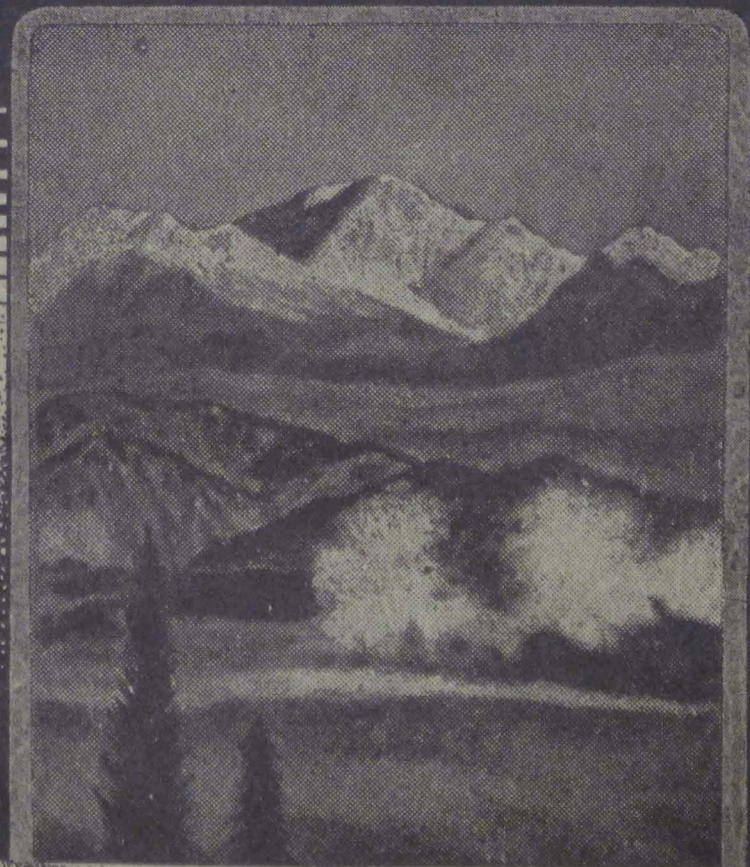


DARJEELING

At a glance



DR. K. C. BHANJA

**DARJEELING
AT A GLANCE**

DARJEELING,

THE QUEEN OF HILL STATIONS

“For natural beauty, Darjeeling is surely unsurpassed in the world. From all countries travellers come there to see the famous view of Kanchenjunga, 28,150' in height, and only 40 miles distant.”

SIR F. YOUNGHUSBAND, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.,
*First Chairman of the Mount Everest
Committee of the Royal Geographical
Society and the Alpine Club.*

* * * * *

“The view of the Himalayas from the hill station of Darjeeling is world-renowned. It includes valleys little above sea level and a summit 28,150' high. Kanchenjunga is fifty miles distant and the angle of sight is only a degree or two, yet it seems immeasurably high and forms a splendid centrepiece to a host of giant peaks that project like spurs of foam-crested reef above waves of blue foothills.”

F. S. SMYTHE,
*A distinguished author and a pre-
eminent mountaineer of Everest,
Kamet, and Kinchenjunga repute.*

DARJEELING AT A GLANCE

A Handbook, both Descriptive and Historical
of
DARJEELING and SIKKIM
with
thrilling accounts of
Everest and Kinchenjunga Expeditions
by land and air.

BY

DR. K. C. BHANJA, B.A.

*(Author of: Wonders of Darjeeling and the Sikkim
Himalaya, Lure of the Himalaya. etc.)*

Sole agents:
OXFORD BOOK & STATIONERY Co.,
DARJEELING.

REPRINT OF THE FOURTH EDITION

[All Rights Reserved by the Author]

Price—Rs. 1/-

Printed by B. K. SEN at MODERN INDIA PRESS, 7, Wellington Squar
Calcutta, and published by DR. K. C. BHANJA of
GILBERT & Co., Judge Bazar, Darjeeling.

From the **PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION**

DARJEELING, 'The Queen of Hill Stations' is the only town in the globe which can boast of revealing to the gaze of the world at large a magnificent panoramic view, comprising some of the world's highest peaks—a view, as compared to which the far-famed Alpine sceneries sink into insignificance. While, in order to come face to face with the glories of the towering peaks of the world, it is incumbent on a tourist to undergo untold hardships, incur heavy expenditure, possess inordinate stamina coupled with dogged perseverance and very strong will-force with the view of penetrating into the vast sea of mountains, the mighty Karakorams and the Himalayas, which two ranges contain at least the first few hundreds of the world's loftiest peaks, and ultimately to explore their remote strongholds wherefrom spring up in all their unspeakable glories the cloud-touching peaks, a spectator from Darjeeling, however, when casting a glance at the snowy range, views the Kingdom of Eternal Snows, displayed not only by the peeping peaks and crests but by the vast snowy faces in all their entirety and magnificence. It is this Darjeeling, which in the epoch-making year of 1885, had its spring from and is the gate-way to Sikkim, 'the land of lightning,' and of superb and incomparable beauty associated with its lonely vales and dales, gaping chasms and terrific gorges, purling rills and rushing streams, teeming and variegated flora and fauna, heartily fed and nourished by almost unparalleled downpour. It is this Darjeeling, wherefrom a single day's easy downhill march leads a traveller to the tropical Sikkim, whence a few hours' journey brings one to the Alpine heights, whereas a steady journey for a week, to the very threshold of eternal snows, while an ambitious journey further on to the resplendently white region of glaciers that pay homage to the mighty Kinchenjunga and its imposing satellites and feed the crystal rivers that

meander along the green plains of Bengal and culminate in the blue ocean that lashes the shores of Mother India. It is this Darjeeling wherfrom are seen the jagged outlines of snows that skirt the vast table-land of Tibet—'the Roof of the World', 'the Land of Hermits', 'the Land of the Thunderbolt', 'the Closed Land of Mysteries'. It is this Darjeeling, whence started fully and scientifically equipped party after party of inspired mountaineering pioneers, the pick of the different nationalities, the American, the English, the Bavarian, the Munich, the German, the Swiss and the Austrian, to assail the hitherto untrodden and virgin snows, verily the forbidden realms of the angels and the gods—at least the Home of the naked Snow Men of amazing existence in this frozen zone, where the thermometer bewilderingly registers several degrees below zero degree Fahrenheit, which is in its turn 32°F below the freezing point.

It is for all these weighty reasons that while writing this book, the author had to strive his utmost to incorporate within the limited range of the work all that incidentally relates to Darjeeling—principally, Sikkim, Tibet, and Kinchenjunga.

It is the singular glory of the mighty Himalayas, in adoration of which an oriental poet sings—"How may I speak of the Creator himself, if I know the incomparable, inexpressible beauty of the Himalayas?" that primarily inspired the humble author to take up the pen and write this 'DARJEELING AT A GLANCE'—a descriptive, and an historical handbook.

* * * * *

He is also under special obligation to several authors whose valuable works had to be consulted in the preparation of this handbook.

Darjeeling, November, 1941.

K. C. BHANJA.

From the **PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION**

A very large number of copies of this Work as published in its first edition have been exhausted before the rolling by of one full year since its publication in December, 1941. In view of extreme scarcity of paper, entirely leaving aside the question of its abnormally high price, the writer had, of late, to give up the idea of its publication for sometime to come till matters would resume their normal conditions. One of the most potent factors that at the present time threatens to cripple all publishing activities is what concerns paper. Somehow or other, the will of Providence proved favourable and a revised edition is now an accomplished fact.

This present edition is distinguished by a new chapter on Mount Everest, which, it is hoped, would be of absorbing interest to general readers.

Darjeeling, November, 1942.

AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The copies of the book as published in its second edition have all been exhausted in an unexpectedly short time of six months. In these days of paper crisis, it has been deemed proper to shorten the treatise as far as practicable without materially affecting its worth. The object aimed at has been achieved by omitting the chapter on TIBET and a few articles which have no direct bearing on the subjects of a guide book.

Darjeeling, May, 1943.

AUTHOR.

N.B.—A tourist should ask for a copy of the printed list of Dak-bungalows in Darjeeling and Sikkim from the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, and obtain necessary permits to occupy the bungalows prior to undertaking any tour. At every stage mentioned in the tabular tour-charts, there is a Dak-bungalow unless otherwise noted.

OTHER WORKS OF THE AUTHOR ON THE HIMALAYA

Wonders of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalaya

It is an extremely interesting supplement to its sister book, *Darjeeling at a glance*. Its illustrations are from photographs of the far off Himalaya. Besides giving additional wonderful informations regarding Darjeeling and Sikkim, it opens up a supremely thrilling chapter of struggles and accidents in assailing by land and air the most spectacular mountain in the world adorned with five summits—Kinchenjunga—that awe-inspiring mountain, which, if Everest would yield to a climbing expedition in this century, may bid defiance to the attempts of its intruders for centuries to come.

Pages 200. Price: Rs. 3/8/-

Lure of the Himalaya

Embodying soul-stirring accounts of Mount Everest Expeditions by land and air with illustrations. The narratives of the journey of nearly 350 miles from Darjeeling to the foot of Mount Everest are thrilling in the extreme. Here is an unparalleled display of every phase of mountain scenery imaginable, covering a hitherto unknown traverse of over 250 miles on the mystic plateau of Tibet. In the work will be found quite a wealth of enthralling informations, some of which have been gleaned from works out of print for nearly a century. As one reads the book depicting man's supreme and crowning adventure on the face of the earth, it holds the heart captive from the very beginning to the end.

In appreciation of the work, Mr. J. O. R. M. Watt, M.A. (Abord.), 13 Dominion Avenue, Leeds, 7, England, writes: I have read Dr. Bhanja's book, "Lure of the Himalaya." Quite apart from the extremely interesting matter contained in it, the manner of its writing is excellent, and makes entertaining as well as instructive reading. I can thoroughly recommend it to the general reading public.

(Cloth bound with attractive jacket) Rs. 5/8/-

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. A SHORT HISTORY OF DARJEELING ..	11
II. JOURNEY FROM CALCUTTA TO DARJEELING (<i>In the past</i>)	17
When the E. B. Ry. did not come into existence —When the E. B. Ry. sees the light—The Hardinge Bridge—Pankhabari Road—Cart Road—Darjeeling Himalayan Railway.	
III. JOURNEY FROM CALCUTTA TO DARJEELING (<i>At the present time</i>)	23
IV. THE TOWN OF DARJEELING	29
Prelude—Climate, Health, etc.—Population— Roads in and about the town—Buildings and Places of Note—Schools and Colleges—Hotels and Boarding Houses—Amusements.	
V. THE DISTRICT OF DARJEELING	52
Area, Location, etc.—Tea—Rivers.	
VI. THE HILL PEOPLE	63
The People—Manners, Customs, etc.	
VII. THE SUBDIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF DARJEELING	69
Kurseong—Kalimpong.	
VIII. Excursions in Darjeeling	75
In the Town—A little beyond the Town—Far beyond the Town but within limited range— Ambitious tours.	
IX. EXCURSIONS IN SIKKIM	96
X. KINCHENJUNGA AND THE SNOWY RANGE ..	106
Routes to and attempts on Kinchenjunga— Mountaineering and the inexplicable pheno- mena—The Snowy Range—Beyond the Snowy Range.	
XI. EVEREST EXPEDITIONS	128
Everest—Everest by land—Everest by air.	

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Kinchenjunga and its Satellites
The Tibetan Monastery at Aloobari.
Nepali School-boys.
The Mount Hermon School.
The Lachung River.
An Ascetic on the Mahakal Cave.
Dhir-Dham Temple.
A Nepali Girl.
A view of Kurseong.
The Great Rangit.
Kinchenjunga.
Lake Kupup (or Bidang Tso).
-



KINCHENJUNGA AND ITS SATELLITES

DARJEELING AT A GLANCE

CHAPTER I

A SHORT HISTORY OF DARJEELING

THE word, Darjeeling, it is said, originated from the Tibetan words, 'dorje' and 'ling', the former meaning the thunderbolt of Indra (the god of the firmament and of rain) and the latter, place. When Darjeeling came into being, it consisted of a few huts surrounding the monastery, then standing on the mount now called the Observatory Hill and it is believed that the thunderbolt of Indra once dropped from the skies and rested in this monastery. Darjeeling*, therefore, derives its name from this shrine with which are associated the two Tibetan words mentioned above. There is another sound interpretation of the derivative meaning of Darjeeling. In 1835 when the village of Darjeeling, comprising a few cots of the meanest description engirding the aforesaid monastery and peopled by some one hundred souls, was gifted to the British by the Maharaja of Sikkim, it was in charge of a Lama (a Buddhist priest of Tibet) named Dorje who was responsible for collection and transmission of revenue amounting to Rs. 20/- only from this hamlet. This strip of hill territory was then called "Dorje-Ling" or the village governed by

* That this exposition is not far-fetched appears from two significant points. One is based upon the fact that in every Tibetan monastery is found a concomitant of worship made of brass, resembling a pair of crowns symmetrically set and regarded as emblematic of the thunderbolt of Indra. To interest readers it may be added here that this is held by the Lama during service by means of the thumb and the index finger with the view of exorcising evil spirits. The other point hinges on the belief of the Tibetans that the real 'dorje' actually dropped on the summit of a mountain near Lhasa.

Dorje. The land revenue mentioned above was accounted for in the Touzi Ledger under the heading "Dorje-Ling".

Towards the close of the year 1813, the British waged war against the Nepalese, to whom at that time belonged the whole territory of Sikkim, won by conquest from the Sikkimesé. The Nepalese (Gurkhās) were defeated by General Ochterlony. Subsequently by a treaty signed at Segoulie in 1816, 4000 square miles of territory (British Sikkim) was ceded by Nepal, which in turn was made over to the Raja of Sikkim by a treaty signed at Titalya on February 10th, 1817. The well-known Ochterlony Monument (165') of Calcutta, standing on and lording it over the *maidan*, commemorates the achievements of this general. It is worth mentioning here that by the Segoulie treaty the Nepal Durbar also ceded certain other territories, which have provided the British with the beautiful hill-stations, viz. Almorah (5,510'), Mussoorie (6,600'), Nainital (6,407') and Simla (7,075').

In 1828, Lt.-General G. A. Lloyd and Mr. J. W. Grant, I.C.S., employed in setting the boundary between Nepal and Sikkim arrived at Chungtong, a few miles to the west of Darjeeling, and visualised the would-be sanitarium. Later on, the East India Company deputed Lt.-General Lloyd to negotiate with the Maharaja of Sikkim for ceding the mountainous region in lieu of money or land. Lloyd with his imposing personality succeeded in making the negotiation fruitful on February 1st, 1835, when the Maharaja* made over a strip of territory on the Himalayas

* The deed of grant transferring this valuable tract of land to the British contains the following lines:—

"The Governor-General having expressed a desire for the possession of the hill of Darjeeling, on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government suffering from sickness to avail themselves of its advantages—

"I, the Sikhimputte Rajah, out of friendship to the said Governor-General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land south of the Great Rangit river, east

24 miles long and about 5 to 6 miles wide, as a mark of friendship for the then Governor General, Lord William Bentinck, for the establishment of a sanitarium for the convalescent servants of the East India Company. In return, the Maharaja was allowed a subsidy of Rs. 3,000/- which was subsequently raised to Rs. 6,000/- per annum. The Maharaja evidently made a prodigious bargain out of this transfer of territory, which at that time yielded a pepper-corn revenue never exceeding Rs. 20/- only per annum, derived from people numbering about 2000.

In 1839, Lieut-Napier of the Royal Engineers (subsequently Lord Napier) deputed to lay out the town constructed a hill road from Siliguri. This was a task which was at once stupendous and perilous, as it evidently necessitated the exploring of the dense forest of the deadly terai and the mighty Himalayas on the one hand, and the undertaking of the construction of roads in an intractable and trackless region on the other.

As soon as the little town of Darjeeling came into being and peeped through dense forest, the site became a crowning attraction to the natives of the surrounding country; and in 1849, *i.e.*, in nearly a decade, the population rose from 200 to 10,000 chiefly by immigration, and principally in view of the security and blessing of life ensured under the aegis of the Pax Britannica hitherto unknown. This rapid growth of the town probably excited the jealousy of the Sikkim Government. And this is the reason why Sir (Dr.) Joseph D. Hooker, an eminent explorer and naturalist, and Dr. Campbell, while travelling in Sikkim in 1849, were treacherously arrested and imprisoned. The latter was brutally tortured, while the former was placed under surveillance. All this was done under the orders

of the Balasaun, Kahail, and Little Rangit rivers, and west of the Rungpo and Mahanuddy rivers."

"Dated 9th Maugh, Sumbut, 1281."

N.B.—The above date corresponds to February 1st, 1835, which is evidently a memorable day in the annals of Darjeeling.

of Namgoway, the brother-in-law of the Maharaja and Dewan of the State. Protest on the part of the British Government proving inoperative, an expeditionary force had to be despatched over the borders in February, 1850. This expedition eventually resulted in the annexation of the whole of the district of Darjeeling, a territory of nearly 640 square miles. It is surprising that simply a march over the borders, without opening fire, was all that was required to effect this annexation.

In 1860, matters again came to such a pass that another expedition had to be forced into the territory of Sikkim under the command of Dr. Campbell. A portion of the Sikkim Giry to the north of the Ramman river was annexed. During the same year, a meagre expeditionary force, consisting of 160 soldiers only under the command of Captain Murray, occupied the village of Rinchingpong about 40 miles from Darjeeling, but the force proving quite inadequate for such an adventure, had to beat a hasty retreat. Panic and terror reigned supreme in the minds of the people of Darjeeling for some days. The Government, then, realised the gravity of the situation, and an invasion ensued in 1861 with a force comprising 2,600 rifles, who crossed the Rangit on 2nd February of that year. Sir Ashley Eden, the then Lieut. Governor of Bengal, accompanied the expedition as an Envoy. The enemy over 800 strong was engirded and badly beaten at Namchi, 17 miles from Darjeeling. On March 9th, the British troops then forced their way into Tumlong, the then capital of Sikkim, one day's journey from, and to the north-west of Gangtok, the present capital, and finally a treaty was signed by the Octogenarian Raja. Namgoway was expelled and an indemnity of Rs. 7,000/- had to be paid by the State.

The Kalimpong subdivision together with the Bengal Duars (also Assam Duars) was annexed from Bhutan on November 11th, 1865 and included in the district of Darjeeling, which then covered an area of 1164 square miles, in place of the previous area of 640 square miles. Here

again, the history is of absorbing interest. For fully thirty years prior to the year 1865, the district of Daling Hills (now called Kalimpong subdivision) which formed a part of the independent State of Bhutan was in a state of great turmoil, the Bhutanese off and on rushing over the frontier of the British territory. Expeditions to put a stop to these wanton raids were forced into Bhutan as far back as 1783 and 1837 by the East India Company, but these, far from improving the situation, made it all the more menacing. In 1863 a mission under Sir Ashley Eden as Envoy was deputed to the capital of Bhutan to negotiate with the Durbar. The force accompanying the mission being not sufficiently strong and well-equipped, the life of the British Envoy was eventually seriously endangered, so much so that had he had not signed a treaty with the Bhutan Durbar in its favour, his life would not have been spared. In the treaty, however, the Envoy strategically added the words "under compulsion" while committing to paper his signature. Later on, a punitive expedition was forced into Bhutan which appeared to have awakened the Bhutanese to a sense of equity and civility, but raids and hostilities went on with unabated virulence till the year 1865, when a strong detachment was despatched into Bhutan. The fort of Daling was stormed and seized, and eventually the Daling subdivision with Kalimpong as its headquarter together with Bengal (and Assam) Duars* finally passed into the possession of the Britishers, and was included in the district of Darjeeling.

In concluding this chapter, we would like to bring to the notice of the readers a few very interesting facts which have, practically speaking, fallen into oblivion. In the early days of the British possession of this Queen of Hill Station, this territory was no better than a wilderness, the best part of the tract being under the banners of the

* Duars mean doors of Bhutan. These are eighteen in number. The Bengal Duars are located at Mayanguri, Dalimkote, Chamurchi, etc. The term should properly mean mountain passes, but has been made to cover the adjoining plains in extension of the same.

denizens of the forest. At the outset, when the town was laid out, even to its residents the town had little or no fascination, with the result that the Government could not even persuade people to purchase even a quarter portion of the town for an almost evanescent amount of Rs. 40/- or Rs. 50/- on a peppercorn rent. No body could even dream of the immense potentiality lying latent in this strip of hill territory. We shall now cite an instance which may sound very strange, but nevertheless it is not a folk-lore. A gentleman named Karbir Sunwar (a goldsmith by caste), a resident of Kalimpong, despatched a silver jar, called *tumba** in this hill station, to Her Majesty the Queen Victoria as an humble token of kindest regards. After the lapse of nearly six months, with the rolling back of the blue waves, so to say, reached the news from the shore of the fairyland that the whole of Kalimpong be gifted to the donor of the curio, or a sum of Rs. 1000/- be paid to him as an alternative. When the news was communicated to the unsophisticated cosmopolite, he candidly remarked—"What should or could I do with such an extensive territory? Let me better have the hard cash to enjoy with." It is said that a better part of the money thus received was expended in filling up *tumbas* times out of number.

Lastly, it may be recorded that prior to the coinage of the word '*Darjeeling*', this hill-station went by the name of Gundri Bazaar. This name has not as yet wholly lost ground, it being still prevalent amongst the old village folk of the district. The word, *Gundri*, meaning mat, was taken advantage of by reason of the fact that a few ramshackle shops constituting the original bazaar were erected in a very crude way by means of a kind of thick mat.

* *Tumba* is a kind of big cylindrical jar made of bamboo and is used for putting in a sort of millet or maize preparation mixed with sufficient quantity of water, constituting an alcoholic decoction, which is sucked up by means of a bamboo-stalk, serving the purpose of a suction-tube.



THE TIBETAN MONASTERY AT ALOORI

Photo—D. Bhani



NEPALI SCHOOL BOYS.

Photo—Author.

CHAPTER II

JOURNEY FROM CALCUTTA TO DARJEELING (IN THE PAST)

When the E. B. Ry. did not come into existence

ON February 3rd, 1855, the E. I. Ry. was opened for traffic and was gradually being extended northward. Early in the year 1860, it reached the terminus, Sahibgunj, which is 218 miles from Howrah. Tourists and traders were travelling to Darjeeling in the following way both tiresome and expensive.

Sahibgunj to Karagola Ghat, the opposite bank of the river, by ferry (a tedious river-crossing of five long hours). From there to Dingra Ghat by bullock cart under the scorching sun. Then to the foot of the Himalayas *via* Purnea, Kissenganj and Titalya* by *palki-dak*, pony or cart. Thereafter the rest of the journey of 56 miles is resumed through the deadly terai, the mere mention of which makes one shake like an aspen leaf. The traveller, then, had to climb up the Pankhabari pony road ascending steeply to Kurseong, and ultimately reached Darjeeling *via* Dow Hill, Senchal, and Jorebungalow, fatigued and weary to the last degree.

From 'Hooker's Journey Through The Terai' we find that he had not only to pay a fabulous amount of Rs. 240/- to the bearers for carrying his *palki-dak*† from Karagola Ghat to Siliguri, but had been obliged to add a handsome

* At Titalaya there are still to be found the ruins of the barracks for British troops on their way to, and from Darjeeling, and of the tombstones which mark the grave of many a gallant heart, victimised by the deadly Terai fever.

† A light covered litter or boxlike carriage used in India for a single person and borne on the shoulders of four or six men.

douceur which he remarked made him lose all patience. This journey was undertaken in April, 1848, nearly a century ago.

From the old records* left by late Girish Chandra Ghose, one of the then premier contractors of the district, we have the following details of his journey from Howrah to Kurseong.

On May 6th, 1876, he left Howrah at 5-30 P.M. and reached Sahibjung in the following morning. He then proceeded to the Steamer Ghat nearly two miles off through a dense jungle and mango groves, infested with tigers and other wild animals as well as robbers. Crossing the river on ferry steamer, he reached Bhavanipur Ghat wherefrom Karagola Ghat was nearly two miles, the route being along the wide sandy bank, almost incandescent with solar heat.

At that time, the journey from Karagola to Darjeeling had to be accomplished by means of a bullock-cart. The traveller then applied to the manager of the Calcutta and Darjeeling Bullock Cart Train Co., stationed at Karagola. There was at that time a rival company styled Bird & Co., running the same business on the self-same route. Each company had a train of some ten to twelve bullock carts under the charge of one guard fully equipped with a gun, armours and spikes. Both the trains used to start and proceed together with the view of getting mutual help on the way, should anything untoward happen.

Leaving Karagola at 4 p.m., he reached Purnea at 10 a.m. on the following day. In the evening of the same day, he reached Kishengunj, after crossing the river Mahananda by ferry-boat. Then on the following day, he arrived at Siliguri at about 11 a.m. In the evening of the same day, Gayabari was reached, but for want of a fresh set of bullocks, they were detained till the following morning.

* The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to Mr. R. N. Ghose Townend, for kindly making over to him some of his old family records, wherefrom the above details have been gleaned.

This was due to an epidemic which swept away hundreds of cattle, thereby necessitating the purchase of a number of new animals. Leaving Gayabari in the morning, Kurseong was reached at about 12 a.m.

As good luck would have it, Mr. Ghose had to leave Kurseong on the following day and return to Chunbhati to fill up a vacancy.

When the E. B. Ry. sees the light

This railway was opened on September 29th, 1862. The line then extended up to Ranaghat. It was on June 10th, 1878, that the present terminus, Siliguri, was reached, but as no bridge had so far been constructed over the Padma at Sara, the passengers were obliged to cross the river by ferry.

The Hardinge Bridge

Prior to the construction of the above bridge, generally known as the Sara Bridge, transshipment at Sara Ghat involved great inconveniences.

The preliminary work of the bridge was taken up in 1909. In 1912, the foundation of the piers was under construction, and within two years most of the spans were erected. The approaches, together with the bridge, extend to a distance of 15 miles. The entire work was completed in full five years. The amount spent on approaches was Rs. 84 lakhs and on the bridge proper Rs. 391 lakhs, total being Rs. 475 lakhs. The wells which carry the main piers were sunk to a depth of 160 feet below the lowest water level, being the deepest foundations of their kind in the world. In this respect, this monster is a breaker of world-record.

It is 5,380 feet in length being nearly half of that of the longest railway bridge in the world called the Lower Zambezi Bridge situated in East Africa. In India, Sone Bridge (1900) is the longest, its length being 10,051 feet. The Howrah bridge is 1,530 feet in length.

A little over half a century after the first train steamed down the E. B. Railway, we find the New Year's day of 1915, dawning with a new epoch in the annals of this railway, when the bridge was opened, first to goods traffic and then shortly after, to passenger traffic, thus placing 'the Paris of the East' (our coinage) in easy and rapid communication with the Queen of Hill Stations.

The bridge was, however, formally opened to traffic on March 4th, 1915 by His Excellency Lord Hardinge, the then Governor General of India, and received the dignified appellation, the Hardinge Bridge, although most people of the province are quite strangers to this English name.

The Pankhabari Road

This historic road 40 miles in length was the only means of communication in the past between the Terai and Darjeeling.

The construction of this road was commenced in 1839 by Lieut. Napier (afterwards Lord Napier) and completed in 1842 at an expenditure of Rs. 8 lakhs as well as at the cost of many lives, and was named the Military Road. This road winds its way up from the Terai till it reaches Kurseong after crossing nearly 200 bridges. From Kurseong the road extends to Dow Hill and runs on along the ridges until it reaches Sinchal, whence it descends to Jorebungalow, and then proceeds to Chowrasta *via* the Jalapahar Road.

The Pankhabari Road reaching up to Kurseong from the plains is now seldom used, being mostly choked with grasses and covered with jungle.

At the sixth mile from Kurseong there is a Dakbungalow, from which place Sukna is 12 miles away. On the downward journey this distance of 12 miles can be easily done, whereas the reverse journey calls for energy and stamina not usually at the command of the people of the plains to accomplish in one day.

The Cart Road

The Military road mentioned above proving useless for cart traffic, owing chiefly to its high gradients, a scheme for the construction of a broad road from Siliguri to Darjeeling, affording facility to the wheeled traffic was launched upon in 1861. The road which is 51 miles long was completed in 1869. It is chiefly along this road that the D. H. Ry. winds its way in and out till it reaches its terminus at Darjeeling.

The road cost the Government about £6,000 or Rs. 90,000 per mile, and entailed an expenditure of one and a half lakhs of rupees annually on the part of the Government for its necessary upkeep. It was later on made over to the D. H. Ry. Co., Ltd., to arrange for its maintenance at all times. It is to the credit of the railway company that they have succeeded in relieving the Government of all cost in the maintenance of this road so far.

It would be no exaggeration to say that this royal road, so to say, is a marvellous piece of engineering, a fact which will not now be obvious as you glide over it on a motor car or notice it from the train.

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

For a period of fully one decade after the construction of the Cart Road from Siliguri, traders and travellers were constrained to accomplish the hill journey by driving in a tonga. Such a journey was not only disadvantageous but expensive.

The idea, at last, of constructing a light railway from Siliguri to Darjeeling to meet the expanding requirements of the district flashed upon the late Sir Ashley Eden, then Lieut. Governor of Bengal. Mr. Franklin Prestage (at that time Agent of the E. B. Ry. Co. and later on the first manager of the D. H. Ry.) submitted a detailed scheme.

A company was soon floated. The work was commenced in 1879. A contract was placed with a Calcutta firm for the construction of a tramway to Darjeeling. The

E. I. Ry. workshops at Jamalpur took in hand the task of building engines for this steam tramway. The first engine named the 'Tiny' was for the first time put in action in March, 1880, on the occasion of the visit of His Excellency Lord Lytton, the Viceroy. The tramway at that time extended up to Tindharia from which place the Viceroy rode to Kurseong and put up at the Clarendon Hotel, which put up the shutters in the year 1938.

On the 4th July, 1881, the tram-line was extended right up to Darjeeling, and was thenceforth styled the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. The line was originally laid along the cart road, but later on, in order to reduce the gradient and enlarge the radii of the numerous sharp curves, many deviations and modifications had to be made.

Originally the line cost £3,500 a mile, but subsequent improvements brought the cost up to a figure exceeding twice the amount.

CHAPTER III

JOURNEY FROM CALCUTTA TO DARJEELING

(AT THE PRESENT TIME)

DARJEELING, the very name of which conjures up a cooling and soothing atmosphere, much coveted by the people of the plains, toiling under sweltering heat of the sun, is at a distance of 386 miles from Calcutta. The traveller has to leave the Sealdah Station in the evening by the Darjeeling mail which arrives at Siliguri, the other terminus of the E. B. Ry. early in the morning. The journey from one end to the other is through vast paddy-fields on either side of the railway line, stretching far away to the remote horizon on all sides and dotted here and there mostly with clusters of bamboos, palms, bananas, dates, cocoanuts, and betel-palms. After the lapse of nearly three hours, unless grossly overcome by sleep, ear-deafening roars of the train as it passes over the gigantic Sara Bridge will not fail to attract the attention of the passenger. Very early in the morning, Jalpaiguri is reached. From this place you will catch a glimpse of the snowy peaks peeping as it were through the infinity. At about half past six in the morning, the main train arrives at Siliguri, the other terminus of the railway. The traveller has then sufficient time (fully 35 minutes) at his disposal to take advantage of the spacious and excellent refreshment room of Messrs. D. Shorabji & Co.

Thereafter the journey is resumed on the D. H. Ry., or, if preferred, by a motor car or a bus which reduces the time of the journey by nearly two hours and a half. On leaving Siliguri, after a run of two or three minutes, a vast field comes into view in the east, through which the Kalimpong railway line (another section of the same rail-

way) passes. This place formed the military base of the Tibetan expedition of 1904-5. Nearly a mile from Siliguri, is the Mahanady Bridge, 700 feet in length. The Mahanady river which appears to be nothing but a streamlet, with a depth of some two feet only, is transformed during the rainy season into a mighty flood of water, sweeping along with tremendous speed. What is very funny about this river during the dry months is that about three miles up its course, it lies hidden for about a mile, the river then passing through subterranean strata.

At the third mile, Panchanai junction is reached. The Kissengunj line branches off from this junction.

Sukna (the dry region) Station (533') is reached at the 7th mile from Siliguri (392'). This is a fever-haunted tract. From Sukna the train begins to ascend in earnest and passes through a stately forest, where lofty sal (*Shorea Robusta*), semul and toon trees on either side appear to strive in vain to baffle the locomotive on the move to over-reach their tops. But as the train winds its way up its zigzag course for nearly a quarter of an hour, the stately forest appears to have sunk down, so to say, and finally lags behind, and the train passes by the slopes of the mountain where jungles of various kinds of trees, plants and creepers come in sight, and practically speaking, at every turn, beauty fresh and unspeakable reveals itself in a magnificent panorama, as the train runs up a spur of the Singalela range which like a huge reptile of fabulous dimensions approaches the mighty Kinchenjunga and ultimately culminates in it after a long and tedious journey in a serpentine course.

What is very marked and a most beautiful feature of this part of the Himalayas as compared to the remote western portion of the mighty range is that here the Himalayas are either clad with forest or luxuriantly prolific foliage and vegetation of all kinds from the very base. This is due to clouds sweeping through the gorge, 80 miles long, which came into being owing to a break of that length

of the Sewalik range being the smaller hills which border the base of the Himalayas.

It may be mentioned here that this lower region of the Himalayas is exceptionally rich in flora and fauna. Here are found elephants, wild buffaloes, bisons, tigers, pythons, and so forth. In 1941 a gigantic bison after being severely wounded by a Nimrod hunting in the adjoining Terai ran pell mell and crossed the railway line with lightning speed while the innocent locomotive was crawling on near by. The momentum generated as the huge monster cut along at top speed seemed sufficient to derail the wheeled traffic.*

On one occasion, in 1916, the evening down train came face to face with a tusker and two females. The male paid no heed to the shrill whistle of the train and was about to charge it, when the driver Oakley with his ready wit saved the situation by sharply blowing off steam from the blow off cocks of the engine. The hissing sound thus produced so frightened the monster that he scampered down the hill with a speed which cannot possibly be associated with a set of four unwieldy pillars in motion.

The train crosses the first loop after traversing a distance of $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles so that as it describes a spiral it passes over a small bridge situated over a portion of the line it has left a little while ago. A loop is a device for easing or lessening the gradient.

At the 12th mile is Rangtong. Two and a half miles away is the second loop. This locality is a favourite haunt of leopards. The third loop is at the $15\frac{1}{2}$ mile.

A mile from the third loop is Chunbhaty (2,000 feet) meaning the lime-kiln. A mile from Chunbhaty is the

* Mr. Guha was at the rear of this train with his commanding flags and whistle but had there come rushing a 'train' likewise of these monsters (who generally roam in herds) all his skill coupled with the kinetic energy of steam would have been easily foiled. It is a curious fact that both the aggressors in the scene are orthodox, in respect of their diet, both being strictly vegetarians, the only difference being that while the one consumes pure carbon, the other assimilates the same from a naturally blended form of the element.

first zigzag or reverse. It is a device under which the train attains a comparatively much higher elevation by traversing a short distance. The Engineer entrusted with the survey of the line was at his wit's end at this place when he found it practically impossible to extend the line any further. He ascribed this state of affairs to a defective survey. When a fresh survey was under contemplation, his better-half solved the problem by this ingenious zigzag device in which the train runs forward and then backward, and then again forward, thus describing a path like the letter Z, on the completion of which path, the train is enabled to follow its usual course as chalked out by the survey. Three more reverses had to be taken advantage of, one a little beyond Tindharia, one at the $23\frac{1}{2}$ mile near Gayabari, and the fourth or the last reverse a little distance beyond the same station.

Tindharia (2,822') is at the 20th mile. The word means three ridges. The workshops of the line together with those of the Kissenganj and the Tista-valley extensions are located here. A little way off from Tindharia is a piece of Engineering curio where the line describes the figure 8.

At the 24th mile is Gayabari (the cow-shed), elevation being 3,516 feet. Soon after passing Gayabari, sharp projecting rocks overhanging the track will be noticed. This rock formation goes by the name of Sikkim Gneiss. Nearly one mile from Gayabari is the Pagla Jhora (literally meaning the mad torrent). This turbulent watercourse caused in the past considerable damage to the D. H. Ry. during the rainy seasons, when it incessantly showers down with lightning speed huge volumes of water. In dry months there is little water in the watercourse, which then cannot be recognised as the Pagla Jhora, in the sense of its appellation.

The next station is Mahanady (4,120'). The source of the Mahanady river already mentioned is in the wooded mountain, looming above the railway station.

Beyond Mahanady is Kurseong, a sub-divisional head-quarter of the district of Darjeeling. Even mail trains halt here for nearly half an hour. This is the only station on the line between the two terminuses where an Indian can enjoy his requisite refreshment at a reasonable cost. The offices of the D. H. Ry. are situated here. From Kurseong, splendid views of the ever-green plains of Bengal with meandering rivers looking like "bright silver ribbons" break through gaps of the mountainous regions. From Kurseong is obtained for the first time the view of the snowy peaks of Kinchenjunga, Kabru and Janu.

The next station is Toong (5,656'). Here Tooni trees from which very good planks are obtained thrive, and hence the name.

Then is reached Sonada (the abode of bears, a real fact). When maize ripens in August, a good many of these animals infest the cultivated areas after it is dark, do full justice to the crops throughout the night, and then disappear before the day dawns, taking their shelter in the adjoining forests. The elevation of Sonada is 6,552 feet. This place is noted for its milk supply to the town of Darjeeling and other places. Here an enterprising Bengali youth started a dairy in 1933 and is now a flourishing concern. It is a little over a quarter mile below the station. Sonada is for the most part of the year found enveloped in dense mist. The views of the plains with rivers flowing along velvety meadows are no more seen beyond this station.

The train, then, reaches Ghoom (gable-shaped village) wrongly considered to be the highest railway station in the world, the elevation being 7,407'. Readers may note that the Peruvian Central Railway has attained an altitude of so much as 15,860 feet, which is much higher than that of our Phalut (11,811') where tourists flock together to catch a glimpse of Mount Everest. The temperature of Ghoom is almost invariably lower than that of Darjeeling by a few degrees (generally 5°F.). This is due to a break in the Sewalik range as has been already explained.

It may be cursorily noted here that Ghoom is the gateway to Tibet and Bhutan *via* Kalimpong on one hand, and Nepal *via* Sukia on the other.

From Ghoom the train descends uninterruptedly for a distance of 4 miles till it reaches Darjeeling about 600 feet below the level of Ghoom. As the train runs on for a few minutes, the mighty Kinchenjunga together with its many comrades clad with perpetual snow suddenly bursts forth before the eyes of a spectator, provided the weather is clear. Shortly after this, the train arrives at the grand loop at Batasia (windy place). It is a fact that at all times wind blows extraordinarily hard over this open summit. As one enters this zone, one feels an abrupt change in the velocity of wind, which during the winter is cutting and icy-cold. Fortunately the zone is not extensive, it being crossed by the locomotive in three minutes or so. The journey over the loop is very enjoyable. The train describes a gigantic spiral and thereby passes underneath a bridge it crossed a little while ago.

Finally the locomotive steams down into the Darjeeling railway station, where a row of female porters await the passengers for carrying their luggages, which they place on their back ingeniously supported by straps passing round their foreheads. One thing which is very unique about these coolies is that they are perfectly reliable, and once your goods are made over to them there will practically be no chance of your missing the same. Rickshaws are always available at the gate, dandies are rarely found, while ponies are conspicuous by their absence.

CHATER IV

THE TOWN OF DARJEELING

Prelude

DARJEELING rightly merits the epithet—"The Queen of Hill Stations." The vast and mighty expanse of the snowy range, extending from far east to remote west with the cloud-touching peaks lording it over the distant horizon, constitutes a panoramic view, as compared to which the best sceneries of the mountainous regions of the world sink into insignificance. Neither the pen nor the brush can depict even an iota of the sublime and majestic beauty of this almost ultra-mundance range of perpetual snow. Be seated in a shelter on the Observatory Hill and run the eye over the snowy range, far far away, in the tranquil hours that gently creep in as the departing sun bids adieu to this hemisphere, or when the twilight deepens as the night approaches. The voice of the silence from afar will whisper into your ears, and your fancy will lift you up on its wings and carry you to a region of heavenly ecstasy, conjuring up an unspeakable sense of the infinite glory of the Great Unseen Hand behind.

The town of Dareeling is a picturesque one. Residences, Hotels, Boarding Houses, Churches, Temples, and Mosques are beautifully situated on the slopes of the Himalayas. It is the summer seat of the Government of Bengal. As the cuckoo follows the spring, so do tourists and visitors from different parts of India and abroad the advent of the Administration, in summer as well as in the early part of winter. They flock to this Hill Station to enjoy its congenial and embracing climate, and its majestic sceneries, and if desired, provided time, stamina, and purse permit, undertake excursions in and about the district, the limit of which both in respect of range and scenery

overwhelmingly surpasses that of any other hill station. It is very curious to note that the summer visitors subscribe to the following doggerel *verbatim et literatim*.

The cuckoo sings in April,
The cuckoo sings in May.
The cuckoo sings in June,
In July she flies away.

Climate, Health

In summer, the temperature of the station seldom exceeds 70° in the shade, and in winter falls below 35° at night and 40° in the day-time, the freezing point of water, it may be noted, being 32°F. Practically speaking Darjeeling climate passes through three seasons: the Spring (first week of March to the end of May), the Rainy Season (from June to middle of October) and the Winter (middle of October to the end of February), December and January being the coldest part of the year. Atmosphere is more or less foggy, particularly in the rainy season and also in the mid-winter (December and January) when most part of the day of this cloud-capt region is misty. Sometimes mist is so dense that it totally obstructs vision at a distance of a few yards. Incidentally, it may be remarked here, that driving by a local motorist through such dense mist on a treacherously serpentine road of more or less high gradient with one side always exposed to the risk of sudden drop into the bottomless abyss of death, is tantamount to a motoring feat which is enjoyable, if at all, with clenched teeth and a painful sense of insecurity on the part of the inmates of the automobile. During the months of November and December, days are fairly dry, bright, and sunny, and consequently these months constitute the most healthy part of the year. Very low temperature of the last week of December, January, and to a certain extent first two weeks of February being very trying, people cluster round the hearth or an iron-oven or a cauldron on which charcoal is kept burning. Rainfall is rather heavy no doubt, measuring 131" per year on an average, of which

nearly a height of 35" is attained in July, the rainiest part of the year. The season is nevertheless on the whole not very disagreeable, principally because rain-water rapidly glides down and hardly finds time to accumulate anywhere owing to the fact that the roads are almost everywhere exceptionally good and drainage is excellent. The following comparative statement of rainfall will be interesting.

Darjeeling	..	..	131.5
Simla	..	..	63.57
Shillong	..	..	83
Calcutta	..	..	62.56
Bombay	..	..	70.63
Madras	..	..	50.78
Delhi	..	..	26.84
Cherapunji	..	..	426

(30 miles south of Shillong. A world-record.)

Darjeeling has earned for itself another appellation—"the children's paradise". It has been found that nowhere children thrive so well as in this hill station. In his "Himalayan Journals" Sir Joseph Hooker wrote in 1854: "* * * * in no part of the world is there a more active, rosy and bright young community than at Darjeeling. It appears from a comparative statement of maximum and minimum temperatures recorded for some years in the past that the climate of Darjeeling excluding the rainy season resembles that of London, the figures being 58° and 48° respectively.

While Chittagong is the Garden of Bengal, Darjeeling is the Sanitarium of the province (also of Burma). On account of its very high altitude (6,812'), it is far above the zone of that dreaded disease malaria, although very rarely we meet with sporadic cases of this deadly scourge imported mostly from Siliguri. The writer in the course of his long practice in Darjeeling met with only three cases of Cholera in this hill station so far. Pneumonia and Bronchitis are the two very common diseases mostly met with in winter, particularly amongst the children of the

poor classes who are as a rule under-fed and do not get sufficient pure air to breathe in their closed rooms, which in most cases are made to serve the double purpose of both sleeping and cooking. In closing this paragraph, we would note below the comparative figures, representing altitudes of different hill stations in India.

Darjeeling	..	6,812'	(Jalapahar, 7,701', Katapahar, 7,886', Tiger Hill, 8,515', Ghoom, 7,407'.)
Nainital	..	6,400'	(Summer seat of U. P. Government.)
Simla	..	7,057'	(Summer seat of India as well as that of the Punjab Government.)
Shillong	..	4,987'	(Head quarters of the Assam Govt.)
Srinagar	..	5,250'	(Capital of Kashmere.)
Mussoorie	..	6,600'	(Off Dehra Dun Ry. Station.)
Almora	..	5,500'	

Population

In 1835 when Darjeeling passed under British possession, there was a cluster of about 20 huts around the present Observatory Hill with inhabitants numbering nearly one-hundred. In 1840, the town consisted of 30 buildings. In 1863, there were about 70 houses in the station, as it appears from the Hand Book of Darjeeling published in that year. There are now picturesque houses at every nook and corner of the town. The following figures refer to the population of Darjeeling as determined by the census.

1835	..	..	..	..	100
1872	..	..	..	..	3,000
1901	..	..	..	..	17,000
1931	..	..	..	..	21,225
1941	..	..	..	..	19,903

In spite of there being hundreds of houses in the station and many hotels and boarding houses both European and Indian, during the seasons and particularly during the principal holidays (the Puja, the Xmas, and Good-Friday), the influx of visitors is often so great that to find accommodation is often quite a business.

Roads in and about the Town

The following guiding notes will facilitate the formation of a fairly clear idea about the general trend of the main roads of the town with particulars.

Cart Road: This road from Siliguri to Darjeeling (beyond which to Lebong, it is called Lebong Cart Road) runs almost always close to the railway line.

Mackenzie Road: This road is a little way off from the railway station. It ascends more or less rapidly till it meets the junction of the Commercial Row, Auckland Road, and Robertson Road, from which junction the Chowrasta (commonly known as the Mall) is a walk of two or three minutes. As you proceed on from the station along this road, you will find in order:—Darjeeling Motor Service, Head Post Office, Imperial Bank, Municipal Office, Town Hall, and Lloyds Bank.

Commercial Row: Where Mackenzie Road ends, Commercial Row begins, keeping Auckland Road to the right and Robertson Road to the left. Firms of the highest class in the town are all located here. This road leads to the Mall.

Old Calcutta Road: It starts from the south-east of Chowrasta keeping the shelter for ponies on the left. After traversing a short distance of 150 yards or so, will be noticed the Jalapahar Road creeping up the hill-side, as also another road to the left, running down to the Toongsoong *busti* (village), while the Old Calcutta Road, being the middle one, runs on in an easy gradient up to a distance of good three miles till it reaches Jorebungalow, a little less than half a mile from the Ghoom railway station.

Jalapahar Road: This road mentioned above ascends rather steeply till it reaches the Jalapahar Cantonment passing by the St. Paul's School, Girivilas (palace of His Highness the Raja of Dighapatia) and the parade ground. After crossing the military cantonment, the road splits

itself into two, one proceeding to a little distance till it joins the Old Calcutta Road, half a mile from Jorebungalow, while another which branches off to your right after describing an almost semi-circular path joins the Calcutta Road at Jorebungalow.

Auckland Road: This road starts from the junction of the Commercial Row and the Mackenzie Road, and runs towards east till it reaches Ghoom Pahar Road (close to the railway line) which leads to the Ghoom monastery.

Jalapahar Road via Auckland Road: Proceed on along the Auckland Road till you come across the Salt Hill Road on the opposite side of the Union Chapel. This road runs up steeply for a short distance till it meets the Jalapahar Road.

Another route is *via* Mackintosh Road and Elysee Road. Proceed on along the Auckland Road a little further on till you pass the Mount Everest Hotel. Here you will find the Mackintosh Road leading to the Elysee Road, following which you will soon reach the Jalapahar Road not far off, although the steepness of the track atones for its distance.

Rangit Road: This road rapidly descends from the Chowrasta till it reaches the Manjitar Suspension Bridge after passing by the Bhutia *busti*, half a mile below the Chowrasta, then crossing the Lebong Cart Road further down along which it proceeds a little less than half a mile in a very easy gradient, and thereafter working its way rapidly down to Kotwali *busti* below the Lebong Race Course. The road then passes by the Ging Monastery and at the 7th mile reaches the Badamtam Dak Bungalow. On reaching the other side of the Manjitar Bridge, one may "breathe the air of Sikkim free".

A few yards below the Chowrasta and to the left of this road as you walk down, will be noticed the house called "Step-aside" where Desh-bandhu (C. R. Das) breathed his last and has left behind him 'a deathless life'.

West and East Birch Hill Road: From the Chowrasta this road (West Birch Hill Road) runs down westward shortly passing by the Government House and then beneath the Birch Hill till it takes an eastwardly direction after approaching the St. Joseph's College, nearly one and a half mile from the Chowrasta. The road then makes an almost complete circuit and ultimately joins the Rangit Road at a point wherefrom the Chowrasta is a short distance away.

Victoria Road: Nearly half a mile from the Railway Station and along the Cart Road towards Ghoom, this road speedily descends till it comes down on a level ground, wherefrom, by taking the rightward direction, the Victoria Bridge will be reached in a few minutes. The road then running on for some 50 yards turns to the left, and works its way down to a little distance till it meets the Marion Road. The road then runs on in a very easy gradient and passes by the T. B. Hospital. A little way off from the Hospital, another road branches off to your left which leads to the Hindu Burning Ground, from which historic place, the dead body of the Rajkoomer of Bhowal miraculously escaped, being aided by the occult power of a Hindu hermit, as has been decisively proved after a trial of years in the law court. The road then passes successively by the Jail, Haridas Hatta *busti*, Happy Valley Tea Estate, and lastly the Hospital for Infectious Diseases, below Singamari. From this place the road ascends rapidly and soon joins the Singtam Road, a little below the Lebong Cart Road, which it crosses and again ascends steeply till it terminates on the West Birch Hill Road a little above the Lebong Cart Road. Most people of Darjeeling are quite in the dark about the trend and track followed by this road commencing from the Rose Bank and terminating on the West Birch Hill Road above Singamari, after covering a distance of nearly three miles.

The above notes will enable the readers to form a fairly clear idea of the lay-out of the principal routes of the

town of Darjeeling. Other roads of the town are much shorter and are either directly or indirectly in communication with the following main roads: namely,—Victoria Road, Cart Road (also Lebong Cart Road), Auckland Road, Jalapahar Road, Old Calcutta Road, Rangit Road, and Birch Hill Road.

Buildings and Places of Note

THE OBSERVATORY HILL—The elevation is 7,163' i.e. 351' above the level of the Darjeeling Railway Station. The Observatory Hill, generally called Mahakal by the common run of men, is encircled at its base by the Mall Road. Although the summit of the hill is easy of access via this road, through four different routes, two of these are worth mentioning. Proceed along the Mall Road East, leaving the lovely Brabourne Park to the west, till the sign-plate 'Pekoe Tip' is left a few yards behind. Here, a track to your left, rising rather steeply, will lead you to the summit of the hill, via Windamere Hotel, Ltd. If this steep path be not preferred, proceed along the same road further on, till the second shelter is reached. At this point, a gravelled road to your left ascends in an easy gradient, amidst lovely scenery, till it branches into two paths near a solitary shelter, wherefrom the summit is reached by following either of the two courses. From this shelter, if attention is directed, the mellow music of the distant river, the Great Rangit, as it rushes along its rocky bed, catches the ear of the traveller, although it is not exposed to view. Very few of the people who walk the face of the earth will lend their ears to the music of the spheres and listen to it with rapt attention in the inmost recesses of the heart, while fewer still will essay at catching a glimpse of the Great Musician playing upon His Orphic lyre—too far and too near at the same time.

This hill, miniature though it be, is the nucleus of the district. It was here for the first time that a few souls breathed the breath of life, when far and near it was all

wilderness, exuberantly teeming with flora and fauna. The past history of the hill, wherefrom by a process of gradual expansion and improvement at a fabulous expenditure, causing the death of many a poor labourer, this Queen of Hill Stations came into being, is replete with absorbing interest.

Long long ago, there stood a Buddhist monastery on the summit of this hill. It was built by the Sikkimese as far back as 1765. It is said to have been looted by the Gurkhas in 1815, but it is not corroborated by facts, so far gathered by the writer. Besides, the Gurkhas were at war with the Britishers during the period 1813-15, and it is most unlikely that they would, at this critical juncture, turn their attention to this small hill of Sikkim. In 1878-79, at the suggestion of the Government, it was removed to the Bhutia *busti* (village), where, however, a site was granted to them. With the shifting of the monastery, the divine service at the St. Andrew's Church, constructed in 1844 on a flat just below the summit of the hill on its western slope, could be peacefully conducted, without being hampered by the shrill and uncanny sound of the trumpets and thigh-bones combined with that of drums and tambourines.

The crowning attraction of the hill was from time immemorial the stone cave of Mahakal (the god Siva, one of the Hindu Trinities, representing the principle of destruction). The transcendental Stone (worshipped as *Mahakal* or *Durjaylinga*, the former meaning the Great Destroyer and the latter the Unconquerable) being a mundane manifestation of the god Siva, was in the beginning inside the cave, but was removed for the convenience of His devotees to the top of the hill, where the same is still *in possee* on a mound. Orisons had been offered by the Hindu priests ever since 1815, if not earlier, that is to say, at least two decades prior to the year 1835, when the district was gifted by the Maharaja of Sikkim to the East India Company. Hence, Dorje Lama, about whom so

much ink has been spilt, can hardly be exclusively given the credit for the origin of all that is antiquarian about this hill-station, during a period when the advent of the Britishers was ahead. Philologically the word, Darjeeling, bears a strong resemblance to the Sanskrit word, *Durjay-linga*, and over and above that, the word, *Mahakal* (the history of whose shrine at the top of the hill can at least be traced back to the year 1815) is a Sanskrit one, the corresponding name in Tibetan being *Lhachan Wangchhook Chhempo*.

Now let us deal with all the items of interest relating to this hill, recapitulating those already dilated upon.

1. *Mahakal*: A Stony Representation of the god Siva situated on a mound, at the summit of the hill, and worshipped by the Hindus as well as by the Buddhists, as a matter of fact, paid homage to, by many nationalities. The mound is surrounded by an array of very long and motley Tibetan banners, on which have been printed from indigenous wooden blocks sacred texts, such as '*Om Mani Padme Hung*',* meaning Hail Thee O! Jewel (Lord) in the Lotus. As these banners are wafted by the wind, it is believed that the orisons embodied in them are propagated to the realms of gods. The fluttering of the flags producing a soundless sound simply brings out into prominence the perfect stillness that reigns supreme over the holy site.

2. *A Chorten* (tombstone): On the summit of the hill, stands a white tomb containing the relics of Dorje Lama. Another chorten, a dilapidated one, situated just above the biggest shelter and close to the upper cave, bears the relics of the son of Dorje Lama.

3. *A cemented flat*: It is just near the *chorten* of Dorje Lama. In the year 1898-99, this flat was constructed, and on it a cannon was fixed. It was fired for a day or two in order to communicate the exact time at noon to

* The inner significance of this pithy *mantra* (a sacred text used as an incantation) according to the writer is: O! Lord, I worship Thee, who resides in the deep recesses of my heart (Lotus) in the shape of a tiny spark of Yours (Jewel).

the residents of the town. The cannon, it is said, was removed to the Jalapahar Cantonment, at the fervent and modest request of the native people, who pointed out to the authorities concerned that it would be in keeping with the holiness of the atmosphere, if the tranquil scene be left undisturbed.

4. *Goddess Kali*: A small image of Hers has been preserved in a ramshackle shrine. This image belongs to the Tibetans and is called *Paldenlamoo*. It is close to the cemented platform, meant for conducting trigonometrical survey.

5. *Maps of the ranges*: In a small shelter on the top of the hill, is kept a complete sketch of the whole range with the names of the peaks and their respective altitudes and positions. It is worth seeing.

6. *The Cave of Mahakal*: This cave, situated just below the biggest shelter, is the crowning attraction of the hill. It is formed of a few gigantic Sikkim gneiss rocks projecting forward. It leads one to a subterranean region, if one would simply take the trouble of crawling down the narrow passage. Inside the cave, there is just sufficient space to allow two persons to take their seats without knocking their heads on the roof of this piece of nature's architecture, which although is an overhanging one, never moved an inch in the last terrible earthquake of the 15th January, 1934, which played havoc with the strongest architectures, not even sparing the Government House, which was levelled to the ground, as if it were a pack of cards. A devotee who had been there for nearly a year, gave me to understand that he gained entrance with a good deal of hardship into another subterranean region through a cleavage at the remote extremity of the cave. The tradition which states that this cave leads to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, is nothing but 'a tale told by an idiot'.

7. *The smaller cave*: Situated just above the bigger one. In it there is a stony representation of the god Siva together with a trident fixed near by.

8. *Hanuman* (a Reincarnation of Siva): There is a small ferro-concrete structure (made by the Government in harmony with the principles of the Magna Charta) containing this deity, a few feet below the summit on its southern slope. This image was brought into being by a devotee, who some 12 years ago, built a fairly big shrine with a long ferro-concrete revetment wall, the remnant of which is still discernible. Having no *locus standi* in building a structure on this site, he was asked to vacate it.

THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE: Originally there was a house, called 'Solitaire' on the site of which the House now stands. Mr. Fred. Brine who started the scheme of the Hope Town in 1856, once possessed this plot of land. Prior to 31st October, 1877, when it finally passed into the hands of the Government, it was the property of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Many additions and alterations had to be made before it could be made suitable for the residence of the Lieut. Governor of Bengal. It was then named 'The Shrubbery'. In the great earthquake of 1934, the building having collapsed, one of superior architectural design was erected in its place with a big dome of a pure blue colour like that of sapphire. It is a very astonishing phenomenon that on a clear morning a pencil of glittering rays of the sun shoot ahead and cast a dazzling lustre on the dome, when the surrounding landscape is all in darkness. This palatial building commands an extensive view of both the town and the snowy range.

THE LLOYD BOTANIC GARDEN: In 1876, when Sir Ashley Eden was the Lieut-Governor of Bengal, a botanic garden was laid out at Rangaroon (5,700') at a distance of six miles from and to the east of Darjeeling. Owing to the locality being subject to frequent hail-storms, having a devastating effect on all vegetation, the site had to be eventually abandoned and the present site selected, which is just below the Eden Sanitarium. In 1878, a major portion of the present site came to the Government by a free gift from Mr. W. Lloyd, the proprietor of the bank

of that name. The garden covers an area of 14 acres of land and contains specimens of the most remarkable flora of the Himalayas. The upper portion of the garden contains indigenous plants and trees, while the lower region the exotic ones.

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM: Originally, the museum was located in a little cottage in the Lloyd Botanic Garden. There, the arrangement and preservation of the specimens of fauna were very defective and the museum was not worth the name. The present ferro-concrete building came into being in 1915, when the scheme for its construction was taken up by His Excellency Lord Carmichael, who was an energetic collector of specimens of both flora and fauna. There are collections of birds, butterflies, reptiles, and animal from different altitudes of the Himalayas. The collection is splendid and admirable. No entrance fee is charged.

VICTORIA BRIDGE AND WATERFALL: The shortest route to this waterfall from the Railway Station is down a flight of stairs to be met at a short distance from the remote end of the railway station. Here a number of sign-posts may be noticed huddled together, the most prominent one being that on which is inscribed "The "Ramkrishna Vedanta Ashram." On your way down, you will have to pass through the premises of the said Ashram (hermitage), on crossing which, you will find a main road, along which you proceed down till on a very near approach to the bridge, the waterfall will suddenly burst upon the view, so long obstructed by the zigzag course. The waterfall, particularly during the rains, is a headlong descent of the crashing element in fearful commotion, partly resolving itself into a storm of spray and setting up a deafening roar as it tumbles down through the air from a giddy height of 80 feet. The lofty and beautiful ferro-concrete bridge, that spans over the stream (called *khola* in Nepali) produced by the waterfall, is called the Victoria Bridge. It needs scarcely be said that this structure as well as the

spectacle are both worth seeing. But, "Whence, How, and Whither!" is the question. Ponder within yourself—What power is the feeder of this perpetual torrent! From what never-ending and never-wearied sources, the body of water is being supplied! Towards what abyss it is being propelled! What receptacle can contain the mighty influx!

BIRCH HILL PARK: This is an exquisitely lovely spot laid in the lap of nature. The hill is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Chowrasta and may be reached by following the West Birch Hill Road. The land on which the park stands was acquired by the Government in 1877 at a cost of Rs. 30,000. The elevation is 6,874 feet above sea level. There is a large pavillion in a central spot on the summit of the hill, surrounded by seats, swings and seesaws. There is also a cook-shed just near the pavillion. It is a splendid spot for picnics. A peculiarity of this summit is that paths run in all directions, opening out on green and velvety flats and leading to cosy nooks. Often monkeys are visible. In the spring-time, the cuckoo may be heard carolling many a plaintive note. Besides, many beautiful birds may be seen on wanton wings and sporting with devious flight, and a thousand flowers will be found nodding gaily to each other.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH: Built in 1843-44. Situated on the western slope of the Observatory Hill. It is a beautiful edifice on a beautiful site, the crowning attraction being its clock-tower. The tower with its gigantic clock chiming hours was built in 1883. Amidst many memorial tablets on the walls of the interior of the church is one which perpetuates the name of Lt-General George Alymer Lloyd, C.B., the discoverer of Darjeeling, who died at this hill-station on the 4th June, 1885, at the ripe age of seventy-six. His remains were interred in the European Cemetery, a mile from the Chowrasta. It may be noted here that the Lloyd Road and Lloyd Botanic Garden

Road commemorate the name of Mr. W. Lloyd, the proprietor of a bank of that name.

JUMMA MASJID: Situated at Daroga Bazaar, below the Central Hotel. At Laldighi (red tank), the original building of the mosque was erected in the year 1786, as claimed by the Mohammedans, in view of the fact that at about that time, China was invaded by them. Tradition states that a priest of theirs pitched his camp at the site, on his journey to India through Tibet and Sikkim. Be that as it may, the present mosque was erected by Naser Ali Khan and others sometimes between the years 1851 and 1862.

HINDU MANDIR: Close to the Bazaar Post Office and on the spot on which the present Mandir (temple) exists, a sacred edifice came into being in the year 1833 as tradition has it. The present temple was erected by Mr. Ranjit Singh, an ex-army Subedar, then serving under the local police and was endowed with a gift of a sum of Rs. 3,400. This is principally the temple of the Lord Krishna.

BRAHMA MANDIR: This temple is affiliated to the Sadharan Brahma Samaj of Calcutta. It came into existence through the lively interest and strenuous effort on the part of Mr. Troylokhyanath Chakravarty (the then Head Master of the Government Bhutia Boarding School) and Mr. Motilal Halder. It was consecrated on the 15th April, 1880.

EDEN SANITARIUM: Is a well-equipped and up-to-date Sanitarium for European adults as well as children. It is in charge of the Civil Surgeon of the station. The late Sir Ashley Eden, in the course of his habitual morning walk, observed that an European on the platform of the Darjeeling Railway Station was on the point of death for want of accommodation anywhere at Darjeeling. An A.D.C. was deputed to render him all possible assistance, but was too late, as he had already left for Siliguri, where

he breathed his last. This sad news came upon Sir Ashley Eden with a shock and made him launch a scheme, which materialised into this Eden Sanitarium, a valued and lasting monument to his memory.

LOWIS JUBILEE SANITARIUM: This institution is for the Indian patients. There were two very big donations behind the bringing into being of this very popular institution. One is a sum of Rs. 90,000/- donated by Maharaja Gobindo Lal Roy in 1886 and placed at the disposal of Mr. Edmund Elliott Lewis, the then Commissioner of the Jalpaiguri Division, to be expended on any work of public utility, while the other is a free gift of land comprising $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres by the late Maharaja of Cooch Behar. The Government grant-in-aid for this purpose amounted to Rs. 16,000/-. The sanitarium was completed in 1887.

THE HINDU PUBLIC HALL: The full name of this institution of the Hindu community of Darjeeling is Nripendra Narayan Hindu Public Hall, often abbreviated as N. N. H. P. Hall. The appellation is after the name of its first donor, Sir Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, the late Maharaja of Cooch Behar. It was Mr. M. N. Banerjee, then Government pleader, who took the initiative in bringing this institution into being. With the sum of Rs. 1,000/- donated by the Maharaja, a small building was erected, but was subsequently burnt down in 1906. From fresh funds, raised mainly through the efforts of Mr. Banerjee, the present structure was completed in 1908. It has a library and a reading room attached to it. This institution admirably provides amusements for the Hindu community of Darjeeling and also the Hindus who flock to this hill station during the seasons. The Bengali Association of Darjeeling formed in 1940 has been utilizing the Hall for many a popular function ever since its inception.

THE GURKHA DUHKHA NIVARAK SAMMILAN: This is an association of the Gurkhas of Darjeeling, aiming at amelioration of the conditions of the poor and the destitute of

their community. Unostentatious though the institution may seem, it is a very right move in a right direction.

THE ANJUMAN ISLAMIA: Situated below the junction of Mount Pleasant Road and Robertson Road. It was established in December, 1909. The Jumma and the Chhota Musjids are in its charge. It has also established primary schools for boys and girls. Its Musafir Khana gives accommodation to travellers free of charge for a period of three days, without any distinction of caste or creed.

THE BUDDHIST MONASTERY: A quarter of a mile below the Chowrasta. Proceed down the Rangit Road till you reach the monastery *via* a white Chorten, to be seen just by the road-side. A few hints about its history have already been given under 'The Observatory Hill'. In the *gompa* (monastery) there is a beautiful image of the Lord Buddha. An image of a Buddhist god called Chengraji with 11 heads and some 1,000 hands will be seen in the hall.

YOUNG MEN'S BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION: Near the above Monastery. It aims at propagation of Buddhist culture and dissemination of education amongst the young community of both Buddhists and Hindus. At present 13 primary schools are being run by this Association.

THE TOWN HALL: The foundation stone of the building, situated near the junction of the Mackenzie and the Auckland Roads, was laid by His Excellency Lord Ronaldshay, on the 27th October, 1917. It was completed in 1921, and cost nearly two and a half lakhs of rupees, of which sum about 50% was contributed by His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

MOHUNLAL & SHEWLAL HINDU DHARMA-SALA: Judge Bazaar, Cart Road. Just four or five minutes' walk from the railway station. The ordinary run of Hindu visitors (of course including many highly aristocratic people) are found to walk straightway to this free rest-house as soon as they get down from the train or motor-bus. This Dharmasala is neat and clean and accommodates the major portion

of such travellers, who when the Darjeeling season is in full swing, are noticed to be driven from pillar to post in search of accommodation of some sort. At the injunction of a holy man who appeared as suddenly as he disappeared before a dying man foreboding evil unless a rest-house would be constructed that this building was erected and the impending catastrophe averted.

THE HIMACHAL HINDI BHAWAN: Established on 11th June, 1931. The object of this institution is to popularize Hindi language, the *lingua franca* of India and to further the cause of the Hindi literature. With these objects in view, it has opened a Public library, a Free Hindi Prachar Vidyalaya, an M. E. School for boys and girls, a Night School for day labourers, etc. It is an ambitious project.

THE DARJEELING ROPEWAY: The office is near the Railway Goods-shed. It was in 1929, that the idea for the opening of a ropeway in Darjeeling with the view of giving a mighty impetus to transport facilities, both in respect of time and cost involved, first flashed upon Mr. N. C. Goenka of Messrs. Goenka & Co. He took the initiative and floated a company, and the ropeway is now an accomplished fact. It was formally opened on the 7th January, 1939. The speed of the carriers is $4\frac{1}{4}$ miles per hour, the complete journey from Bijanbari to Darjeeling (just a little less than five miles) being accomplished in an hour and a few minutes. The biggest span covered by the rope is about $\frac{7}{8}$ th mile. This is a record for India, and would have been a world record, had not Brazil stepped in with the figure of fully one mile some five years ago.

THE GANDHAMADAN BIHAR (Buddhist Temple): At Chhota Kagjhora. There is a rest-house attached to it. The scheme was launched in 1921, but materialised in 1928. The tract of land on which the temple and the rest-house have been erected, came by a free gift from the late Maharajadhiraj of Burdwan. On knowing about this free gift of land in this Queen of Hill Stations, a Mahasthabir (a Great Buddhist Priest) of Akyab (Burma) sent a Buddha

murti (an image of the Lord Buddha) made of an alloy consisting of eight kinds of metal including gold at a cost of Rs. 700/- or so, as a token of his reverence to the Lord, to be preserved in the temple.

The Dhir Dham (1939): Very close to the Railway station. A temple of the god Siva. It looks like a pagoda and is the most lovely architecture of its kind in Darjeeling. All the sculptural works were admirably done by a Nepali sculptor.

MISCELLANEOUS: Besides the above, the following are well worth noting, if not visiting.

The Old Cemetery (1865), a mile from the Chowrasta, near Birch Hill.

✓The Jail (1865), below the Victoria Road, and below Chandmari.

The Union Chapel (1869), on Auckland Road.

Victoria Hospital (1903), just above the market.

✓The Parsee Cemetery (1907), at Singamari.

The Chinese Club (1913), below the Eden Sanitarium.

✓St. Columbia's Church (Scots) (1894), just above the railway station.

The Church of the Immaculate Conception (1893), attached to the Loreto Convent.

The Gaudiya Math (1935), Krishna Villa. This religious institution preaches the doctrines as laid down in the Sreemat Bhagabat, which contains the true exposition of the Vedas and the Upanishads, forming the fountain-head of the Vedic (Hindu) religion.

The Ramkrishna Vedanta Ashram (1923), founded by the late Swami Avedananda, the spiritual brother of the Swami Vivekananda, who once took the whole of America by storm and preached the Religion of the Vedas in a clarion, nay, in a thunder voice.

✓The Nepali Tashi Dargayling Monastery (1926): Built under the auspices of the Tamang Buddhist Association Darjeeling. Below the Waddel Road. This beautiful monastery is worth seeing.

Schools and Colleges

Education in this district owes its inception and impetus to the untiring efforts of the Christian Missionaries, who took up the cause of education as far back as 1841, when the district was a mass of illiteracy. As early as 1841, that is, six years after the passing of Darjeeling to the hands of the Britishers, the Rev. William Start, an independent missionary, started work among the Lepcha community at Takvar on the Moravian System of self-support. He was the first pioneer in the field and opened for the first time a school for the Lepchas, personally financing the scheme. In 1842, Messrs. Treutler, Stoelke, Wernicke, Brundine and the Rev. C. G. Neible appeared on the scene. The Rev. Mr. Macfarlane of the Scottish Mission started regular work in Darjeeling in 1870. He wrote text-books in Hindi, the *lingua franca* of India and imparted training to some selected students in order to qualify them as teachers. In 1846, Mother M. Teresa Mons, assisted by Sister Gabriel, established the Loreto Convent. Some of the missionaries were so enthusiastic that they compiled a Nepalese and a Lepcha Dictionary. It would be of much interest to note that Alex. Cosma de Koörösi, a native of Hungary, a philologist, who died at Darjeeling on 11th April, 1842, at the age of 44 (his tomb is to be found in the Old Cemetery) on his way to Lhasa, to resume his philological researches, compiled a Dictionary and Grammar of the Tibetan language. To his lot, however, fell very patient bearing of privation for years. The late Sarat Chandra Das, a famous Bengali tourist, who earned for himself the designation—'the hardy son of soft Bengal' had not only been to Lhasa in disguise (1878-82) but thoroughly mastered the Tibetan language and left behind him a voluminous and a monumental Dictionary of the language which is Greek even to the Nepalese of the district.

This 'childrens' paradise' has been very fitly chosen for the organisation of several European schools, in which



THE MOUNT HERMON SCHOOL,
Darjeeling.



By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

THE LACHUNG RIVER

pupils have flocked from different parts of India. The following is a chronological list of the very prominent schools of Darjeeling and Kurseong.

- 1847 The Loreto Convent, Darjeeling.
- 1863 St. Paul's School, Darjeeling, *by Jalapahar*
- 1879 Victoria Boys' School, Kurseong.
- ✓1888 St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling. *at Singaman,*
- 1890 St. Helen's Convent, Kurseong.
- 1891 The Government High School (for Indian students).
- ✓1895 Queen's Hill Girls' School (later on named Mount Hermon School), Darjeeling.
- 1898 Dow Hill Girls' School, Kurseong.
- ✓1904 Dioscesan Girls' School (later on named St. Michael's Girls' School), Darjeeling. *on Lebong*
- ✓1908 Maharani Girls' School (for Bengali Girls), Darjeeling. *on Cart Rd*
- 1926 St. Teresa's School (for Indian Girls), Darjeeling.
- ✓1934 St. Robert H. E. School (for Indian boys), Darjeeling.
- 1941 The New School, Darjeeling.

N.B. Where nothing is mentioned, it is to be understood that the school is for European students.

St. Paul's School in Darjeeling occupies in all probability the highest altitude in the world. It is located on the top of the Jalapahar Hill at an elevation of 7,400 to 7,600 feet above sea level. This institution owes its inception to Bishop Cotton, one of the great pioneers of European education in India.

Hotels and Boarding Houses

The following is a list of the principal hotels and boarding houses at Darjeeling.

European Establishments—

- Hotel Mount Everest, Auckland Road. The largest and the most beautifully designed hotel in Darjeeling.
- Bellevue Hotel, Commercial Row.
- Central Hotel, Robertson Road. Both for Europeans and Indians.
- Carlton Chinese Restaurant, near Children's Park.
- Alice Villa and Carlton Hotel, below the above Restaurant.
- Windamere Hotel, Ltd., near Chowrasta, on the Observatory Hill.
- Pliva's Confectionary and Restaurant, Commercial Row.
- Swiss Confectionary, Commercial Row.
- Swiss Hotel, below the Mount Everest Hotel.
- Ruby Hall, Mackenzie Road, near Imperial Bank.
- Pekoe Tip, East Mall Road.
- Pines Hotel, Ghoom, near the Ghoom Ry. Station.
- Minto Villa, Auckland Road.
- Kopje Villa, Auckland Road.
- Ashfield, Auckland Road.
- The Eden Sanitarium, near the market.

Indian Establishments—

- The Snow View Hotel, Cart Road, a few minutes walk from the Railway Station, towards south.
- The Snow View Hotel, Mackenzie Road. A branch of the above for higher class boarders.
- The Hindu Boarding, Mackenzie Road.
- The Central Boarding, Waddel Road.
- The Lowis Jubilee Sanitarium, below the Ry. station.

Chinese Establishments—

- The Allies Restaurant, Off Mackenzie Road.
- The A.B.C.D. Restaurant, Off Mackenzie Road.
- Chuncking Kungkee Restaurant, Off Mackenzie Road.

N.B. These Chinese Restaurants are run in European style.

Amusements

There is a great scope for amusements in Darjeeling. Those who are interested in tennis, badminton, golf and polo should apply to the Secretary, Gymkhana Club, Darjeeling. Tennis is played all the year round. Golf is played at Senchal. Polo may be arranged for at Lebong Race Course. One may see races at Lebong, after the advent of the Administration in the summer season of Darjeeling. For pictures, go to the 'Capitol' at the Town Hall, or the Rink Cinema at the Rink. For dances, one has to enquire of the Gymkhana Club, the Pliva's Restaurant, the Mount Everest Hotel, etc. Fishing and excursions go together. The following places are comparatively easy of access. Poolbazar, Manjitar Bridge (the Great Rangit river), the Balasun river (below Kurseong), and the Tista Bridge. The best months for indulging in this hobby are from March to May, and from October to December. During the rainy seasons, the Rangit, the Ramman, and the Tista are not fishable.

In the mid-winter, amidst very trying Himalayan rigor, is celebrated the Bara-din (the Great Festive day) of the Tibetans and the Bhutias. The site of the Buddhist Monastery at Bhutia busti, which is the urban centre of their spiritual activities, is turned into a veritable scene of what is called the devil dances, in which the Lamas wear grotesque masks in imitation of the various kinds of wild animals of the Himalayan region. Sword-swinging forms a part of their festivity. Alcoholic beverages are partaken of by the dancers to keep up strength, which is abnormally drained as a result of such violent feats, to which is ascribed some occult significance.

CHAPTER V

THE DISTRICT OF DARJEELING

Area, Location, etc.

The district of Darjeeling comprises the four subdivisions—Sadar, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri. The first three are on the mountainous regions, whereas the last one Siliguri, meaning the stony plain, is in the deadly Terai region of Bengal, the mere mention of which is intimidating even to those possessed of Herculean physique and otherwise brave to the back-bone. It lies between $26^{\circ}-53'$ and $27^{\circ}-13'$ north latitude and between $87^{\circ}-59'$ and $80^{\circ}-53'$ east longitude. Its area is 1,164 square miles, of which an area of 445 square miles is under reserved forest.

It may be of interest here to note that the province of Bengal, of which Darjeeling is one of the twenty-eight districts covers 82,277 square miles.

The district is both sharply and beautifully demarcated on three of its sides by natural boundaries, consisting of rivers and ridges of mountain ranges. From the town of Darjeeling, if you look to the west, you find a long range (Singalela) of mountain proceeding towards Kinchenjunga in a northerly direction. A few peaks are noticed on this range, the first prominent peak being Tonglu (on which is visible a daktungalow on a clear day) and the last but not too remote and which appears to be lying within the district being the peak of Singalela. The peak just by its side and to the left of the spectator, as he faces the Singalela range, and looking almost as high as that is the well-known Phalut, which is the extreme north-west point of the British boundary over the Singalela range. On the other side of the ridge of the Singalela range, up to Phalut, is Nepal. The side of this range open to the view from Darjeeling

is in the British territory while beyond Phalut is the State of Sikkim, in which if you proceed further you will reach the base of Kinchenjunga. The road along this ridge demarcates the boundary of the British territory, so that as you step on to the other side of the road, you inhale the breeze of the free land of Nepal. Beyond Sukiapokhri ($7\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Ghoom) if you proceed along the road leading to Mirik, where the laying out of a seat for the summer resort of the Bihar and Orissa Governments was once contemplated, you will find the Nepal frontier lying on the right side of the road. The close proximity of the two territories here has been taken advantage of by criminals and judgment-debtors, who intending to avoid payment of decretal amounts play their cards well by shifting to the favourable side of the road. So far as the plains or the Terai portion of the district is concerned, it is bounded on the west by the Mechi river which is discernible to the remote west from the railway line from Mahanadi to Sonada. Although there are a number of streams, two of them looming in the hazy distance catch the eye of the traveller, on his way from Mahanady Railway Station to Sonada. These are the Balasun and the Mechi. On the east, the Jaldhaka river intervenes between Darjeeling and Bhutan. On the north the Ramman, the Little and the Great Rangit, the Tista and the Rongli rivers separate the district from Sikkim, while to the south it is bounded by the districts of Jalpaiguri and Purnea.

Tea

The history of the tea-shrub which now affords our daily refreshments would be not a whit less inviting to our readers than a cup of this savoury beverage to its votaries in the wintry days. The first sight of roses to the Norwegians, it is said, was intimidating, they having thought that the plants were budding with fire. To the natives of Virginia, a little quantity of gun-powder seemed to be potent enough to yield plentiful crop of explosion

quite sufficient to blow away the whole British colony. Similar was the fate of tea or *theh* when it was first introduced into England in the middle of the 17th century. Few people then dared to sip this 'black water' with an acrid taste. Its use spread consternation and alarm in European countries and it was reckoned as an accursed commodity.

Then again ludicrous mistakes were committed in preparing it in the early days of its introduction into the continent. A case is on record in which a pound of green tea was deliberately boiled as spinach, and served with other vegetables on the table.

In Germany, Hahnemann, the father of Homœopathy "considered tea dealers as immoral members of society, laying in wait for men's purses and lives." Many a virulent brochure was published in Europe against the use of the Chinese leaf. Although "only by the slow and resistless efforts of time and its own virtues" the tea-shrub has come off with flying colours at last, enlisting its votaries from China to Peru, a happy English phrase which, strange to say, alludes to the nativity of this exotic novelty, neither its aroma nor its exhilarating principle, not even its universal adaptability can justify its immoderate use or atone for the reaction thereof which is the inevitable result of stimulation. Excessive tea drinking produces neuralgia, insomnia and kidney troubles. Tea-tasters who do not drink the tea they taste, but only hold it in the mouth in order to arrive at the comparative value of different varieties of tea, sometimes develop what is known as tea-tasters' paralysis.

The tea-shrub is indigenous to China, Japan and Assam. It was the research of the Tea Committee appointed by Lord William Bentinck in the year 1834 that led to the discovery that tea is indigenous to Assam, where it was found growing in a wild state. In the ancient writings of a European author, tea was designated *Chia*, being exactly the word by which tea is called in Darjeeling. The word, *Cha*, is of Japanese origin, where it is called by that

name. The name was subsequently borrowed by the Portuguese and then, so to say, bequeathed to the Indians.

The Dutch in their second voyage to China bartered a huge stock of dried sage with the Chinese for tea, receiving three or four pounds of tea for one of a sage, which was considered by the Chinese more precious than their tea; but unfortunately for the Dutch, sage could not be supplied in sufficient quantities to meet the growing demand of the Chinese.

It appears that tea first came into England from Holland in 1666. In 1639, a Russian Ambassador who adorned the court of the Mogul Emperor, Shajahan of indelible Tajmahal repute, declined to accept a large present of tea for the Czar, as it was deemed to be simply an encumbrance without any utility whatsoever.

In the books of the East India Company, the word tea was found recorded for the first time in 1615. In 1664 a present of a little over two pounds of tea was made by the East India Company to Charles I. But the first mention of tea in England is found in an Act of the Parliament passed in 1660, by which a duty of one shilling and six pence per gallon when drunk in public houses was imposed.

The history of tea in Darjeeling, however, began from 1841 when seeds and plants of tea were for the first time imported into the district from China. Together with the same was requisitioned a batch of Chinamen with the view of initiating the pioneers in the tea industry in its culture and manufacture. This industry in Darjeeling owes its inception to Dr. Campbell, the first Superintendent of the district, who planted tea seeds in his garden at Beechwood by way of experiment. It is claimed that Dr. Campbell and some other pioneers in tea industry sowed the seeds of India's prosperity. It is to a certain extent true no doubt, but the wealth acquired has gone to swell the purses of the Capitalists, while the poor operatives are simply eking out an existence by the sweat of their brow. It is, however, an admitted fact that the tea industry

has contributed immensely to the growth and prosperity of Darjeeling.

Without dilating any more upon the history of this shrub which, however, when left to itself without being pruned and cut, grows vigorously till it attains the height* of a tree, we would now very briefly deal with the planting and manufacture of tea.

Tea seeds are sown in a nursery about the beginning of the year and the tender shoots are reared for transplantation after eighteen months. In the rainy season the plants are transplanted in the terraces, ingeniously cut out of steep mountain sides, preferably facing east and west so as to give the plant the benefit of the fullest exposure possible to sun's rays. They are not allowed to grow higher than two or three feet, being subjected to a process of pruning and cutting. At the third year the shrub yields its precious leaves. At the fourth year the leaves are picked, the picking being carried on from April to October. The coolies who are expert in leaf picking fill their baskets, cleverly supported on their back by rope straps passing round their foreheads. Pruning is done from November to February. About a month or so after pruning, new shoots make their appearance and are picked again. From this time onward, the plants go on flushing† every fifteen or twenty days throughout the rainy season.

The plants begin to thrive most from the fourth to the twelfth year when they attain their full growth. After a number of years the shrubs lose their vitality and fail to yield tender leaves any more. The branches are then mercilessly lopped off almost to the extent of extermination, or in other words, are levelled to the ground. The reaction of this process is the putting forth of new stems and foliage with renewed vigor. The hardiness of the shrub is very great and the longevity of a bush associated with its power

* The China plant grows to a height of 15 feet, while the Assam surpasses it and attains a height of 25 to 30 feet.

† Flushing means the putting forth of buds and young leaf-clusters.

to put forth tender shoots cannot be ascertained, but there are many healthy bushes on the Himalayas which are more than three decades old.

Now leaving aside cultivation which evidently requires careful and frequent weeding of the terraces, manuring, removal of diseased bushes, medication of unhealthy shrubs, etc., let us turn our attention to the manufacture of tea, before it finds its way into consumers' house, to be shortly served on the table, after due preparation, with the accompaniment of the inviting music of the spoons.

The green leaves thus picked are subjected to the process of withering, rolling, fermentation, drying, sifting and finally packing. Each coolie carries his own basket of green leaves to the factory where it is weighed and paid for accordingly once every week. The first process of withering is effected by spreading out the leaves thinly on racks made of wire netting with the view of allowing the leaves to wither. This process generally takes about 20 hours, after which period the leaves cease to produce a cracking sound when held near the ear. The objects of this process are to impart to the leaves a certain degree of flaccidity which prepares it for the second process of rolling or twisting, now accomplished by machinery and to cause to develop and increase the *enzyme*, its most active principle. When sufficiently withered, the leaves are subjected to the process of rolling under which they are bruised resulting in the bringing out of the juice to the surface, with the liberation of which fermentation sets in and the leaves assume a coppery tint, which, it may be mentioned, is noticed in the leaves to a marked degree when infused in the tea-pot. This process necessitates maintenance of temperature at 80°F. and is complete in about five hours. It requires very trained eyes to ascertain the delicate point in the stage, at which has been attained the degree of fermentation, requisite for quality production. The next process of drying is effected by the machinery, through which hot air

passes at a temperature of 240°F. Thus dried, tea assumes a black colour and manufacture is practically complete.

What now remains to be done is sifting through inclined trays with bottom of wire netting of different meshes. In this sieving process, the trays are made to oscillate at a high speed by the factory engine and different grades of tea are arrested in the trays as it passes through different sieves. The following grades of tea noted in order of merit are obtained by sifting:— (1) Flowery Orange Pekoe. (2) Orange Pekoe. (3) Pekoe. (4) Pekoe Souchong. The small flaky particles of these grades are again separated by a winnowing process and the following grades are obtained:— (i) Broken Orange Pekoe. (ii) Broken Pekoe. (iii) Pekoe Fannings. (iv) Dust. Finally the tea is again dried to a certain extent and then packed in chests which are generally lead-lined.

A tea-garden on the hill is worth visiting. Many of the planters, whose sociability and amiability are proverbial, would be glad to show tourists round, by appointment. The writer had the opportunity of verifying in one instance the sociability thus ascribed to these European gentlemen, when he was given a lift on his way down to Takvar.

Rivers

To form a clear conception of the trend of mountain streams as they flow along their tortuous rocky beds through valleys between mighty walls of nature standing abruptly one behind the other, is not an easy task. If one would simply make an excursion to Bijanbari *via* Poolbazaar, to the north west of Darjeeling, he would be at his wit's end to find so many streams flowing down from different directions. The principal rivers or rather streams of the district, none being navigable and most of them being fordable during the dry season are the Tista, the Great Rangit, and the Mahanady, the first of these having numerous affluents.

The Tista, which is the most magnificent in the district, has its source in the lake Cholamu, situated at an elevation of 17,500', which exceeds twice the height of the well-known Tiger Hill of Darjeeling by 500'. This lake* lies to the south of the Donkia Pass near Shetschen, wherefrom the summit of the pass is about 5 miles' ascent. The lake is 74 miles to the north-east of Darjeeling as the crow flies. On its way, contributions are made to it by streams which rise in Thangur, Yeumthang and Donkya La ranges far far away from and due north of Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. Then, as it approaches the Tista Suspension Bridge, which joins Kalimpong with Darjeeling, it receives a mighty torrent of water from a stream called the Great Rangit. From this confluence of the two rivers, the aforesaid bridge is nearly four miles. The Tista river debouches through the gorge at the Tista bridge, at an almost imperceptible gradient, taking a southerly course and finally emerging into the plain through Sivoke, where it has been spanned by the famous Coronation Bridge.

It would be of much interest to many a reader to mention here that this river passes through the Jalpaiguri and the Rungpore districts and falls into the great Brahmaputra at Fulcherry or the Tista Mukhi (mouth) Ghat. The combined waters then flow on to Goalundo, where the Padma emerging into it, forms the unbounded expanse of waters known as the Meghna (skyblue) river, over 60 miles in width, so that as the steamer plies on through the mid-stream, the tall palm trees on the banks look like so many tiny plants or even dots.

In the hilly region, the bed of the Tista is rocky and its banks precipitous, but as it merges into the plains, its bed becomes sandy and flat being slightly sloping. The Kalimpong railway line passes along its right bank. Although one bank of the stream is at a stone's throw from the other,

* About this lake Hooker says: "I doubt whether the world contains any scene with more sublime associations than this calm sheet of water, 17,000 feet above the sea, with the shadow of mountains 22,000 to 24,000 feet high, sleeping on its bosom."

the mighty torrent, it appears, would frustrate the attempt of a tusker to ford it over. A few miles from the Tista Bridge, the Rangli Rangliot flows into it through its right, while the Rilli of Kalimpong through the left bank.

Once during a rainy season, the crossing of the Rilli with the help of several stalwart hillmen by the method of mutual catching of hands fell to the lot of the writer. It was at once a very difficult and an exceedingly risky task. At another time, he had no other alternative but to cross it on horse-back, when the river was in flood in the month of July, 1929. The animal, with a good deal of both coaxing and stern persuasion, alternating one with the other, could at last be made to wade through the uncertain rocky beds of the waters, almost boiling with rage and rushing down with a terrific speed. While passing through the mid-stream, almost the whole body of the animal was emerged in the water and it was neighing and foaming like a charger in the battle-field. The rider had the sensation as if he had been cut off from the world outside and was almost in a trance, in which it appeared as if the terrific speed and the deafening sound of the rushing water solidified themselves. As he was nearing the other bank, the queer sensation was gradually wearing off. The inordinate action of the lungs of the animal, while struggling through the raging element, caused the belts of the saddle to snap off. The unnerved rider, however, managed to get over the situation by firmly grasping at the neck of his saviour.

How many human bodies have been swept away with the swiftness of an arrow, history deponeth not, principally because the lives of the poor in lowly cottages have nothing to do with the historians. We, however, find it recorded in art paper* how in 1914, the late Mr. Geo. P. Robertson, the then Municipal Engineer, while engaged in surveying the

* This refers to the brochure—"A short history of electricity in Darjeeling" printed on art paper and published by the Darjeeling Municipality on the 9th December, 1938.

Great Rangit river in a jolly-boat in connection with the installation of an electric power station, was drowned in the river.

The Great Rangit takes its rise from the glacier of Kubru, and proceeds southwards till it meets the Ramman river coming down from its source near Phalut in the Singalela range. The combined waters, after traversing just a quarter of a mile, take up a further tribute from the Little Rangit hailing from the base of the Tonglu spur in the Singalela range, and therefrom the Great Rangit flows on for a distance of about nine miles till it emerges into the Tista river. ✓ On its way it is spanned by the historically famous Manjitar Bridge below Badamtam, which connects Darjeeling with Sikkim.

The Mahanady river has its source near Mahaldiram hill to the east of Kurseong. As soon as it debouches through a gorge of the Himalayas, it runs through a subterranean stratum of sand for a distance of nearly four miles before heaving into sight again. In the rainy season, this queer phenomenon disappears, with the rushing in of a mighty torrent from the hills, which makes the river overflow its banks. It is this river, which has been spanned by an iron bridge to the north of the town of Siliguri. At a distance of four miles from the bridge, and in the downward course of the river, it receives its contribution from the Balasun river which flows past the valley below Kurseong. The fish of this stream (called *khola* in Nepali) are caught in number and brought to Kurseong, and then added to the number of the imported ones. The fish of the Balasun *Khola* has made a noise in the world of taste. The Mahanady river passes through Purnea and Malda and finally falls into the Ganges at Godagri. The bed of the river is stony and rocky as it flows through the hills, and sandy as it proceeds along the plains. In the dry months, the river is fordable, whereas in the rainy season, even navigation is out of the question. The Balasun takes its rise at Lepcha Jagat, a few miles to the south-west of

the station of Darjeeling and flows past Mirik, Pankhabari and Panighata in the Terai, where it is spanned by a suspension bridge, completed in 1901, after the collapse of several worthless bridges constructed since 1896, when it was a frail wooden structure, brought into being when mortality from crossing the river during the rainy season ran abnormally high.

The Mechi takes its rise in the Singalela range, on the Nepal frontier. It marks the western boundary of the district from its very source. It passes through the Purnea district. It is fordable throughout the year except the rainy season.

The Jaldhaka marks the western boundary of the district, separating it from the Bhutan State. It debouches into the Duars and flows to the east of the Chalsa Station in two small streams running close to and almost parallel to each other.

There are two small lakes in the district. One, called Ramtal, is a few miles to the east of the Tista. The other is about six miles south-west of the Hope Town, below Sonada.

CHAPTER VI

THE HILL PEOPLE

PERHAPS in no town all the world over would be seen such a varied combination of people extraordinarily different in physiognomy as in Darjeeling. Taking into consideration the limited area of the town, Darjeeling in all probability in the number of languages spoken has broken the world-record. Leaving aside the exotic tongues of the plains, as many as ten different languages are spoken by the hillmen, there being absolutely no similarity between them, and in almost all cases not a single syllable of any of these languages is intelligible to a hillman speaking a different dialect. Fortunately, the Nepali language known as *Khas kuras* (their own and genuine language) spoken by the Chhetries being the *lingua franca* of Nepal and Darjeeling is understood by almost all of them, except the Tibetans who hail from Tibet and have not been sufficiently domiciled here. The writer had once to appoint an interpreter while holding a discourse with the head *Lama* (a Tibetan priest) of the Ghoom monastery. The Lama who hails from Tibet is perfectly innocent of the Nepali language, although he had been here for a number of years. The following are the ten different and distinct languages that are spoken in this part of the hill. The languages of the Nepalese, the Lepchas, the Bhutias, the Tibetans, the Newars, the Mangars, the Sunwars, the Tamangs, the Limboos, and the Jimdars. Be that as it may, superficial observation would often reveal certain very striking characteristics in respect of the features of hill people belonging to different classes. There is, for instance, a class of people who have aquiline noses, big eyes and tall stature. Under this class fall the Brahmins (priests), the Chhetries (warriors), the Thakuries (with

a tinge of priestliness in them), the Newars, the Kámis (blacksmiths), the Sunwars (goldsmiths), the Sarkis (workers in leather), and the Damais (tailors). Then, there is a class of people who are of a Mongolian type, having flat nose, more or less oblique and small eyes and short stature favourable to hill-climbing as the shorter a man the less is exertion required in pumping up blood to the heart. This class comprises the Limboos, the Jimdars and the Yakhas. They are the hardiest of all hill people, very brave and war-like. Both the British and the Nepal Governments have recruited an overwhelming number of Limboos in their Gurkha regiments. Lastly, intermediate between these two classes, there is a class which comprises the Mangars (soldiers), the Gurungs (the shepherds), and the Tamangs (admixture of the Nepalese and the Bhutias). Now let us deal with a few distinct classes of hill people.

The Lepchas are the aboriginal inhabitants of Sikkim. They once possessed the whole territory of Sikkim and Darjeeling including the Daling subdivision (Kalimpong). They have a written language of their own. The Lepchas are a meek, submissive and peace-loving people, having no martial spirit in them. It is very strange that this race appears to be dying out. Amongst the hillmen of the Mongolian type, the Lepchas possess the best physiognomy and a peculiar grace, not met with in any of the hillmen. The Lepcha women are really beautiful. The sterner sex possesses an effeminate beauty. Their complexion is very fair with a tinge of yellow in it. They are born naturalists having names for various species of trees, plants, butterflies and insects. In the 17th century, they were converted from Animism to Buddhism, but the conversion is nominal, as there is only a slight touch of Buddhism in the religion. They are worshippers of spirits, such as those of the Snows, the Mountain Peaks, the Forests, the Rivers, etc. Their religion, it appears, originated in the appreciation of the majesty and sublime grandeur of the natural sceneries which surround them. There are two

clans of Lepchas, the Kamba and the Rongpa (the ravine-folk). The Maharaja of Sikkim belongs to the former clan.

The Tibetans hail from Tibet, the land of the hermits, or the closed land of mysteries. Their features clearly betray their Mongolian origin. They are middle-sized, muscular and to a certain degree hardy. Their complexion is generally fair. They are averse to ablutions. Their shaggy garments are rarely changed or washed. They profess Buddhism, but theirs is not a pure Buddhist religion, demon-worship playing an important role in the same.

The Nepalese belong to Nepal, the eastern borders of which abut upon Darjeeling. Nearly 50% of the population of the district is composed of the Nepalese. There are as many as seven different dialects spoken by the people of Nepal, as will be observed from what has already been stated in the beginning of this chapter. Even in the plains portion of the extensive province of Bengal, where so many different dialects are spoken, no dialect, not even that of Chittagong, which very widely and preposterously differ from the standard tongue, can hardly baffle the comprehension of a Bengali, no matter which part of the province he belongs to. This linguistic difference goes to establish the fact that they are different races; of course this is open to criticism. The Nepalese are on the whole enterprising and have a remarkable colonizing spirit. Tea gardens would have been an Utopian scheme without them, as almost all the operatives in the district have been recruited from the Nepalese. Nepal is an independent state, covering an area of 54,000 square miles. Its shape is like that of a parallelogram having a length of nearly 450 miles. It is on the north of British India and south of Tibet. This country is peopled by nearly four million souls. The central portion of the territory is a table-land which is about 20 miles long and about 16 miles broad. This is known as the Valley of Nepal. It is bounded on the north by ranges, one rising behind the other till the

snow-clad peaks are reached. Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal, is situated in this valley.

The Mechis are an aboriginal tribe, inhabiting the forest portion of the Terai lying just below the base of the hills, extending from the Brahmaputra to the Kossee river, which is 20 miles to the west of the river Mechi. The area covered by the tract is nearly 250 miles \times 15 miles. The Mechis have no written language. One thing which the writer himself can testify is that the Mechis are very modest, virtuous, very social, and hospitable. Nature has endowed them with a certain degree of immunity to malarial fever. They own vast fields for cultivation, which are hardly encroached upon by other people who are afraid of this fever-haunted and deadly region.

The Rajbansis or Koches are found throughout the foot of the Himalayas. At one time, this aboriginal tribe ruled over an extensive tract in the Terai. These people are generally now found in the region extending from Siliguri to Jalpaiguri and have migrated as far as Cooch Behar and Goalpara, the latter being in Assam. They are of a very dark complexion. Their womenfolk clothe themselves in a coloured *sari* which extends from the breast to the knees.

The Bhutias include the Tibetan Bhutias, the Bhutias of Bhutan, the Sikkim Bhutias and the Sherpa Bhutias (admixture of Tibetan Bhutias and the Lepchas). The Sherpas are the hardest people in the Himalayas and are remarkable for their mountaineering spirit. Whilst in the Everest expedition of 1922, all of the Tibetan porters proved useless owing to excessive cold, when the base of Mount Everest was yet 10 miles off, the Sherpas pushed on even beyond the foot of Mount Everest and climbed up a precipice attaining a height of 27,000 feet amidst the extreme rigor of the region of eternal snow. The Tibetan Bhutias are apt to migrate in the winter season, with their donkeys, dogs, and all their goods and chattels and are seen coming down to Kalimpong and Darjeeling *via*

Pedong. The Bhutias of Bhutan are a lot of hard-working and stalwart people. They are the best porters and the rickshaw drivers of the station. Drinking and gambling are, however their, besetting sins.

Manners, Customs, etc.

The Nepalese to a great extent resemble the Bengalis in their manners and customs. The Nepali language too is very akin to Bengali. It may be argued that this is due to their common origin, Sanskrit. But a close philological observation decisively establishes that the Nepali language originated from Bengali and not even from Hindi, the *lingua franca* of India. In spite of the presence of much similarity in language, manners and customs, there are many things which differ a great deal. What is perhaps most striking is that the Nepalese recognise dignity of labour. Another notable trait in their character is that they have no false sense of aristocracy which often debars the people of the plains to hold free communion with the less fortunate members of the society. And a third is woman emancipation. But the surrounding conditions are perchance drifting them towards the region where a sense of so-called prestige is a guiding factor in all activities of life. Amongst the Nepalese, poverty which makes one stoop down in spirit, is practically unknown, as almost every member of a family (in lower classes of people) subscribes his or her quota, no matter how small or insignificant it may be, by earning wages.

Their system of marriage is rather peculiar. Under the normal conditions, the would-be bride is wooed and won by the consent or with the connivance of her parents or guardians, and later on the marriage takes place. But what is better and in accordance with strict social laws is when the guardians of the would-be bridegroom come to the house of the girl and negotiate for the marriage. But there are many cases, particularly amongst the lower classes of people, in which the bride-elect is enticed away

and kept hidden for a number of days, either in the house of the would-be groom or somewhere else, and at last the culprit betrays himself, usually with more or less fear and hesitation, and approaches the parents of the girl with a prayer to sanction the marriage under contemplation. Such sanction is however readily given. While Shakespeare has said that 'Hanging and wiving goes together by destiny' here in Darjeeling enticement and divorce 'goes' by freakish fancy, either converging or diverging as the case may be. Polygamy is prevalent among the Nepalese, while polyandry characterises the Tibetans in Tibet.

All hillmen burn their dead bodies. The Tibetans who have means sometimes have a relic-tomb (*chorten*) constructed on the relics of the departed. When a corpse is carried to the cremation ground, the Tibetans blow conches in order to drive out the evil spirits lest the departed be molested by them before passing into the kingdom of God.

Most of the hillmen ascribe illness to the act of a divine agency which they call *Deuta*, who, they believe, dwells on the hills, in trees, in forests, in hill streams (*jhora*), and so forth. This faith has so much pinned them down that very often they take the help of one proficient in black art (*dhami*) to exorcise evil spirits from the ailing person.

The Newars follow a religion which is an admixture of Hinduism and Buddhism, a very curious phenomenon indeed, principally because Lord Buddha was silent about the existence of the Divinity, whereas the Hindus believe in a personal God.

The hillmen, it appears, have a special aptitude for picking up foreign languages and imitating their peculiar accents, and can nicely sing exotic songs, such as those in English, Bengali, and Hindi.

CHAPTER VII

THE SUBDIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF DARJEELING

A chapter has already been devoted to the Sadak subdivision of the district of Darjeeling. The remaining three are, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri. Here we propose to deal with Kurseong and Kalimpong which are on the hills.

Kurseong

Kurseong is 19 miles from Darjeeling and 32 miles from Siliguri. It has earned the appellation 'the land of the white orchid'. It is situated at an altitude of 4,864' above sea-level. It is a small town, but is very neat and clean, and is gradually growing. Its climate is more temperate and congenial than that of Darjeeling, which has extreme temperature during the winter months. But owing to a break in the Sewalik range to the south of the station, its rainfall is heavier, inasmuch as the clouds find easy entrance through the gorges and drench the town mercilessly. Its average annual rainfall is 165 inches as against 131·5 inches in Darjeeling.

In Kurseong there are the following schools.

For European boys: The Victoria School and the Goethal's Memorial School. *For European girls:* The Dow Hill School and the St. Helen's Convent. *For Indian boys:* St. Alphonsus School.

Then there is St. Mary's Training College for Christian Brothers and Fathers. It is a lovely edifice in a lovely site. Miss S. de Laplace has a Home for Mentally Deficient Children at Jim's Lodge.

As regards religious institutions, the following may be mentioned. Buddhist Monastery, Behari Temple, Marwari

Temple, Siva Mandir of the Burdwan Raj, Mosque, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Mission Churches.

There are a number of hotels and boarding houses in the station, of which the following are worth mentioning. Wood Hill Hotel, Plains View, Collen Villa, Pelican, Margaret Villa. There are many houses in this station which take paying guests.

There is a very decent *Dharmasala* (free rest-house) near the railway station. During the seasons, there is a great deal of rush to occupy this rest-house.

Kurseong boasts an up-to-date T. B. Hospital.

There is a Sericultural Station (Silk Nursery) at Constantia, where mulberry is cultivated and silk worm rearing is carried on under the Sericultural Department of Bengal.

The town commands a limited view of the snows on the one hand and a view of the green plains with meandering rivers looking like so many silver-ribbons in the hazy distance on the other. The peaks of Janu (in Nepal), Kabru and Kinchenjunga peep out above the saddle of the Ghoom range.

The Balasun Valley lies directly below the town and is a place well worth visiting. One can enjoy very pleasant walks and rides around Kurseong for which Dow Hill and Eagle's Crag deserve our first attention. The adjoining forest tract on Dow Hill is particularly beautiful. The Dow Hill Road leads up to the Victoria School and the Dow Hill School. By following the road branching off to the east from the Cart Road very close to the railway station, one will arrive at the summit of the hill known as Eagle's Crag. This road rises up in a more or less easy gradient. From the summit, a double view of the plains and the snows greets the vision of the spectator.

In 1932 a company* styled 'Kurseong Hydro-electric Supply Co., Ltd.' was floated with the object of supplying

* Mr. N. C. Goenka kindly furnished the writer with facts and figures regarding this enterprise.

electricity to the town of Kurseong and the neighbouring tea-estates. Power is generated at the power-house situated about three miles from Kurseong. The waters of the river Rinchington are utilised in generating electrical energy. The element is carried down from the river to the reservoir by a channel line, a little over a mile in length. Power is ultimately generated as the water descends down a tube 12" in circumference having a sheer drop of fully 1,100 feet. Now that the plant has been installed, the required electrical energy will be there, as long as the river will flow.

The water-supply of the town is obtained from a catchment basin situated above Dow Hill, where there are some 15 springs, giving several thousand gallons of water per day for consumption of the urban population.

Kalimpong

Kalimpong, the altitude of which is 3933' above sea-level, has very little of the rigor of the Himalayas one experiences at Darjeeling and even at Kurseong. It is an admirable health-resort, having very mild climate. One drawback is that hard gales laden with mist sweep into the tract off and on. The average rainfall is only 84 inches.

The hillmen call the place *Kalibong*, most probably meaning 'the black spur'. It was originally called Dalingkote by the Bhutias to whom this territory belonged, before it passed to the hands of the Britishers in 1865. The sub-division of Kalimpong (which came into being in 1916) covers an area of 524 square miles, 225 square miles of which being under Reserved Forest.

The town of Kalimpong is 9½ miles (if the Cart Road is followed) or 6 miles (if the bridle path meant for riding or walking is preferred) from the Tista Bridge. Kalimpong is 37 miles from Siliguri and 29 miles from Darjeeling.

The most beautiful edifice of the town is undoubtedly the Macfarlane Memorial Church of gothic architecture

with its clock-tower which lords it over the surrounding country.

The higher slopes of a part of the Kinchenjunga range is visible from the station. There is very little of the extensive and glorious views that greet the vision of a spectator at Darjeeling, but, nevertheless, the place is well worth visiting, especially because it has a peculiar beauty and atmosphere of its own. Here the hill people have yet retained, to a degree, the native traits in their character, as the exotic civilization has not so far gained ground in this isolated town to any noticeable extent.

Kalimpong is the centre of the Tibetan trade with Bengal. Just on entering the British territory, the Tibetan and the Bhutia traders sometimes halt at Pedong, 13 miles from Kalimpong, which is also a small centre of trade. Therefrom they proceed to Kalimpong, with their array of mules with jingling bells around their necks and laden with commodities of the land of snows. This trade is carried on in full swing in winter as in summer the Tibetans find these lower regions very trying.

Kalimpong, in the opinion of the writer, may be fitly given the appellation—'the garden of Darjeeling', as the climate and its elevation are very favourable to the growth of all kinds of vegetables, plants, and fruits. Oranges are exuberantly grown.

The Deolo Hill is an attractive site. On its higher slopes is situated the St. Andrew's Colonial Homes, with which is intimately associated from its very inception the name of the Rev. Dr. Graham. It is an institution for the education and training of the needy European and Anglo Indian children. It was inaugurated in 1900, when the Government granted an estate of 100 acres of land on a peppercorn rent. This organisation covers within its range training in industrial lines comprising carpet-weaving, lace-making, embroidery, tailoring and carpentry. The institution is worth a visit.

In the Charteris Hospital, hill-women are trained in nursing in accordance with the scheme started by Lady Carmichael.

There is a training school which turns on fully qualified teachers, who are sent out to different parts of Darjeeling and Sikkim.

Between the bazaar and the Deolo Hill stands the Buddhist Monastery called Trongsa Gompai and is under the jurisdiction of the Kargyupa section of Bhutan. In the centre of the altar, there are two figures of the Lord Buddha, on either side of which are the figures of the last Dharmaraja (king of Bhutan).

On the lower slopes of the Deolo Hill and nearly two miles from the centre of the town is the residence of Raja Ugyen Dorji, the late Prime Minister to the Bhutan *Durbar*. This is a place of historical importance as here once dwelt His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the head as well as the Pope King of Tibet for 4½ months in 1910, when he had to flee for his life in view of an invasion of Tibet by the Chinese. The rooms in which he breathed the breath of life have been preserved just as he left them and are regarded as a chapel where is also kept the sundry gifts he presented to the Minister as tokens of his appreciation of the hospitality accorded to him. In one room there is a throne where the Great Priest used to take his seat. His garments as well as his various ecclesiastical vessels and furnitures are also to be found there. In fact the house is a veritable museum of Tibetan curios of historical importance. There is also a library containing a full set of Tibetan scriptures.

The Government of Bengal has set apart the site of Rinkingpong for the people of the plains in order to enable them to take advantage of this health resort on the hills by building houses at a moderate rent under the system of lease for a number of years. The altitude of this settlement ranges from 3,500 feet to 4,500 feet above the sea-level.

The Kalimpong bazaar on the market days (Wednesdays and Saturdays) is really well worth visiting. There will be seen traders of a number of nationalities such as Tibetans, Bhutias, Nepalese, Sikkimese, and even Chinese. Hundreds of pack ponies will be seen hailing from Tibet and Bhutan laden with bundles of raw wool, leather, lac, etc.

From the bazaar one should not forget to climb up a ridge called the Durpin (the Telescope Ridge), wherefrom the meandering river, the Tista, and the Riang railway station will catch the eye of the traveller from a great distance.

CHAPTER VIII

EXCURSIONS IN DARJEELING

While making excursions, one may use with advantage the ponies which are always available at the Chowrasta. The rate for hiring the same is generally Re. 1 per hour. Rickshaws used in Darjeeling, unlike those of Calcutta, are very strong and substantial and require three or four sturdy hillmen (generally Bhutias) to pull from the fore-front and push from behind, while making an uphill journey, but downhill, they have to reverse the order, so as to retard acceleration. On steeper hills or bad roads, unless one can ride or walk, the services of a *dandy* can be secured. A *dandy* is an oval shaped basket, where one sits on a chair. This contrivance is carried by two to four *dandiwallas*, on whose shoulders rest the wooden rods fixed at the two extremities of the *dandy*. Ladies are usually carried in *dandies*. But, of late, these are rarely used.

In the town

In the heart of the town of Darjeeling at least the following places should be visited by every visitor. For details, see Chapter IV.

Observatory Hill.

Birch Hill Park (a lovely place for picnics).

Lloyd Botanic Garden.

The Museum.

Victoria Waterfall.

The Bazaar (on market days—Saturdays and Sundays).

A little beyond the town

1. CHOWRASTA TO BHUTIA BUSTI.

(Visiting Buddhist Monastery, the village of Bhutias, etc., Relic-tomb, Step Aside, Tibetan Painting on Rocks.)

Proceed via Rangit Road. Descending a short distance, notice on your left the Tibetan painting on rocks. The

central figure is that of Rimpochay (Padma Sambhava in Sanskrit), the Great Preceptor. To the left of this central figure is that of His Highness Thesungchen, the king of Tibet who reigned in the middle of the 8th century A.D. There are also images of the gods *Lhachan Wangchhook Chhempo* (Siva of the Hindus) and *Ganapati* or *Chhoda* (*Ganapati* or *Ganesh* of the Hindus) and *Paldenlamoo* (*Kali* of the Hindus). The reasons for this similarity are traced back to Tantrism (mystical practices in mediæval Hinduism) which was introduced into Tibet along with Buddhism by a number of Indian teachers who had penetrated that country from time to time. Proceed further down till you find a white *chorten* (relic-tomb) to your right. Follow the zigzags still further down till you reach the Buddhist Monastery. The villages on both sides of the road give some idea as to how the people of the snows (Tibetans and Bhutias) pass their days in this hamlet. Although most of them belong to the lower rank and are more or less needy, they wear a face of joy. Here generally live bearers, cooks, rickshaw drivers, weavers, lamas, etc. Now you may retrace your steps without proceeding any further. The return journey covering a distance of nearly half a mile is rather trying as the road ascends steeply. As you near the Chowrasta, just cast a glance at the historical edifice called 'Step aside' where occurred the most tragic events associated with the administration of poison to the Rajkoomer of Bhowal, who was later revived by a Hindu ascetic.

2. CHOWRASTA TO BHUTIA BUSTI AND BACK (via Birch Hill Road)

For route (see the 4th article of Chap. IV) This is a good walk no doubt, but the tour is not a tiring one, as there is only one steep climb towards the end of the journey. This pleasant walk gives one a fair idea of the country surrounding this hill-station. As the traveller leaves behind him the St. Joseph's college, the route becomes very solitary and one feels as if one is in the very

lap of nature. A cosy shelter on the roadside seems to invite the traveller to rest a while and view the distant tea-gardens dotted with tiny huts for the garden coolies and the circular flat of Lebong looming at the bottom of the spur, and above all, range after range of green and wooded mountains rising up abruptly, ultimately culminating in the towering snowy range spreading from east to west, as far as the eye can see. Proceed further on till you meet the sign-post—'Hermitage Road' following which road (a steep ascent) you will arrive near the gate of the Government House. Otherwise proceed straight on (leaving to your left a road which leads to Lebong Cart Road) and you will soon arrive at the Bhutia *Busti*, wherefrom Chowrasta is easily accessible.

3. LEBONG.

If you are an excursionist, you will follow the Rangit Road going down from the Chowrasta till it meets the Lebong Cart Road, not far from the Lebong parade ground. The return journey is a steep and hard climb. The Cart road is easier but extends 4 miles. Very often one can secure a seat in a taxi or bus near St. Joseph's College, and come back to the bazaar.

4. TO GHOOM VIA CALCUTTA ROAD.

(*On the way: Toongsong busti, Tibetan cemetery, Tibetan Monastery and Alubari busti*)

If you enjoy natural scenery beyond all other beauty, we would advise you to take the Old Calcutta Road starting from the Chowrasta (see the 4th article of Chap. IV.) Soon after proceeding along this road, Toongsong *busti* will be noticed down below the road to your left. It is a small hamlet beyond which are tea gardens. On both sides of this road will be observed huge boulders standing on the hillsides. It is said that most of these were hurled down by the Spirits of the Rain and Storm causing great landslips which played havoc with thousands of dwelling houses and of human lives quite in an unprecedented way

on the 25th September, 1899, a date which will never be wiped away from the annals of Darjeeling. After traversing a distance of nearly $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile, the Tibetan cemetery will be reached, lying just below the road, where there is a cluster of white *chortens* as well as a number of tomb-stones which mark the graves of many a Tibetan. The *chortens* contain the relics of many lamas. A short way further on from here, a beautiful Tibetan monastery will be found by the roadside, apparently at the extremity of a zigzag course. This monastery is worth a visit. It contains very big Tibetan gods. Here will be seen Alubari busti. Many Tibetans reside in this solitary place hedged in by the Jalapahar spur. Proceed further for nearly two miles when you will reach Jorebungalow. From Jorebungalow proceed along the Cart Road till you reach the Ghoom Ry. station.

5. FROM GHOOM TO DARJEELING.

(Visiting Ghoom Bazaar and Ghoom monastery).

After completing the journey as noted above, proceed to the Ghoom Monastery by following the Ghoom Pahar Road to be in a short time found on your left as you proceed along the Cart Road towards Darjeeling. A few minutes' walk will lead you to this famous monastery through the Ghoom bazaar, a typical antiquarian market, the like of which is met with in many trade centres on the remote Himalayan regions. There, on a special day, is held a bazaar once a week when sellers and customers hailing from distant parts of the country come in flocks in their gay attire. The monastery is situated on a mound at a secluded spot. It was founded in 1875 by Lama Sherab Janchhay who belonged to the yellow-sect Geylukpa. In 1918, an image of Champa or Maitreya Buddha (the coming Buddha), was consecrated and unveiled amidst thousands of votaries of the Lord. This image was constructed under the supervision of a great Lama of the Chumbi valley in Tibet. One month's strenuous labour brought this image over 15 feet into being, at a cost of some Rs. 25,000/-.

Within this image, have been placed 16 volumes of Buddhist scriptures. It is said that inside the image there are many precious stones and other costly articles, and that the surface of the image has pounded gold as one of its constituents, the principal ingredient being clay. After the passing away of the founder of this monastery, three other Lamas had been successively in charge, namely, Ambo Lama, Toomba Lama and Namgay Lama (the present priest), who is one of the nearly 200 direct disciples of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Close to the central edifice is a small building in which has been preserved an image of 'Atis Dipankar' (called by the Tibetans—Chhoji Palden Atisha). It is very curious that in the same chamber is found a figure of Guru Nanak who flourished in the Punjab in the 15th century A.D. and preached his doctrines embracing both Hindus and Mohammadans of India in his tenets. After visiting this monastery you may come back to Darjeeling by train or motor-car, whichever is available first.

6. TO JALAPAHAR AND KATAPAHAR.

Proceed from the Chowrasta via Jalapahar Road, or via Auckland Road and Salt Hill Road, or via Auckland Road and Elysee Road as described in the 4th article of Chap. IV. On the summit of the spur will be noticed Jalapahar cantonment. In these two cantonments reside detachments of British troops during the summer. Jalapahar (burnt hill) was on fire in 1840, when a portion of the region from the Salt Hill Road right up to the Depot. At Jalapahar was burnt down. The colvaescent Depot. was erected in 1848. Here are quartered the invalid British soldiers sent from the plains.

7. SINGAMARI AND BACK.

(Via Victoria Road)

(Visiting on the wayside Hospital for Infectious Diseases, Happy Valley Tea Estate, Jail, Victoria Waterfall, and Rajbari busti).

Proceed to Singamari (on bus if you like) and get down at the junction of the Singtam Road leading to the

valley called Poolbazaar. Descend a few yards and then take the downward course to your left. See Victoria Road in the 4th article of Chap. IV. This walk will give you an idea of the peculiar suburban sceneries of Darjeeling, besides other things as noted on the aforesaid page. Just after crossing the Victoria Bridge, you visit Mr. Ghose's Nursery near by, containing a good collection of some of the Himalayan and other floras. Beyond the waterfall is the Rajbari *busti*. From here the palace of His Highness the Maharajadhiraja of Burdwan is visible. This route will ultimately lead you to the Cart Road, near the gate of the Rose Bank.

Far beyond the town but within limited range

(ONE DAY TRIPS)

1. TO GHOOM ROCK.

Close to the Ghoom station will be found a road branching off from the Cart Road, where buses and taxis are always available. Secure a seat in any of these automobiles and proceed up to $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles when you will find yourself at the foot of the lofty Ghoom rock, which is a gigantic boulder fully 95 feet in height. A zigzag path runs up to its flat summit on which many picnics are held. A magnificent view of the plains in the hazy distance is obtained from this place. The Nepal frontier is visible at a distance of a few miles. Tradition states that from this precipice were hurled down criminals when the region was under the banners of the Nepalese.

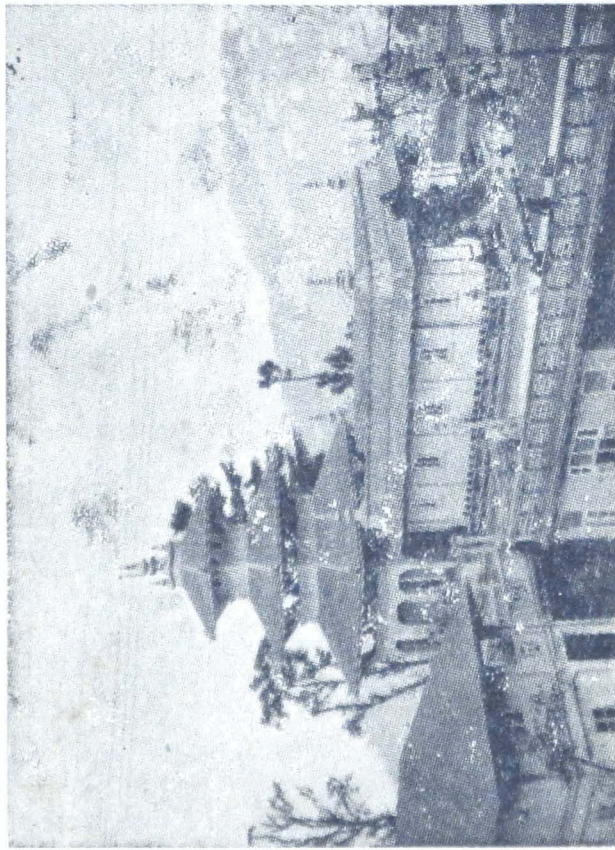
2. TO SUKIAPOKHRI.

From the Ghoom Rock, if you proceed further on for a distance of nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles (*i.e.*, 7 miles from Ghoom Ry. Station) this village, situated by the roadside, will be reached. From Ghoom this broad road zigzags down. The motoring feats of drivers called into play by the sharpness of the curves of the road are in themselves worth enjoying.



AN ASCETIC ON THE MAHAKAL CAVE.

Photo—Author.



DHIR-DHAM TEMPLE

Built by His Highness the Maharaja of Nepal.

Photo—D. Bhanja.

Sukia is a trade centre, where are imported huge quantities of potatoes from Nepal. Special markets are held on Fridays (whence the name of the place), when people from distant villages and the town of Darjeeling on the one hand and from Nepal on the other congregate, and make it a veritable heterogenous scene, which is better left to the tourist to scan. A short distance beyond Sukia on the way to Mirik or Pashupatinagar (in Nepal) is Nepal frontier where you may step on to the other side of the road and boast of having entered into the free land of Nepal without being empowered with a pass-port.

3. TO SONADA.

(Visiting Hope Town and Salesian College.)

"Sonada Railway Station is just 10 miles from Darjeeling. Better avail yourself of the train that leaves Darjeeling sometime after 10 a.m. On reaching Sonada proceed down a motorable road to be found branching off from the Cart Road just a short distance away on its upward course. The journey consists of a descent of fully 2 miles. When the E.B. Ry. was extended up to Jalpaiguri, it was the intention of the railway authorities to extend the line not to Siliguri but to Adalpole in Terai and therefrom to Panighata and then up the several spurs to Darjeeling via the slopes adjacent to the Hope Town. In anticipation of the fulfilment of the above scheme, Messrs. Fred. Brine and several other eminent English people started this Hope Town scheme in 1856. Needless to add that their surmise was not correct, and the Hope Town now consists of a few English cottages with a church (St. John's) on a central site, built in 1868. On returning to the Railway Station, one may walk nearly a mile downhill along the Cart Road till the Salesian College is reached by the side of the Cart Road. It is an institution to turn out Christian Brothers and Fathers and was established in 1938, when the site and

* Sukia+pokhri=Friday+pool.

the building were purchased from the Company which started a brewery called the Victoria Brewery in 1888. The place is a secluded one and favourable for the theological study. After visiting this site, you will very likely be able to catch the train at Sonada at about half past two.

4. TO GING MONASTERY.

The Ging Monastery is situated below Lebong. Take the road which starts from Lebong Race Course and rapidly descends along the eastern side of the Lebong spur through the Kotowali *busti*. On the way to this monastery will be seen the two bungalows of the late General Mannering (an Anglo-Indian) who compiled the only standard Lepcha Dictionary and Grammar. The monastery is just half an hour's walk from the Race Course. The original structure was raised in the middle of the 19th century, which was however subsequently demolished. The present building was made after several decades through the efforts of the priest, Lodio Lama. This institution belongs to the Red-sect called Lachun-pa. These people put on red conical caps. It appears that there are altogether four different sects of the Tibetan Buddhists, wearing yellow, red, black and white caps, by the colour of which they are accordingly designated.

5. TO POOLBAZAAR.

Follow the Singtam road near Singamari which very rapidly descends to the valley called Poolbazaar (market at the bridge). On your way, two suspension bridges span two hill-streams of which one is called the Little Rangit. This is a gateway of trade with Eastern Nepal and Western Sikkim. During the potato season several thousand maunds of seed-potatoes are imported here and are subsequently sold to different parts of India through middlemen who make a handsome margin of profit. Lilliputian though the shops located at this gateway of trade may look, transactions of the following imports pass through them annually.

<i>Article</i>				<i>Rough estimation</i>
Butter	..	..	..	.. 1,000 mds.
Potatoes	..	..	..	.. 50,000 ..
Cardamom	..	..	..	.. 3,000 ..
Cherita (a tonic plant)			..	.. 4,000 ..

Rangaroon has been aptly designated—'the father of Darjeeling Botanic Garden.' The place is just three miles from Ghoom, having an altitude of 5,700'. From Ghoom proceed along the Cart Road running parallel to the railway line towards Siliguri till after traversing a distance of nearly half a mile, a broad road (Peshok Road) will be met branching off to the east. Sign posts at this junction will give you the direction. After travelling along this road for nearly two miles up to which distance the road runs on a level ground, take the road branching off to the left and rapidly and abruptly descending to the Dak-bungalow at Rangaroon. The path passes through beautiful forest on both sides and the walk is very enjoyable. In front of the bungalow there is an open flat on which games may be indulged in. Those who want to enjoy forest scenery and also require more or less home-comforts in the lap of nature should make it a point to visit this place and stay in the bungalow for a day. There is plenty of water in the locality, and the place is particularly suitable for a picnic party desiring strict privacy.

7. TO SIDRAPONG POWER STATION.

Should the Victoria Waterfalls cease to rush along the deep ravines through which it descends, the town will be plunged in darkness with the nightfall. The waters of the falls rush into the reservoir of the electric power station at the foot of the Sidrapong spur nearly 5 miles west of and below the Railway station. The altitude of the place which is 2,200 feet below the level of the Darjeeling Railway Station is 3,500 feet above sea-level. The people acclimatised at Darjeeling will feel the place considerably warm. The site of the Power House belongs to the Maharaja of

Burdwan, and here there was a fine orchard containing trees of such luscious fruits as mangoes, lichis and jack-fruits. Considering the public utility involved in the scheme, the then Maharajadhiraja Sir Bijoy Chand Mahatab Bahadur, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., I.O.M. of Burdwan was pleased to make it over to the Municipality at a nominal cost. To meet the growing demands of the town, the Municipality was constrained to instal a Diesel Engine Station at Lebung as an emergency measure. A bigger hydro-electric scheme is under contemplation. The route leading to this Power Station is across the Victoria Falls. Proceed towards the Rose Bank (Burdwan Raj palace) along the main road from the falls which gradually descends to the place through typical villages on either side of the road, which too are worth seeing.

8. TO SENCHAL.

(Golf course and remnants of the old Military barracks)

Just a few yards further on from the junction of the Cart Road and the Peshok Road (at Jorebungalow), a road (called Senchal Road) branches off to the left, and rises steeply. Following this road, you would shortly after be passing through forest where in April and May, stately rhododendrons and magnolias are in bloom, lending to the hill-sides a magnificent blaze of colour. As you do a distance of a little more than a mile on this road, a more or less flat ground opens up before you, where was once situated the first military barracks, the isolated and dilapidated chimneys of which still mark the spot. Tradition states that a few of the troops committed suicide owing to the rigor of this region in the winter and in consequence thereof the cantonment was shifted to Jalapahar. This road is motorable. The road being very steep, the passenger can well feel what a tremendous amount of engine power is brought into play as the automobile does the steep climb. The view from Senchal is a splendid one. The town of Darjeeling with its picturesque residences

appears as if set up on a canvas with green back-ground of foliage and vegetation. There are two Dak-bungalows (one new and another old), where you may pass the night if you would so desire with the idea of easily proceeding to the world-famous summit of Tiger Hill on the following morning to get a view of the sunrise. Sunset from Senchal is a sight that is apt to remain treasured up in memory.

9. KEVENTER'S DAIRY FARM

After ascending a short distance along the Senchal Road, a path will be noticed branching off to the left. Following this, Keventer's Dairy Farm is soon reached, the distance from the Cart Road to the farm being nearly one-third of a mile. The Dairy is an up-to-date one. Milk and milk-products pass through the scientific process of pasteurization before they are offered for sale to the consumers. All the methods adopted in the dairy farm are on a scrupulously neat and clean basis. Many lovely milch cows are reared here in conformity with strict hygienic principles.

10. TO SENCHAL LAKE.

Take the old Military Road which branches off from the Cart Road at Jorebungalow. Proceed down the Cart Road from its junction with the Peshok Road. Just a few yards off, will be noticed the Senchal Road (which leads to Senchal and Tiger Hill). Walk downhill further on for nearly 200 yards, when to your left will be seen the Old Military Road, gradually rising up, keeping the railway line just below and running almost parallel to it. Along the Old Military Road which runs up to Kurseong (see Pankhabari Road in Chap. II) in an easy gradient, a bridle path to your left will come in sight after traversing a distance of nearly $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. This path will soon bring you right up to the Senchal Lake. The town of Darjeeling, which covers an area of nearly 5 square miles, is supplied

with water from this artificial lake, where water is collected from a catchment area containing more than two dozens of springs. This area is called the Senchal Catchment Area. Before visiting this lake, apply for a permit from the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling.

11. TIGER HILL

(At Sunrise)

Both Senchal and Tiger Hill may be visited in one day. Arrange for a motor car (preferably a Baby Austin) and start from Darjeeling at about half past three in the morning. The journey is via Ghoom and along the Senchal Road, already described. The summit of the hill is just 2 miles from Senchal. The car stops at a place from which you have to climb up a distance of a little less than half a mile. The best time to undertake an excursion to Tiger Hill is from October to November. Very warm wraps are advisable, as in the early morning the summit is extremely cold. Never take your chance to see the sunrise when the weather is cloudy and days are rainy, but after two or three days' incessant rain when the weather clears up for a considerable time, wait not for a moment, but hasten to undertake the excursion and hope for the best. Near the summit of the hill, under European supervision, light refreshment may be had at a moderate charge.

As one toils up with a good deal of exertion the fag-end of the journey, one cannot imagine what a glorious view awaits to greet the vision. In the fast receding glimmer of the night, the spectator finds himself standing on the mound bedewed with sparkling frost, plunged in hush and silence and steeped in frigid cold. Sweeping over an arc of a huge cricle which seems to pass through an ultra-mundane region, is seen towering aloft in bold relief peak after peak of perpetual snow in a magnificent panorama wondrously beautiful in their outnumbering

diversity. As one stands face to face with the workmanship of the Great Creator, a part of one's consciousness is imperceptively withdrawn, being magnetically attracted to the boundless space all around. The eastern horizon is reached by range after range of mountains greenly clad by the Sylvan Diety from the very foot to the summit. Soon after, appear horizontal wrinkles of resplendent colours stretching across the celestial canopy, skirted by fleecy clouds which bring into prominence the play of ever-changing and lovely hues. The winged arrows of shooting rays of golden sheen, emanating from the hidden side of the globe, intersect the horizontal streaks of palpable colours ceaselessly changing. Attention must not now be distracted for a moment as the celestial disc springs up through the horizon, crowning the snowy range all of a sudden. The crimson sun, as it leaps upon the bright chariot of rainbow hues, presents a soul-stirring scene. Many a globe-trotter has been unanimous in their expression when they hold that no view all the world over can compare with the one that unveils itself at the sunrise observed from Tiger Hill.

Although a thousand and one visitors annually through this summit to see sunrise, particularly in the months of April and May before the monsoon breaks out, and then again in the dry months of October and November, most of them are more or less disappointed, as the horizon is not always clear, owing to dense and gloomy mist sweeping over the landscape in an extremely freakish way. The scene associated with the sunrise itself also varies a good deal. It is better to see with one's own eyes, as although the writer has striven to describe it, the landscape that presents itself at the summit of the hill as well as the beauty of sunrise and the grandeur attendant upon it, simply baffles description. The altitude of Senchal and Tiger Hill are respectively 8,163 feet and 8,515 feet. The first glittering rays of the sun shoot ahead and shed light upon the twin peaks of Kinchenjunga and gradually paint

the whole of its snowy body with a beautiful orange colour. One can notice this scene from the town of Darjeeling too. From Tiger Hill, just the top of Mount Everest (29,002') is visible, peeping out through two other peaks standing by its side. The peak that looks highest is that of Makalu (27,709'). These three peaks are seen to the north-west, a little left of Phalut. Everest looks smaller than any of its two sisters, although Everest is not only higher than either of them, but the highest peak in the world, the distance of Everest from Tiger Hill being 107 miles as the crow flies. This phenomenon arises from the fact that Everest is several miles beyond them. Kurseong is visible to the south. In the hazy distance are noticeable like so many silver bands, the Tista, the Mahanadi, the Balasun and the Mechi, meandering down to the south. Chumal Hari mountain of Tibet is seen in the north-east, 84 miles away as the crow flies. It looks like a great rounded mass over the snowy Chola Range. Dr. Somervell of Everest repute says that this is one of the world's most beautiful peaks. So make it a point to identify it. One comes face to face with this peak of superb beauty from Phari Jong (the route covering 129 miles from Darjeeling).

Ambitious Tours*

1. TO KALIMPONG (VIA PESHOK ROAD)

Stage	Intervening distance	Altitude in feet
Darjeeling	—	6,814
Ghoom	4	7,400
Lopchu	12	5,300
Peshoke	4	2,600
Tista Bridge	3	710
Kalimpong	10	4,100

All along there is a beautiful light motor road. Small cars go direct to Kalimpong. There are Dak-bungalows

* Tourists should apply to the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling for a copy of the printed list of Dak-bungalows in Sikkim and Darjeeling.

at Lopchu, Peshok, and the Tista Bridge. Three-fourths of a mile from Peshok is what is called the 'View Point', which is so named, as it commands a view of the confluence of the Tista and the Great Rangit rivers. From Ghoom to the Tista Bridge (span is over 300 feet) the road runs down all along, the descent being more pronounced as it approaches the Tista valley. From the bridge to Kalimpong it is an uphill journey right through. There is a bridle path (meant for ponies and travellers who prefer to do the journey on foot) which is just 6 miles as against the motorable road which covers a distance of fully 10 miles. While coming back, even if ponies are used, the bridle path cannot be taken owing to the prohibitive sloping and the stony character of the track; the cart road must be followed. This tour is very enjoyable.

2. SILIGURI TO KALIMPONG.

Stages	Intervening distance	Altitude in feet
Siliguri	—	392
Sivoke	13	500
Kalijhora	5	550
Birrik	5	570
Riang	3	625
Tista Bridge	7	710

Half an hour after the Darjeeling Mail (B. & A. Ry.) has arrived at Siliguri, the toy-like Himalayan train (on metre gauge) starts for Kalimpong at 6-15 a.m. and reaches its terminus, Gielle Khola at 9-45 a.m. This line, called the Tista valley line, was opened for traffic in the year 1915. For the first 12 miles from Siliguri the line crosses the deadly Terai, an almost level tract of land lying at the foot of the Himalayan range. After running for this distance, the train enters the sal tree forest and soon after crosses the Sivoke river spanned by a fine bridge, and emerges into the Himalayas with the two sides of the line hedged in by the slopes of the mountains. From here right up to the terminus at Gielle Khola, the line passes

closely along the right bank of the Tista, the greatest and mightiest drainer of the lofty snowy range of the Kinchenjunga group. Sevoke (a Lepcha word meaning the Gateway of Wind) which is $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Siliguri is a dense forest tract, noted for its providing shelter for tigers, deer, bisons, elephants, and even rhinoceroses (rare). It is a favourite hunting place for huntsmen. Then combined scenery of stately forests, lofty mountains, the deep valley, and the thundering river fighting all the way with stones and gigantic boulders, peeping out of the waters here, there and everywhere, constitutes Nature's moving pictures which vision would fain to feast on without interruption. A fairly broad cart road runs almost parallel to the railway line all the way right up to the Tista Bridge. From Gielle Khola one has to walk a distance of 2 miles to reach the Tista Bridge, which is worth seeing. From here one may undertake a trip to Kalimpong or return to Siliguri that very day by availing himself of the train which starts for Siliguri at 4 p.m. Those who come to Darjeeling and exclude this trip miss an unique phase of the Himalayan landscapes, the Tista valley being one of the most beautiful valleys in the world.

3. KALIMPONG TO PEDONG

A road of which the first few miles are motorable runs from Kalimpong to Pedong, beyond which, after crossing a bridge and doing an uphill journey for three miles, the Sikkim frontier is reached. This place is called Rhenok, where there is a post and telegraph office under the British Government. This is a gateway to Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan. It is very curious that R. C. Missionaries explored this remote part of the district (Pedong) at a time when this tract of hill-territory was hardly known to the outside world. There is a beautiful R. C. church at Pedong. This distant village boasts of a Government Hospital too.

4. TO MANJITAR BRIDGE VIA BADAMTAM.

Stages	Intervening distance	Altitude in feet
Darjeeling	—	6,812
Badamtam	7	2,812
Manjitar Bridge	6	1,906

Proceed to Lebong via Bhutia *busti* down the Rangit Road till the junction of this road with the Lebong Cart Road is reached. Walk further down for some 300 yards when to the right a road less in breadth is noticed running rapidly down. Follow this track on which small cars run up to Namchi in Sikkim via Badamtam and the Manjitar Bridge. Badamtam will be reached in 2 hours via Ging monastery. Halt in the Dak-bungalow for one night. Next morning proceed to the bridge (span is 300 feet) and place your feet on the other side of it and you may now boast of having entered into Sikkim, the land of superb beauty. You cannot proceed any further as the guard stationed there will challenge you to produce your frontier pass. In the primitive battle that took place in Sikkim, the British troops marched into Sikkim across this bridge which, however, at that time, was made of canes and bamboos. The views from this valley are very lovely. The roar of the Great Rangit as it rushes along its stony bed is audible from a great distance. From here you may return to Darjeeling or undertake the next trip which is perhaps the best tour, except the trip to Phalut. The next trip, if undertaken, repays an ambitious traveller handsomely.

5. TO THE CONFLUENCE OF THE GREAT RANGIT AND THE TISTA VIA BADAMTAM.

After reaching the bridge, proceed along the right bank of the Great Rangit river, the mountains on the other side of the river being in Sikkim. The place is considerably hot, being 4,000 feet below the level of Darjeeling. At every turn of the valley, fresh beauty reveals itself through the stately forest and luxuriant vegetation which

fringe the road on the right, and lovely windings of the river-bed on the left lavishly strewn with coloured pebbles, stones and boulders ever changing in character. During the rainy season, this trip is not advisable, as the road becomes very often blocked owing to frequent land-slips. The winter months are very favourable for this lovely trip. Six miles ahead of the bridge can be seen one of the most magnificent views of two mighty drainers of the snowy range of Kinchenjunga meeting with each other. The Great Rangit which rises at the foot of Kinchenjunga here combines with the Tista, rising from Lake Choluamu (17,500') on the further side of the Kinchenjunga range, the lake being nearly 74 miles to the north-east of Darjeeling as the crow flies. The waters of the Tista are much cooler and have a dark green hue, while the colour of the Great Rangit is very light blue. The Tista works its way down the valley at a much greater speed than does the Rangit, the speed being 10 to 14 miles per hour in dry seasons. After being united, the rivers retain for a considerable distance their distinctive hues, a phenomenon worth seeing. The beauty of the confluence is indescribable.

While returning to Darjeeling you may come back via the Peshoke Road after reaching the Tista Bridge, nearly $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles from this confluence, or catch the train at Gielle Khola, just two miles from the bridge and on arriving at Siliguri, halt there at the Dak-bungalow for one night and return to Darjeeling the following morning.

6. TO PHALUT.

Stages	Intervening distance	Altitude in feet
Darjeeling	—	6,812
Sukiapokhri	11	
Tonglu	12	10,074
Sandakphu	14	11,929
Phalut	12	11,811

One may reach Tonglu in one day, via Ghoom, Sukiapokhri, and Manaybhunjan (a valley at the foot of

Tonglu). To Ghoom, by morning train; to Sukiapokhri, by motor car or bus; to Manaybhanjan (3 miles) on foot; and lastly a steep climb (9 miles) to Tonglu. The peak of Tonglu is 11 miles from Darjeeling as the crow flies. There are a few treacherously short cuts which one is very much tempted to follow to reduce the distance of the journey, by deviating from the main route which is a good bridle path. By following one of these attractive short paths, the traveller may reach certain points where the path is exceedingly steep and strewn with pebbles which very frequently slip while treading on them, resulting in an involuntary glissade down these steep slopes of the hill called screes. On the way to Tonglu, there is a monastery by the road-side. It is really a place for worship. At the top of the ridge, there is a Dak-bungalow, to reach which it requires a steady trudge for fully five hours from the foot of the hill at Manaybhunjan. Once in the month of December, the writer was benighted nearly a mile below the aforesaid bungalow on his way back from Jogmayee (in Nepal). Owing to a terrible snow-fall at night, he had to take shelter in the house of the *mandal* (the chief authorised person), who furnished him with a pair of woollen quilts, without which additional wrappers he would have been literally frozen during the abominably chilly night. Besides, the room had to be kept warm by keeping charcoal burning throughout the night. The cascade that was seen flowing in the evening, was found converted into ice the following morning. Trees, plants, and all vegetations were covered up with a very thick coating of snow. A very lovely sight indeed! From the peak of Tonglu, the snowy range unfolds greater beauty than what is seen from Darjeeling. Passing the night in the Dak-bungalow at Tonglu (the Hill of Fire), the traveller has to proceed to Sandakphu (the Home of Aconite or deadly nightshed) through Kalpokhri. The decidedly sweet smell of the flowers of Aconite when in bloom in this region is in itself highly poisonous. In case of emergency,

the traveller should at once inhale camphor which is an antidote to this deadly herb. Ponies happening to nibble the shrub while grazing in this region are sure to die, the shrub being highly poisonous. The forest scenery on the way to Sandakphu is marvellous. The traveller must remember that this forest abounds in big snakes including pythons. Hill bears are also a menace to travellers. The tigers (rare) of this strip of land have long hairs. It is hardly known to tourists as well as most people of Darjeeling that apes infest these forests, but fortunately they are hardly met with in the day-time, besides, they inhabit the denser and more remote regions of the woods. Snow Man called by the hill people *Shukpa* or *Saitan* (Satan) or devil is on very rare occasion met with in the Sandakphu region. The readers may read the article on Snow Man in the author's book *Wonders of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalaya*, where this amazing subject has been dealt with at some length. In order to reduce the length of the journey, tourists often take advantage of short-cuts, but they should remember that although in this region treacherous pebbles are not found strewn over the hill-sides, the slopes themselves are frightfully steep in many places, so that clever mountaineers only can and should undertake climbing on these precipices and even then they have often to be on all fours to avoid glissade. Even along the main route, there are at some places very steep climbs. In the region from Tonglu to Phalut a great number of yaks are reared by shepherds. There are many lovely grazing grounds especially in the tract extending from Tonglu to Phalut, where viewing the undulating waves of long green grasses flooding the slopes and plateaus at some places of this lofty region, is in itself a fascination. Here some hillmen easily earn their livelihood by rearing goats, sheep and yaks only. The writer is under the impression that these independent people removed far away from the toils and turmoils of urban life and quartered in the very lap of nature where every phenomenon speaks of unending peace

and happiness, the birth-right of the humanity, really feel the pulsations of life. On the way, unexpectedly will come to sight a pool with a small cluster of huts at its edge. From here, passing through 25 steep zigzags, one reaches Sandakphu, after a hardy march of 6 hours or so. This is the highest peak on the Singalela range lying within the British territory. From here, a splendid panoramic view of the snowy range of Nepal (not visible from Observatory Hill) is obtained, apart from the snowy range that catches the sight of a spectator stationed at Darjeeling. This Nepal range includes the peaks of Mount Everest and Makalu. At Sandakphu, owing to strong gales and extreme cold, the rhododendrons and other trees cannot grow up to their full heights. Passing your night at the Dak-bungalow at Sandakphu, your next march on the following morning will be to Phalut, the extreme north-west point of the British boundary over the Singalela range. Phalut means 'the Denuded Peak' and so it is. Tourists hailing from different parts of the globe flock to Phalut with the object of having a complete view of the kingdom of snows comprising the peak of Mount Everest, the highest pinnacle of eternal snow, standing like a sentinel with all its superb beauty between the two closed lands of Nepal and Tibet. Connecting the two highest peaks of the world will be seen a jagged line of snows which skirts for a distance the vast table-land of Tibet, so as to keep the roof of the world hidden from the gaze of the world at large—a divine arrangement, quite in the fitness of things. This panoramic view of a vast snowy range has undoubtedly no parallel all the world over, in beauty, height, magnitude and extensiveness. Phalut is 11,811 feet above the sea level, and is 19 miles away from Darjeeling as the crow flies, whereas it seems as if it is not more than a couple of miles from the town. This apparent proximity of mountains is one of Nature's illusions. The months of April, May and October are particularly favourable for undertaking this world-famous trip.

CHAPTER IX

EXCURSIONS IN SIKKIM

I. TO PHALUT AND BACK VIA SIKKIM.

Stages	Intervening distance	Altitude in feet
Darjeeling	—	6,812
Phalut	50	11,811
Dentam	17	4,500
(a) Pamionchi	10	6,920
Chakung	13	5,100
Darjeeling	20	6,812
<i>Or extending the tour further into Sikkim:</i>		
(b) Pamionchi	—	6,920
Kyozing (Soshing)	10	6,000
Temi	10	5,000
Namchi	11	5,200
Badamtam	11	2,500
Darjeeling	7	6,812

We have already taken the traveller with us to Phalut. For tours beyond Phalut, one must be equipped with a pass-port in one hand and if possible with a gun in the other, as the journey beyond Phalut through Nepal and Sikkim frontiers through secluded regions is certainly more or less risky. So the first quarter of the journey from Phalut to Dentam (in Sikkim) must be accomplished with great caution. While making this journey, one feels as if he is passing on to an antipodal point of the globe through extreme hush and silence of this almost bleak region, frightfully intensified by howling winds. From the ridges extending from Tonglu to Phalut, Darjeeling appears to be lying helplessly on a valley.

Nearly 2 hours' journey from Phalut brings a traveller to the summit of Singalela (most probably originating from the Sanskrit words *Singha* meaning best and *Lela* meaning beauty, i.e., the Superb Beauty). There is an expression—'See Naples and die', so beautiful is the metropolis of

Naples. We say, just stand on this lofty peak (12,126') and run the eye over the whole of the snowy range. Also see how the mighty Himalayan range hedges in the northern side of India for hundreds of miles at a stretch. Not only that, here stand in reverence and look at Mother India, extending on as far as the eye can see till lost in the dimness of distance. Have, if you can, a telescope with you and see the globe itself till it emerges beneath the horizon. It is a place where humanity becomes dissolved in a mood of worship. A pyramid of rough stones erected by some devotee marks the spot and bears testimony to favourableness of the site for plunging oneself into meditation. Owing to extreme cold, trees here have stunted growth. Wild gales sweep over the region, particularly with the approach of the twilight.

From Singalela the road descends to Chiabhunjan which is at a distance of 4 miles. Beyond Chiabhunjan, the road ascends so steeply that riding is almost out of the question. Besides, the road is very rocky. This climb takes fully 2 hours. There is no other such trying ascent on the way. On reaching Dentam, a traveller feels fatigued to the last degree. Dentam is the principal pass between the eastern valleys of Nepal and Sikkim. Here paddy-fields are found to no little surprise of the traveller, as on the hills paddy is, as a rule, conspicuous by its absence. Milk, eggs, rice, etc. are obtainable at Dentam. This trip from Singalela to Dentam is, although tiresome, full of unique interest, as the land of Sikkim unfolds its beauty in a number of ways—in lovely valleys, purling streams, roaring waterfalls, jungles of resplendent flowers, antiquarian roads and bridges, the sight of which buries in oblivion many hardships involved in the tour.

Without entering into any more details as regards routes which the traveller will now easily be able to make out for himself, we propose to note a few interesting facts. Eight miles from Chakung in the forest of Burikhop is a mine of mica. In the forest of Dentam, nearly 2 miles

above the Dentam bazaar are found coloured stones, most of which are reddish. Prismatic stones of various shades are obtainable near Chakung.

At Pamionchi* there is a big Buddhist monastery which is the second institution of its kind in Sikkim. It was built in the year 1450 A.D. *Dubdi* is the first monastery in Sikkim, whereas Pamionchi and Tashiding are the most famous. Pamionchi is the richest and the largest in Sikkim. At present some 60 or 70 lamas reside in the Pamionchi monastery, which is a four-storied building. This monastery was founded by the priest, † Gyalwa Lhavtsunpa, who hailed from Tibet.

Tasiding was founded by him and also another monk, Ngabdagpa† Lama. On reaching Kyozing (Soshing), one may visit the famous monastery of Tashiding which is visible from the Dak-bungalow and seems to be just a little way off. But the tourist has first to descend to the Rangit River and then on crossing the same has to scale a very steep and lofty height through dense vegetation which often requires trailing on the way. There are hundreds of monasteries in Sikkim each crowning the top of a summit.

The Tashiding monastery, it is said, has acquired greater sanctity from the lamas' point of view than that acquired by even Pamionchi monastery, in which has been preserved very secretly the relics of Guru Padma Sambhava (the 'precious teacher'). Proceeding downward from Namchi towards north-east along the banks of the Great Rangit, the tourist will find a cave which is said to have been sanctified by the aforesaid spiritual teacher, who lived there for some time. It may be mentioned here that Padma Sambhava possessed many mystic powers.

* The names of Sikkim monasteries are significant ones. For instance, *Pamionchi* means 'the sublime perfect lotus'. *Dubdi* means 'the hermits' cell', *Tasiding* means 'the elevated central glory'. *Sangachelling* means 'the place of secret spells' and so on.

† For information, the author is indebted to Mr. L. M. Dorje, Lecturer in Tibetan, Calcutta University.

2. DARJEELING TO GANGTOK.
via Singalela Range and Back.

Stages			Intervening distance	Altitude in feet
Darjeeling	..	..	—	6,812
Namchi	..	..	18	5,200
Temi	..	..	11	5,000
Song	..	..	12	4,500
Gangtok	..	..	15	5,800
Pakyong	..	..	11	4,700
Rungpo	..	..	9	1,200
Melli	..	..	11	800
Lopchu	..	..	10	5,300
Darjeeling	..	..	16	6,812

An alternative route from Pakyong to Darjeeling

Stages			Intervening distance	Altitude in feet
Pakyong	..	..	—	4,700
Pedong	..	..	6	4,900
Kalimpong	..	..	12	4,100
Darjeeling	..	..	33	6,812

In one day, one can reach Namchi *via* Badamtam and the Manjitar Bridge, the journey covering a distance of 18 miles but as the heading suggests the tourist is supposed to have reached Namchi *via* Singalela Range, following the route shown under 1 (b). From Namchi, the road ascends up the Tendong spur, till the saddle is crossed at Damthang ('the meadow of mud'), which is really muddy. From this point, one has to descend to the Tista river, spanned here by a more or less frail suspension bridge. A steep climb brings one to Song, whence Gangtok is one day's march amidst lovely forest scenery. On the way will be found the monastery of Ramthek. The route from Gangtok to Pakyong is along the main road leading to Pedong. So from Pakyong, one may come back to Darjeeling *via* Pedong and Kalimpong, or *via* Rungpo and Melli, situated on the motor car route to Gangtok. From Melli the Tista Bridge is $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles. This long trip covers the

most beautiful portion of the Singalela Range on the one hand and an extensive sweep through the length and the breadth of the land of Sikkim, including Gangtok, its capital, taking the tourist from the highest (excluding the snowy range) to the lowest elevations, across its lovely hills and dales, teeming with both Alpine and tropical flora and fauna on the other.

3. DARJEELING TO GANGTOK.

via Peshok and Rungpo.

Stages	Interven- ing dis- tance	Stages	Interven- ing dis- tance	Stages	Interven- ing dis- tance
Darjeeling	—				
Lopchu	16				
Melli	10				
(a) Rungpo	11	(b) Rungpo	—	(c) Rungpo	—
Pakyong	9	Shamdong	12	Sankakhola	6
Gangtok	11	Gangtok	12	Martam	6
				Gangtok	13

From the above chart, it would be clear that there are three routes from Rungpo leading to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. From Darjeeling to Gangtok, there is a fine motorable road *via* Peshok, Tista Bridge and Rungpo, but only small cars can run.

4. BEYOND GANGTOK.

(Towards the snowy peaks).

Stages	Inverven- ing dis- tance	Altitude in feet	Stages	Inverven- ing dis- tance	Altitude in feet
Gangtok	—	5,800			
Dikchu	13	2,150			
Singhik	11	4,600			
Toong	9	4,800			
(a) Chungthang	5	5,350	(b) Chungthang	—	5,350
Lachung	10	8,800	Lachen Pass	12	8,800
Yeumthang	9	13,000	Thangu	13	12,800

At Dickchu, which is to the north-west of Gangtok, the two rivers, the Tista and the Dikchu meet. This region is noted for its beautiful rocks and boulders overhanging the very precipitious slopes of the hills, where lovely foliage and brilliant orchids grow at every nook and corner, lending the landscape a singular charm. Beyond Dikchu is Tumlong (5,290'), the old capital of Sikkim. But at present no sign of the same is in evidence. Tumlong is, however, out of the track. On the way to Singhik from Dikchu, the traveller will have to cross a slender suspension bridge made of bamboo and canes. The bridge spans the gorge of the Rang-rong Chu in a crude way. The crossing is trying for the nervous people. Chungthang is a lovely plateau at the junction of the two rivers, the Lachen and the Lachung, which take their rise on the side of the snowy range remote from India and meet here. In view of this confluence, the place is named Chungthang or the 'marriage of the rivers'. This plateau was brought into being by mighty avalanches which in a remote age crushed down the towering peaks with the violence of an earthquake. At Chungthang gold dust is obtainable. From here the tourist may proceed to Thangu or Yeum Thang. Thangu is extremely cold and damp. The Dak-bungalow here is the last rest-house in Sikkim. It is a bleak region, very thinly populated by nomad folks, somehow eking out an existence by rearing yaks. Aconite or deadly nightshade grows in this tract in abundance.

Lachen is an uniquely lovely spot. It is to the north of Gangtok and is situated in a slightly more northerly region than that occupied by Kinchenjunga itself, having elevation exceeding that of Darjeeling by nearly 2,000 feet. It stands in splendid isolation on the border-land of region densely clad with forest and suffocated by heavy undergrowths which after extending for miles pave the way to the bleak region of glaciers culminating in snowy mountains. Miss Kronquist of Finish Mission, 'self-exiled in solitude', resided in this lonely and lovely place where

apples grow in abundance. In 1941, she breathed her last. The people of this place possess amazingly transparent and rosy complexion and are exceedingly charming. Lachen is verily a home of beauty and health.

5. TO JELAP PASS.

(On the high-way to Tibet)

Stages	Intervening distance	Altitude in feet	
Darjeeling	.. —	6,812	
Kalimpong	.. 28	4,100	
Pedong ..	.. 12	4,900	
Ari ..	.. 8	4,700	
Sendochan	.. 12	6,500	
Lingtu ..	.. 8	12,617	(No Dak-bungalow)
Gnatong ..	.. 7	12,210	
Jelap Pass	.. 9	14,390	
Gangtok ..	.. —	5,800	
Karponang	.. 10	9,500	

From Pedong which is 12 miles from Kalimpong, the tourist has to proceed to Rhenock by a descent to a hill-stream (the Rangpo Chu), spanned by a strong suspension bridge and then a steep climb to Rhenock which is the gate-way to Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan. At Rhenock there is a post and telegraph office and a small bazaar. The distance covered so far is 5 miles.

From Rhenock, one road leads to Gangtok and the other to Tibet and Bhutan *via* Ari which is just 3 miles from Rhenock. It is a sharp ascent on stone-stairs through a secluded region. Nowhere in the district of Darjeeling, to the best of the knowledge of the writer, is this kind of stone-steps found. This peculiar stony, steep ascent through a lovely region beyond the British territory is singularly impressive. One is apt to think, one is really proceeding towards the "Roof of the World," which appellation has been very deservedly won by Tibet, the closed land of mystery.

The next journey is from Ari to Sendochan *via* the Rongli river at 2,700' above sea-level. It is a descent (for

nearly 4 hours) to the river and then an ascent (for nearly 7 hours) to Sendochén. From Rongli, the tourist rises higher and higher, passing through a forest of tall and moss-covered trees with dense undergrowth below them, through which at some places verdant and fertile clearings peep out with their crops grown by the villagers. The road leading to Sendochén is exceedingly stony and very steep with hollows and rough rocks where one's ankles are apt to be twisted. The scenery, however, on the way to Sendochén is unsurpassed by any in the district of Darjeeling. From Sendochén is seen the rugged outline of Gimpochi where meet the three states of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet.

After a good rest at Sendochén, one must be prepared to undertake the next trip to Gnatong *via* Lingtu where there is a Dak-bungalow. Up to Lingtu, it is a very trying climb of 8 miles, by traversing which distance the traveller attains a further elevation of a little over 6,000 feet. From this lofty region (12,617'), the snowy range on a clear day, unfolds itself in all its glory and majesty, far superior to what is observed from Phalut and Sandakphu. A little below the summit of the mountain are the remnants of the old Tibetan fort of Lingtu, which was jealously guarded by the Tibetans towards the close of the year 1887, thus necessitating the forcing of an expedition into Tibet in 1888. Not being able to resist the attack of the British regiment, the Tibetans moved backwards and in one night built a stony wall fully three miles in length and some three or four feet in height at Gnatong, whence they beat a hasty retreat without fighting. Be that as it may, the tourist has to reach Gnatong (7 miles from Lingtu) after crossing Lingtu, and take shelter for the night at the Dak-bungalow of Gnatong, there being no rest-house at Lingtu. At Gnatong, there is a village of the Bhutias and a sub-post office.

The next stage is Jelap La (La means pass). There are only here and there dwarf pines and rhododendrons,

across which with the eventide sweep in tremendous velocity icy-cold winds which retard their growth. Many trees having been struck by lightning are found in a ruined state. Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan have been very aptly designated as 'the lands of the thunderbolt'. Between Jelap Pass and Gnatong lies Lake Bidentzo, which is 6 miles to the north-west of the road from Gnatong. It covers an area of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles \times 1 mile and is situated at an elevation of 12,700'. From this lake, Kuphu Dak-bungalow is 5 miles further on, wherefrom Jelap Pass is a sharp and very tiresome ascent for 4 miles, the road being strewn with stones and shales. This pass is almost in a bleak region.

Beyond to the north-east and below Jelap Pass lies the valley of Chumbi, which was at one time under the suzerainty of Sikkim, when the king of that land used to spend the trying rainy season in this lovely valley. At Chumbi the rain-fall is very scanty. From Jelap Pass is visible for the first time, the most lovely peak of Chomal Hari, far-famed for its beauty.

6. TO JELAP PASS VIA GANGTOK.

Stages	Intervening distance	Altitude in feet	
Gangtok ..	.. —	5,800	
Karponang ..	.. 10	9,500	
Changu ..	.. 10	12,600	
Nathu Pass ..	.. 8	14,300	(No Dak-bungalow)
Kuphu ..	.. ?	13,200	
Jelap Pass ..	.. 4	14,300	

A hardy tourist can cover the distance of fully 19 miles from Gangtok to Changu in one day. The route is an ascent through dense forest. A little below the Changu Dak-bungalow is Changu Lake which is nearly a mile long. In the lake, the snowy peaks of the surrounding ridges are beautifully reflected. The distance from Changu to Kuphu is not exactly known. It may be some 12 miles and it takes nearly 6 hours to do the journey. The tourist

may halt at the Dak-bungalow of Kuphu or push on to cover an additional distance of 4 miles to reach the Jelap Pass, wherefrom one can return *via* Gnatong, Sendochen, Ari, Pedong and Kalimpong.

7. HOT SPRINGS IN SIKKIM.

From Singla Bazar (*see the next chapter*) after doing a distance of 14 miles along the right bank of the Great Rangit River, one will reach a hot spring, just at the place where most miraculously this river divides itself into two streams, which meet after running for a distance of nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. If dug a little, hot water begins to ooze out from this enclosed sandy strip of land. This water has medicinal properties. During the rainy season, this upland is obliterated by the rushing waters of this hill stream which is the second great river in these parts of the Himalayas. Twelve miles further away and along the same route *via* the village of Lepchhek is another hot spring which sprouts up from a hole in a big boulder, nearly eight feet in height.

CHAPTER X

KINCHENJUNGA AND THE SNOWY RANGE

Routes to and attempts on Kinchenjunga

There are four principal routes of approach to this second or probably the third highest peak in the world. One is *via* North-eastern Nepal through the upland valley of the Tamar, wherefrom the tourist has to cross Chumbab La, Kang La, Tseram, Mirgin La, Khunza, and lastly Kangbachen. This route is along the western side of Kinchenjunga. Chumbab La (*La* means pass) is beyond Jongri (sometimes spelt Dzongri) at the threshold of the snows, being 7 days' march from and to the north (slightly to the left) of Darjeeling. Beyond Chumbab La is Kang La, near the junction of the Singalela Range. Then proceed to Tseram, a village in Nepal beyond the Singalela Range, the route being towards west. Then proceed towards north *via* the villages of Khunza and Kangbachen between which lies the mountain called Janu (25,294') visible from Darjeeling. To the north of Kangbachen and far away is the Kinchenjunga glacier, from which a mountaineer can attack the mighty Kinchenjunga from the south-western face. The second route is up the Yalung Valley in Nepal. The third route is up the Talung Valley in Sikkim. Proceed from Gangtok to Dikchu (Ch. IX), then while nearing Singhik on the following day's march, the Talung, a tributary of the Tista is seen. From here proceed towards Kinchenjunga, which is nearly 30 miles away as the crow flies. The way is through a dense forest and snowy regions, which border the two well-known peaks of Simvu and Siniolchu, the glaciers of which give rise to the Talung River. The fourth route is *via* Lachen Pass (*see* Ch. IX), almost near the home of the Tista River at Lake Chalamo, which has been named by the English

and the mountaineering parties 'the Green Lake' or 'the Turquoise Lake'. Beyond Lachen Pass, where there is the last Sikkim Dak-Bungalow, one enters into a very dense forest, which necessitates an arduous trail making. When the famous Kinchenjunga Expedition of 1930, consisting of a party of mountaineers from four different nations, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Great Britain under the leadership of Professor G. Dyhrenfurth, was just making arrangement to penetrate into the region, suffocated by very dense forest, and heavy undergrowths and scrubs beyond Lachen Pass, they had to completely change their plans on receiving a 'charming letter' from the Maharaja of Nepal, which authorized them to assail Kinchenjunga *via* the first route already described, that is through Tseram, Kangbachen, etc.

By the Lachen Pass route, the pick of the school of the young and famous Munich mountaineers attempted Kinchenjunga under their leader, Dr. Paul Bauer, who had with him eight companions. In 8 days, this party reached Lachen Pass and established their Base Camp (Camp Three) after two more marches beyond Lachen on Green Lake Plain at an elevation of 14,126 feet. The party then proceeded to explore the north-east side of Kinchenjunga. One party ascended to the Simvu Saddle, wherefrom an attempt was made to attain the Simvu Peak, 22,760 feet. Another party attempted to assail Kinchenjunga. The party with the hardy and faithful porters (Sherpa and Bhutia) confronted an icy ridge which leads to the North Ridge, at the junction of which an easy and lovely terrace is conspicuous from Darjeeling with the naked eye. A few members of the party, as a result of repeated attacks with renewed vigour proceeded beyond Camp Ten (22,288'), the last one. At Camp Eight and Nine (21,646'), they had to carve ice-caves in the solid ice, where 7 feet of snow fell by night-fall and the entrance had to be cleared several times during the day and still it was snowing. The entrance was as narrow as possible, and

the cave was just spacious enough to hold six to eight persons. The temperature inside it rarely sank below 26 degrees to 28 degrees F. whilst outside it was 14 degrees F. by day and 10 degrees F. to 25 degrees F. below zero degree Fahrenheit by night. The last camp (Camp Ten) was pitched 'on easy and open snow'. But the journey up to this Camp was a terrible and a most fearful affair. They had to climb up perpendicular ice-walls by step-cutting and roping operations, cross over terrible ice-ridges and most uncertain ice terraces by making a hole into which with the help of an axe, a mountaineer to his great surprise gazed upon a glacier (Twins Glacier) in the abyss of death. Two ice-towers on their way had to be stormed before they could make their way ahead. After fully 40 days' march, struggles and repeated efforts, they could proceed beyond the last Camp thinking that they would after such a terrific and death-inviting struggle be able to reach the North Ridge and then climb upon the summit along that lovely terrace. But alas! the real arduous task was, it is said, just begun, as onwards were not only perpendicular, but overhanging rocks. Besides, extreme rarity of air beyond the elevation of 24,000 feet makes it extremely trying to even do a vertical height of 150 feet per hour. Here, to march a single step is an exertion. At this stage, weather too was changed for the worse, with the result that the party had to beat a hasty retreat through ice and continually falling snow in which they and the porters were buried almost knee-deep, and sometimes, hurled down to a certain distance by small avalanches. To relieve the porters, miserably played out, of heavy burdens, a good half of the loads were thrown down 5,000 feet precipice to the Twins Glacier. The exhausted porters continually fell down while crossing slippery precipices and many were saved by the presence of mind and a gallant feat of a porter with the help of a rope. The highest point reached was only 24,272 feet. These are only a very few facts of one of the most gallant mountaineering

adventures in the world so far. Imagination itself shudders at the task that confronted these desperate mountaineers.

The attempt of Mr. E. F. Farmer of New York in 1929 is a romantic one. His was the second and a very desperate attack on Kinchenjunga. His mountaineering experience was very limited and he had never before visited the mighty Himalayas. He never allowed his plan to leak out. Having obtained a pass for entrance into Sikkim with the provision that he would not enter into either Tibet or Nepal, he set out on his journey. Being accompanied by expert Sherpa and Bhutia porters under the guidance of Sirdar Lobsang, he left Darjeeling on May 6, 1929, crossed Sikkim, entered into Nepal and secretly avoiding the village of Tseram in the Yalung Valley of Nepal by passing through higher forest-clad slopes, crossed the Kang La (pass). After 20 days' march when they were climbing up Talung Saddle, Lobsang, because of insufficient clothes and inferior boots provided for the porters, was reluctant to proceed any further and advised a retreat. Farmer ordered them to halt and continued the climb against advice. His figure shrouded in mist at times made its appearance from great heights with the freakish clearing of the fog. The porters waved hands signalling for his turning back without avail. With the approach of the eventide he was seen no more. The porters then returned to their camps and off and on signalled during the night with an electric torch. The next morning, on climbing up some distance, the porters caught a glimpse of his figure on a steep snow slope, appearing as if he was coming down with arms stretched. The whole day, they were expecting his arrival but in vain. On the following morning, they turned back, as their food fell short. Thus ended the tragedy.

The first attempt on Kinchenjunga was made in August, 1905, by three Swiss gentlemen, Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod, M. Reymond and Lieut. Pache under the leadership of an Englishman, Mr. Aleister Crowley. They

took the direct route (almost straight on towards north from the Singalela Range) which would seem to a layman to be quite easy. They proceeded along the Singalela Ridge, and crossing the Chumbab La (pass), entered the Yalung Valley, whence they ascended the Yalung Glacier on the western side of Kinchenjunga and attacked the south-western face of the mighty mountain, which was then found to be exceedingly steep and mostly built of granite precipices, which are evidently inaccessible, as step cutting and nailing are out of the question on this face. A Camp was established at 20,343 feet. Some members of the party claimed to have climbed 1,000 feet higher, but realising this face to be formidable and inaccessible, they retraced their steps down a snow slope, when two porters in the middle slipped, thereby dragging with them Pache and another porter who were behind and pushing down two other members of the expedition who were in front. This slip would not have probably been fatal to any one of them, as mountaineers often descend down ice-slopes by a glissade as was the case with Dr. Somervell and his companions in the Mount Everest Expedition, but this slip started a large avalanche of snow, with disastrous results, culminating in the burial of all (three) the porters and Pache in the avalanche. So this direct route through Yalung Glacier is absolutely worthless for attacking Kinchenjunga. It may be noted here that the south-eastern face of Kinchenjunga, which to a spectator from Darjeeling appears to be easily conquerable is 'vicious in the extreme, defended everywhere by overhanging masses of ice'.

The Dyhrenfurth Expedition of 1930 is, as has been already pointed out, an International one. Professor Dyhrenfurth who in his younger days bagged outright so many as seven hundred peaks in the Alps and Hope Tatra was placed at the head of these aspirants to Kinchenjunga. Of the climbing members Kurz was an expert in winter ascents. He was also attached to the expedition as a

cartographer. Hoerlin and Schneider, the youngest members of the expedition, had at their credit brilliant climbing records. The former was a student of medicine while the latter was a geologist. Wood Johnson and F. S. Smythe were English mountaineers. Smythe, the eminent and seasoned mountaineer of Kamet and Everest repute, was an invaluable acquisition to this expedition as also the Everest Expedition of 1933.

Professor Dyhrenfurth ignored the valued experience gained by the pioneers on the field. For instance, he did not recognize the fact that besides facilitating ventilation of the body two, three, or more layers of clothing of lighter stuff are for obvious reasons warmer than one layer of heavy material.

Nashpati, Gyaljain, Narsang, and Lobsang are the four sirdars who were engaged by the expedition. The porters who made their mark in this enterprise were Nemu, Lewa, Sonam, Tsinabo, Ongdi, Narsing, Kipa, and Nima. Nima had been Irvine's servant on Everest in 1924. Lewa performed magnificent work in the Bavarian Expedition. Chettan or "Satan", the immortal porter, was a seasoned mountaineer and was recruited by Schneider.

The Expedition preferred the longest route through the North-eastern Nepal to the Lachen route taken by the Munich party the previous year.

Up to Dzongri at the threshold of the snows the route followed by the expedition is the same as described elsewhere in this book. On the way to Dzongri they had encountered deep snow below 10,000 feet. They wondered whether the bare-footed porters would be able to negotiate the 16,373 feet Kang Pass, which was ahead and must have been snow-covered. Even at Dzongri the party was overtaken by a blizzard. To the Bhutia and the Sherpa porters the fury of the elements was intimidating. The Nepali porters began to tremble like an aspen leaf and refused to proceed to the Kang La. Being bare-footed and

clad in cotton clothing they had every justification for the refusal to traverse the snow-clad Kang Pass. Fifty Nepali porters abandoned their loads and returned to Darjeeling to the great detriment of the progress of the expedition through the bleak and high Himalayan region in which lay only three villages of meanest description named Yalung, Khunja, and Kangbachen. On their way the party spared no pains in gathering some informations about Farmer, but no information was available as to his traverse. Just before reaching the Kinchenjunga Glacier, a small cluster of huts marked in the map as Ramthang, was met.

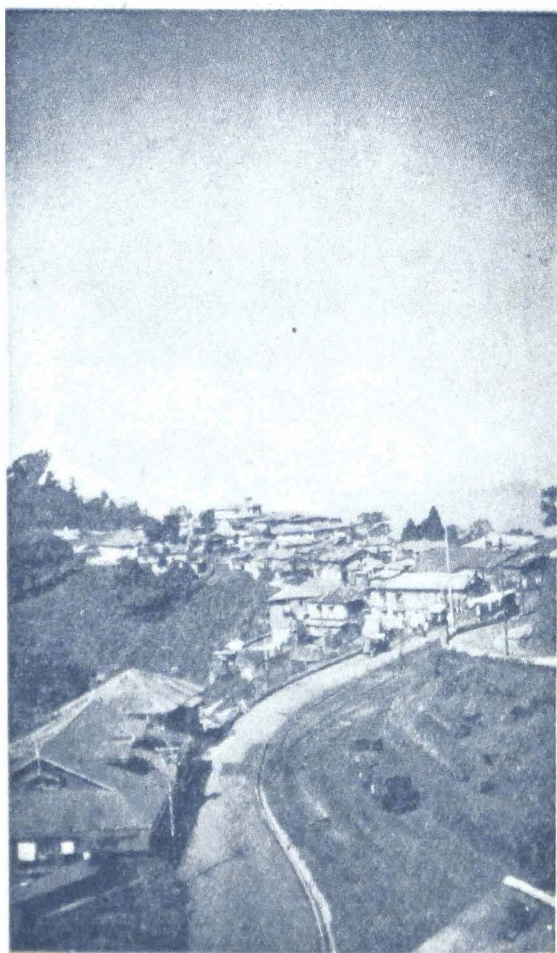
It was proposed to attack the western face of the mountain, the foot of which was some five miles away from the Base Camp. Mr. Freshfield was of opinion that it was the western face of the mountain which offered any possibility of a climb to the summit. A mental survey of the route from the foot of the western ridge might keep one's spirit up and hope might tell a flattering tale, but all the same the obstacles of Kinchenjunga are many and prodigious, appalling and terrific. If Everest would yield to a climbing expedition in this century, Kinchenjunga may bid defiance to the attempts of its intruders possibly for many centuries to come. It may even remain unassailable till Nature and time contribute their quota and at least tumble down the formidable armours that defend the citadel of both static and dynamic power. When they climbed far up, the whole face that intervened between the crest of the North Ridge and the Eastern Tributary Glacier seemed absolutely beyond the bounds of possibility. The only alternative that offered itself for consideration was the great ice wall that runs for some three miles across the face of the mountain. It was an almost vertical ice band having an appalling height of 600 to 800 feet, a most forbidding barrier imaginable.

While the party was encamped in Camp II on the Kinchenjunga Glacier before attacking the great ice band.



A NEPALI GIRL.

Photo—D. Bhanja.



A VIEW OF KURSEONG

a faint shout was heard in the evening. It was not a shout, but a series of shouts or rather cry at the top of one's voice, only subdued by distance. They wondered if the shouts were those of a snow man! It was soon discovered that their porter, Ongdi, had been lying engulfed in the depths of an abysmal hole. Soon a rope was lowered which Ongdi readily put to use by fastening himself to it. Ongdi very narrowly survived the catastrophe.

That was a dreadful night. Great ice avalanches many times thundered down mountain sides. In five days they could rise to a height of 500 feet on the almost vertical ice wall. The process was one of step-cutting and running into the hard ice pitons through the rings of which was passed a rope to serve as a hand-rail. It was not only a great adventure, but a nerve-racking enterprise. The following words of Mr. Smythe speak volumes: "During the day we watched them, mere specks crawling upwards with the slowness of an hour-hand."

The night before the day dawned for the final struggle to climb up the ice wall and gain the terrace was an ominous one. Avalanches roared and thundered all night from time to time. Altogether four sahibs and twelve porters were off to ascend the ice wall. An avalanche of cataclysmic dimensions thundered down the mountain side. The climbers and the men in the Camp below were providentially saved. Chettan was missing. Wieland was found "approaching something sticking out between the ice blocks. It was Chettan's hand." He was dug out. It was all over with this hero of many a Himalayan expedition. Smythe writes: "We lost not a porter but a valued friend. We left him buried amid one of the grandest mountain cirques in the world." Thus ended the first attempt on May 9, a tragic day in the annals of Himalayan mountaineering.

The last alternative was to attempt the North-west Ridge of the mountain. About this Ridge Smythe writes: "no ridge I have ever examined affected me with the same

feeling of utter and complete hopelessness as that of the North-west Ridge of Kangchenjunga." The crest of the ridge is as keen as the edge of a knife, and there are deep gaps into these edges—it was like a saw of ice on which stood rocky towers hundreds of feet in height. During the ascent of this ridge many an unstable rock was dislodged which on its way hurled down other rocks until "a perfect torrent of crags" set up tremendous vibrations which were answered by echoes roaring from the pyramids of Kinchenjunga. May 17 of 1930 witnessed the final defeat on the invulnerable North-west Ridge of the mountain. It appears that Kinchenjunga will ever remain a virgin peak.

Without dilating any more on Kinchenjunga expeditions, which were many, some of which are not on record, we would now propose to show the direct road to this snowy group of mountains from Darjeeling, taking the readers up to the very threshold of the snowy region, through tropical Sikkim.

First Day:—To Chakung via Takvar Road—20 miles. A steady descent to Singla Bazaar, at the valley verging on Sikkim. Then to cross a suspension bridge, spanning the Ramman River, a tributary of the Great Rangit. From the bridge, the journey is a steep uphill one through dense forest. Chakung Dak-bungalow is at an elevation of 5,100 feet. *Second day:*—To Rinchingpong—13½ miles, via Ratho Valley. First a descent to the valley and then an ascent to cross a ridge north of the valley. Then down to Rishi Valley. Lastly an ascent to Rinchingpong Dak-bungalow. This is an historical place (see Chap. I). *Third day:*—To Pamionchi—11 miles. To Kulhait river—a descent of 5 miles. Then to Pamionchi—an ascent of 6 miles. Nearly 2 miles below and on the way to Pamionchi monastery is Geyzing mart famous for carved Tibetan sermons on stones. To Brigadier-General Bruce under whose leadership the second Everest Expedition left Darjeeling in the spring of 1922 was once displayed here

by a Head Lama of this monastery the efficacy of spells.

Fourth day:—An easy march to Tingling, through cultivated valley of Rathong. On the way, there is a monastery called *Malli gompa*, which was built in commemoration of the halt of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Pope of Tibet, in the course of his tour in Sikkim. There is a small village, but no Dak-bungalow here or beyond.

Fifth day:—To Yuk-sam, the last village. Yuk-sam means 'the meeting place of three lamas'. Here is the first monastery of Sikkim, nestled on a wooded cone, rising aloft from the plateau. It is pre-eminently a historic place as from here the history of Sikkim began. The monastery was founded by a Tibetan prelate named Lhasen Chemo, who hailed from Tibet. On his arrival here, he was met by two other lamas hailing from south and east. Hence the name Yuk-sam. The country was then sparsely peopled by primitive Lepchas. In pursuance of a pontifical order, a man named Pun-tsok, was searched out from the east and was crowned king of Sikkim, after being anointed with holy water. A huge *chorten* and a rough stone seat respectively mark the spots where his coronation took place and his throne lay.

Sixth, Seventh and Eighth day:—A tourist of exceptional stamina can do the journey from Yak-sam to Jongri in two days, ordinarily three days being required in completing this tour. Marching onwards from Yak-sam, the tourist finds himself merged in dense forest, choked with scrubs and heavy undergrowth, where sunshine cannot penetrate—a canopy of vegetation, set with blind, but bold and clever leeches, which being guided by smell shower down and play havoc with any passer-by that may happen to pass by this most irksome track. Rotting leaves, turned into leaf mould, thickly and treacherously covering rough stones, make footsteps unsteady and uncertain. Long gaps between boulders necessitate jumping from one to the other. Tracks are oppressed with thick vegetation, creepers and branches of trees, which must be lopped off to enable one to push

on further. Miasmatic and offensive odours of decay, narrow and hardly discernible tracks crested on giddy precipices, fear of wild animals and even of dreaded Snow Men* hidden in the impenetrable depths of this choked region, stealthy attacks of leeches from below as well as from above, vicious stinging of nettles hidden in the thick walls of wild vegetation pressing from both sides, etc. are some of the obstacles and abominable features of this trudge from the last village towards Jongri. In one word, flora and fauna reign supreme in this region, and actively and desperately resist for the last time, passage of human beings, attempting to lay their feet on the virgin region of snows. A few miles from Yuk-sam is a small open spot called Nibitha. At a distance of 4 miles from Nibitha, the track crosses the river Praig-chu at an elevation of 7,000 feet. After ascending a further vertical height of 3,000 feet, one is beyond the forest zone. From here Pandim and Jubonu are visible. Lastly a very steep, violent, and nerve-racking climb for 4 hours breasting a vertical height of 7,000 feet through a region of incredibly dwarf rhododendrons (may be called thickets) and stony slopes falls to the lot of a tourist. On completion of this ascent, two rough and primitive stony sheds for two yak-herds for summer attract the notice of a tourist—the last reminiscence of human workmanship in this bleak region, and though quite insignificant and standing in splendid isolation is geography-making, being a definite site at the threshold of the snows, suitable for a climbing centre for the Kinchenjunga group of mountains. The word *Jongri* slightly deviates from *Chaunri* meaning yaks. The elevation of Jongri is 13,200 feet. From Jongri, a steep climb leads a tourist to Gochak La, 'the lock pass', where there is a cave in this snowy region. The priests of the famous

* In the *Statesman*, an English Major related how he had met, while climbing a snowy rock in his Himalayan expedition, a tall Snow Man almost naked, who, on being detected, fled away with wild leaps over the rocks.

Pamionchi Monastery make their pilgrimage to this cave once a year in order to propitiate the Spirits of the Snows.

If you are still intent on transgressing the Great Laws of Silence and Towering Heights of the Virgin Snows, you may, oblivious of the danger of passive resistance extend your pilgrimage further into the very grip of Nature, amid the Eternal Snows, opening up before the two passes, Chumbab La and Kang La.

Mountaineering and inexplicable phenomena

A few words must be said of the very interesting phenomena associated with the highest peaks in the world and the mountaineering involved in assailing the same.

Most spectators from Darjeeling have probably noticed a distinct and an oblique line of clouds rising from the crest of Kinchenchunja and pointing towards the east. Similar phenomenon has been observed with respect to Mount Everest. The writer so long attributed it to the cloud-attracting power of the Twin Peaks of Kinchenjunga or blizzard swept along the windward direction. This crowning cloud wreath is generally called a 'plume' in common parlance. The appellative given to it by the aerodynamical experts is 'burble'. The eminent writer of 'The Kangchenjunga Adventure', Mr. F. S. Smythe, writes in one place:—"A silver lock of clouds was trailing from Kangchenjunga." So it did not fail to attract his attention but no one has so far been able to probe into the mystery of this 'silver lock'. The epic and epoch-making Houston Mount Everest Expedition of 1933 by aeroplanes throws some light on this enigma. The expedition party gave voice to their unique experience and amazement thus: "We were thrilled beyond description by what we had seen; but of all we had seen through, our passage into the heart of that plume or jet of ice particles was the most intriguing." In another place again: "Here was no drifting cloud wisp, but a pro-

digious jet of rushing winds flinging a vertiable barrage of ice fragments for several miles to leeward of the peak." They consider it to be due to a zone of reduced pressure "which tends to draw up the air from the Tibetan side and with it great masses of old snow and fragments of ice." But why should there be a reduction of pressure, approaching a vacuum?—a great mystery indeed!

Now about the difficulties and obstacles that confront a mountaineer while climbing snowy altitudes. At altitudes above 14,000 feet one quite feels the effect of rarity of air. From 20,000 to 24,000 feet, the extreme rarity of air tells upon one's energy to an appalling degree when climbing against one's body-weight, so much so that to proceed a single step onward is trying. The members of the Mount Everest Expedition party found the gaining of entrance into sleeping-bags through a narrow passage at the top a very tiresome feat—they were constrained to take rest at intervals. Needless to add that this was due to the extreme rarity of air in the atmosphere. Beyond 24,000 feet, the struggle is a terrific one, when to do a vertical height of 150 feet to 200 feet per hour requires nerve-racking efforts. Besides, one gets very irritated at these giddy heights. Brain-consciousness seems to have waned a good deal—one is neither quick to execute nor to think. As a rule, the climbers have to get themselves acclimatised by staying in successive camps for a day or two, before proceeding on to a new camp. Limbs become frost-bitten, so much so that they drop off. The writer had the opportunity of treating several years ago a Sherpa porter who lost several of his finger-tips in a Himalayan Expedition—nearly an inch of some fingers and more than that in others dropped off outright. The parts had suppurated and were septic. Amputation was advised, but fortunately the case was cured with a few does of Arsenicum album; thus was saved one whose heroism will ever remain unhonoured and unsung. Dr. T. Howard Somervell who in Mount Everest Expedition of 1924 reached the level of 28,000 feet

has left an indelible record of his appreciation of the porters who accompanied the aforesaid expedition. The higher the altitude, the less is the boiling point of water, and hence arises the necessity of boiling water under high-pressure boiler, as otherwise water will steam and boil in vain without having its desired effect in cooking. The mountaineers sleep at night in their comfortable eider-down sleeping bags which are almost impervious to cold. At very high altitudes of Kinchenjunga, the difference between day and night temperature is very wide—nearly 200°F. This abnormal fluctuation is terribly trying for the climbers. Solar heat during the daytime when the sun is ablaze has a scorching and blackening effect on the face, which feels as if the skin is being stripped off. This is principally due to the ultra-violet rays of the sun which are mercilessly intense in these very high elevations. Sometimes the faces and the lips become puffed and then the skin cracks and exudes a thin fluidic substance. Scientifically prepared face-creams which are potent enough to greatly absorb these rays have to be used. The writer has known from a reliable source that several tourists who have been negligent in being equipped with this stuff had to suffer the consequences, their rosy complexion giving place to a decidedly dark one characteristic of the tropical zone. Then, there is such a thing as snow-blindness, which is principally caused by looking at resplendently white sheets of ice and snows. It must be remembered that ultra-violet rays of the sun at high altitudes play a very important part in producing snow-blindness, so that even on looking at the faces of rocks and boulders, one may suffer from this trouble. Bottle-green or dark yellow snow-glasses specially made for the purpose are used. The effect of intense ultra-violet rays is not only to make one blind, but to set up regular and most painful ophthalmic affections. High altitudes tend to the formation of acid in the stomach. So the mountaineers often carry with them suitable alkaline tablets, which evidently neutralise the acid. An avalanche

is a prolific source of danger to climbers. Treading on the masses of ice, or sometimes the slightest touch is sufficient to set a small avalanche in motion. Without giving any notice, avalanches slide down slopes of mountains, crushing and burying everything on their way. Dense mist shrouding mountain after mountain almost in the twinkling of an eye is a great obstacle to a mountaineering party. Fresh layers of snow constitute a further impediment to climbing. Then, there are blinding storms of wind and snow called blizzards to encounter. The climbing on ice walls rising aloft perpendicularly in some places is no joke. A climber has to hammer a kind of nail, one above the other, through the rings of which he clips a rope which supports the body, thus enabling him to cut with an ice-axe step after step on the hard ice to place his feet on. On Kinchenjunga, this kind of ice work begins at 21,000 feet. But while descending, these steps as well as the fixed ropes very often become obliterated by fresh falls of snow. No more vivid description can be given of such a tedious climb than that depicted by Mr. Smythe when he writes: "During the day we watched them, mere specks crawling upwards with the slowness of an hour hand."

Except Kinchenjunga, none of the first one dozen of the highest peaks in the world exposes itself in all its glory to spectators stationed in any town, all being hidden in the very depths and, so to speak, the wilderness of mountains, and although climbing its summit appears to be easy to the spectators from Darjeeling, the conquering of the Twin Peaks of Kinchenjunga is the most difficult and most dangerous task that has ever or will perhaps ever confront a mountaineering party. The very promising shelf of snow that is visible on the south-western face of Kinchenjunga from Darjeeling is not only inaccessible owing to perpendicular granite-walls below it, but if somehow or other reached, would prove to be most dangerous, as along this snowy terrace very often roll down gigantic

boulders and monstrous avalanches, thundering as they fall, making an ominous roar, which if heard from a distance, may be likened to what ushers in a terrible earth-quake.

Kinchenjunga, which is 12 miles to the south of the wind-swept "Roof of the World" and 45 miles from Darjeeling as the crow flies, is a great attraction to the world at large. In the authoritative writings of Mr. Smythe we find: "To compare Kinchenjunga with the Alps is like comparing a pigmy with a giant." In another place he says: "The Alps are the 'Play-ground of Europe', the Himalayas the Play-ground of the gods. ** ** There is nothing friendly about a Himalayan peak. You feel that it is coldly hostile, that it resents intrusion. It allows no latitude, it seizes upon the slightest mistake. It will kill you, if it can."

A tour up to the threshold of the snows (Jongri) or further beyond up to the foot of this majestic mountain through several snowy passes is romantic in the extreme.

The Snowy Range

Stand on the Observatory Hill and look towards the snowy range, spreading from east to west. The loftiest and the most massive mountain on the north (slightly to the left) with two peaks close to each other is Kinchenjunga. The peak to the left (*i.e.* west) of Kinchenjunga is that of Talung. The depressed point where the two ridges extending from Talung and Kinchenjunga meet is known as Talung Saddle. While making an attempt to climb this saddle, Mr. Farmer lost his life. To the left of Talung stands the well-known Kabru with its two summits, the eastern and the western, looking like a tent. It is from the glacier of Kabru that the Great Rangit takes its rise, and sweeps down coloured stones and thereby strews its banks with water-worn pebbles of amazingly variegated hues, which must be seen, to be believed. On a clear day is visible below the eastern summit of Kabru, a dome-like

peak called Kabur (15,827'), which is two miles north of, and above Jongri (see page 115). The peak close to, and to the east of Kabur is known as the Forked Peak. The peak to the left of the western summit of Kabru is the Little Kabru. To the left of Little Kabru stands another very well known peak called Janu, which is in Nepal. Janu will be very easily recognised by the fact that its crest seems to be cut down slantingly to a considerable distance. Further on to the west is the Kang Peak (18,280'), to the north of which is Kang La (16,373'), not visible from Darjeeling. To the right of Kinchenjunga is Pandim. To the right of Pandim is Jubanu. To the right of Jubanu is an almost invisible peak, named Simvo, which seems to be very remote. To the right of Simvo is the massive Narsing, a well-known peak, to the western side of which are noticed several snowy shelves running down to a considerable distance. Then comes the most beautiful turret-like peak of Siniolchu, named by the Survey Department D2. It is only Nilkanta in the Western Himalaya that shares the same towering magnificence.

The following is a list of known and prominent peaks in this range with details, the order of the names being from west to east.

Mountains	Altitude in feet	Distance from Darjeeling	Remarks
1. Kang Peak	.. 18,280		South of the pass, Kang La, 16,373'.
2. Janu (in Nepal)	.. 25,304	46	Called 'the Eagle Peak'.
3. Little Kabru	.. 21,970		
4. Kabru ..	.. 24,002	40	Kabur is a different peak.
5. Talung Saddle	.. 22,130		
6. Kinchenjunga	.. 28,156	45	The second or the third highest peak in the world.
7. Pandim ..	.. 22,017	36	
8. Narsing	.. 19,130	32	
9. Siniolchu	.. 22,520	46	Called D2.

Mountains	Altitude in feet	Distance from Darjeeling	Remarks
10. Chomiumo	.. 22,300	70	
11. Takchan	.. 19,200	49	Called D3.
12. Kangchenjhau	.. 22,509	69	
13. Donkia Rhi	.. 23,136	72	
14. Narim .. "	.. 17,572		
15. Dependikang	.. 17,325	43	Also called Chu- manago.
16. Chomal Hari	.. 23,944	84	The most lovely
17. Gipmochi	.. 14,518	42	peak in the world.

A few notes on the above peaks:—Between Pandim and Narsing, there are 4 smaller peaks. Between Siniolchu and Chomiumo stands a long range with several peaks. Between Kangchenjhau (its summit looks flat) and Donkia Rhi are many jagged snowy peaks. To the east of Dependikang and beyond one more peak is the well-known Chola Pass which leads to Tibet. To the west of Donkia Rhi is a less elevated but a prominent peak, at the western foot of which lies Donkia Pass, leading to Tibet. The first peak to the east of Chola Pass is Chomal Hari. At Gipmochi meet the three territories of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. Siniolchu has earned an appellation: "Embodiment of inaccessibility." It is 'too beautiful to be defiled by man. Whether Kinchenjunga is the 2nd or the 3rd highest mountain in the world is not yet definitely known. Taking into account the errors of refraction, attractive forces of mountains, etc., Colonel S. G. Burrard, Superintendent of the Trigonometrical Survey of India, arrived at the following heights of the three highest peaks in the world.

1st Mount Everest	..	..	29,141
2nd Kinchenjunga	..	..	28,225
3rd Godwin Austin	..	..	28,191 (Now called K2)

A FEW WELL-KNOWN HIMALAYAN PEAKS

Mountains	Altitude in feet	Remarks
Godwin Austin	.. 28,250	Called K2.
Makalu ..	.. 27,790	The 4th highest peak in the world.
Dhaulagiri	.. 26,795	
Nanga Parbat	.. 26,620	Vainly attempted by Dr. Kellas, Dr. Longstaff and Mummery.
Gauri Sankar	.. 23,440	These three mountains are men- tioned in the Hindu scriptures of great antiquity. A famous peak in Nepal, to the west of Everest.
Badrinath	.. 23,399	
Kailas ..	.. 22,028	
Gosainthan	.. 26,305	

HIGHEST PEAKS OF DIFFERENT CONTINENTS

Europe: Mount Elburz (Russia)	.. 18,465	
Africa: Kilimanjaro ..	.. 19,710	
North America: Mt. McKinley	.. 20,464	
South America: Aconcaqua	.. 23,081	
Asia: Mount Everest ..	.. 29,002	(the highest).
N.B. Renowned Alps (Mont Blanc)	.. 15,780	

TIBETAN NAMES OF A FEW MOUNTAINS

Kangchen Dzonga (Kinchenjunga) meaning 'Five Treasuries of the Great Snows'. *Jhomolungma* (Mount Everest) meaning 'Queen of Mountains'. *Cho-mo Kang-kar* (Mount Everest) meaning 'The Queen of White Snowy Mountains'. *Mithi-guthi Chaphu Long-nga* (Mount Everest) meaning 'Mountain visible from all directions, on the summit of which the flying birds become blind.' *Janu* means 'Masked Rainbow Hues'. *Kabru* means 'Horn of Protection.' *Pandim* means 'the King's Ministers'. *Chomiomo* means 'the Mountain of our Lady Mother'. *Chomal Hari* means 'the Goddess Mountain'.

Beyond the Snowy Range

The vast and extensive snowy range that greets the vision of a spectator from Darjeeling, stretching away from the eastern to the culminating western point of the

horizon, practically speaking, hedges in the 'Roof of the World', a vast table-land, having a mean elevation of 13,000 feet, that is, fully 1,000 feet higher than the highest elevation met with in the district of Darjeeling, its lowest plains being 12,000 feet above sea-level.

Its area is 651,700 square miles, being nearly 13 times the size of England, but its population is comparatively very meagre, being 4 to 6 millions only.

It appears from the existence of water-worn pebbles and shells which cover a considerable portion of this plateau, that the land was, at no very remote geological age, under water.

Whereas the rainfall in Sikkim is on an average 200" per annum, in Tibet it does not exceed 14". The rain-clouds that sweep on to Bengal and Sikkim, and enrich these lands with exuberant flora and teeming fauna, are hardly able to cross the lofty ranges that jealously hedge in this extensive plateau. Tibet is consequently not a fertile land. It is in a bleak region, where forest is conspicuous by its absence.

The only fuel, the Tibetans have, consists in dried dungs of yaks and this is scanty too,—nay, miserably insufficient for this cold country. In some parts of Tibet, they get fuel from scrubs and thickets. When they feel colder, they put on more clothes, and never use their precious fuel for warmth. Bathing is a thing which is almost unknown in Tibet, for where is sufficient water to heat the ice-cold water!

Tibet boasts of being the mother of most of the greatest rivers of the continent of Asia. They all take their rise in this closed lofty region, which in its turn is studded with lakes ranging in their area from hundreds of square yards to hundreds of square miles, the larger lakes not being navigable due to terrific storms that sweep the hill-sides and the rocky plains. Wind runs wild and howls an hour before noon till sunset, and sweeps along the plateau for miles with dust-devils consisting of sands and small stones.

The upland valleys that only assume a countenance of friendliness with the people of this land, cleanly cut off from the outside world, find it trying to yield crops, such as barley, wheat, and peas, which are practically the only crops that Tibet can boast of; extreme cold cripples the growth, and blunts the edge of activity.

Although the principal occupation of an overwhelming portion of the population is rearing of sheep and yaks, the former supplying them with wool, a very valuable commodity, and the latter, milk which is turned into butter, extensively used to make their beverage of tea potent enough to keep their body heat at par. But, then again, insufficiency of fodder in the winter reduces the animals, particularly the yak, to a skeleton. The poor animals drag on their miserable existence till summer brings in its train some vegetation which fattens them nicely—a redeeming feature. Such is Tibet, sternly inhospitable. But all the same, life here has all its romance and attractions, which is here as elsewhere, 'a pendulum betwixt smiles and tears.'

On the lovely plateau of Tibet rise ranges of hills which divide the country into basins, forming political units under the charge of Dzongpens (Head of an administrative district.)

Lakes and coloured stony crags of various shades—red, yellow, white, gray, green, etc.—lend a charm to the landscape which has perhaps no parallel all the world over. The beauty of the distant towering peaks of eternal snow, which greets the vision through the extreme and unparalleled clarity of the atmosphere before the wind blows, does not lend itself to description.

A lovely river adorns Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, which boasts a colossal and magnificent eight-storied edifice erected in 1642 A.D. on the slopes of a hill, rising aloft from the plateau. This edifice, which is painted white all over, except the central and the topmost portion which is resplendently crimson in colour, is called 'Potala' after the name of a rocky hill standing on the harbour at Cape

Comorin in Ceylon at the extreme south of India. This most imposing edifice of Central Asia is both a palace and a monastery. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Pope and Monarch of Tibet, resides in this palace with some 200 selected lamas or priests.

Lhasa was founded in the middle of the 7th century by the King, Sron Tsan Gampo. Nearly two-thirds of the population of Lhasa are lamas. Population of Lhasa is 30,000, of Shigatse (the second city) 130 miles to the west of Lhasa, 12,000, and of Gyantse (the third city), 60 miles south of Shigatse, 5,000 only. In Tibet the number of women is much less than that of men. This is why polyandry is practised here.

In Tibet law has its mysterious side. Punishment is not only meted out to a convicted criminal, but also to the relations of the convicted. The idea is that crime to a certain extent originates from the negligence of those who are connected with the offender.

In Tibet everything is astonishing. Their copper coin, *sho*, is smaller than a half-*sho*, and the quarter-*sho*.

As soon as a Dalai Lama (a Pope and King of Tibet) passes away, his subordinate Lamas forthwith set out for remote parts of Tibet and China, being principally guided by the result of occult investigations, to find out his holy successor, who is often a child. It is also said that this child too, before he is found, keeps on claiming that Lhasa is his priestly seat. For confirmation, the lamas mix up all the ecclesiastical vessels, robes, etc. belonging to the deceased Dalai Lama with similar other articles, which, it is held, are definitely recognised by the child, who is then made the Pope and King of Tibet. The writer got all this information from His Serenity Namgay Lama, the present Head Lama of the Ghoom Monastery, who is a direct disciple of the previous Dalai Lama of Tibet.

CHAPTER XI

EVEREST EXPEDITIONS

Everest

Introduction: From Tiger Hill, are visible on a clear day the snow-capped pinnacles of three mountains, peeping out through the north-western horizon and almost screened from sight by the green massifs within range and incredibly dwarfed by remoteness in space and the curvature of the globe. The peak in the middle illusively looking the smallest is that of the loftiest mountain in the world. The height of the peak (then named Peak XV) calculated by the Survey Department of India from observations made during the period from 1846 to 1849 was 29,002 ft. from sea-level. In 1852, Radhanath Sikdar, a Bengali computer of the Survey Department of India, discovered that the Peak XV was the highest peak in the world. The author of the Houston Mount Everest Expedition, 1933, however sarcastically remarks: "The story of the Bengali computer who rushed into Sir Andrew Waugh's office about 1852, crying out: 'Oh, sir, oh, sir, I have discovered the highest mountain in the world!' is probably a subaltern's mess-room yarn, but it is good enough to go on with."

Towards Everest: Imagination shudders at the very idea of penetrating the wilderness of mountains, towering aloft to tremendous heights, and guarding the southern face of Everest. These snowy mountains extend for a distance of 12 miles, north-eastward from the tiny monastery of bleak Dingboche. Dingboche itself can only be reached by an exceptionally hardy march through the forbidden land of Nepal, requiring at least one month and a half to accomplish.

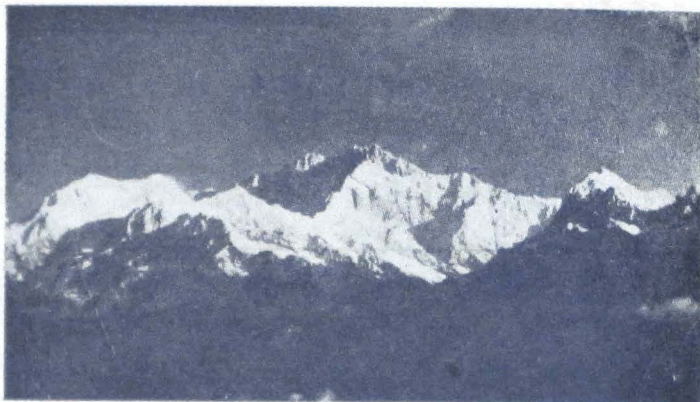
It is only the northern face of Everest that is climbable. As the Tibetan plateau lies on the northern side of the



THE GREAT RANGIT.

(Banks strewn with pebbles of variegated colours.)

Photo—D. Bhanja.



KINCHENJUNGA



By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

LAKE KUPUP OR BIDANG TSO

mountain, a climbing expedition must first cross this "forbidden land", before gaining access to the northern foot of the mountain. The easiest way to Everest from Darjeeling is a circuitous one, via Phari Jong. The latter half of the journey from Phari to Kampa Dzong, a lovely town in Tibet with its towering castle on high rocks necessitates entering into an extremely bleak and inhospitable region adjacent to the mountain called Pau Hunri (23,180'), where blizzard or a storm of snow and sleet plays havoc all the year round. From Kampa Dzong begins the real march in a westerly direction across the desert-like plateau of Tibet, culminating in Shekar Dzong, wherefrom commences a direct southerly route to Everest with real thrills, through a region of crystalline rocks in the valley of the Dzakar Chu. After five marches from Shekar, appears all of a sudden at a sharp turn of the valley the prodigious monastery of Rongbuk at an elevation of 16,000 ft. From here the colossal figure of Everest, nearly 16 miles away, with a yellow band of rock 1000 ft. in breadth simultaneously comes into view. The route from Darjeeling to Everest covers a distance of nearly 350 miles and is under normal conditions a journey of nearly a month and a half.

Wonders: Even the environments of Everest are extraordinarily amazing. The region around the Rongbuk monastery evince wonderful signs of sacredness. Little birds were found by the members of the expeditions, strolling about with impunity, so much so that they passed to and fro between their feet. Burhels, the blue sheep of the Himalaya, timid by nature, were noticed grazing about near the Base Camp, even not more than 20 yards away. It has been truly said: "Life is sacred in the Rongbuk valley and the presence of man inspires no fear." The gateway to the Goodess Mother of Mountains represents a feature unique in the world. Here on a longitudinal depression of nearly 50 feet on the East Rongbuk glacier stand most fantastic pillars and pinnacles of ice of blue and white and green tints, 'sculptured into an infinity of forms.' It is a fairy-

land which few are privileged to behold. Its beauty does not lend itself to discription. There is a play of colour in Tibet, which must be seen to be believed. Rocks are of various colours—blue, green, white, purple, deep brown, etc. The plateau itself is of honey colour. Distance lends an exquisite, yellow hue to snowy peaks far far away. Extreme clarity of atmosphere, in a sense, annihilates distance and thereby mars the perspective character of remote landscape with the result that photographs fail to give impression of relative positions, and in consequence thereof the pictorial effect is lost. Small and feeble birds and animals are by special providence protected from their aggressors by their peculiar colours curiously resembling that of the region they frequent or inhabit. Had it been otherwise, the extreme transparency of atmosphere and abominable barrenness of the country would have rendered detection easy.

Everest by land

INTRODUCTION

Organisation: A plan to climb Mount Everest was contemplated in 1893 by Brigadier-General Hon. C. G. Bruce and Francis Younghusband. In 1920, by the joint efforts of the Alpine and the Royal Geographical Society, the proper authorities could be successfully moved. Finally Sir Charles Bell, the then Political Agent of Sikkim, was deputed to Lhasa, where his tactful negotiation with Dalai Lama, the Pope King of Tibet, secured the consent of His Holiness to an expedition *via* Tibet, very jealously guarded from any foreign intruder, no matter who he and what his mission be.

Object: What can lie at the root of all these prodigious enterprises both dangerous and exhausting in the extreme, apart from their being a great drain on money? Had they scientific research in view? Although variously interpreted as was deemed expedient from the peculiar

nature of the enquiry made, it has been clearly admitted that the object was simply to reach the summit of the loftiest peak in the world—to explore the abode of gods in order to enjoy the real thrills of life, no matter if death overcomes before life's mission is fulfilled. An author of these adventures in one place gives voice to his feeling by penning "..... price of life is death..... could any man desire a better end" (referring to the perishing of Mallory and Irvine).

Paraphernalia: An Everest expedition is a fight with tremendous altitude and frightfully low temperature. Mountaineering obstacles encountered were also of a high order. And last but not the least was "wind of hurricane force" to contend with. Consequently preparations were many, cumbersome, and wonderful too. There were asbestos-lined and felt-sided boots, wind-proof overcoats, eider-down sleeping-bags, orange-tinted goggles, ferocious crampons being a steel-pointed device which when tied to a boot enables a climber to walk on fairly step ice, coils of rope made of silk, oxygen apparatus, ice-axes for cutting steps on ice and, when needed, capable of playing the role of a Saviour during a glissade, be it voluntary or not, rope ladders, folded ladders to cross crevasses and a hundred and one varieties of queer equipments. And then, were called for a few hundreds of pack-ponies mules and yaks, besides an imposing array of enterprising coolies, and last but not least "an imposing heap of yak-dung to serve as fuel on the Tibetan plateau."

Problems and dangers: Even at their Base Camp (16,800') they felt the effect of height to a great extent. To put on their boots or even to light a pipe was quite a business, what to say of wriggling into one's sleeping bag or step-cutting on icy slopes in much higher altitudes. One is, beyond an altitude of 16,000 ft., painfully conscious of something lacking in the air. It is oxygen, the quantity of which is exasperatingly inadequate to serve the purpose of breathing. unless one becomes gradually acclimatised

under the extraordinary condition prevailing in very high altitudes. Whether the carrying of an oxygen apparatus weighing nearly 30 lbs. outweighs the benefit to be derived from its use is yet a baffling question. The failure of this apparatus at high altitudes means imminent disaster. Then, there is the risk of losing toes, fingers, ears, and noses from frost-bite in spite of all sorts of splendid armours. Abominable grip of cold and altitude makes one callous and overwhelmingly befogs the mind. The resulting evils which are of a grave character are enfeeblement of memory, lack of determination, mental lassitude, impairment of vision, and diminution of hearing.

THE EXPEDITION, 1921

The very proposition of assaulting the master-peak at the first attempt is preposterous. No great peak in the world yielded to the first attack. The problem in the case of Everest was a much deeper one, not only in view of the bewildering intricacy of its ramparts, but also the long march of nearly 200 miles across the high plateau of Tibet, so far practically unknown to any foreigner. Hence, the first expedition was nothing more than a reconnaissance in order to find out a route to the summit, if there were any at all.

Colonel Howrad Bury's party left Darjeeling on May 19th, 1921. Major Morshead and Captain Wheeler mapped the northern, eastern and western region of Everest, the mountain itself, as well as the Tibetan plateau *en route*. Mallory, the premier Everesteer, who joined the first three expeditions and ultimately met with his tragic end in the last one, discovered the ice-saddle known as Chang La or North Col, wherefrom a practicable route to the summit by following a ridge to the east was revealed. The whole work was strenuous in the extreme, especially in view of late start and consequent embarrassment occasioned by the sweeping monsoon bringing with it snow and blizzard.

Brigadier General Hon. C. G. Bruce, the eminent leader of 1924 Expedition, had at his credit fully 30 years' experience in climbing both in the Himalaya and in the Alps.

The party left Darjeeling on March 26th. As is the case with every expedition, it was a race in earnest with the monsoon, as an earlier start would be for many reasons not advantageous, on the other hand would be deleterious in effect.

Mallory, Norton, and Somervell after passing a night at a prodigious height of 25,000 ft. reached an altitude of 26,985 ft. without oxygen. It was a tremendous effort under terrible conditions of weather, which so far has not been encountered by any other party.

In the second attempt, the party left the last camp on May 25th and reached a height of 27,300 ft. At 27,235 ft. an accident rendered Geoffrey Bruce's (not General Bruce) oxygen-apparatus inoperative. The situation was saved by Finche who got him attached to his own apparatus and himself managed to set the other right. Mount Everest Committee's warning to the effect that failure of oxygen at this height would cause almost instantaneous disaster did not prove true.

The third attempt was then contemplated. It was resolved to use oxygen. The party consisting of three mountaineers including Mallory with 14 porters sank up to their knees in snow while proceeding to the North Col. Due to heavy fall of snow the previous track was obliterated. The suspected zone of an avalanche having been crossed, no hesitation was entertained in the going now. All of a sudden, however, a soft but violent sound startled the party. Mallory was buried in the snow, but somehow or other by a swimming movement saved himself, while ten of the porters were lost underneath heaps of ice and snow. With a tremendous amount of exertion all but one could be dug out. Six of the porters thus extricated already expired, whereas three only survived. Of these three, one

was buried upside down, but although buried for nearly 40 minutes, survived the casualty in a miraculous way. Just before making the third attempt, the Head Lama of the Rongbuk monastery forebode evil.

THE EXPEDITION, 1924

On March 25th, under the leadership of General Bruce started the third expedition from Darjeeling. In this expedition, amongst 10 climbers Mallory, Norton, Somervell, and Geoffrey Bruce were seasoned mountaineers. Irvine, the youngest (aged 22), was one of the four new adventurers.

In the first attempt, the porters could not be induced to proceed any further from Camp V, established with difficulty at 25,000 ft.

In the second attempt, the porters who were "packed like sardines" in their little tent could be induced to move after fully four hours' negotiation on the part of Norton who had to bear the brunt of intense cold in the open. Camp VI was established for the first time at 26,800 ft.—a singular achievement to warrant a final successful dash right up to the summit. On their way up from here Somervell narrowly escaped death from suffocation owing to an extremely bad throat. He was played out at 28,000 ft. Norton by taxing his energies to the utmost took precedence of all other mountaineers in the world so far known by making an altitude record of 28,100 ft. Struggling alone he crossed the great couloir that fortifies the final pyramid of the King of Heights. The crossing of the snow-filled gully was risky to the highest degree. A slip would have meant an involuntary glissade down a prodigious snow-slope having a vertical height of 10,000 ft. and the ultimate arrest of the tremendous momentum by the Rongbuk glacier. Norton's vision was now considerably impaired. It is a mere luck that he could with safety retrace his steps.

The last is the historic attempt of Mallory and Irvine. On June 8th, they were heading towards the final pyramid, and Odell was following up in support to Camp VI. Odell

saw the tiny figures of Mallory and Irvine moving upwards from the base of the second rock-step situated a little below the final pyramid. The point of this rock-step at which Mallory was last seen is at an altitude of 28,230 ft. as was subsequently determined by theodolite from Base Camp. Odell alone made a desperate search in the region of death-like silence, but to no purpose. Man's strenuous struggle to reach the loftiest physical height not only inspired the ambitious in varied branches of human endeavour but also raised the spirits of men struggling hard with adversity. It was a glorious failure.

Lama Tsa-rinpoche made a prophecy that this year's attempt to conquer Everest would end in losses. This fact is recorded in Prof. Roerich's *Altai-Himalaya*.*

THE EXPEDITION, 1933

The expedition of 1933 was led by Mr. H. Rutledge. The first party left Darjeeling on March 3rd. The second party started 5 days later. The whole expedition left Phari Dzong on March 25th, and arrived Rongbuk on April 16th. The Base Camp was established on April 17th. It then took 42 days for the expedition to establish the last camp (Camp VI) at an altitude of 27,400 ft. This is 600 ft. higher than Norton's Camp VI of 1924 and at the same time, 400 yards nearer to the summit in a horizontal direction. Beyond Camp V, there is hardly any ledge to pitch a very small tent just sufficient for two climbers to be huddled together. Camp VI this year as last year was on a precarious spot sloping outwards and hardly 3ft. in width. Beyond this camp, Everest has reserved no berth, although for a successful assault it was highly necessary to pitch a camp a few hundred feet higher for the final dash to the summit, and a safe return therefrom before nightfall, as no

* "The lama seemed astonished at the desire of foreigners to ascend the summit of Everest, at any risk. 'Why expend such efforts in the physical body? Is it not simpler to be there in spirit?' For with ease do lamas project their astral bodies, for which, of course, no height is an obstacle."

climber can afford or should be expected to do any night-work at such tremendous altitude and under such dangerous conditions. Beyond Camp VI comes the real struggle or rather tug of war with the master-peak, 'the embodiment of silent strength.' There are two rock-steps just above an altitude of 27,800 ft., of which the higher one (called the second rock step) proved unclimbable. In order to avoid this step, Norton took a western route (followed this year too for want of any other feasible way) which, however, involved in a sensational crossing of an appalling gully (called the great couloir), and then another subsidiary couloir, far more risky than the former. Then, there was the wilderness of treacherous, outward shelving slabs, arranged like tiles on a roof. At 12-30 *p.m.* the first party (Wyn Harris and Wager) reached a height of 28,100 ft. or a little over.

To proceed any further would be to court disaster and also useless from the point of view of reaching the summit and coming down to Camp V (not Camp VI which would by that time be occupied by the second party consisting of Smythe and Shipton, both being climbers of great repute). On their way back to the North Col on the following day, Wyn Harris made an attempt to glissade down a snow-slope, leading to the North Col. but in a moment he made out that he had been glissading down in a wrong direction towards the East Rongbuk glacier. He managed to turn over to his face, and then by gently turning the pick of his ice-axe against the hard snow and gradually pressing it, so as to make a deeper groove and thereby arrest that immense momentum, succeeded in escaping the casualty. A quick and a sharp forcing of a passage into the snow would have meant the snatching away of the ice-axe from the hand of the climber. While making his way up, Wyn Harris happened to find Mallory's (might also be of Somervell's) axe lying some 250 yards east of the first rock-step. Much ink has been spilt on this unexpected find, in order to surmise the fate of Mallory and Irvine in 1924 Expedition.

The next two attempts did not produce any better results and consequently it appears that the last 1,000 ft. or at least 900 ft. of Everest is forbidden to any human incursion. This fag-end of the traverse, it appears, calls for both physical and mental strain, exacting to the last degree.

It would be interesting to know that apart from the eight "tigers" (pick of the porters) who most gallantly rendered service to the expedition in establishing higher camps, a large Bhutia dog accompanied the expedition up to a height of 22,000 ft., to reach which altitude she had to climb a rope-ladder, which she managed to climb splendidly like a practised mountaineer. Several times she was packed off to the Base Camp, but she always managed to make her way up. She was used to bivouacking under this terrific Himalayan rigor. One day she was missing. Probably during a solitary ramble, she succumbed to a fall into some crevasse in the glacier.

While climbing alone, after Shipton had been disabled by an attack of colic, Smythe experienced two very curious phenomena. He noticed "two curious-looking objects floating in the sky." He writes: "They hovered motionless but seemed slowly to pulsate, ** **" The second experience was all the more astonishing. He had a strong feeling that during his solitary climb he was accompanied by somebody following him. It seemed that he was roped up with him, so that in case of a slip, he would hold him. On his reaching the highest point, the climber, while trying to eat some cake, went so far as to divide it and turn round with one half in his hand. He was surprised to find no one to accept his offer. It was a strong and indelible impression, which, however, faded away as soon as Camp VI was sighted, on his way back thereto.

The inference drawn from the last three devastating struggles after Everest is found in Rutledge's expression given below:

"An ascent to at least 28,000 feet is almost regarded as a matter of course. Success may not come at the next

attempt or till after many more attempts, but the end is certain. ** * Surely it is worth while to pursue one of the last great adventures which the surface of the earth has to offer."

Everest by air

THE EXPEDITION, 1933

While the hardy mountaineers of 1933 Expedition were pushing ahead in their desparate struggle for the summit of Everest from the Tibetan side, the last stronghold of nature was being assailed from the Nepal side by aeroplanes.

The idea of flying over Everest first flashed upon Major Blacker. Colonel R. T. Etherton, a born organiser, espoused the cause of Blacker. The Council of the Royal Geographical Society endorsed the plan in due course and, through proper authorities it was brought home to the stern Government of Nepal that the purpose of the expedition was austere scientific—that its success in mapping an impassable region extending for nearly 20 miles south of Everest with the help of air cameras would not only place before the world at large important knowledge of this stupendous fortification of bewildering intricacy but also pave the way to efficient survey of impenetrable region from the air in other parts of the earth's surface. The Government of Nepal proved sympathetic, and the enterprise at once sprang up into action.

The committee of the expedition approached Lady Houston, D. B. E., whose munificence had already made a noise in the world of British aviation. The ambitious project appealed to her and although contributions were to a certain extent forthcoming from the public, it was her open-handedness that at last brought the dream within reach.

It was not an easy adventure. The problems before them, all scientific in character, were too many to mention. A series of scientific experiments most problematical and

highly technical in character had to be carried out, not only in the laboratory, but also in cold chambers of intensely low temperatures, and also steel chambers of highly reduced pressure.

The expedition was principally to be a fight on the one hand with altitude, almost fringing on the stratosphere for they were to fly over the summit of Everest at an altitude ranging from 30,000' to 33,000' and on the other with extreme rigor, the terrestrial atmosphere can have at its command.

Besides these two embarrassing factors, there was to contend with 'wind of hurricane force', the velocity of which near the summit could not be determined although meteorologists persistently endeavoured to do so from observations made on the velocity of inflated India-rubber balloons, let loose from the foot of the Himalayas.

It was not a fight of the nature similar to that encountered by the climbing party, so to say, fortified by a process of acclimatisation for their ascending marches from camp to camp. Here the pilot as well as the observer were to bear the terrific effect of both cold and altitude almost at a moment's notice. In less than three quarters of an hour, temperature would change from the sweltering heat of the plains to inconceivably low temperature, reigning supreme at an altitude almost verging on the stratosphere, that is to say, from a sun temperature of nearly 180°F to 120°F of frost,— a tremendous difference. And within that short time, a man subjected to the pressure at sea-level is to undergo an abnormally reduced pressure of the extremely rarefied air. This abrupt change in pressure is apt to cause rupture of blood-vessels of the body and bleeding from various outlets of the human organism as well as cerebral hæmorrhage.

The following were a few of the many problems science had to solve before wings could be put in action on Everest.

(1) To supply pure oxygen as obtained by separating it from liquified air.

(2) To eliminate every trace of water-vapour from oxygen thus prepared (this proved to be highly problematical) as otherwise it would freeze while passing through the valve, which would then be clogged, resulting in failure of the oxygen apparatus, and immediate disaster would ensue.

(3) To arrange for electrically heated clothes, goggles and all other equipments.

(4) To arrange for a special protection of films in the camera, as otherwise the heat in the cock-pit of the aeroplane would be sufficient to bring about an explosion of the same. (This problem was solved by means of a mica-covering).

(5) To estimate fuel consumption beforehand which depends on speed and direction of wind *en route* to the summit. (The weight of every equipment and materials had to be cut short to an ounce with utmost care in order to give the machines best chance to surmount the peak.)

(6) To guard against the petrol freezing in the carburetter. (Petrol was of a special quality. To this benzol was not mixed to any appreciable extent, as is usually done, by reason of the fact that benzol freezes at -60°C . Benzol was practically ruled out and tetra-ethyl lead was substituted.)

(7) To arrange for a microphone for facilitating communication between the pilot and the observer while passing through the din and roar produced by the sweeping wind dashing against the 'plane, and of the engine itself. (Microphone, however, did not behave well at those tremendous altitudes.)

(8) To arrange for parachutes. (But in case of engine failure, these would be of no avail. So these were ruled out.)

(9) To be on the look out for a sufficient drop in the wind-velocity over Everest.

(10) Necessary fall in the wind-velocity should also be made to synchronise with clear atmosphere as clouds or mists enveloping either the mountain, or even the low valley would frustrate scientific observations—*i.e.*, the taking of a series of overlapping vertical photographs.

(11) To arrange for air cameras with devices for automatic exposures which could be regulated as to intervals between two consecutive exposures. These intervals, again, had to be determined with reference to height at which the 'planes would be flying through different regions.

For the flight over Everest, two very big and most scientifically equipped aeroplanes were designed, while for the purpose of reconnoitring and bringing in news of the conditions prevailing over Everest region, three small aeroplanes were utilised. While bound for the aerodrome at Purnea (in Behar) wherefrom the expedition was finally to start for the epic flight, wonderful glimpse of the mountain was caught for the first time from Gaya.

On the memorable day of April 3, 1933, the velocity of the wind fell to 57 miles per hour at 33,000 feet, and the scouting 'planes reported the mountain and the valleys free from clouds. This velocity is still appalling, although not so great as to produce disastrous results.

The die was cast. The machines soared aloft and sailed for the unknown. From Purnea it was a distance of fully 160 miles to cover as the crow flies. Actually they had to do a distance nearly 215 miles at an average speed ranging from 108 to 156 miles per hour. They expected to get over the brown dust-haze at 5,000 feet, but it was only beyond 19,000 feet that the crystal-clear atmosphere came into view and with it a few peaks of the Everest group, and Kinchenjunga peeped out of the horizon against the azure sky.

But as ill luck would have it, they could not discern the confluence of the two rivers near the Komaltar ridge (120 miles from Purnea) which guards Nepal on the

North. As this landmark, wherefrom their air survey was to begin, could not be identified, this expedition was practically a failure from the standpoint of science.

At the 128th mile from Purnea, they crossed a ridge, 8000 feet in height. From here peaks after peaks towered aloft to greater and greater heights till culminating in that of the King of Heights. The crossing of the vast sea of snowy mountains was a spectacle thrilling in the extreme. As they were just essaying to pass over the South Peak (called Lhotse by the Tibetans) of the Everest group, the aircraft was forcibly drawn vertically downwards to a distance of nearly 2,000 feet, owing to a great down-draught of the winds in this region. It then seemed that the clearing of the peak of Lhotse was a vain expectation, but the splendid aircrafts managed to stem the current, and soon after approached the summit of Everest. The distant snowy peaks beyond Everest towering aloft on the Tibetan plateau looked larger than the master-peak—an inexplicable phenomenon. Soon they flew over the highest pinnacle, clearing it by 1,000 feet. Three circuits were made around the summit. While passing through the leeward of the peak, they entered the 'plume' of Everest (see Chapter X). The aircrafts battled their way into this region of flying fragments of ice, which literally bombarded the 'planes and 'rattled violently into the cockpit.' In spite of electrically heated devices, the metal parts of the camera were contracted by cold, and certain manipulations called for energy amounting to a struggle.

While returning, the film in the ciné-camera was found frozen and the oxygen masks too were deplorably covered with a solid mass of ice.

April 4th dawned fine over the mountains and meteorologists forecasted that the favourable weather might not last any longer. An attempt to assail Kinchenjunga was hastily planned. The first sight of this majestic and prodigious massif from the air was supremely enthralling. A height of 34,000 feet was attained. Everything looked promising.

They intended to first reach the well-known confluence of the Great Rangit below Tashiding monastery* (see chap. IX) and therefrom to start taking a series of overlapping vertical photographs straight on to the mighty summit. But partly owing to clouds shrouding the valley, this confluence could not be noticed. While encircling the summit through a sea of clouds, both the aircrafts, for some unaccountable reason, all of a sudden lost height and could not cross this virgin peak. The pilots seemed to lose all control of the ailerons and rudder, and were at their wit's end. Fellows, one of the pilots, writes: "The machines rocked, twisted and shook in a way I had never experienced before in eighteen years' continuous flying."

In the meantime, cablegram was received from Lady Houston, by whose name the expedition was designated, advising Lord Clydesdale to eschew any further adventure over the mountains.

A second attempt on Everest, however, was made on April 19th. Owing to some western disturbance the velocity of wind was too terrific to warrant any flight over the snowy mountains. On April 19th, wind-speed was 88 miles per hour at 24,000 feet; and certainly much higher at greater elevations. It would be sheer folly to encounter such infuriating wind. A plan was very ingeniously worked out by McIntyre (second pilot) under which the 'planes were to fly in a direction slightly north of west at a height of about 3,000 feet for nearly 100 miles. It would mean sailing under favourable wind, as at that low elevation, wind blows almost westward. Then, they were to reach a height of 18,000 feet and head eastward (*i.e.*, towards Everest), when again wind would be behind them at that

* On his way to the Great Rangit in 1941, the writer came to know from the people at Singla Bazaar (near the confluence of the Great and the Little Rangit) that nearly a decade ago, two 'planes flew over this confluence. These were evidently the aircrafts of the 1933 Expedition. From this place, the Tashiding confluence is a few minutes' flight towards east.

higher altitude. This ingenuity barred out any wrestling with the wind.

The attempt was a great success. Many vertical photographs in a systematic way could be taken. These photographs disclosed a heart-shaped black patch, high up on Everest. In the photograph of a snow-clad mountain a black patch evidently cannot represent a bare rock. It can be nothing but a sheet of water. Undoubtedly therefore it is a lake fed by hot springs. The discovery of such springs to the north of and not far off from the foot of Mount Everest as made by the party of the 1921 Expedition is very significant in this connection. It is a thrilling discovery of this epic flight over Everest.

Aerial science thus came off with flying colours—the last stronghold of nature at least yielded to reconnaissance from the air.

