

the first thrill of my new adventure, and I forthwith drank in greedily every new impression.

All around in the plains there was rank, dank, depressing vegetation. Unwholesomeness exuded from the soil. Putrefying pools of water lay about on every side. The whole air was thick with fever. But those high heavenly mountains carried hope. As the train progressed, the lower "hills"—themselves 7,000 or 8,000 feet in height—came into sight. Eventually we reached their base, and left the ordinary train for the little mountain railway which ascends to Darjiling. And now, indeed, were charms on every hand. The little railway winds its way upward through a tropical forest of superb magnificence. The orchids could almost be plucked from the miniature carriages. The luxuriant vegetation nearly met over the train. Immense tree-ferns and wild bananas shot up beneath the overhanging arches of the dripping forest trees. Wreaths and festoons of vine, convolvulus, and begonia stretched from bough to bough. Climbing bauhinias and robinias entwined the trunks and hung like great cables from tree to tree. Bamboos shot up in dense tufts to a height of 100 feet. Refreshing streams dashed foaming down the mountain-side. Glorious waterfalls here and there thundered over steep cliffs. And through all the diminutive train panted its way upward—by zigzags, by spirals, through tunnels, across dizzy bridges, along the sides of cliffs—but only too slowly, for, glorious as was the tropical forest, I thirsted for the sight of Kinchinjunga, which we should get when we at last topped the ridge and reached Darjiling.

Alas! when we at last reached the summit, all was hid in cloud. Fresh from the steamy plains, we shivered in the damp mists, and when we reached Darjiling itself rain was descending in cataracts. It was depressing, but it had the advantage that it enabled me to recuperate a little from the hot, trying railway journey through the plains of India, and be all the more fit therefore to thoroughly enjoy and appreciate the great view when at last it should be revealed.

Many times afterwards I saw it, and each time with a