

new and more wonderful impression. Sometimes in the eddying cloudy billows a break would come, giving a glimpse into heaven itself; and through the little inlet would be seen a piece of sky of the intensest blue, and against it a peak of purest white, so lofty and so much a partner of the sky and clouds it seemed impossible it could ever be of earth. This was Kinchinjunga in one of its aspects. At another time, when all was clear of cloud, I would look steeply down from the tropical forests of Darjiling for 6,000 feet to the bottom of the narrow valley beneath, and then up and up through tier after tier of ever-heightening ridges, till, far up in the skies, suffused in the blue and dreamy haze, my eyes would rest on the culminating range of all, spotless and ethereal, and reaching its climax in one noble peak nearly 28,000 feet above the valley depths from which it rose. And at yet another time, when the houses were all lit in the bazaar, and the lamps lighted along the roads, and night had almost settled down upon Darjiling, high up in the skies would be seen a rosy flush: Kinchinjunga was still receiving the rays of the sun, long since set to us below. In these and many other aspects Kinchinjunga had never-ending charms.

Darjiling itself, with such scenery and vegetation, was, it need hardly be said, an exquisitely beautiful place. And it had about it none of the busy air of Simla. It was at this season nearly always shrouded in mist, and seemed wrapped in cotton-wool. No one was in a hurry, and the whole tone of the place was placid and serene.

Sir James Bourdillon, the acting Lieutenant-Governor; Mr. Macpherson, the Chief Secretary; Mr. Marindin, the Commissioner; Mr. Walsh, the Deputy-Commissioner, were all most helpful to me, and I appreciated their assistance all the more because I could not help feeling somewhat of an interloper and poacher upon other people's preserves. Since 1873 the Bengal Government had been working for the settlement of their frontier affairs with Tibet, and now at the crucial moment a stranger dropped down from the Olympian heights of Simla to carry out the culminating act. I could naturally expect ordinary official civility