A

JOURNEY TO KATMANDU

(THE CAPITAL OF NEPAUL),

WITH

THE CAMP OF JUNG BAHADOOR;

INCLUDING

A SKETCH OF THE NEPAULESE AMBASSADOR AT HOME.

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eye as it perched on a branch, or fluttered unconsciously amongst the leaves. But the most interesting object in the group was the lately-wedded bride, who was seated in a howdah. Jung introduced her to me as "his beautiful Missis"—a description she fully deserved. She was very handsome, and reflected much credit on the taste of the happy bridegroom, who seemed pleased when we expressed our approval of his choice.

Before quitting the subject of Jung's shooting-party, I must remark, in justice to him as a sportsman, that he considers nothing less than a deer to be game at all. Tiger or rhinoceros shooting is his favourite sport, and he looks upon shooting a parrot, a snipe, a hawk, or a partridge as being equally unworthy of the name of sport, nor does he understand why some of those birds should be dignified with the name of "game," and the others not.

At dawn on the following morning the stir and bustle in camp announced an early start, and our elephant appeared at the tent door just as the gallant rifle corps marched past, the band playing the "British Grenadiers." Mounting the elephant, we picked our way through the débris of the camp, now almost deserted; some few of the coolies were still engaged packing the conical baskets which they carry on their backs, one strap passing over the forehead, and two others over the shoulders. The appearance of a hill coolie as he thus staggers along under his tremendous burden is singular enough, and so totally unlike that of the coolies

CHAPTER VI.

March to Bhimphede — National defences — The Cheesapany pass — Lovely scenery — Night adventure — The watch-fire — Reception at camp — Arrival at Katmandu.

We had looked forward with no little anxiety to the morning following our elephant-hunt, as we were to go in search of rhinoceros: it was therefore a severe disappointment to us when Jung entered our tent at daylight, and informed us that it was necessary we should at once proceed on our way to Katmandu. The reason he gave us was, that we should have to go too far out of our route before we could find our game: however that might be, there was no help for it, and we commenced our march up the valley of the Rapti, along the narrow rocky path leading to Bhimphede, our next halting-place. It was a five hours' march, and we crossed the river thirty-two times before we came in sight of the picturesque Durumsolah, or native rest-house, which is situated at the head of the valley. Hills clothed to their summits with variegated jungle rose above us to an immense but not uniform height, and the scenery looked bolder as we became more enclosed among the mountains.

Bhimphede is a Newar village, the inhabitants being the aborigines of the country. It is said to derive

its name from a Hindoo divinity named Bheem having on some occasion happened to step there. It is distant from Hetowra about 18 miles, and the road might be much improved by a little engineering.

The present policy of the Nepaul government is to keep the roads by which their country is approached in as impassable a state as possible, vainly imagining that, in case of a war, the badness of the roads would offer an insuperable obstacle to our progress, and compel us to relinquish any attempt to penetrate to Katmandu. This delusion ought to have been dispelled by the occupation of Muckwanpore by Sir David Ochterlony; not that it is a contingency they need take much trouble to provide against, since it would never be worth our while to do more than take possession of the Terai.

The present state of the roads renders it impossible for goods to be conveyed into Nepaul, except upon men's backs; and as the traffic would be considerable in various articles of commerce, the prosperity and wealth of the country would be incalculably increased by an improvement in the means of transit.

Jung Bahadoor is quite alive to the real state of the case, and sees at once the absurdity of the policy pursued by the Nepaul government, but he feels that any innovation of the sort would be too unpopular for him to attempt in his present position. His recently imbibed liberal notions coincide but little with the cramped ideas of a semi-barbarous durbar. He is well aware that neither bad roads, troops, nor any other obstacle that he could oppose

washed by a great man from H'Lassa, an emissary of the Grand Lama's, we passed through the town of Katmandu, which was entered by a massive gateway, the city being surrounded by a wall. Long narrow streets, very fairly paved, lead in all directions; the houses are not so high as those of Benares or Cairo, the streets are broader, and some of them would admit of the passage of a carriage. They are all well drained and comparatively clean, contrasting most favourably in that respect with any other Oriental town I have ever seen. The streets were filled with foot-passengers, in bright and variegated costumes, passing busily on, or stopping to make purchases at the shops, which were on the ground-floor, with the whole front open, and the merchant sitting in the midst of his wares. The next story is inhabited, I believe, by his family; but I did not gain an entrance into any of the common houses. The outside front generally presented a mass of wood carving, each small window surrounded by a border two or three feet broad, while under the eaves of the house projected the singular balcony I have already described.

The great square, in which is situated the Durbar, or palace of the King, presented in itself almost all the characteristic features of a Nepaul town. As it suddenly burst upon us on turning the corner of the long street leading from the city-gate, the view was in every respect most striking. This square, or court, is well paved, and contains the Chinese pagoda, composed entirely of wood, from which it is

said the town derives its name. Its three or four roofs, glittering one above another, are supported by grotesque representations of unknown deities, and figures of all sizes and colours, not always of the most proper description. The whole formed a mass of green, gold leaf, and vermilion; and was guarded by a sentry, who, in order to be in keeping with his charge, wore a long flowing gown of bright colours, reaching to his ankles, and marched backwards and forwards at the top of a long flight of steps. A couple of well-carved lions, in grey sandstone, guarded the lower steps as efficiently as he did the upper ones. There were at least four pagodas, painted in like way, and guarded in like manner, in the great square of Katmandu. The guard-house contained a large stand of arms of antique construction. There was also the Durbar, the residence of the Rajah, a straggling building, almost European in its style, and gaudy enough to please even the late King of Bavaria; close to it was a huge deformed image of Siva, sitting in an uncomfortable posture on a square stone, violently gesticulating with her fourteen arms, perhaps at a party of heretical Bhootyas who were passing tranquilly by, leading along their sheep, decidedly the cleanest and most respectable-looking members of the group. Beyond, high and gloomy houses almost touched, their wooden fringes creaking responsively to one another across the narrow streets, while the owners of the cobwebby tenements, peeping out of the narrow windows in their balconies, made their remarks

upon the strangers in not much more melodious tones; in an old court-yard a little way above, was visible an unwieldy rhinoceros, placidly contemplating a bundle of grass, from which it had satisfied its hunger, in happy ignorance that its life is dependent on that of the Rajah; for in Nepaul it is a rule that the death of one great animal should be immediately followed by that of another, and, when a Rajah dies, a rhinoceros is forthwith killed to keep him company. As he stood tethered almost under the palace windows, we thought him at once a fitting moral and a characteristic background to this novel and interesting picture.