From
THE HOOGHLY
TO THE
HIMALAYAS


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HOOGHLY TO THE HIMALAYAS

Being an Illustrated Handbook to the chief places of interest reached by the Eastern Bengal State Railway.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is intended to serve as a guide to the more important and, from the average visitor's point of view, more interesting places reached by the Eastern Bengal State Railway. The usual guide-book references to hotels, details of routes and time tables are omitted, because in India these things are constantly changing. An inquiry at the offices of the E. B. S. R. will be found more helpful on such matters than many pages of directions.

The source of quotations given is as a rule stated: but much of the historical information has been derived from various volumes of the latest edition of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*.

The photographs, except where otherwise acknowledged, are by Messrs. Johnston and Hoffman of Calcutta.

ELEPHANT FALLS, SHILLONG.

FROM THE HOOGHLY TO THE HIMALAYAS.

Chapter I.—In and round Calcutta.

NO one can stay for any length of time in Calcutta without perceiving how important a part in the commercial and social life of the city is played by the Eastern Bengal State Railway. It is the line which traverses in various directions the rich and fertile plains of Bengal and connects Calcutta with North and East Bengal and Assam, and with Diamond Harbour on the Hooghly, and it is the line which takes the tourist and the resident in Calcutta away from the heat and bustle of metropolitan life to the most magnificent hill stations in the East. A glance at the map will show that the system of this railway covers a wide area in an apparently confusing network, but a little study will simplify matters and show that there are practically three separate systems, separated by unbridged rivers :—

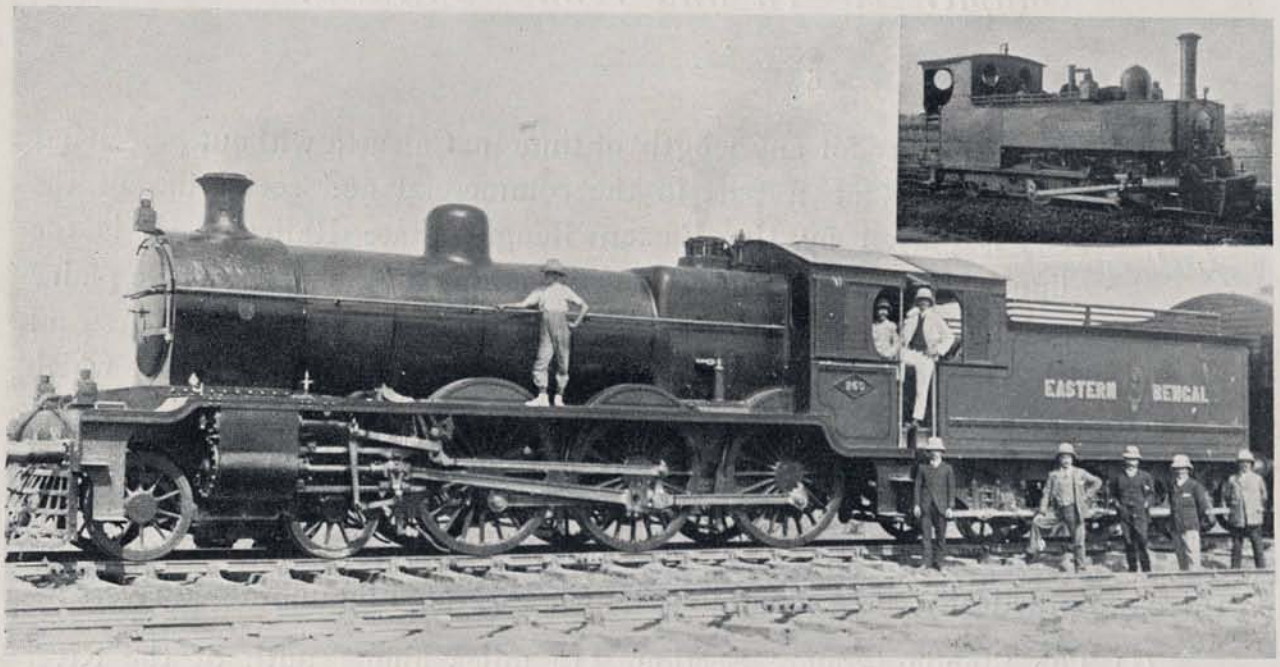
(1) The Standard-gauge Section, 512 miles long, south of the River Ganges.

(2) The Northern Section, Metre-gauge, 910 miles long.

(3) The Dacca Section, 141 miles long, also Metre Gauge. There are also two short branches on the 2 feet 6 inches gauge :—Ranaghat to Krishnager, 20 miles; and Teesta to Kurigram, 15 miles.

The three systems together are now administered as one by an Agent, who is under the orders of the Railway Board, and, as the name shows, the railway is financed as a State Railway. The details of its history (see Appendix) show how a number of private companies have gradually been absorbed in this one system, and present to students of railway problems in India a capital example of what private enterprise has done for the development of the country. The passenger on any one of the Eastern Bengal State Railway's lines will soon discover that the system is as good as any other in India, so far as comfort is concerned, and better

than many. The carriages are of the standard Indian construction, fitted with electric lights and fans, with the exception of the standard-gauge Darjeeling Mail which is one of the few corridor trains running in India—an innovation which unfortunately is not likely long to survive the prejudice and hostility of the travelling public in India. If it be added that the catering arrangements at all the stations where a halt is made for meals are good, the traveller can set forth on his journey with the knowledge that he will be as comfortable as it is possible to be in a railway journey through a land where the heat and the dust are often a grievous trial to the flesh and to the spirit. But one cannot start on the way to the "delectable mountains" without first seeing something of Calcutta. If it is



ENGINES, OLD AND NEW.

The illustration shows the most up-to-date engine in use on the E. B. S. R. together with one of the earliest engines built for that line which is now running.

no longer the Capital of India, Calcutta is still its most important town, the largest in size and in trade, the richest in historical associations so far as the British are concerned; and it has more of the characteristics of a European capital, more of the amenities of urban life than any other town in India. As to its size, the result of the latest census "is to show that the total population of Calcutta and the suburbs, *i.e.*, the suburban municipalities of Cossipur-Chitpur, Maniktala, and Garden Reach is 1,043,307, which exceeds by 62,862 that of Bombay, the second most populous city in India. With the exception of London, no other city in the British Empire has so many inhabitants, and it takes its place among the twelve largest cities in the world. Calcutta proper, *i.e.*, the area administered by the Corporation of Calcutta with the Fort, Port, and Canals, has 896,067, and

the suburbs 147,240 inhabitants. For all practical purposes, however, the suburbs form part of the same city, being connected with Calcutta by a continuous line of buildings, and only differentiated by having another system of municipal government."

The English first came to Bengal, as traders about the middle of the 17th century, and soon learned that they must protect themselves in that commercial

SCENE IN THE CALCUTTA DOCK.

enterprise by force. Hence the despatch of an expeditionary force in 1686 under one Job Charnock of the English East India Company, who came to Sutanuti (in the north of modern Calcutta) after a skirmish with the Mughals at Hooghly, and formulated certain demands on the Nawab. These were rejected by the latter, who ordered his subordinates to drive the English out of the country. Charnock retaliated by destroying various salt-houses and forts, but was shortly afterwards superseded by Captain Heath, who came out from England with

instructions to occupy Chittagong. The attempt on this place failed; but on August 24, 1690, the English returned to Sutanuti under Charnock, at the invitation of the Nawab, and laid the foundation of modern Calcutta. Several reasons led to the selection of this place as the headquarters of British trade in Bengal. The Hooghly river tapped the rich trade of the Ganges valley, and Calcutta was situated at the highest point at which the river was navigable for sea-going vessels; it was moreover protected against attack by the river on the west and by morasses on the east, and it could be defended by the guns of the shipping. But there is an ancient fallacy that the site was chosen by chance, being that of a mid-day halt made by Charnock, and that the town was of fortuitous growth. This picturesque notion has been adopted by Rudyard Kipling, who writes in the Departmental Ditties : -

Thus the mid-day halt of Charnock more's the pity
Grew a city;

As the fungus sprouts chaotic from its bed,
So it spread—

Chance-directed, chance-erected, laid and built,
On the silt.

Palace, myre hovel—poverty and pride,
Side by side;

And above the packed and pestilential town,
Death looked down.

Once the settlement had started it soon developed. A local rebellion necessitated the construction of a fort on a site extending from the modern Fairlie place on the north to Koila Ghat street on the south, the river forming the western and what is now Dalhousie Square the eastern boundary. Forty years later the inhabitants started to strengthen their defences by digging an entrenchment (which followed the course of the modern Circular Road) as a defence against the Maratha raiders in Bengal. Already (in 1707) the East India Company had declared Calcutta a separate Presidency accountable only to the Directors in London, and the Maratha scare and growing trade brought it so many additional inhabitants that in 1752 it was said probably with exaggeration to have a population of 40,000.

The first real set-back to the growth of Calcutta as well as the chief event in its early history was its capture in 1756 by Siraj-ud-daula, Nawab of Bengal. The native troops deserted and the Europeans were driven into the fort, which was practically indefensible, as its guns were masked by the surrounding buildings. The Governor and many of the officials made their escape to the ships, which thereupon dropped down the river, and the garrison, under the command of Holwell

were driven to surrender. They were forced, to the number of 146, into a small room, measuring only 18 by 14 feet, which is known in history as the Black Hole. Here they were left for the night. It was June 20; the heat was intense, and the two small grated windows were quite insufficient to give air to the closely packed crowd, who endured terrible sufferings. When the morning came and the door was opened, only twenty-three were found alive. The names of most of the sufferers are preserved to this day on a monument presented to Calcutta by Lord Curzon, and the site of the tragedy is commemorated—as also are various parts of the old Fort—by a tablet.*

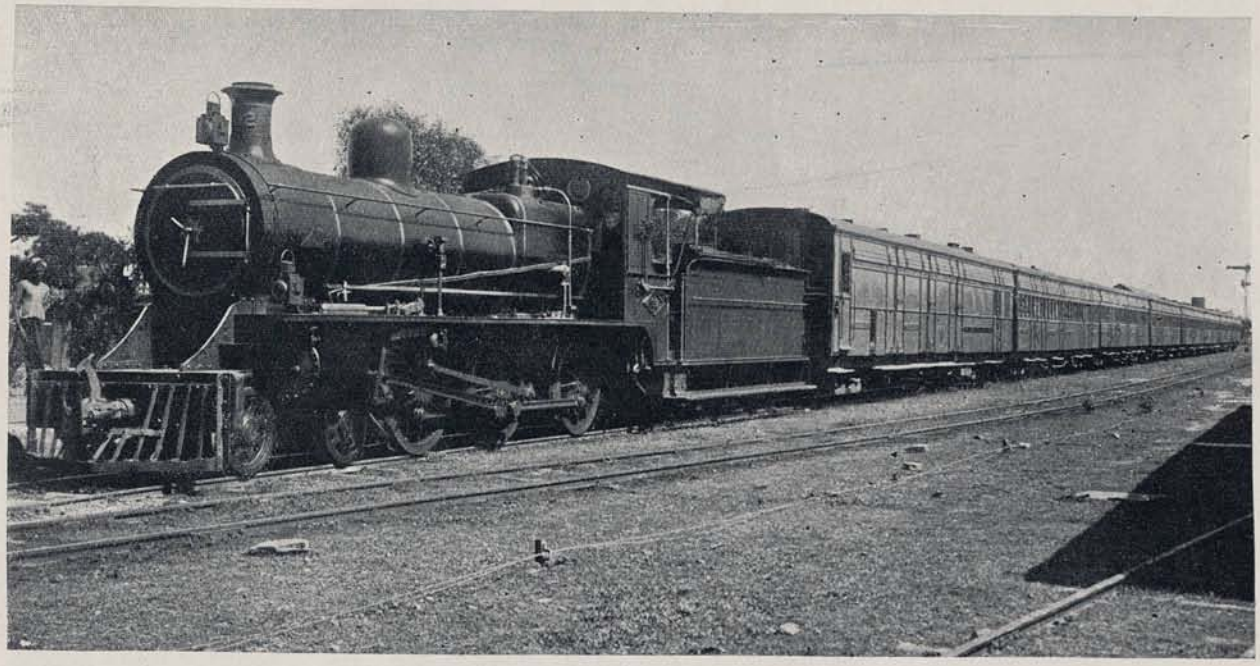
General Offices of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, Sealdah, Calcutta.

The town was recaptured by Clive and Admiral Watson early in 1757; and after the battle of Plassey (*see* Chapter VI) Mir Jafar gave the English the *zamindari* of the twenty-four Parganas, as well as a free gift of the town and some of the adjacent villages. Heavy compensation was paid to the merchants for their losses and from that time dates a period of uninterrupted prosperity in the history of the town. With part of the compensation money received from the Nawab, Gobindpur was cleared of its inhabitants and the foundations of the present fort were laid. It was not finished until 1773, and is said to have cost two millions

* Full details of these tablets and of the theoretical reconstruction of the fort are to be found in "Thacker's Guide to Calcutta," by the Rev. W. K. Firminger. (Thacker, Spink and Co.)

sterling, of which total a quarter was spent on protective works against the erosion of the river. The clearing of the jungle round the fort led to the formation of the maidan, which is to-day the pride of Calcutta. Of the subsequent improvements, at the end of the 18th and early in the 19th centuries, many were carried out with money raised by means of lotteries, a device that also helped in the building of modern Bombay and Madras. Lottery schemes were set on foot in aid even of church building funds, and were run, as one historian says, with an earnestness which must atone for the want of moral propriety.

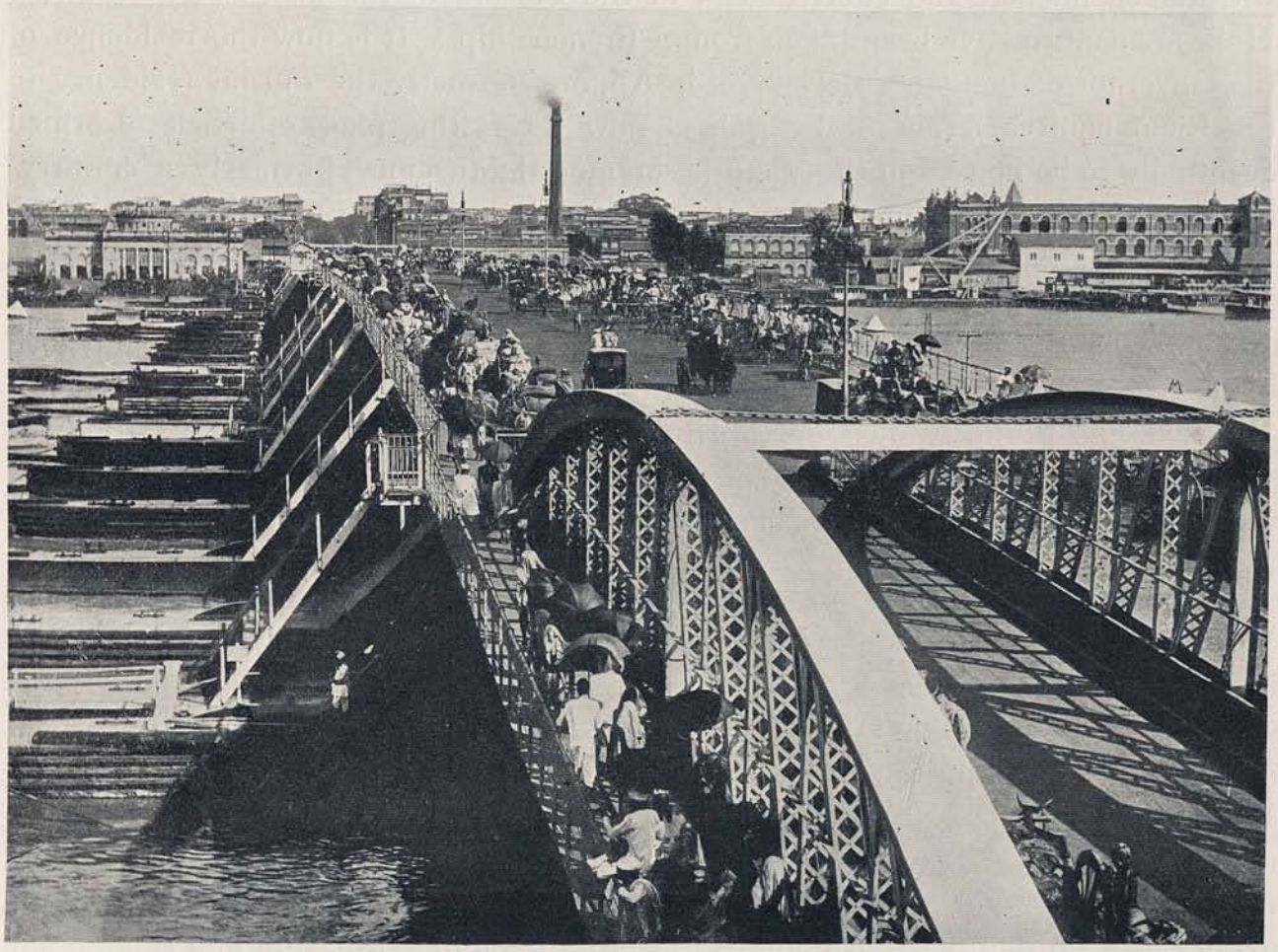
It has already been said that Calcutta came into existence as a trading town, because its position enabled merchants to tap the rich traffic of the valley of



DARJEELING MAIL TRAIN, E. B. S. R.

the Ganges. The luxurious courts of the Moghul rulers had fostered the manufacture at Dacca and Murshidabad of beautiful silks and muslins (described later in this book) which were eagerly bought up in Europe. The saltpetre of Bihar was in great demand in England for the manufacture of gunpowder during the French wars; and rice, sesamum oil, cotton cloths, sugar, clarified butter, lac, pepper, ginger, myrabolams and tussore silk were also in request. Bengal produced all these articles and Calcutta was the only seaport from which they could be exported. The demand for Indian muslins gradually died out in Europe, while early in the nineteenth century Lancashire began to export manufactured cotton goods to India, and the introduction of steam power placed the local weavers at such a disadvantage that piece-goods are now by far the largest article of import into Bengal, while the export of silk and cotton manufactures has practically

ceased. The export of jute, on the other hand, has grown enormously since the middle of the nineteenth century, and the production of oilseeds and tea has vastly increased. Bengal coal is in great demand all over India, and salt and mineral oils are largely imported. Through all these vicissitudes of commerce, Calcutta has more than held its own, and the development of railways and of steamer routes along the main waterways has greatly strengthened its position, so that it now attracts to itself the trade of Assam as well as of Eastern Bengal and of the



HOOGHLY BRIDGE, CALCUTTA.

Gangetic Valley. The foreign trade of the port in 1912-13 amounted to imports 65 crores of rupees, and exports nearly 95 crores.

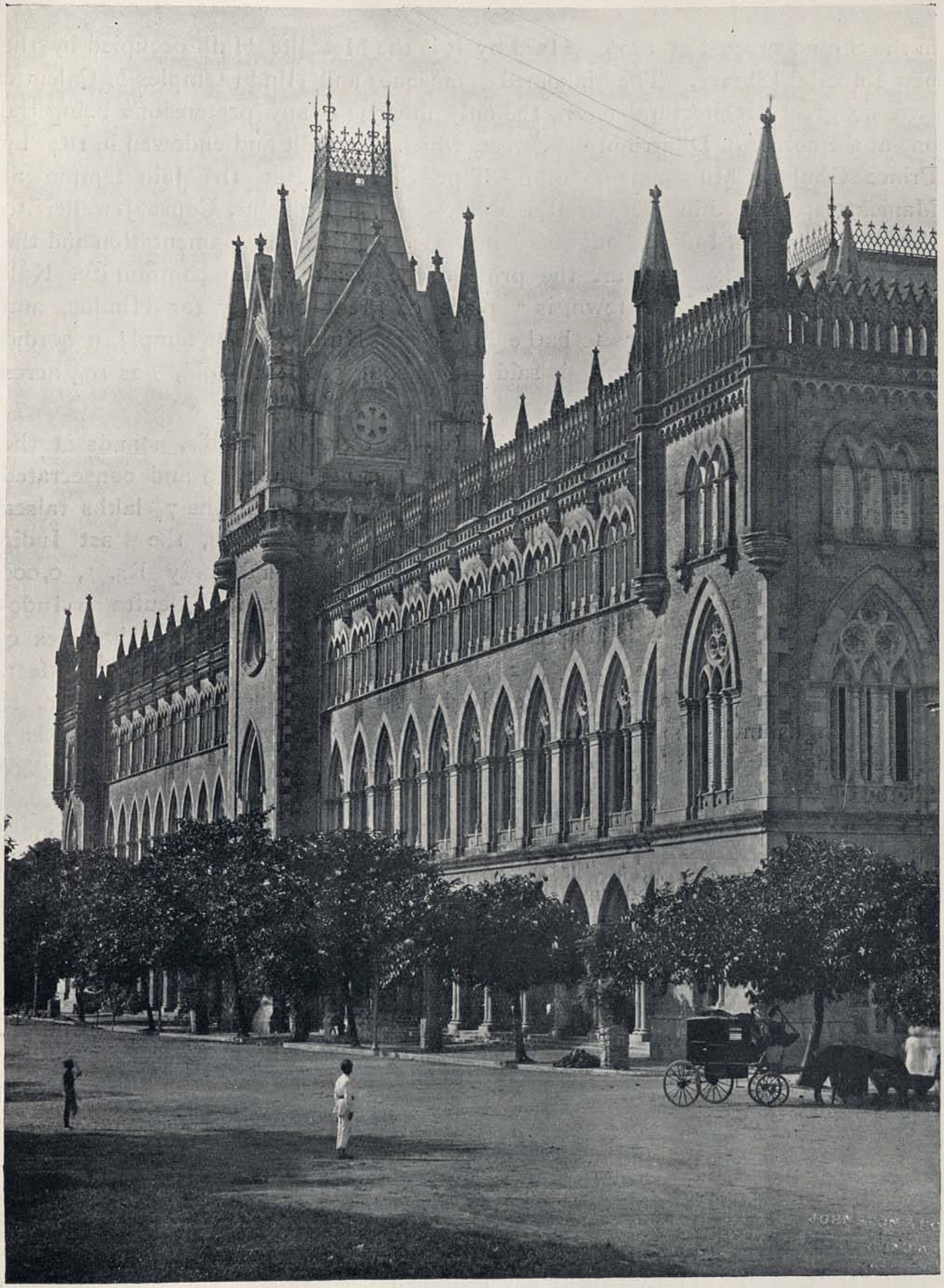
Calcutta possesses many fine buildings, both public and private, of historical and architectural interest. The original Government House occupied the site of the modern Customs Office. The erection of the present building was commenced in 1797 at the instance of the Marquis Wellesley, who urged that "India should be governed from a palace, not from a counting-house." It was completed in about seven years, at a cost of 13 lakhs, the design being partly based on that of

Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, the structure consisting of four great wings running to each point of the compass from a central pile approached by a magnificent flight of steps on the north. The Grand Hall is an exceptionally fine chamber and the building also contains the Council Chamber in which the Supreme Legislature held its sittings. Various articles of furniture and trophies recall the perilous early days of the Company, having been captured from European or native powers. The two fine full-length portraits of Louis le Bien Aimé and his Queen, together with the chandeliers and twelve busts of the Cæsars in the aisles of the Marble Hall, are said to have been taken from a French ship. It is now the residence of the Governor of Bengal. Belvedere, in Alipore, formerly the official residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, is now the resting place of articles destined eventually to be housed in the Victoria Memorial Museum. Formerly a country-house of Warren Hastings,* it was purchased in 1854 for the residence of Sir Frederick Halliday, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. It is a handsome edifice, and stands in extensive and well-kept grounds. It was greatly improved and embellished by Sir Ashley Eden. At the spot which is now the west entrance of Belvedere, on the Alipore Road, was fought the famous duel between Warren Hastings and Philip Francis, in which the latter was wounded. Nor far from this spot is Hastings House, the favourite residence of the great Governor-General, which is now used as a guest-house for Native Chiefs.

To the west of Government House, and nearer to the river, stands the High Court. This imposing structure in somewhat florid Gothic was completed in 1872 on the site of the old Supreme Court. The design is said to have been suggested by the Town Hall at Ypres. The Town Hall stands west of Government House, between it and the High Court. It is a large building in the Doric style, approached by a flight of steps leading up to the grand portico and contains many interesting statues and portraits. The Indian Museum, situated in Chowringhee, contains a fine collection of fossils and minerals, a geological gallery and a gallery of antiquities. Adjoining it are the Economic Museum and the School of Art. The Victoria Memorial Hall, to which allusion has just been made, in memory of the late Queen-Empress, is now in course of construction at the south end of the Maidan near the Cathedral.

The Central Post Office, opened in 1870, occupies a position in Dalhousie Square on the site of the old fort. In the same square are Writers' Buildings, now used for the offices of the Bengal Secretariat, and other Government Offices. The Survey Office occupies substantial quarters in Wood Street. The Bank of Bengal, incorporated as a Presidency Bank by Act XI of 1876, has a fine building

* This period is admirably recalled in Dr. Busteed's "Echoes of Old Calcutta."



THE HIGH COURT, CALCUTTA.

in the Strand erected in 1809. Hard by it is the Metcalfe Hall, occupied by the new Imperial Library. The Mahomedan mosques and Hindu temples of Calcutta have no great architectural merit, the only mosque of any pretensions being the one at the corner of Dhurrumtolla Street, which was built and endowed in 1842 by Prince Ghulam Muhammad, son of Tipu Sultan. But the Jain temple at Manicktola, founded in 1867 by Rai Buddree Dass Bahadur, Court Jeweller to the Government of India, should be seen. Its magnificent ornamentation and the grounds in which it stands are the pride of the wealthy Jain community. Kali Ghat, in the south of the town, is a place of great sanctity for Hindus, and numbers go there every day to bathe in Tolly's Nullah. The temple, a sordid and unattractive building, which is said to be about 300 years old, has 194 acres of land assigned for its maintenance.

The Cathedral Church of the See of Calcutta, St. Paul's, stands at the south-east corner of the Maidan. It was commenced in 1839 and consecrated in 1847, and it is practically the work of Bishop Wilson. Of the 7½ lakhs raised to build and endow the Cathedral, the Bishop gave 2 lakhs, the East India Company 1½ lakhs, and 2·8 lakhs was subscribed in England; only Rs. 1,20,000 was collected in India. It is built in a style which is known in Calcutta as Indo-Gothic, that is to say, Gothic adapted by a military engineer to the exigencies of the Indian climate. The building is 247 feet in length with a transept of 114 feet, and the tower and spire are 207 feet high. Among the many monuments to famous Englishmen who have served in this country, the most conspicuous is a colossal kneeling figure in episcopal robes by Chantrey bearing the single word 'Heber.' The spire was rebuilt in 1897, the original one having been destroyed in the earthquake of that year. St. John's, the old Cathedral, was commenced in 1784. It was erected to replace the still older Church of St. Anne's, which occupied the site of the modern Bengal Council Chamber and was demolished by Siraj-ud-daula in 1756. St. John's was built chiefly by voluntary subscriptions, the site being the gift of a Raja. In the graveyard is the mausoleum which covers the remains of Job Charnock; and slabs commemorating Surgeon William Hamilton, who died in 1717, and Admiral Watson, are built into the walls of the Church. The Charnock mausoleum was erected, probably in 1695, by his son-in-law, and is "the oldest example of British masonry now existing in Calcutta." The old Mission Church has a peculiar interest as having been erected between 1767 and 1770 by Kiernander, the first Protestant Missionary to Bengal, at his own expense. In 1786 the good Swede found himself unable to defray the charges involved by his benevolent schemes, as well as to pay the bills of a spendthrift son and the church was seized by the sheriff. It was rescued and restored to religious purposes by Charles Grant, afterwards the well-known East Indian Director, who paid Rs. 10,000, the sum at which it was appraised. Other churches of the Anglican

BATHING GHAT, CALCUTTA.

communion are the Fort church of St. Peter, St. Thomas's, St. Stephen's, Kidderpore, and St. James's, besides several others belonging to missionary bodies. The Roman Catholic Cathedral, situated in the heart of the commercial quarter, was built in 1797, taking the place of a chapel built by the Portuguese in 1700. The Greek church in the same quarter was built by subscriptions in 1780, and the Armenian Church was completed in 1790. At the corner of Dalhousie Square, on the site of the old Mayor's Court-house, stands the Scottish church of St. Andrew.

The Maidan, the chief open space in Calcutta, stretches from Government House and the Eden Gardens on the north to Tolly's Nullah on the south, Chowringhee lying on the east, and the river and Fort on the west. Scattered over it are several monuments, the most conspicuous of them being the Ochterlony column, erected in honour of Sir David Ochterlony, who 'for fifty years a soldier, served in every Indian war from the time of Hyder downwards.' It rises 165 feet, with a Saracenic capital, and its summit commands a noble view of the city. Facing the river is a pillared archway erected by the citizens of Calcutta to perpetuate the memory of James Prinsep, founder of the science of Indian numismatics. Near Park Street is the fine bronze statue of Sir James Outram, in which he is represented with drawn sword looking round to his troops and cheering them forward. Among other monuments may be mentioned those of Lord Roberts, Lord William Bentinck, Lord Hardinge, Lord Mayo, Lord Lawrence, Lord Dufferin and Lord Lansdowne, and the statue of Lord Curzon is a noteworthy and recent addition to this group. A statue of Queen Victoria by Frampton has been placed on the Maidan, waiting till it may find a more honoured position in the Hall now being erected to her memory. On the south-west side of the Maidan is the racecourse, while the rest of it is devoted to recreation grounds.

Other open spaces are the Eden Gardens, named after the Misses Eden, sisters of Lord Auckland, on the north-west of the Maidan; Dalhousie Square, in the heart of the official quarter; Beadon Square, in the north of the town, named after a Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal; and a series of squares by the side of Cornwallis, College, Wellington, and Wellesley Streets. The Zoological Gardens at Alipore were opened by the (then) Prince of Wales in 1876. They are managed by an honorary committee, and are maintained chiefly by donations and subscriptions, entrance receipts and a Government grant-in-aid. The gardens contained, in 1913, 336 mammals, 1162 birds, and 150 reptiles.

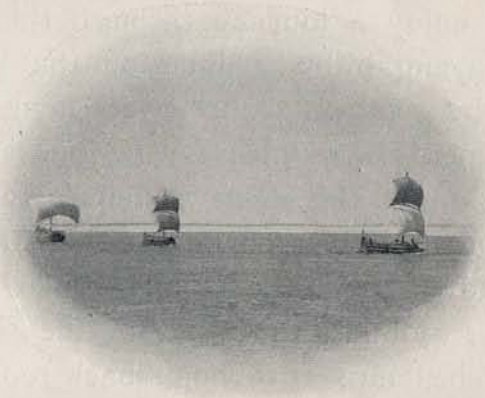
At Sibpur, on the opposite bank of the Hooghly, are situated the Botanical Gardens, which are beautifully laid out along the river and are stocked with rare tropical plants. They were founded in 1786, at the instance of Colonel Alexander Kyd, for the collection of plants indigenous to the country and for the introduction

General Post Office, Calcutta.

and acclimatisation of plants from foreign parts. This object has been fully realised, and among the greatest triumphs of the gardens may be mentioned the introduction of the tea plant from China. They cover 272 acres, and contain a fine herbarium, a botanical library, and monuments to the first two Superintendents, Kyd and Roxburgh. Of greater fame is the wonderful banyan tree that covers 900 feet in circumference. When Bishop Heber visited the garden he wrote : "It is not only a curious, but picturesque and most beautiful scene, and more perfectly answers Milton's idea of Paradise, except that it is on a dead flat instead of a hill, than anything I ever saw."

Chapter II.—On the Way to Dacca.

TO visit Bengal without travelling on the great rivers which intersect that province would be almost as bad as going to Agra without seeing the Taj Mahal, and one may see something of the rivers and appreciate their importance as highways of commerce without making the long journey to Dibrugarh. For example, it one goes from Calcutta to Dacca the rail journey is broken at Goalundo and from there to Narayanganj is continued by steamer. The night mail from Calcutta deposits one at Goalundo in the early hours of the morning, and there is little time for the tourist in a hurry to see much of this village and to appreciate its importance as a trade centre before he leaves on the steamer for Narayanganj. But Goalundo, the terminus of one section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, merits some description. The groups of thatched huts of which the village consists are a poor index to the transhipment trade of this busy mart. It is situated at the junction of the Padma, or Ganges, and the Brahmaputra, and daily services of steamers connect it with the railway systems at Narayanganj and Chandpur, and with the steamer services to Madaripur, Barisal, Sylhet, and Cachar. There are also daily services of steamers up the Padma to Digha Ghat in the dry season, and Buxar in the rains, and up the Brahmaputra to Dibrugarh. From that it will be seen that Goalundo occupies a very strong strategic position in the waterways of Bengal, a position which has been made much stronger by railway development. But this strengthening has not been effected without much difficulty, for Goalundo has the wandering habits of the prodigal son and constantly evinces a strong desire to escape from doing its duty in that state of life to which it has pleased an imperious trade to call it. It is the unstable water which has misled it, as it has misled many another Eastern town, into these ways. Formerly Goalundo was situated exactly at the junction of the rivers Padma and Brahmaputra, and large sums were spent in protecting the site from erosion; but in 1875 the spur was washed away, and since that date the terminus has constantly been on the move, with the result that it is now to



be found about seven miles south of its former position. This being the case there are no permanent landing stages. The steamers come as close alongside as they can and narrow planks serve as gangways for the use of passengers and coolies carrying the cargo to and from the shore.

The crumbling nature of the alluvial soil renders the banks easily adaptable to these makeshift arrangements, and an occasional fall of a few tons of earth into the river seems to inconvenience no one. It might be supposed that those who live in the extensive bazar of Goalundo and the officials of the railway and steamer companies would find it somewhat bewildering to live in a port of such erratic habits : but their houses are of the flimsiest build and so they are enabled to move snail-like after the peripatetic terminus, to whose vagaries they must by now be accustomed. In fact the history of Goalundo and its inhabitants affords a capital argument against the platitudinous thesis that a rolling stone gathers no moss. The volume of trade passing through it is enormous, the chief commodities dealt in being jute, oilseeds, food-grains, and hilsa fish for the Calcutta market.

Those who have time to go up the Brahmaputra from Goalundo will find themselves amply rewarded, for the scenery there is wild and the deep gorges cut by contributory rivers—if not comparable in beauty with the celebrated defiles on the Irrawaddy—are very fine and the forest-clad uplands provide a welcome contrast to the dead level of the land farther south. Yet it must not be supposed that the low-lying lands (a wicked poet once said that the people inhabiting those lands were low, lying people) are devoid of interest : far from it, and even those familiar with the scenery of more famous river haunts frequented by the tourist will enjoy a journey through this flat and fertile country. From Goalundo to Narayanganj by steamer on the Padma, as the Ganges is called on its lower reaches, takes about seven hours, and as the boats are comfortable and the prospect always pleases, the journey is well worth making and serves as a introduction to the great system of waterways that is the main characteristic of this province. The amazing width of the river, the lights and shades reflected on its muddy waters, the vivid green of the fields of rice and jute that fringe the banks and recede into the mists of the far horizon across the flat alluvial plains, the thatched huts with hog's-back roofs—or huts modernized and ugly with the more water-proof iron tops—and the little clusters of palms and other trees—all this

makes up a moving panorama that one may watch for hours untired. This, it is forcibly brought home to one, is the India that knows not the horrors of famine. This is, indeed, the land of the pagoda tree: here if anywhere have the teeming peasantry reason to be content with their lot. This is the *pulcher Ganges* which, Vergil said, could not compete with the glories of Italy.

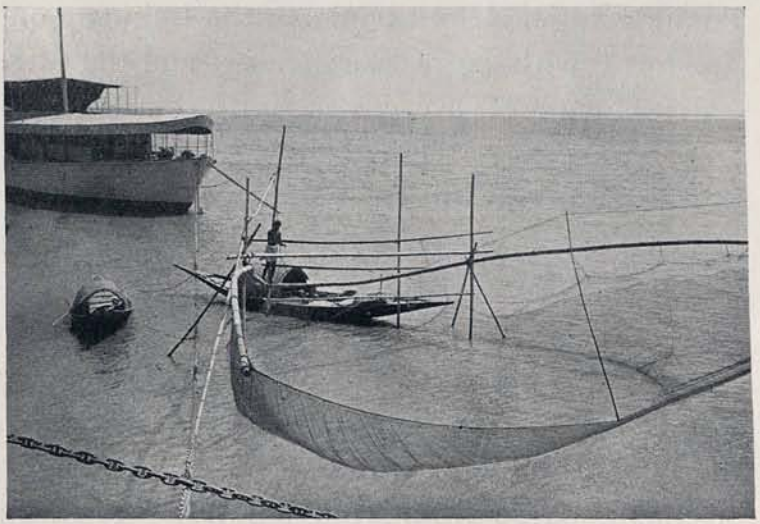
Narayanganj, the port of Dacca, is splendidly typical of the prosperity of this part of Bengal. It is said to have been a busy mart a century ago, and the growth of the jute trade and the development of rail and steamer communications have made it vastly more busy. It is also said to be a pattern municipality, which means much in a land where the municipality system of government has yet room to improve very considerably. But what will most impress the visitor is the approach to Narayanganj. He may come armed with the knowledge that this port taps the huge jute areas of Mymensingh, North Tippera, and Dacca, and

RIVERSIDE VILLAGE, GOALUNDO.

that it focusses the imports from Calcutta for their dense populations: but he is hardly likely to be prepared for the busy scene in the river as he draws near the landing stage. Both banks of the Lakhya, on which river this town is situated, are lined with large warehouses, and the stream is filled with steamers, tugs, native boats of every description, and the curious roofed barges used for the transport of jute. These signs of a busy emporium are repeated on shore. Here is the terminus of the metre-gauge railway that goes northward through Dacca and Mymensingh, and here also is evidence in plenty of the great dimensions to which the jute industry has attained within the last thirty years. The growth of that industry is one of the miracles with which one is always coming in contact in Bengal, and the historian of it—Mr. D. R. Wallace—did well to call his work on the subject "The Romance of Jute." A little more than seventy years ago Dundee flax and hemp spinners used to guarantee their products "free from Indian jute." Then in 1838 the value of jute yarn was

discovered and the Dundee jute industry was born. In 1855 the first spinning machinery was brought out to Calcutta from Dundee, the first mill was established—on part of the garden house property which was once owned by Warren Hastings—and the first machine-spun jute yarns produced. In the place of that one mill there are to-day 58 mills with over 33,000 looms and over 6,82,000 spindles, employing over 2,16,000 persons. In 1850-51 the value of jute to India as represented by the exports of the raw and (Indian) manufactured material, was about £275,000. In 1911-12 the value of the exports, raw and manufactured, was about 30 million sterling, and the acreage under jute in the same year was nearly three millions.

The mud flats along the river banks grow, in addition to jute, great quantities of rice, oil seeds and pulses. Rice is the staple food crop, the most common variety being harvested in winter, but spring and autumn kinds are also cultivated, with the result that there is always some green to be seen by the riverside, no matter at what time of year the journey may be made. But the winter months are most to be recommended for seeing this part of India, although even at the latter end of April or early in May the river trips will be found pleasantly cool in contrast to the stifling heat on shore at mid-day. The enterprise which has made this mode of travel possible has found an able historian in Mr. Alfred Brame, whose account of the rise of "The India General Steam Navigation Company, Limited"—the parent commercial river company of India—is well worth reading. The company was founded in 1844 and retained its title unchanged up to 1899, when it was reconstructed as the India General Navigation and Railway Company. It does for Bengal and Assam to-day the same sort of service that the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company does for Burma, and has developed to an amazing extent. Another company of the same description is the Rivers Steam Navigation Company, which was founded in 1862 with a fleet of three steamers and three flats. It has now 130 steamers and twice that number of flats and barges. Its latest steamers—such as the "Kharoti," which was built in the Company's dockyard, at Garden Reach, with accommodation for 12 saloon and 1,500 deck passengers and a cargo capacity of 18,500 maunds—are of the most up to date pattern, well fitted, and with good arrangements for catering. The magnitude



FISHING AT GOALUNDO.

of the operations of these two companies may be estimated from a statistical summary. This combined fleet now stands at :—Steamers 208, Harbour Tugs and Launches 38, Running Flats 252, Receiving Flats 72, Barges and Boats 194, which with other craft, such as Dredgers, Floating Cranes, etc., 39, make a total of 800 vessels. The Companies' despatch services extend over many thousands of miles of waterways in the four great provinces of Bengal, Assam, Behar and the North West, besides running a great number of feeder, or branch, services, especially in the Backergunj district of Bengal. The despatch service lines are

River Bank at Goalundo.

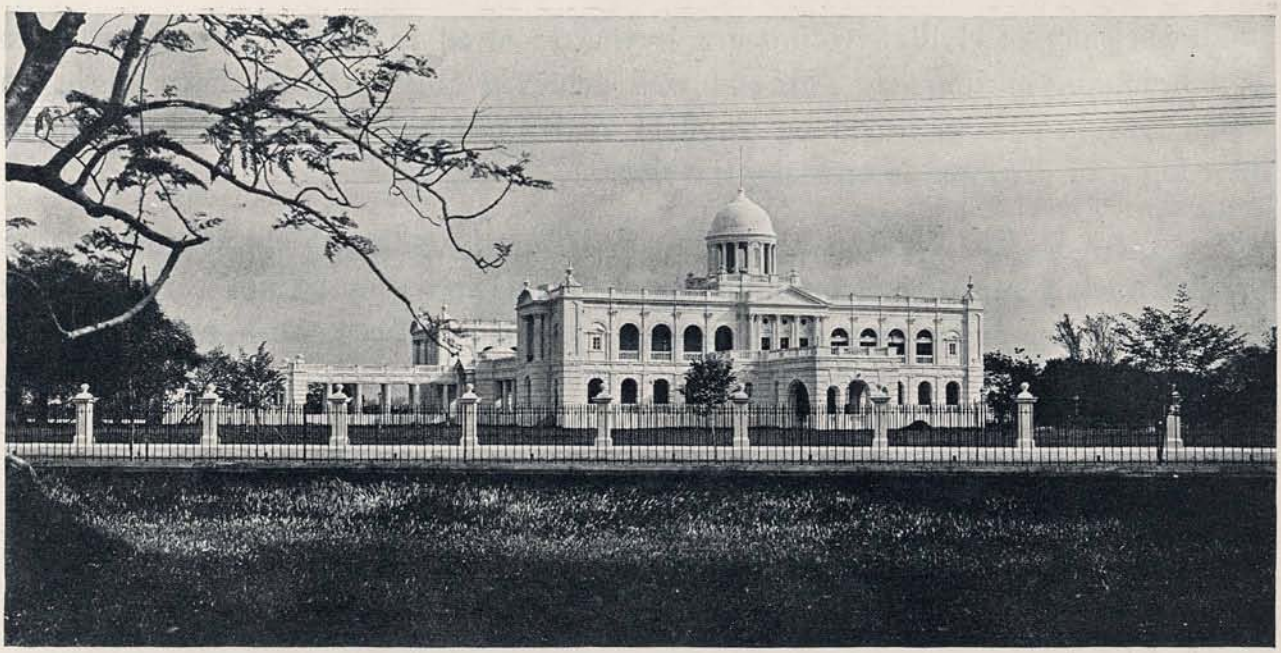
from Calcutta to Assam, terminating at Dibrughar (1,108 miles); Calcutta to Cachar terminating at Silchar (771 miles); and Calcutta to Dinapore (936 miles), whence feeder lines branch off and terminate at Buxar on the Ganges (1,018 miles) and Adjodhya (Fyzabad) on the Gogra, 1,229 miles from Calcutta. The maundage carried by the Joint Companies from July 1st to December 31st, 1912, approximated 30,000,000 maunds, or considerably over a million tons of merchandise. The I. G. N. & Ry. Co. also own a Railway extending from Juggernathgunj on the Brahmaputra river to Mymensingh, whieh is worked by the Eastern Bengal State Railway in connection with their Dacca Section on behalf of the I. G. N. & Ry. Co.

Dacca has less interesting history than, from its appearance, one might expect. It derives its name, according to some wise men, from the goddess Dhakeswari, who has a shrine here : others assign the origin of the name to the dhak tree, known to botanists as *Butea frondosa*. Both explanations are plausible enough to satisfy the average tourist. What is of more importance to remember is that Dacca became the capital of Eastern Bengal early in the seventeenth century when Islam Khan made it his head-quarters, finding it a convenient base for his operations against the Ahoms of Assam and against the Portuguese pirates who, as allies of the Arakanese, were then ravaging the waterways of the Delta. In the first century of its existence as capital, it attained to great prosperity. The great trading companies that were exploiting the East—the English, French, Dutch, Portuguese—all had factories in Dacca, of which, however, no trace remains to-day. Those were the days when Dacca muslins were known all the world over, and the trade in them continued until the end of the

SECRETARIAT AT DACCA.

eighteenth century when it began to wane before the competition of English piece-goods made by machinery. Even now one may be so fortunate as to acquire one of the old pieces but at a cost of fifty rupees or so the square yard.

In 1704 the Nawab Murshid Kuil Khan moved his residence to Murshidabad and with that potentate the glory of Dacca departed. A few mosques of no great distinction from the architectural point of view and a large and rambling native town remain to remind one that Dacca was once a fine Mahomedan town at the time when the Mahomedan Rulers of India were making history by their conquest and by their magnificent buildings. Coming to modern times, Dacca was the scene of an exciting episode in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Two companies of sepoys were then stationed in the fort, and on the first alarm of the outbreak at Meerut, 100 men of the Indian Navy were sent up from Calcutta for the protection of Dacca. With these sailors and a



GOVERNMENT HOUSE, DACCA

ANGLICAN CHURCH, DACCA.

small company of civilian volunteers, it was resolved to disarm the sepoys who were becoming mutinous. This end was achieved only after a sharp fight in which 41 rebels were killed on the field, and a number of others were killed in their flight or drowned in crossing the river.

Were it not for the partition of Bengal, under which scheme Dacca enjoyed a few years of metropolitan glory, it might to-day be not very different from what it was in the time of the mutiny. As it is, Dacca shows many signs of the grandeur which it had thrust upon it—in fact a new Dacca was built to house

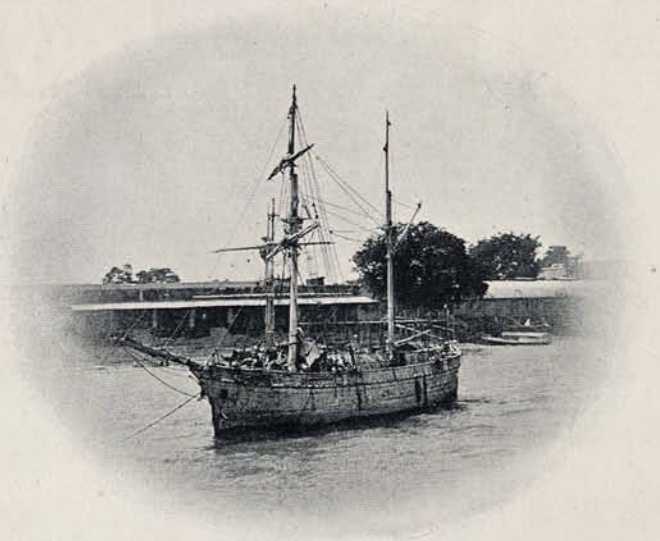
CURZON HALL AND PART OF THE DACCA COLLEGE.

the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam and all the machinery of Government called into existence with him in October 1905. This new town was hardly completed when, in 1911, a re-adjustment of the partition scheme was announced at the Delhi Durbar and Dacca fell from its high state as capital of a Province. Thus there were less than six years in which to plan and build the new town, but in that time much was accomplished. As an example of town planning Dacca does not compare with, for example, Kuala Lumpur, the capital of the Federated Malay States, but it well repays study. It will be noticed in

particular that the town displays an unusual mixture of architectural styles. What was intended to be Government House is a Renaissance building, rather lacking in breadth. What will become Dacca University is in the Moghul style as also is the Madrassa. The old College is a classical structure possessing considerable dignity. The Secretariat, by Mr. Ransome, cannot be said to be in any definite style, but cannot fail to attract attention owing to its unusual character: it represents an effort to evolve something to meet new conditions with an eye to economy. Finally, the Church is an architectural curiosity, belonging to no style or period, characteristic of the English Church builders in India.

TEMPLE ON THE DACCA RACE-COURSE.

Reference has been made to the muslins for which Dacca is famed, but a fuller account of them is demanded in even the briefest survey of the town. These muslins have long been famous and known under poetic names indicative of their beauty, such as the *abrawan*—running water (because if placed in a stream it could scarcely be seen), *baft hana*—woven air (because if thrown in the air it would float like a cloud); *shab-nam*—evening dew (because if placed on the grass it could hardly be seen). Dr. Taylor, in his history of Dacca muslins, speaking of the fineness of the thread, remarks that "a skein which a native weaver measured in my presence in 1846, and which was afterwards carefully weighed, proved to be in the proportion of 250 miles to the pound of cotton." In these muslins there are usually more threads in the warp than in the woof, the latter being to the former, in a piece weighing twenty tolas, in the proportion of nine to eleven. The value of a piece of plain muslin is estimated by its length and the



CHITTAGONG SAILING BOAT.

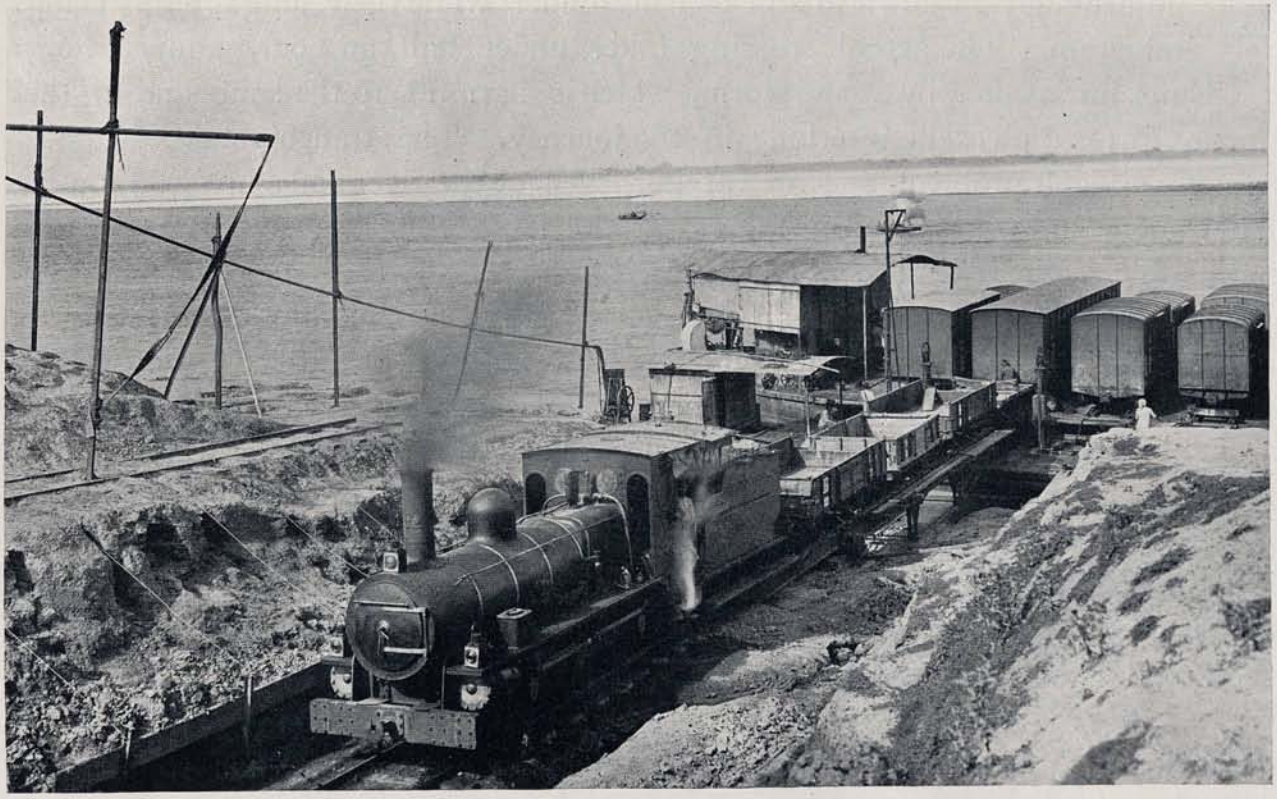
number of threads in its warp, compared with its weight. The greater the length and the number of threads and the less the weight, the higher the price. Only the expert can hope to tell by the eye the difference between muslin valued at Rs. 150 and those at Rs. 600 the piece. A popular method of testing fineness used to be to ascertain if the piece measured could be passed through a lady's finger ring. "It has often been contended that even at the present day the hand-loom muslins of Dacca are finer than any produced by machinery, but this is a mistake; the finest Dacca muslins do not exceed four hundreds, whereas several manufacturers in England can and do produce six hundreds. The demand for such goods is, however, very limited and steam power is therefore never likely to be employed in their production. The limited demand is the Indian hand labourer's chief safety with many of his artistic manufactures." (*Indian Art at Delhi* by Sir George Watt.) The finest of all the Dacca muslins used to be called *Mulmul Khas*, the king's muslin, but the *Jamdani* or figured muslin is the finest product of the Indian weaver of to-day. The fabric of the *Jamdani* is, as a rule, grey cotton, ornamented with blue-black designs, or with brightly coloured cottons and gold and silver wire. The designs are commonly accepted as Persian in origin.

Chapter III.—The Sara Bridge.

AT Damukdia, 119 miles from Calcutta, the main route of the Eastern Bengal State Railway comes to the Ganges, and here passengers and cargo must be ferried across to Sara on the left bank. This operation, so far as passengers are concerned, is simple. They go aboard a comfortable paddle steamer, and if crossing in the evening, immediately sit down to an excellent dinner while their luggage is being taken on. The actual crossing takes under half an hour, and, so long as it is not interrupted by a sand storm, which is harmful to the soup and to the temper, forms a pleasant interlude in the journey. The transhipment of goods is a more difficult problem, and the varying levels of the river and a break in gauge do not make it any easier. But a great proportion of the extensive goods traffic on this line crosses the river in trucks carried on specially constructed flats towed over by paddle steamers. It is an expensive system and so long ago as 1889 the administration of the Eastern Bengal State Railway put forward a proposal for bridging the Ganges at Sara. Nineteen years later, after much discussion as to the site of the bridge, a scheme was sanctioned and Mr. R. R. Gales was appointed Engineer-in-Chief of the project. Thus the ferry system is doomed, and the bridge will shortly provide through rail communication between the jute-growing area to the north-east of the site and Calcutta. A very large traffic in wheat and seeds from the area to the north-west is also expected, and the gain in convenience, by obviating the present double transhipment and delay, is expected to lead to a large increase in the passenger traffic between Darjeeling and Shillong and Calcutta. Apart from the expense of the ferry system one has to bear in mind also the deterrent effect on trade of the loss and delays due to that system and the actual loss incurred by consignors in damage and delay to actual despatches.

The Lower Ganges Bridge at Sara is the most important engineering scheme at present being carried out in India, and in some respects one of the most notable in any part of the world. The difficulty that here confronts the engineer is not how to span a mile or so of water, but how to train the river, which has frequently changed its course, not to desert the bridge when built. Thus after the site had been selected (9 miles below Raita, the present railway terminus on the right bank, and 3 miles below Sara, the present terminus on the left bank) almost the first thing to do was to build banks to control the water. A pair of guide banks have for this purpose been constructed at the bridge site to prevent further lateral movement of the river, and a revetment of the bank

of the river has been built at Sara Ghat Station and another revetment at Raita Ghat Station. When it is understood that the annual rise of the river in flood time is 31 feet and that there is a maximum flood discharge at this point of 2,500,000 cusecs, it will be seen that the training works have to be of great strength. An ingenious statistician has computed that the amount of stone used in "pitching" these guide banks of sand and clay would fill a broad-gauge train extending from Calcutta to Darjeeling, and this gives a vivid idea of the magnitude of the task.



LOADING WAGONS ON FLATS, SARA FERRY.

Work on the bridge itself was begun in 1911, and it is hoped that it may be opened to traffic in 1915. It is to consist of 15 spans of 352 feet and two land spans of 75 feet, a total length of 5,430 feet. It will provide for a double line, and when it is complete the broad-gauge will be extended northward to Santahar, 52 miles from Sara, which will therefore become the changing station for Darjeeling passenger traffic to the metre-gauge system.

The bridge is to be carried on 16 piers, for which well foundations—150 feet deep and 63 feet long by 37 feet wide—have been sunk. The great depth of the wells, the deepest in the world, is necessary owing to the scouring action of the river, and has been obtained by direct dredging with plant electrically driven from two power houses, one on each bank. The piers are formed of concrete blocks

above the steel caissons, and of steel trestles above high flood level. A very noticeable feature of the project is the approach work, which alone has cost Rs. 84 lakhs. On the left bank the approach is about 4 miles long and for 2,000 feet of that length is at the unusual height of 50 feet above the surrounding country: on the right bank the approach is three miles long. To the layman who cannot readily appreciate these figures, others may be presented that will illustrate the great extent of the scheme. It is estimated that the whole undertaking will cost Rs. 4,76,68,863. It is a colossal figure. And the bridge has been long in construction, but might have been ready at an earlier date had there not been strikes in England, which delayed the shipment of girders,

WAGON FERRY, SARA.

and an outbreak of cholera among the army of coolies (at one time amounting to 25,000) employed on the work.*

A very interesting stage of the construction on the Sara side of the river was reached in June, 1913, when, after some weeks of anxiety lest the work should be

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* Some additional statistics may here be given. The wells require —

36,00,000 c. feet of 1½ stone ballast.
20,00,000 c feet of sand.
125,000 casks of Portland cement.
7,906 tons steel work.

Land acquired for the scheme under the Land Acquisition Act amounts to—

Right Bank...	... ...	1,888 acres.
Left ,,	... ...	2,143 ,,
Quarries ..	... ...	741 ,,

ruined by floods, the first main span of girders was erected together with the service girder which is to perform the functions of the ordinary timber staging for the deep water spans. The last piece of main girder was received at Paksey on the 20th May, and the last piece of service girder on the 29th May. The service girder weighing 870 tons was erected and struck almost fully rivetted on the 14th June and the main span weighing 1,200 tons was erected and struck on the 17th June. This span is carried on 40 per cent. of parallel drifts fully filling the holes and sixty per cent. of service bolts. The floods began to rise on the 15th June and submerged the piles of the staging on the 18th June. The bridge-builders were just in time, and the nicety of their calculation was remarkable.

River Bank by Sara Bridge.

To this account of the Sara ferry and bridge must be added at least a list of the other ferry services over the Ganges and Brahmaputra for, owing to its unique geographical position, the Eastern Bengal State Railway presents problems in transportation which are not encountered on any other railway in India. These ferries are —

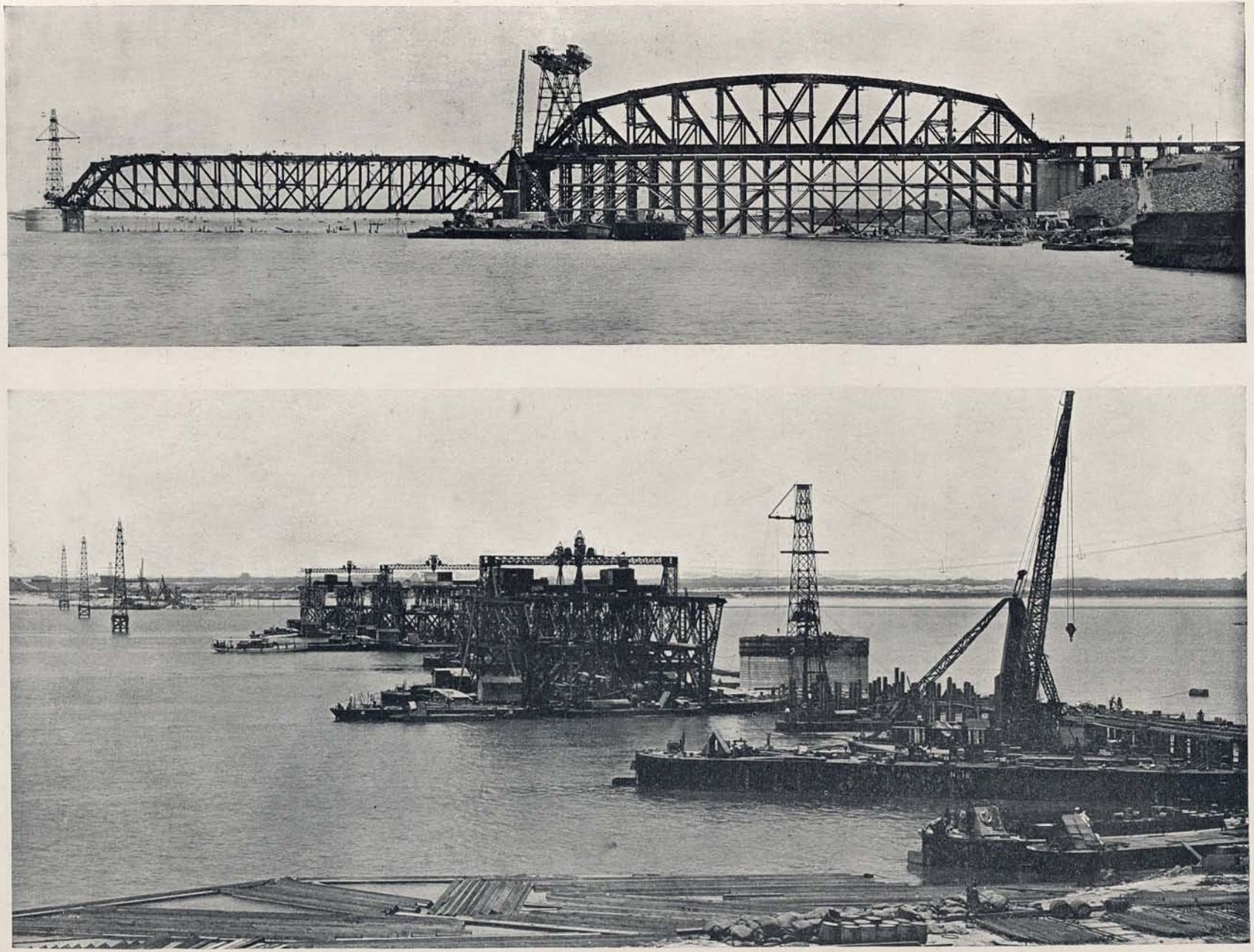
Between Lalgolaghat and Godagarighat, Passenger service and flat transhipment.

Between Amingaon and Pandu, Passenger service and wagon ferry.

Between Fulchhari and Bahadurabad, Wagon Ferry and will shortly be opened to Passenger traffic.

At Maniharighat, worked by the East Indian Railway.

Besides the fact that there is a break of gauge at Sara, Godagari and Maniharighat, the difficulty of working these transhipments is enormously increased by the fact that the rivers are continually shifting and shoaling when the water is dropping, often with very little notice. These alterations of the rivers frequently necessitate the shifting of the ghats, and it is sometimes necessary to move the ghats several miles in order to get good water. As it is sometimes necessary to open new ghats at each place, two and three times in a year, the labour and expense of keeping them open are very great.



General View of the Sara Bridge under construction.

Chapter IV.—Darjeeling.

AT the village of Siliguri the Eastern Bengal State Railway comes to an end, and is joined by the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway. The village is the terminus also of the cart road from Kalimpong and Sikkim, and is thus the focus of the local trade—but is known to the traveller only as a stepping stone on the way to the hills. Of the ascent to Darjeeling much has been written and it is not uncommon to find the railway described as a masterpiece of engineering skill. But the Darjeeling Gazetteer* prudently warns one against the sin of exaggeration. It points out that the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway was constructed on a ready-made road, and for the most part it was only necessary to lay the rails along that road. "It is true that skill was required in seeing that the curves and radii were suitable and not too sharp, but no tunnelling had to be done, and the main difficulties had been already overcome by the engineering skill of the Public Works Department, which made the cart road many years before. The railway, moreover, cannot compare for speed, comfort and cheapness with mountain railways in other parts of the world, though it was no doubt a creditable achievement in the days when it was built." That is quite true, but on the other hand one must remember that this line was built (by the late Mr. Franklin Prestage) so long ago as 1881 when the science of constructing railways of this type was in its infancy; that the line has stood the test of time; and that great credit is due to the railway staff for the continued safety of the line which is liable to be breached by torrents and landslips, as in the cyclone of 1899 when long stretches of the railway were completely destroyed. In any case the railway has made Darjeeling accessible. Until the year 1878, when the Northern Bengal State Railway was opened for traffic, the route from Calcutta to Darjeeling, available for those who had the time, money, and energy necessary to undertake so formidable a journey, was by rail from Howrah, the terminus of the East Indian Railway on the West bank of the Hooghly to Sahebgunge, a distance of 219 miles; then by steam ferry across the Ganges to Carragola, thence by bullock cart to the river opposite Dingra Ghat; after crossing which, again by bullock cart or palki gharry to Purneah, Kissengunge, Titalya, and Siliguri whence the

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* Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling. By L. S. S. O'Malley, I.C.S. (Bengal Secretariat Book Depôt, 1907.)

ascent commenced *vin* the Punkabaree Road, which joins the present cart road at Kurseong. The whole journey took from five to six days, and was about as exhausting and uncomfortable a journey as can well be imagined; now it is made in twenty hours, the Siliguri to Darjeeling section taking about six hours.

The total length of the railway from Siliguri (398 ft. above sea level to Darjeeling (6,812 ft.) is 51 miles, and after the first seven miles, which are across a gently sloping plain, the gradient is always steep. The difficulties of the

CURVE ABOVE TINDHARIA, DARJEELING HILL RAILWAY.

ascent are overcome by reverses or zigzags and by spirals, the train passing the latter being especially interesting to watch for it is not often that one is presented, as here, with the spectacle of a train running round like a puppy after its tail. There is a little illustrated guide to the railway and Darjeeling, which gives a detailed list of these engineering devices and of the other objects of interest passed *en route*, and it may profitably be studied in the train. But the real

attraction of the journey lies in the view that one thereby obtains of the lower slopes of the Himalayas, of the trim tea-gardens monotonous as vineyards among the disappearing forest, and of fine waterfalls. Added to this is the feeling of exhilaration that one obtains in steadily rising from the torrid plains to the cooler atmosphere of the hills. Of the stations on the line, none are of any importance except Tindharia, where the Railway Company has its workshops, and Kurseong. From the latter place, in clear weather, a magnificent view may be obtained of the plains of India as they stretch away from the abrupt mountain

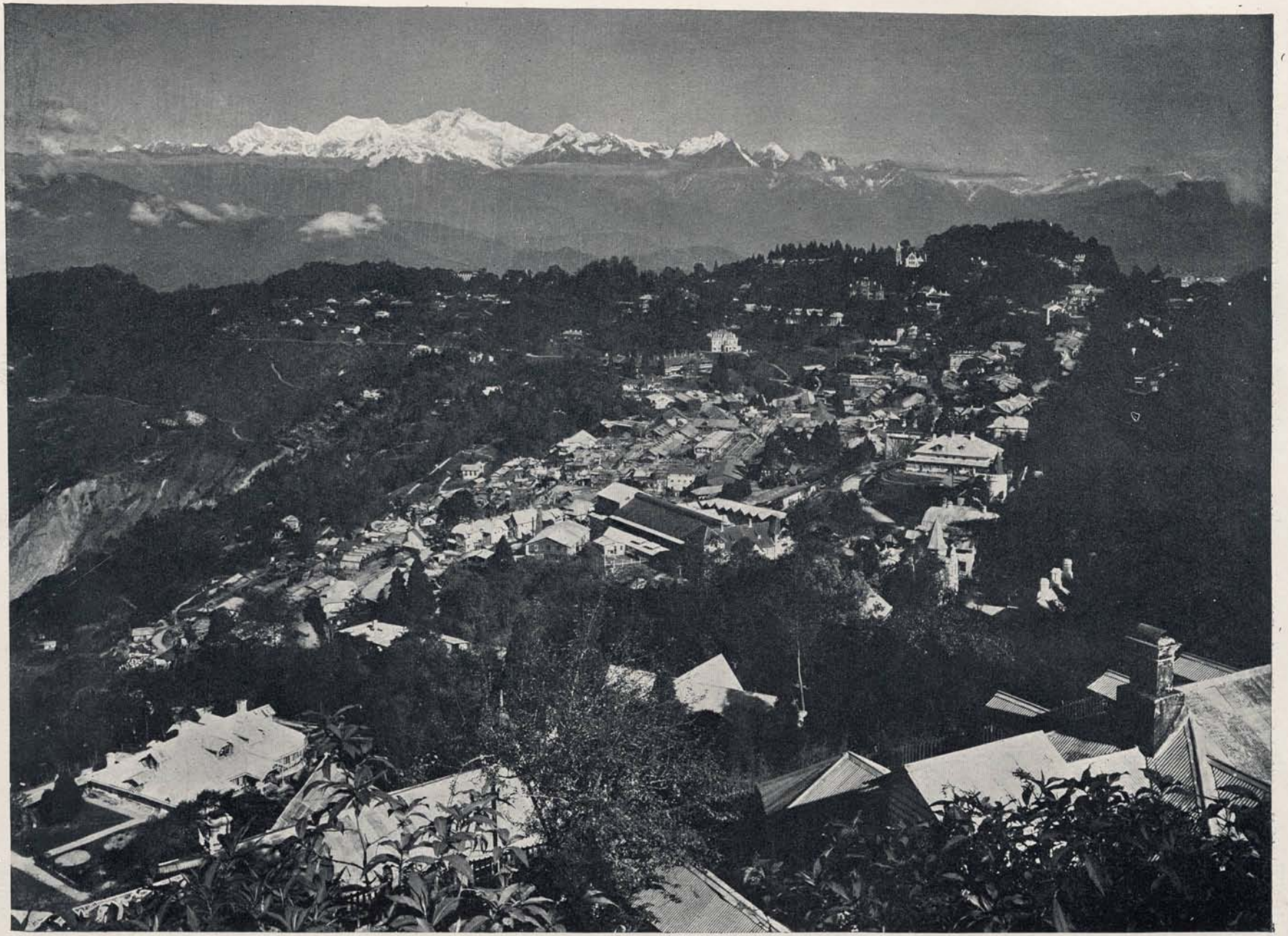
CURVES NEAR GHOOM ON THE DARJEELING HILL RAILWAY.

footholds towards the misty distance of the horizon. Nor is Kurseong to be disregarded as a hill station. It is the headquarters of a subdivision which includes much of the low-lying belt known as the Terai, and is a place of growing importance as a kind of hill station supplementary to Darjeeling. Its comparatively low altitude (4,860 ft.) and mild climate are much in its favour. The Jesuits have here a training college, and there are also a church and a club together with other adjuncts of civilisation.

THE ETERNAL SNOWS

A tablet in St. Andrew's Church at Darjeeling, to the memory of General Lloyd, records the fact that "to his exertions and personal influence with the Raja of Sikkim the Province of Bengal is indebted for the Sanitarium of Darjeeling." As a fact he was the first European to visit the place, in 1829, and his representations about it to Lord William Bentinck, who was then Governor-General, resulted six years later in the cession of what was then a worthless uninhabited mountain to the British. In 1841 the Government granted the Raja of Sikkim an allowance of Rs. 3,000 as compensation and raised the grant to Rs. 6,000 in 1846, only to withdraw it on account of the Raja's misbehaviour in 1850. The station was not long in developing and the population was swelled by immigrants from the neighbouring States in which slavery was prevalent. Troubles with the adjacent States mark the early history of Darjeeling, but by 1866 it had settled down to peace and uninterrupted progress and had been linked by roads with the outside world. In the sixties also several hill schools were established, the first of which was St. Paul's School which was transferred to Darjeeling from Calcutta with a view to making the hills the home of European Education in India. But the choice of Darjeeling as a health resort and the subsequent planting of tea in the hills were still more important factors in the development of the district : following the tea industry came the railway. Several experiments in growing tea were made both by Government and private enterprise before 1856, which is taken as the date at which the industry was established as a commercial enterprise : once it had started its growth was phenomenal, and, as the number of tea estates increased, an unexampled immigration took place from Nepal and elsewhere in order to meet the demand for labour. A curious result of this rapid economic change in the conditions of Darjeeling and the surrounding district is that a remarkable number of the Nepalese have shown the ability to discard their hereditary occupations and have rapidly become competent mechanics and engineers, either on the railway or in tea factories.

This immigration has resulted in the collection in Darjeeling of a strange mixture of races, baffling to the stranger and even to the professed ethnologist. From the plains there have migrated a variety of merchants, Marwaris for the most part, and Punjabi traders together with Bengali clerks, Hindustani mechanics, and sweepers from Rajputana. But the majority of faces one sees are unmistakably Mongolian, showing that Nepal, Tibet, and other hill countries have largely contributed to the making of Darjeeling. The aboriginal Lepchas are said to be leaving Darjeeling for the forest area of Kalimpong or to be slowly migrating to Bhutan, where they are at liberty to live the nomadic, lazy life of the true forest-dweller unhampered by the irritating restrictions of civilisation. Their place is taken by the hardworking, thrifty Nepalese, by the Bhutias—half Lepcha,

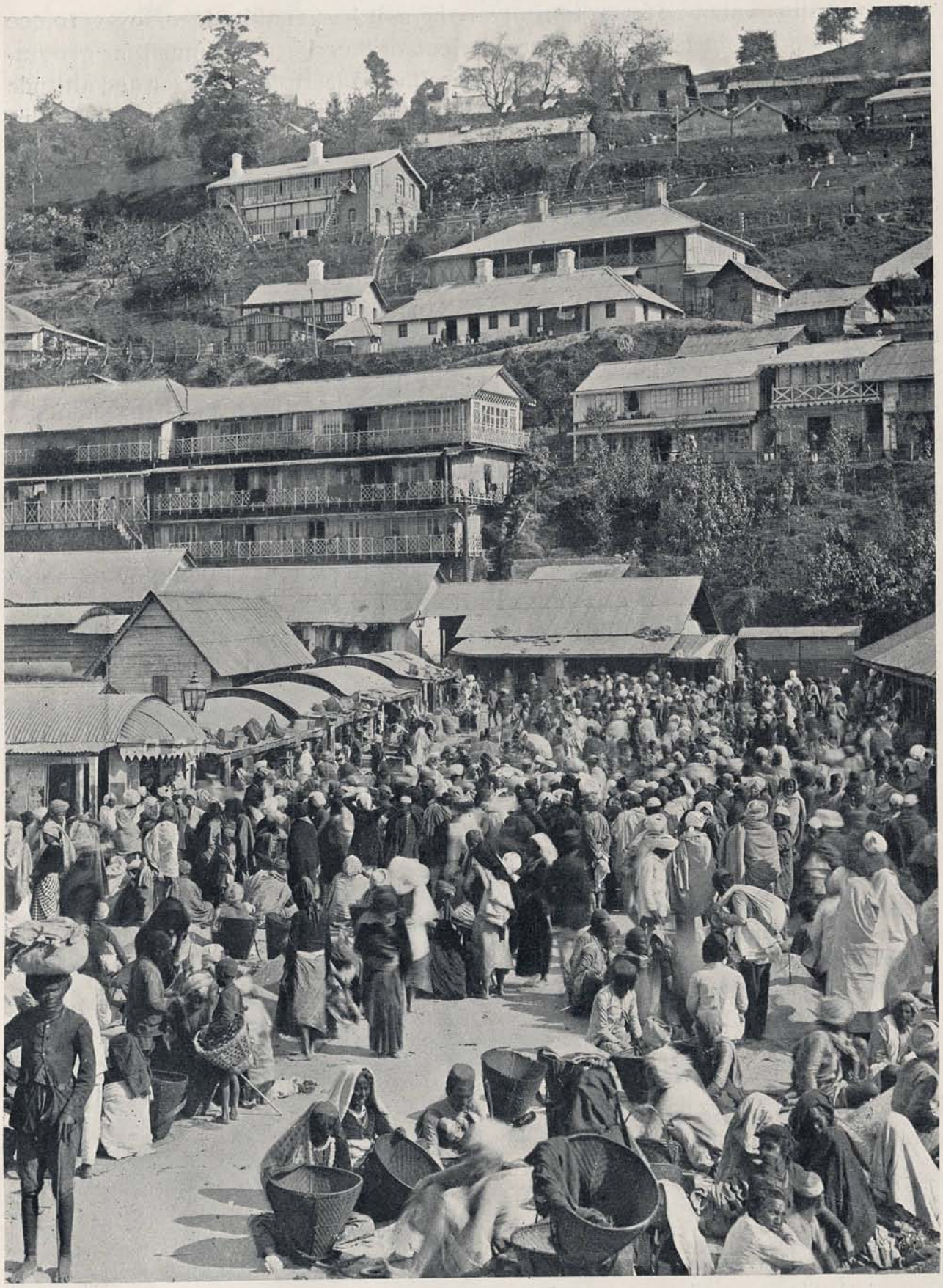


GENERAL VIEW OF DARJEELING.

half Tibetan—who are as strong* as they are cheerful; and by the Koches from the Terai. "At one end of the scale of civilization (in Darjeeling) stands the European and at the other remnants of races who express 'agriculture' by the term 'felling' or 'clearing the forest,' who have no term for 'village,' for 'horse,' or for 'plough,' for 'money' of any kind, and whose language is marked by an absence of any term for nearly every operation of the intellect of will, whether virtuous or vicious, and for almost every abstract idea, whether material or immaterial." The majority of these people are Hindus, worshipping a number of unpleasant spirits constantly in need of propitiation, and a considerable number profess and call themselves Buddhists.

The Himalayan range, which one views to perfection from Darjeeling, has been commonly divided into three zones—the great range of snowy peaks, which, roughly speaking, form the axis of the chain; the lower or outer Himalayas, forming a broad belt of mountains of inferior, though still considerable, altitude south of the snows; and, thirdly, the comparatively low hills forming the Sub-Himalayan zone, either as ridges or spurs contiguous with the outer hills or separated from them by flat-bottomed valleys. In Darjeeling the mountains belong to the lower Himalayan zone and consist of long tortuous ranges, running generally from north to south throughout its length. The Sub-Himalayan zone is altogether wanting, and the detached ridges met elsewhere in the Himalayas are unrepresented; while the snowy range lies far beyond the limits of the district to the north, where it gives the appearance of a long range of mountains stretching east and west at an average distance of about 50 miles. This range forms the great backbone of the Darjeeling Himalayas. To the north-west tower the giant peaks of Kinchinjunga (28,146 feet), and to the north-east is Dongkya (23,184 feet) at a distance of rather less than 50 miles. From Kinchinjunga the Singalila range, an immense ridge 60 miles long, stretches south to the plains, forming the boundary between Nepal and Darjeeling. It is the continuation of this ridge in a south and then south-easterly direction by Tanglu and Senchal, with its various lateral spurs, which constitutes the Darjeeling hill territory west of the Teesta. To the east of that river a lofty ridge runs southwards from Dongkya, dividing at Gipmochi (11,518 feet) into two great spurs, one of which runs to the south-east and the other to the south-west, including between them the valley of the Jaldhaka. It is the lower half of the south-western spur, with its numerous ramifications, that constitutes the hills of Kalimpong, east of the Teesta. The highest point of these hills is where the

* It is an old story, but worth repeating, that in the days before the railway, a single Bhutia carried a grand piano up the hills to Darjeeling, 50 miles distant and 7,000 feet in elevation. Those who have seen a Bhutia woman shoulder an American trunk will find the story not incredible.



SCENE IN THE BAZAAR, DARJEELING.

main ridge first enters British territory, where it has an altitude of over 10,000 feet; the other eminences do not exceed 7,000 or 8,000 feet. So much for geography. But one does not as a rule go to Darjeeling to learn the position and altitude of the various Himalayan peaks so much as to observe the beauty of the everlasting hills. It is important therefore to go at the season of the year when one may be reasonably certain of obtaining a view of the snowy range unimpeded by mist and clouds. The months of November, December and January form this season—though fortune may occasionally favour the visitor by lifting the veil of clouds at a much later time of year—and then the mountains may be seen standing out in stereoscopic sharpness and the intervening distance appears to be enormously diminished owing to the clearness of the atmosphere. (As Stevenson said of the Alpine landscape, "space is reduced again to chaos ..... the scene has a character of insanity.") At some other times only the summits of the mountains can be seen emerging from a sea of clouds: and there are many days in the year when a wall of mist which the eye cannot penetrate shuts off the mountains from the world, and when disappointment is the inevitable lot of him who goes forth in the hope of seeing one of the most superb scenes in the world. But when there is any view at all, there can be nothing more wonderful: and the visitor to Darjeeling will do well to ride out early to Tiger Hill, or walk to the more accessible Observatory Hill in time to see the sun rise. From nowhere can the pageantry of the arrival and departure of day be better seen than from the latter Hill on a winter day, and no pen has yet described the full glory of that changing scene when—

From grey of dusk the veils unfold
To pearl and amethyst and gold
Thus is the new day woven and spun:
From glory of blue to rainbow spray
From sunset-gold to violet-grey
Thus is the restful night re-won.

It is a scene on which one may look untired day after day, and on no two days do the snows in all their glory appear to be the same.

It is to be regretted that the Buddhist is a lover of the mountain tops, and his somewhat ostentatious

Summit of Observatory Hill.

presence on Observatory Hill is apt to interfere with the meditations which sight of the mountains may inspire. For the hill was once crowned by a Buddhist Monastery which was destroyed by invading Gurkhas some hundred years ago, and of which only the hallowed associations remain. Thus the site is a holy place where pious Buddhists sing endless prayers, ring bells, and make propitiatory offerings of no intrinsic value—all no doubt commendable proceedings of great advantage to the spiritual welfare of the worshipper and seriously annoying to evil spirits, but extremely irritating to those who there seek to be alone with nature in the contemplation of its glory. The centre of the hill is occupied by a kind of stone altar surrounded by bamboo poles from which flutter the rags and flags, "the horses of the wind," which transport the prayers of the devout to the ears of the gods: and a curious effect is produced among these tattered Buddhist flags by a large cross—which is found on closer investigation to be only a pole and cross piece for carrying electric light wires. Near by a tree is decked with what appears to be the contents of a rag-and-bone man's hoard. Such is Buddhism in its most repellent aspect, a kind of demonolatry as far removed from the religion taught by the Buddha as it is possible to conceive. This surely is not the creed that once conquered half the East and led kings captive beneath its compelling sway. Nor does one find a much more attractive form of Buddhism in the monastery in Bhutia Basti, a few hundred feet down the hillside. It is a plain two-storeyed structure, with idols enshrined on the ground floor. The mural paintings, recently refurbished in garish colours, illustrate the degeneracy of Buddhist art which, according to some incomprehensible critics, is finer than anything the Greeks ever produced; but those who are capable of studying them will find of considerable interest the library of sacred books that is housed in this building. Prayer-wheels, great and small, flank the entrance—machines which, if they were not regarded and used with fervour by Buddhist worshippers, one might have supposed to be the invention of some cynic engaged in the task of ridiculing the "vain repetition" of prayers. A more portable form of

A Bhutia Tamasha.

prayer-wheel is to be purchased from the many dealers in "antiques" in Darjeeling, and is with tourists a popular souvenir of Buddhist monastic life.

From Darjeeling a number of interesting excursions can be made, and the visitor who has never seen a tea garden should not fail to do so. Few industries have developed so rapidly in India as that of tea cultivation which was only established on a commercial basis about the time of the Mutiny.* Now an enormous, and still increasing area of land is under tea and the slopes of the Himalayas up to Darjeeling are plentifully covered with it. To those unfamiliar with the sight there can be few more pleasant experiences than to watch the various operations of plucking, withering, rolling, fermenting, drying and sifting the tea, which are followed by the packing in the familiar wooden chests.

Bhutia Mummers.

Most of the area in Darjeeling has been planted with the China variety which was for many years considered the only kind suited for the production of fine tea. Some planters of experience still hold to this view, though it is now a very rare thing for the pure China plant to be planted. Of late years the variety known as the "Assam indigenous" has been much in favour, and it is certainly capable of producing the very finest tea; but it is very delicate. A hybrid from these two varieties has proved most suitable all round. Some fields have been planted with the "Manipur indigenous" which is the most hardy of all the varieties, and gives a good yield, but the tea produced is almost invariably coarse and rank in flavour. These three are the principal varieties of tea at present cultivated. Darjeeling tea is famous for its peculiarly fine flavour; but the quality produced varies greatly in different parts of the district, and varies also remarkably at different seasons of the year on the same estates. It is indeed not uncommon for teas produced in one month to sell for double, and occasionally four times, the price of teas produced on the same estate two months later or earlier, as the case may be. The finest teas are usually produced from the second growth, just before the advent of the monsoon rains, and again at the end of

* In 1912-13 the exports of Indian tea were valued at Rs. 14,18,81,020 (£9,458,734) of which over three-quarters went to the United Kingdom.

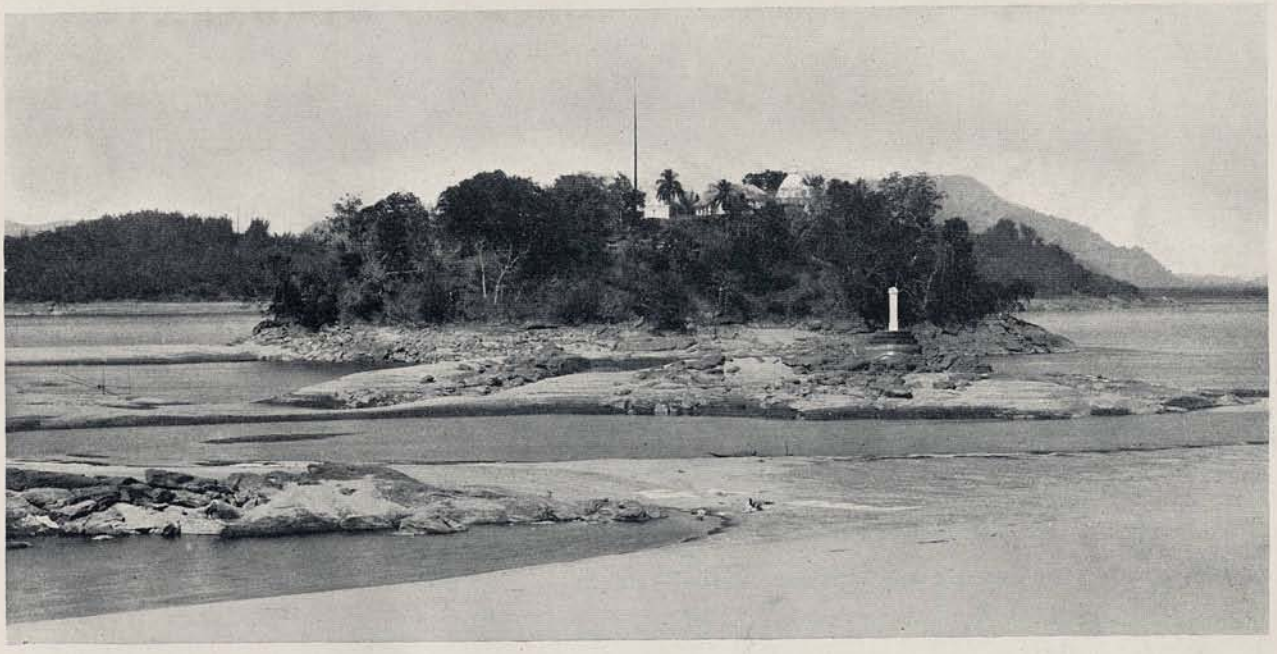
the season, when the growth has become slow and the sap thick. It is a generally recognised fact that the teas produced during the rainy season are watery and poor.

A variety of excursions, short and long, may be made from Darjeeling by those anxious to see other aspects of the Himalayas than can be seen from Observatory Hill. Of these the easiest, and one of the most popular, is to Senchal, 7 miles south-east of Darjeeling. A ride to that place is not a great undertaking; and if the visitor is favoured with a clear day, and can undertake to be at "Tiger Hill" (8,514 feet), near the site of the old barracks on Senchal before sunrise, he will have before him one of the finest sights of the snowy range which the Himalayas can afford. Mount Everest (28,994 feet) is seen to advantage from "Tiger Hill." "A jagged line of snow" connects the two highest mountains—Everest and Kinchenjunga (28,156 feet). More ambitious expeditions are to Phalut (11,811 feet), Subargum (10,430 feet), and Tongloo (10,074 feet)—mountains in the range that lies to the west of the town. These necessitate the employment of coolies to carry the camp kit and of guides. There are bungalows on the route which may be occupied under certain conditions that may be learned from the Deputy Commissioner in Darjeeling.

Chapter V.—In the Hills of Assam.

NO part of India is more mysterious than the north-east, and if the tourist cannot hope to solve the secrets of the upper courses of the Brahmaputra, to penetrate to the ill-defined frontier, or to stay a week-end with the inhospitable Abors, he may at least go off the beaten tourist track and go to the lovely hills of Assam. The old guide books used to say that places "well repaid a visit:" the visitor to Shillong is repaid a hundredfold for his trouble. And after all it is not much trouble, for the eastern extension of the Eastern Bengal State Railway takes him most of the way. The divergence from the Calcutta-Siliguri line is at Santahar, thence eastward to Amingaon, the railway passes through country partly cultivated and partly covered either with jungle or forest. The coarse grass of the jungle, growing as high as an elephant, is as good an index to the luxuriance of the soil as the large herds of cattle that may be seen grazing by the line or the wide expanse of arable land; and as one approaches Amingaon on the Brahmaputra, the verdure of the forest-clad slopes, with occasional burnt-out clearings, suggests a comparison with the incomparable beauty of colouring that is to be found in the Malay Peninsula. It will be noticed from the train as one passes up this valley that the population is very scanty. The valley is an alluvial plain about 450 miles in length and on an average 50 miles broad, and of this area much, though very fertile, is waste land. "On the north and south below the hills the country is generally covered with jungle; by the ever-shifting banks of the mighty river, which in the rains extends to 5 or 6 miles in breadth, precarious crops are snatched before the floods sweep down. It is in the central tract between the jungle and the river that population is mainly found: generally the tea gardens are near the hills and below them lie the villages. The tea gardens depend for their labour almost entirely on importation from Chota-Nagpur, the Central Provinces and Madras, and their time-expired coolies form the most important factor in the colonisation of the valley. The devastation caused by the Burmese in the early years of the nineteenth century threw back into jungle large tracts of cultivation. The people now styled Assamese, in addition to an unenterprising character which is due to their enervating climate and the security of their crops, received a serious reverse from the severe epidemic known as kala-azar, which has now practically disappeared. The valley cries out for people to fill up its waste areas, and though the progress of colonisation is hopeful, it will take many years to

remove the void. Of the cropped area 67 per cent. is under rice, 8 per cent. under tea, and 2 per cent. under jute, while oil seeds cover 8 per cent." * From Amingaon the Eastern Bengal State Railway runs a ferry service across the Brahmaputra—here a wide and tortuous river studded with little islands—to Pandu, the terminus of the short line, from Pandu to Gauhati, which links the Eastern Bengal State Railway with the Assam-Bengal Railway: but at Pandu one has done with trains and takes to a motor car. Owing to the good arrangements made by the Gauhati-Shillong Motor Transport Co., Ltd., the long road to Shillong, with its many twists and steep gradients which make slow driving necessary, is covered in $6\frac{1}{4}$ hours up and $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours down, and luggage and servants follow in another car. † Without these cars the ascent of over 60 miles must have been somewhat tedious, but is now one of the



Island Temple, Gauhati.

pleasantest experiences. Ascent, however, is not a correct term, for the early part of the road is over level ground, and it is somewhat surprising to find, after travelling for about 16 miles from Pandu, that the car has not ascended more than 200 feet. But for all that the plain presents several points of interest.

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* Census of India, 1911. Assam, by J. McSwiney, I.C.S.

† Motor cars for the carriage of passengers, luggage and goods run daily between Pandughat, Gauhati and Shillong, in connection with the Eastern Bengal State Railway and Assam-Bengal Railway Up and Down trains. The fare by what is called Service No. 1 (First Class Passenger accelerated) is Rs. 22 from Pandughat to Shillong. The fare for a servant is Rs. 10.

Gauhati (which, being interpreted, means "high land covered with areca palms ") is on the banks of the Brahmaputra, a little to the east of Pandu, and there a stop is made at the Motor Company's Office. There is time therefore to see something of this place, which is not only situated in a very beautiful setting, but is also of historical importance; it is indeed identified with the capital of a monarch mentioned in the Mahabharata, and in the 17th century is said to have been taken and retaken eight times during the wars between the Mahomedans and the Ahoms. That it was once a place of consi-

BETWEEN PANDU GHAT AND SHILLONG.

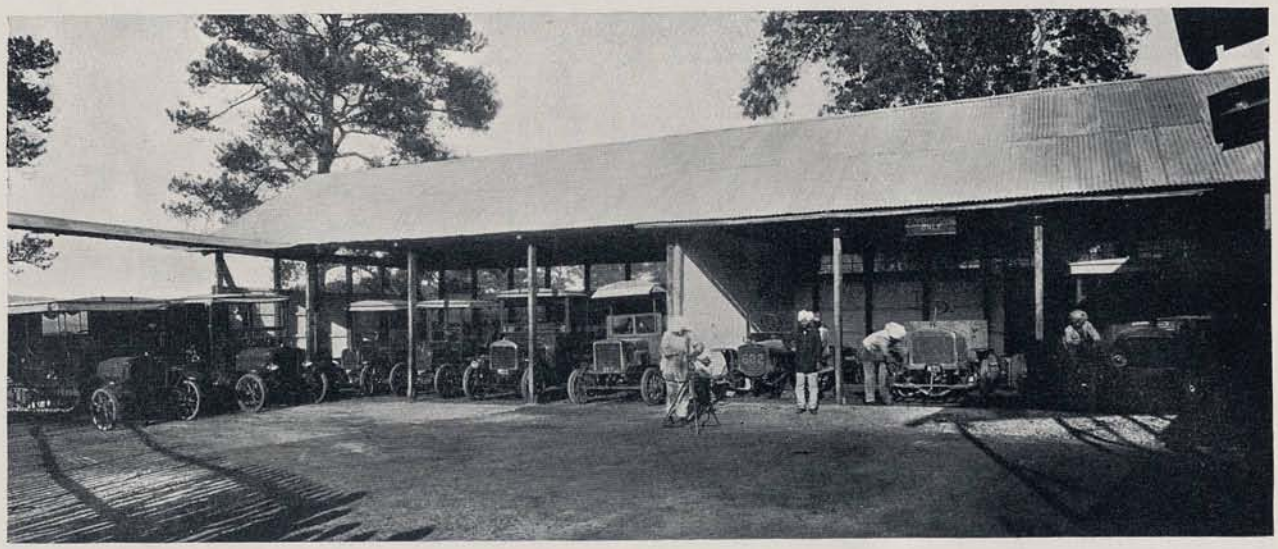
derable dimensions and importance is testified to by the remains of ancient buildings, and to this day it is the place to which pilgrims wend their way from all parts of India. Two miles to the west is a temple, sacred to Sati, on a hill overhanging the river. Tradition has it that this temple, Kamakhya, was built by a Prince in the time of the Mahabharata, but it was rebuilt by Nar Narayan in 1565 when the goddess received the sanguinary offering of 140 human heads. Within a day's march from Gauhati there lies at Hajo a temple to Siva which both Buddhists and Hindus venerate and in which is maintained a large staff of "dancing" girls. Yet another holy place in the

HALF-WAY HOUSE ON THE ROAD TO SHILLONG.

ON THE ROAD TO SHILLONG.

neighbourhood is Aswakranta, opposite Gauhati, where the footprint of Krishna is to be seen embedded in the rock. In another sense Gauhati has been liberally endowed by the gods. The encircling amphitheatre of wooded hills on one side and the majestic Brahmaputra—one of the most important as well as one of the largest rivers in the world—on the other, make Gauhati a place of great beauty. And the view from it is typical of these great rivers at their best, a rocky island in midstream being a fine addition to the landscape.

From Gauhati the road turns southward, leaving mythology and ancient history behind, and makes for the purifying air of the hills. It soon enters the District of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, which contains the two sub-divisions known as Shillong and Jowai. It is a part of the world that presents to the visitor one of those confusing administrative puzzles that are not uncommon in India, for the Jaintia Hills, with Shillong and some villages in the Khasi



GARAGE OF THE MOTOR TRANSPORT CO.

Hills, are British territory; but the rest of the Khasi Hills is included in 25 petty Native States. The country traversed by the road is for the most part covered with dense evergreen forest, the haunt of elephants, bison, tigers, bears and other large game, and is intersected with a number of streams. From these beautiful woods one emerges, at a higher altitude, into more open plateau and hills covered with pine trees and into the Shillong Sub-division which is, in effect, one high tableland. Shillong town, the headquarters of the Government of Assam, has been a civil station since 1864 and has now developed into one of the finest hill stations in all India. It lies at an elevation of about 5,000 feet, amongst the pine woods which clothe the slopes of the Shillong peak. Immediately to the north and east of the station are rolling grassy downs, while on the west a driving road mounts to the high

plateau of the Khasi Hills, which is nearly 6,000 feet above sea-level. The climate is temperate, the mean maximum temperature even at the hottest seasons of the year being only 75° F., the "summer heat" of England. The average monthly rainfall between May and September is 13½ inches, but most of this rain is precipitated in the form of thunder showers and there are few days on which there are not spells of brilliant sunshine.

Shillong, it is true, lacks the wonderful views of the mountains that can be obtained from Darjeeling, though in clear weather the distant snows can be seen. But it makes up for this omission in other ways. It is a garden city

TYPICAL VIEW IN SHILLONG.

with every garden full of the fragrance of English gardens, having, in addition, the tropical glory of orchids in considerable variety: and at every turn of its well-kept roads one is reminded by the scent of the pines, as well as by the appearance of the country, of parts of Hampshire and Surrey. Yet, even in the most beautiful hill stations, one cannot for ever be looking at the scenery, and Shillong offers great attractions to the visitor of a kind not usually found in the hills. There is a fine race course, a full sized polo ground, and a very beautiful and sporting 18-hole golf course. There is a good cricket ground and a smaller golf course suitable for beginners. Lawn tennis is played at the Club and at private houses. The country in the neighbourhood consists of rolling grassy downs interspersed with rice fields, pine woods, and low hills, and, though too much broken up for hunting, it is admirably suited for paper-chasing or for a morning gallop. There are excellent driving roads in the station and

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SHILLONG.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE FROM THE LAKE, SHILLONG.

the neighbourhood, and, for the accommodation of those who are making only a short stay, there are two or three boarding houses and a small, but well designed and very comfortable, hotel—Morello's Hotel.

The most striking feature in Shillong is its architecture. Before 1897 most of the public offices and private houses were built of rough-hewn masonry, but on June 12 of that year the station was reduced to a heap of ruins by one of the most disastrous and widely-felt earthquakes on record. After the earthquake new buildings were erected on what has been found in Japan to be the most earthquake-proof principle. They rest on a wide, firm plinth, of brick

GOVERNMENT OFFICES, SHILLONG.

or concrete, but the superstructure in each case is designed with timber framework to be as elastic and light as possible. Fortunately the earthquake occurred at 5 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, when nearly every one was out of doors and only two Europeans and 27 Indians were killed. Had it taken place at night, there would have been few survivors. So tremendous was the shock that it completely wrecked such places as Shillong and Goalpara, did serious damage in Darjeeling, and was strong enough in Calcutta to injure nearly all brick buildings. One authority, indeed, estimates that the shock was felt over an area of 1,750,000 square miles. Early in June faint tremors had been felt at Shillong, but the warnings of this great catastrophe were almost imperceptible.

THE CLUB, SHILLONG.

ON THE LAKE, SHILLONG.

tible. "At 5-15," wrote one observer at Shillong (who is quoted in Dr. Charles Davison's 'A Study of Recent Earthquakes') "a deep rumbling sound, like near thunder commenced, apparently coming from the south or southwest. . . . The rumbling preceded the shock by about two seconds. . . . and the shock reached its maximum violence almost at once, in the course of the first two or three seconds. The ground began to rock violently, and in a few seconds it was impossible to stand upright, and I had to sit down suddenly on the road. The shock was of considerable duration, and maintained roughly the same amount of violence from the beginning to the end. It produced a very distinct sensation of sea sickness. The feeling was as if the ground was being violently jerked backwards and forwards very rapidly, every third or fourth jerk being of greater scope than the intermediate ones. The surface of the ground vibrated visibly in every direction, as if it was made of soft jelly; and long cracks appeared at once along the road. The road is bounded here and there by low banks of earth, about two feet high and these were all shaken down quite flat. The school building, which was in sight, began to shake at the first shock, and large slabs of plaster fell from the walls at once. A few moments afterwards the whole building was lying flat, the walls collapsed, and the corrugated iron roof lying bent and broken on the ground. A pink cloud of plaster and dust was seen hanging over every house in Shillong at the end of the shock. The whole of the damage done was completed in the first ten or fifteen seconds of the shock."

Of the people inhabiting Shillong and the neighbourhood much has been written. The Khasis, who form the principal tribes, are descendants of a great Indo-Chinese race and speak a language unlike any other form of tribal speech now found in Assam. They are a sturdy race, with faces of a Mongolian type, keen traders and mighty archers. To the anthropologist they present many points of interest, especially in connexion with their marriage and funeral customs. Marriage with them according to the Gazetteer "is merely a union of the sexes, dissoluble at will, and the people have no temptation to embark on secret intrigues. A woman who commits adultery is moreover regarded with extreme disfavour; and according to the Khasi code of morals, there is only one thing worse, and that is to marry in one's own clan." Their religion is ill-defined and interwoven with superstitions of a peculiarly disgusting nature; but their innate radicalism has made them a progressive people and they are said to be extremely receptive of Christianity. Some ten years ago there was a "revival" in the Khasi and Jaintia hills, under the auspices of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, which was said to bear a striking resemblance, in many of its features, to the "revival" movement then proceeding in Wales under the leadership of the evangelist Evan Roberts. Remarkable stories of

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE: ON THE COOCH BEHAR STATE RAILWAY.

conversions on a large scale were published, and the census report just issued by Mr. McSwiney shows that these stories were well-founded. The number of Christians in the Khasi and Jaintia hills has almost doubled within the last ten years, and now stands at 31,257. So far as the Province of Assam generally is concerned, the growth of Christianity is said to have been less than during the two previous decades, but even so it was at the rate of 85 per cent. Most of the converts appear to have been won from the Animist tribes, whose main desire, says the report, is "freedom from the terrors amidst which they live."

A number of short excursions can be made from Shillong to one or other of the numerous waterfalls in the neighbourhood, or to Shillong Peak (6,445 feet), the highest point in the district, from which on a clear day a magnificent view can be obtained. On the north the snowy peaks of the Himalayas can be seen shutting in the valley of the Brahmaputra, on the south the mountains of Hill Tippera stand up beyond the boundaries of the broad district of Sylhet. According to Sir Joseph Hooker, a tract of country as large as the whole of Ireland is occasionally visible, but such extended views can only be obtained just after the cessation of the rains.

A longer excursion is to Cherrapunji (33 miles by road), a village which has the curious but unenviable distinction of being the wettest place in Asia. At one time it was the administrative headquarters of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, but the rain drove the officials to Shillong leaving their bungalows to ruins. The annual rainfall averages 458 inches, but in 1861 a total of 905 inches fell, including 366 inches in July.

The explanation of this "demned, moist," unpleasant phenomenon is that at Cherrapunji the hills rise straight from the plains, and the S. W. Monsoon blowing across the flooded tracts of Eastern Bengal and Sylhet is suddenly stopped by this barrier. The air, saturated with moisture, cools and is precipitated as rain. The village is on a plateau overlooking the plains, bounded by gorges on either side, and is thus completely surrounded by cooling vapour. "The view from the eastern edge of the plateau is particularly striking. The ravine terminates in a semi-circle of precipices, whose slopes, for a considerable height above the river, are covered with brilliant herbage or dense tree forest. Some five hundred feet below the summit, this natural glacis ends, and an absolutely sheer wall of rock, as smooth and perpendicular as though chiselled by the hand of the most careful mason, shuts in the valley on this side. Lower down, the ravine is joined by other gorges, all of which have been carved out of the limestone rock by the rivers hurrying towards the

THE PALACE, COOCH BEHAR.

plains, and the view is bounded by ridge upon ridge, whose precipitous slopes are clothed with luxuriant vegetation. The roar of the torrent rises from its bed several thousand feet below, like the distant thunder of surf upon the coast, and, perhaps, is most effective when the valleys are filled with mist, and there is nothing but the distant voice of the waters to tell of the depths beneath. To the south the eye travels for mile upon mile over the levels of Sylhet. The cliff rises sheer, 4,000 feet and more, from the plain, and there are no outlying ranges of lower hills to soften the transition from the mountain to the valley. On a clear day in July the spectacle is sufficiently bizarre. The whole surface of the plain seems one broad lake, dotted over with clumps of

BRAHMO-SAMAJ CHURCH, COOCH BEHAR.

trees, and it is almost impossible to realize that this inland sea is in reality a densely peopled district." *

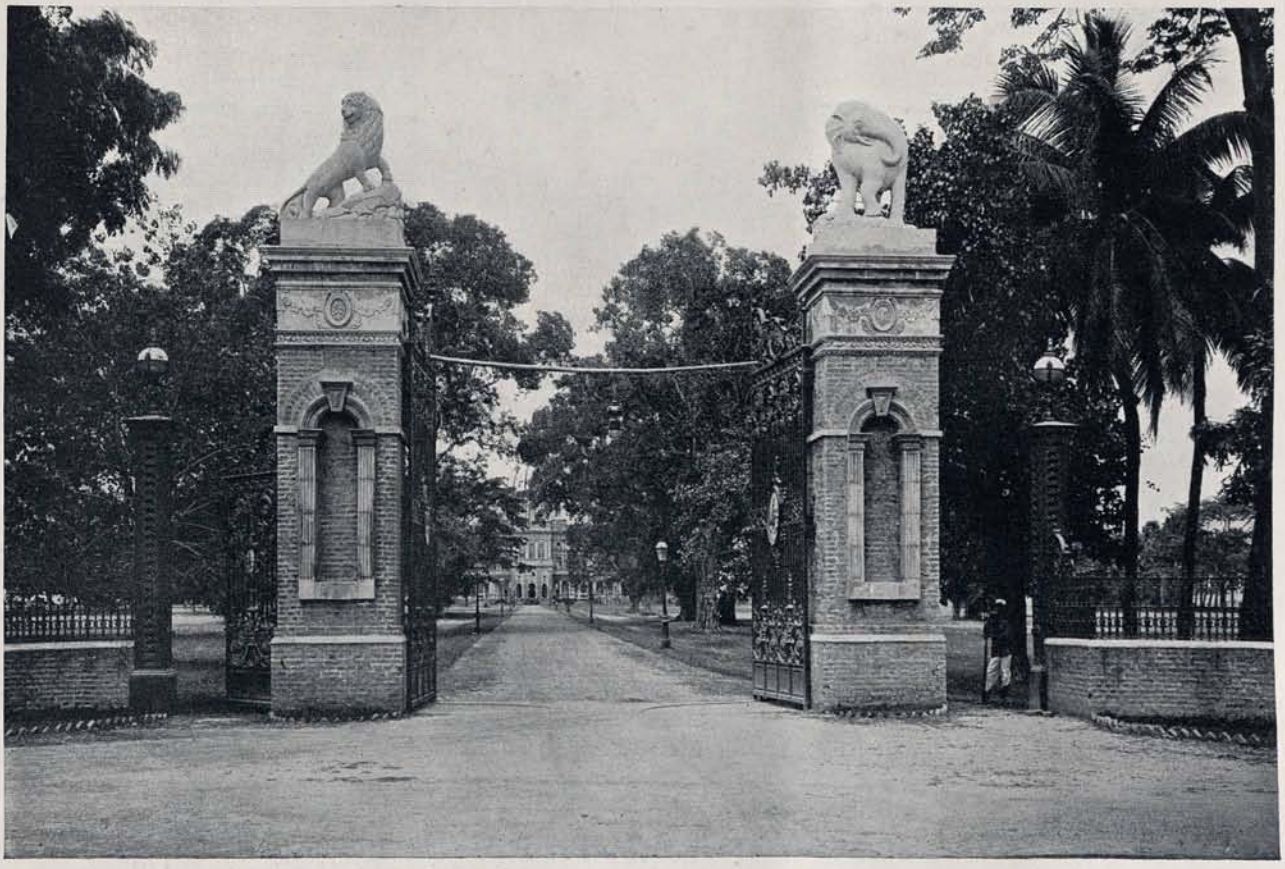
Those who make the journey to Shillong have the opportunity *en route* of visiting, if only for a short time, the Feudatory State of Cooch Behar. It lies somewhat off the tourist track on a line branching off from the E.B.S.R. at Gitaldaha. Probably most visitors to this small but prosperous State go there to enjoy the sport which the hospitable Maharajah offers to his friends. A few tracts are maintained as shooting reserves, but these consist mainly of grass jungle, and there is no real forest. The big game with which the State

* This description is taken from a small guide-book to Shillong, illustrated with maps, published by the Government of Assam at the office of the Director of Surveys, Shillong.

formerly abounded has receded northwards before the advance of cultivation, and within its limits the only wild animals now found are leopards, bears, deer, and hog : of small game, florican and francolin are plentiful in some of the grassy plains. The town itself is well laid out, the principal building being the Maharajah's palace, which stands in fine park-like grounds, and the Courts, Dewan's residence, and other public buildings which are grouped round an artificial sheet of water.

In Cooch Behar.

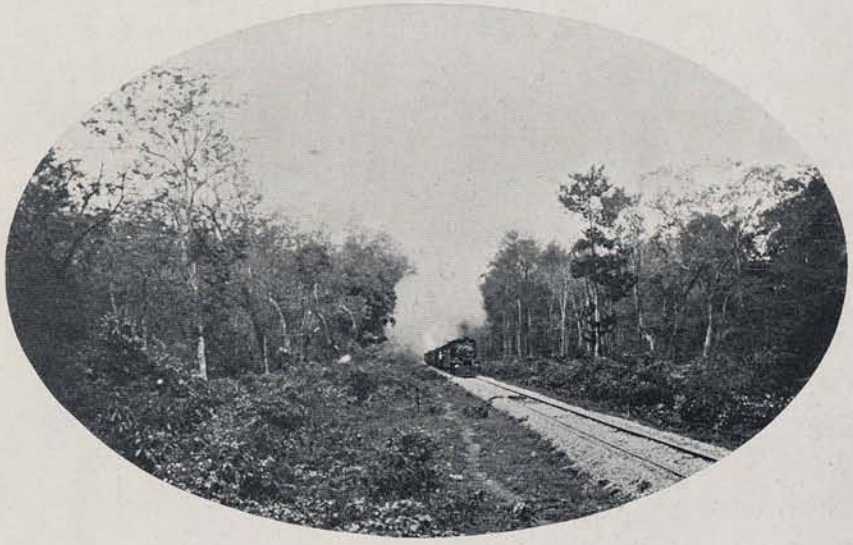
The State itself has an area of 1,307 square miles and is a low-lying plain intersected by several large rivers. It once formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa and tradition and authentic facts together make up for it a history of imposing



Cooch Behar Entrance to the Maharajah's Palace.

Offices and Council House, Cooch Behar.

length. The attention of the East India Company was first directed towards it at the end of the eighteenth century when the succession was in dispute, and a treaty was then drawn up between the Rajah of Cooch Behar and the Company, by which the former acknowledged subjection to the East India Company, and consented to his country being annexed to the Province of Bengal. This right of annexation was, however, eventually waived by the Government. In subsequent clauses the Raja promised to make over one-half of his annual revenues, according to an assessment to be made by the Company. This moiety was permanently fixed in 1780 at Rs. 67,700. Fresh domestic dissensions soon reduced the administration to a deplorable condition, and in 1788 a Commission of two Civil Servants was nominated to enquire into the state of the country. The Commissioners concluded their report by recommending the appointment of a Resident or Commissioner at the town of Cooch Behar. This office subsequently became merged in that of Governor-General's Agent for the North-East Frontier.



In the Woods near Jainti.

In the Jainti Woods.

The present Maharajah was born in April 1882 and educated at the Mayo College and at Eton and Oxford. His father, the late Maharajah, married the eldest daughter of the great religious reformer Keshab Chandra Sen and the Brahmo Samaj Church now forms a landmark in Cooch Behar town. It was the late Maharajah who was responsible for the introduction of the railway into his territory, and the Cooch Behar State Railway (originally 2′ 6″ gauge but converted to metre-gauge in 1910) runs from Gitaldaha junction, where it connects with the Eastern Bengal State Railway system, through picturesque

Loading Timber into Trucks at Jainti.

View from Jainti looking towards the Bhutan Hills.

forest country to Jainti, at the foot of the Bhutan hills; its total length is $53\frac{1}{2}$ miles, of which $33\frac{1}{2}$ lie within the State. The Eastern Bengal State Railway line from Mogal Hat to Dhubri runs through the south-east of the State for a distance of 12 miles, and on the west the northern section of the line runs for a distance of $5\frac{3}{4}$ miles. A short section ($2\frac{3}{4}$ miles) of the Bengal-Duar Railway from Barnes Ghat to Lalmanir Hat also lies within the State. These three lines are all on the metre-gauge.

Chapter VI.—Plassey and Murshidabad.

IT is only within recent years that one of the most interesting districts, from the historical point of view, has been brought within easy reach of Calcutta. Until the construction of the broad-gauge branch on the Eastern Bengal State Railway from Ranaghat to Lalgolaghat, Murshidabad was comparatively inaccessible, and few persons went out of their way to see its historical monuments and the neighbouring battlefield of Plassey.* This branch, 97 miles in length, was opened in 1905-07 and besides tapping an important trade district has made it easy to visit various places that once played a great part in the history of India.

On the battlefield of Plassey on the left bank of the river Bhagirathi, which is close to the railway station of Plassey, not many of the original land-marks survive. The historical mango grove, in which Clive's force encamped on the eve of the fight, has been washed away by the river. It was 800 yards long and 300 yards broad and surrounded by an earthern bank and ditch, and close to it stood a hunting-box belonging to the Nawab of Bengal, surrounded by a masonry wall. The disappearance of these two land-marks and the changed course of the river make it anything but easy to reconstruct the scene of the battle. Nor is there much to remind the visitor that he stands on ground that the British should regard as hallowed. A monument has been erected, bearing the inscription :

PLASSEY.

Erected by the Bengal Government, 1883.

And the visitor may be asked to buy at a high price small objects, such as spoons, made from the wood of the last of the famous mango trees; but he will do well to remember that the district is famous for its mangoes and that the supply of mango wood is unlimited.

Clive's famous victory can be described in a few words. After the capture of Calcutta by Siraj-ud-daula, the Nawab of Bengal, in June 1756,

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* The name is said to be a corruption of Palas, the scarlet-flowered Flame of the Forest, botanically known as *Butea Frondosa*.

Clive was despatched with reinforcements from Madras to re-establish the British factories in Bengal, and he recaptured Calcutta in January 1757. After prolonged negotiations he succeeded in gaining over Mir Jafar, the Nawab's general, whom he promised to install as Nawab in place of Siraj-ud-daula. In March Chandernagore was taken from the French and on June 13th a fresh advance was made; Katwa was captured on the 18th, and on the 22nd, after considerable hesitation and changing of plans, the troops marched to Plassey, where Siraj-ud-daula was encamped with an army of 50,000 foot, 18,000 horse and 50 pieces of cannon, mostly 24 pounders and 32 pounders drawn by bullocks. To oppose this army Clive had a force of 900 Europeans, of whom 100 were artillerymen and 50 sailors, 100 topasses or Portuguese half-castes, and 2,100 sepoys; the artillery consisted of 8 six-pounders and 2 howitzers. Clive encamped in the mango grove which has already been described, and the enemy were entrenched on the river bank to the north of him. At daybreak on the 23rd the enemy, headed by a small body of Frenchmen, advanced to the attack, enveloping his right, Mir Jafar, who had so far proved faithless, being on the extreme left of the line. Clive kept most of his men under shelter, and during the morning withdrew his whole force into the grove only hoping to be able to make a "successful attack at night." A heavy fall of rain about noon drenched the Nawab's ammunition and almost checked his cannonade. The Nawab's most faithful general, supposing that Clive's gunners had also suffered from the rain, led a cavalry charge against the grove and was killed by a cannon ball. Another general, a member of the conspiracy, was working on the fears of the Nawab who in an evil moment for his cause withdrew his men into their entrenched camp. Clive advanced to the attack, stormed the camp, and routed the army. The Nawab fled on a camel to Murshidabad with a body-guard of 2,000 horsemen. In the panic which followed the departure of that potentate, the 40 or 50 French artillerymen, under M. St. Frais, alone held their ground before Clive's advance. The

Photo by Bourne & Shepherd.

MONUMENT ON THE FIELD OF PLASSEY.

rest of the Nawab's host followed their master Mir Jafar's cavalry, which had hovered undecided during the battle, and had been repeatedly fired on by Clive "to make them keep their distance" joined Clive's camp. A great victory had been won, the road to Murshidabad lay open, the Black Hole had been partly avenged, and from the day of that hard-fought fight dates in reality the beginning of the British Empire in the East.

When Clive entered Murshidabad after the battle of Plassey he wrote: "This city is as extensive, populous and rich as the city of London, with this difference, that there are individuals in the first possessing infinitely greater property than in the last city." If this was a true description the town had rapidly attained to its state of prosperity. It was founded by Akbar and to it, in 1704, the Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan moved his seat of Government

Photo by Bourne & Shepherd.

THE NIZAMUT IMAMTARAH, MURSHIDABAD.

from Dacca and gave the town his name. As ruler succeeded ruler each, in true Eastern fashion, built for himself a palace, and as the city never suffered from the domestic or foreign wars which raged in its neighbourhood it became of considerable dignity and beauty. Even after the conquest of Bengal by the British, Murshidabad remained for some time the seat of administration and it was not until 1790 that the entire revenue and judicial staff were fixed in Calcutta. The Murshidabad Mint was abolished nine years later; but the Bengal Government which had for some time discontinued that Mint still inscribed its Sicca rupees coined in Calcutta with a Persian legend to the effect that they had been coined in Murshidabad in the 19th year of the fortunate reign of Shah Alam! With the loss of its political importance, the size and population of Murshidabad naturally declined. To-day but few vestiges remain of its former greatness, and the title of the present descendant of the once independent rulers

of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa is simply that of Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad. Of many parts of the town one can truthfully say—

> There is a palace, and the ruined wall
> Divides the sand, a very home of tears,
> And where love whispered of a thousand years
> The silken-footed caterpillars crawl.
>
> And where the Prince commanded, now the shriek
> Of wind is flying through the court of state :
> "Here," it proclaims, "there dwelt a potentate
> Who could not hear the sobbing of the weak."

The chief object of attraction is the Nawab's palace on the banks of the Bhagirathi, a fine building in the Italian style designed, as an inscription says, "by Colonel Duncan McLeod, of the Bengal Corps of Engineers and executed entirely by natives under his sole superintendence." Local enthusiasm claims for the palace that it has "more points of interest than probably any other secular building in India*." If one does not concur in that judgment, one can at least admire this "house of one thousand doors," and especially the fine proportions of the Durbar room and the Banqueting Hall. It contains many old pictures, including one of King William IV presented by His Majesty to a former Nawab, costly jewellery, china and arms.

The Imambara (house of prayer), which was built directly in front of the northern principal door in the year 1847, is a fine structure, on the site of a more celebrated building erected by Siraj-ud-daula, which was accidentally burnt down in 1840.

About 1½ miles to the east of the palace is the Topkhana, the site of the artillery park of the Nawab Nazim, and the east entrance to the old city. Here is a large gun, 17½ feet long with a girth of 5 feet at the breech, weighing 2½ tons, which was made at Dacca during the reign of Shah Jahan. The gun is now embedded in a pipal-tree, which has lifted it many feet above the ground. One and a half miles south-east of the palace is the Motijhil ("pearl lake"), built in an old bed of the Bhagirathi, in the shape of a horseshoe. Motijhil was taken by Siraj-ud-daula in 1756, and it was from here that he marched for the battle of Plassey. Lord Clive stayed at Motijhil in 1765 to negotiate the transfer of the Diwani to the Company, and again in 1766, when the first English revenue collection was held here. Motijhil was also the residence of Warren Hastings when he became Political Resident at the court of Murshidabad, and of Sir John Shore in a similar capacity.

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* "The Musnud of Murshidabad ;" by Purna C. Majumdar. (Murshidabad, 1905.)

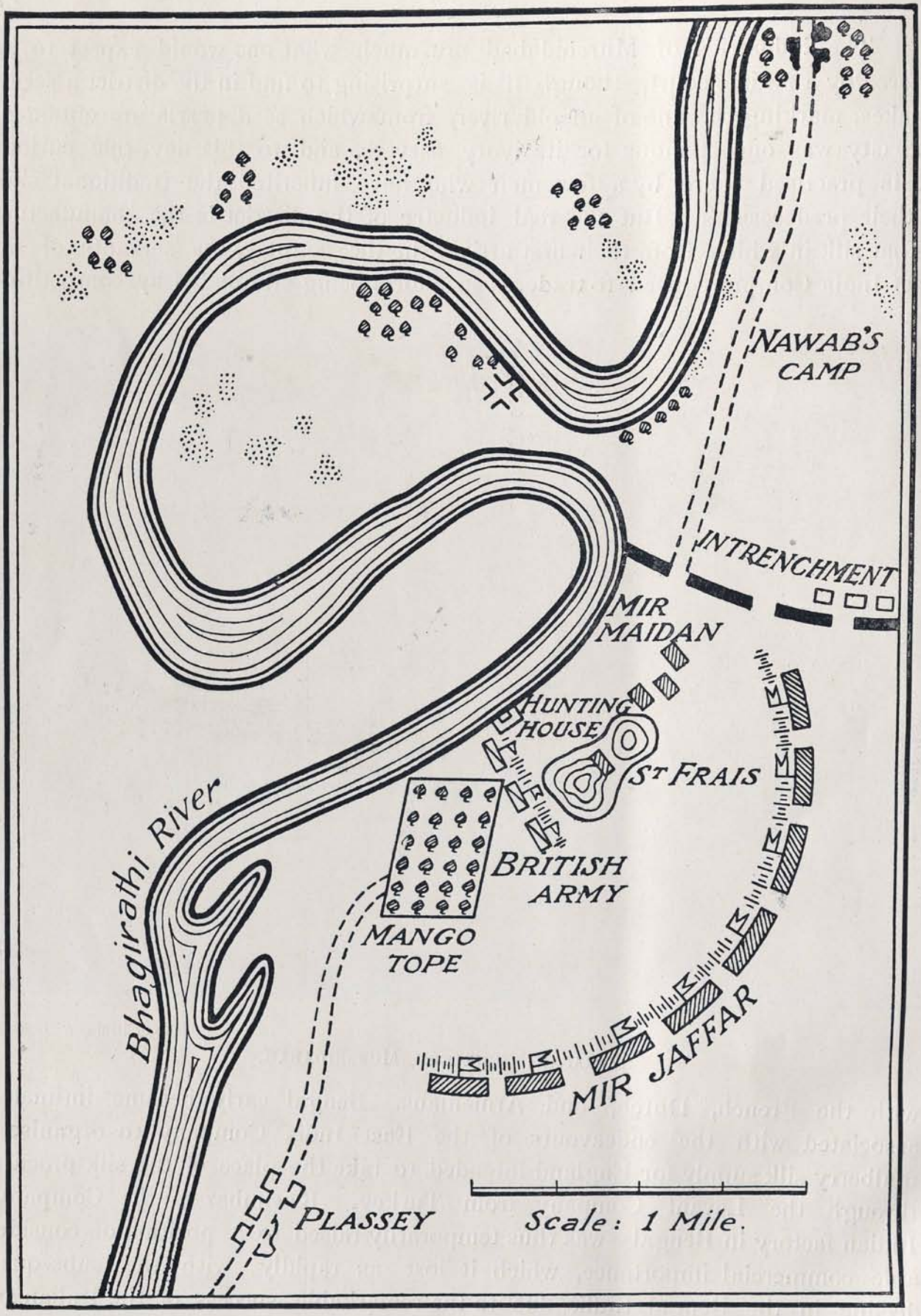
A mosque at Katra to the north-east of Motijhil about 1½ miles from the town of Murshidabad, contains the mausoleum of Murshid Kuli Khan. This was for a long time the chief mosque in the city, and was a place of pilgrimage for devout Mahomedans, Murshid Kuli Khan being regarded as a saint. Jafarganj, situated at a distance of about a mile from the palace at Murshidabad, contains the old residence of Mir Jafar when he was commander-in-chief. His audience hall, since turned into an Imambara, and his dwelling house still exist. Here the last secret conference before the battle of Plassey took place between him and Mr. Watts, the chief factor at Kasimbazar, who entered the

Photo by Bourne & Shepherd.

RUINS OF DEPARTED GLORY.

house in a palanquin as a *pardanishin* woman. It is said that Siraj-ud-daula was murdered here.

About 2 miles north of the city of Murshidabad is Mahimapur, once the residence of the famous banker Jagat Seth. Here Watts and Walsh met Mir Jafar and Raja Rai Durlabh, three days after the battle of Plassey, and conferred concerning payment of the amounts stipulated for by them before the battle was fought. A portion of the house has been washed away by the river; the old place of worship, however, and some ruins remain to this day.



THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY.

the 7th century that it furnished 20,000 bales annually, each weighing 100 livres. But the silk carried from Kasimbazar by both the Dutch and English merchants was of the coarse kind known as "country wound" and was suited for but few of the English goods even then produced. This circumstance led to strenuous efforts to improve both the quality of the silk and the nature of reeling, with the result that a large industry rapidly developed in what was known as *korah* silks. The winding of silk is still carried on, but it has steadily declined since the Company closed their factory at Jangipur in 1835. The decline is due in a great measure to diseases of the worms, which the Bengal Silk Association, constituted in 1898, is now taking steps to combat. There is a nursery at Chandanpur which distributes large quantities of selected seed to the rearers; similar nurseries are being built elsewhere, and the use of examined seed is spreading in the Government estates west of the Bhagirathi.

Silk is still largely manufactured in the head-quarters and a great variety of fabrics are manufactured. At the present day the Bengal silk manufactures of most importance are the steam power factory at Ultadanga, near Calcutta. Mr. N. G. Mukerji gives an interesting review of the silk industry of the Murshidabad district in the *Indian Art Journal*. He there writes "what is commonly, and everywhere, known as 'Berhampore Silk' is manufactured in four different centres. These are: Baluchar, Mirzapur, Khagra and Islampur—all in the district of Murshidabad. Besides these four principal centres there are hundreds of villages throughout the district where pierced cocoons are employed for obtaining a coarse thread used in making *matkas*, of which the trade is very extensive." The *matka* textiles are in much demand by the Jains and other communities who object to taking life in order either to procure food or dress.

Appendix.

As explained in Chapter I, the system now known as the Eastern Bengal State Railway has grown out of a number of small companies which have gradually been amalgamated into one. The line as originally constructed consisted of :—

The Northern Bengal State Railway, from Sara to Siliguri, with branches from Parbatipur to Kaunia on the east, and Dinagepur on the west (metre-gauge), and from Poradaha to Damukdia (standard-gauge). These were opened during the years 1877 to 1884.

The Kaunia-Dharla Railway, from Teesta Junction to Jatrapur and Mogalhat (2ft. 6in. gauge), opened during the years 1881 to 1884.

The Dacca State Railway, from Narainganj to Mymensingh (metre-gauge), opened in 1885.

The line from Calcutta to Port Canning (standard-gauge, 28 miles), which was the property of the Calcutta and South Eastern Railway Company and was built in 1862-63, was purchased by the State on 1st April 1868.

On 1st July 1884 the Eastern Bengal Railway, which ran from Calcutta to Rajbari on the standard-gauge and was opened during 1862 to 1871, was acquired by the State from the late guaranteed Eastern Bengal Railway Coy., and on the same date the Poradaha Branch (standard-gauge portion) of the Northern Bengal State Railway was permanently amalgamated with the Eastern Bengal Railway. On 1st April 1887, the metre-gauge portion of the Northern Bengal State Railway, the Kaunia-Dharla Railway and the Dacca Railways were amalgamated with the Eastern Bengal Railway and the Calcutta and South Eastern Railway, and the whole became the Eastern Bengal State Railway.

Other lines built by private Companies were also taken over at various times, namely :—

The Bengal Central Railway (standard-gauge, 127 miles) from Dum Dum Junction to Khoolna and Ranaghat to Bongong, with a short branch from Dum Dum Cantonment to Pattipuker, opened in 1882 to 1884 and 1904 respectively, taken over from 1st July 1905.

The Brahmaputra-Sultanpur Branch Railway (metre-gauge, 59 miles) from Santahar Junction to Fulchhari built in 1899 and 1900 and taken over from 1st April 1904.

The Ranaghat-Krishnagar Light Railway (2ft. 6in. gauge, 20 miles) from Aistalaghat to Krishnagar built in 1899, and taken over from 1st July 1904.

The following are the principal extensions made in recent years :—

(1) The Murshidabad branch, 97 miles, standard-gauge, from Ranaghat to Lalgolaghat, opened in 1905-07.

(2) The Godagari-Katihar line, 105 miles, metre-gauge, in extension of the above, opened in 1909.

(3) The Gauhati Extension, 147 miles, metre-gauge, from Golakganj Junction to Gauhati, crossing the Brahmaputra by a ferry between Amingaon and Pandu, opened in 1906-1910.

(4) The Kaunia-Bonarpara Extension, 44 miles, metre-gauge, from Bonarpara Junction to Kaunia Junction, opened in 1905.

The Eastern Bengal State Railway also works the following privately owned lines :—

(1) The Cooch Behar State Railway, 33 miles long. This line was originally opened, on the 2ft. 6in. gauge, in 1893 and 1898, and was converted to metre-gauge in 1910.

(2) The Mymensingh-Juggannathganj Railway, 55 miles, metre-gauge, opened in 1898-99. This line is worked as part of the Dacca Section.

The rolling stock in use consists at present of the following :—

Number of Engines	S. G.	246
	M. G.	229
	2ft. 6in.	5
Number of Carriages	S. G.	751
	M. G.	804
	2ft. 6in.	56
Number of Wagons	S. G.	5328
	M. G.	4324
	2ft. 6in.	93

Number of Passengers carried in 1912 ... 31,748,100

Goods carried in 1912 ... ... 3,667,166 tons

The Staff consists of—

Officers		130
Subordinate Staff	Europeans,	423
	Eurasians,	561
	Indians,	37,117

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REVISED ROUTE MAP OF THE EASTERN BENGAL STATE RAILWAY SYSTEM & CONNECTED STEAMER SERVICES.