

## KALIMPONG: A GIRL'S RIDE INTO BRITISH BUTAN.



It was too good an opportunity to be lost. A certain "High Official," who was a friend of ours, was going on a tour through Sikkim. His first day's journey was to take him to Kalimpong, a place my brother and I had long wished to visit, and when our friend offered us the benefit of his escort, we accepted with delight, though we had only a few hours in which to make our arrangements.

Kalimpong, a tiny place up in the mountains of British Butan, is unknown to history, although it is very charming, almost Italian in scenery and climate, and only thirty miles from the much frequented hill-station of Darjiling. There are no hotels in Kalimpong, indeed it has not more than half a dozen European inhabitants, but the kind mission people there are famed for their hospitality; and in answer to a telegram from the "High Official" asking if they could take us in for a couple of nights, they at once wired us a welcome. Thus was our last difficulty removed. We ordered ponies, sent off a pair of hold-alls on the back of a sturdy, pretty coolly woman, who seemed to enjoy the prospect of the long weary walk, and waited eagerly for the morrow.

We left Darjiling about ten o'clock in the bright morning sunshine. My brother Tom and the "High Official" walked the first part of the way, and I and the "High Official's" dog travelled together in a "dandy." A "dandy" is a wooden framework, suggestive both of a box and of a canoe; it has a seat, and is furnished with a cross-pole at either end; these poles go over the shoulders of the four strong men who carry the "dandy" safely over the steep mountain paths. One is lifted high above the ground in it, and if the "dandy" is well supplied with rugs and cushions, and if the "dandywallahs" walk in step, two very important ifs, the swinging motion is not unpleasant; but on a rough road, with the four carriers of different heights, it can produce a feeling sadly akin to *mal-de-mer*. My "dandywallahs" were ugly, picturesque, and very dirty; I am sure they had not washed for years, if ever; indeed, it is the custom of these people to wear a garment without changing it, till it simply drops to pieces. They belonged to the demon-worshipping race of Lepchas, and wore old green three-cornered

felt hats, into which they had fastened wild yellow flowers, and short, very old garments, of various shades of brown, blue, and green cloth, fashioned like Roman togas. Their bushy matted hair was plaited into one plait; the hill women wear two; and their turquoise rings and earrings showed their love for jewellery.

Our way was down the steep road that zig-zags along the mountain on which Darjiling is built; it took us past the large Bootia *busti* or village, where there is an interesting Buddhist temple. The temple is surrounded by little houses; they are built of mud and wood, and are very small and dirty. At the doors, or rather at the entrance, for there are not many actual doors, the women sit weaving the pretty striped Bootia cloths, and the partly clothed jolly little brown babies roll in the mud near them, playing with puppy dogs, black pigs, and kittens, which are in great profusion, and all seem to be on the most friendly terms with each other.

The village is made bright by long poles, to which are attached little bits of cloth, red, blue, yellow, and white, which wave in the breeze. These are prayers, and each time they are moved by the wind the prayers are wafted up to heaven; a pretty conceit, though a lazy one.

Down we went, always down, past two large tea-gardens, called respectively Ging and Badamton; the little bushes looked very pretty, and well cared for, growing methodically in lines. It began to get very warm, and the riding-habit that had been comfortable in Darjiling, which is over 7000 feet above sea-level, felt much too thick. I dispensed with gloves, and cuffs, and both the men, even the "High Official," took off their coats, and said we might as well be in the plains. The road was very narrow; on one side was a steep precipice, on the other a bank covered with wild flowers, beautiful foliage of variegated tints, and moss. Every now and again we came to a spring, and then the "dandy" was put down, and the four "dandywallahs" drank the cool water, filling their hands with it, while my travelling companion lapped eagerly. At last we seemed to be nearing the valley; on either side the jungle was very thick, but through the break in the bamboo clusters and trees covered with moss and lichen, we saw delightful glimpses of the high mountains surrounding us. We approached the Rungeet river, which, seen from Darjiling, looks like a tiny white line, but is in reality, a very respectable size, with blue waters that dash over huge boulders.

"We shall find the ponies here," said the "High Official," the first lot of ponies. "Yes, there they are, all right," as we turned the bend, and saw three small sturdy fat ponies waiting for us, while their *syces* (grooms) sat on the ground, playing a gambling game with little pebbles.

But was it all right? Far from it; my brother was the first to find out the terrible mistake that had been made.

"Look here," he said, in a voice of the deepest concern, "what is she to do?"

"This is extremely awkward for your sister," remarked the "High Official." His voice also conveyed such astonishment and pity that I looked with some alarm at the ponies to see what was the cause of their evident distress; and then I gave a little gasp of dismay, for the three ponies were saddled with men's saddles.

We were silent for a minute, at least my brother whistled a melancholy rendering of "Wot cher," which seemed to relieve his feelings, and then being young and merry we burst into fits of laughter, in which even the

"High Official" joined, in a dignified demi-official sort of way. At last I assumed a stern expression, and said reproachfully—

"It is all very well for you to laugh, but what am I to do? I think I could sit sideways if the pony is quiet, and we need not go fast, or shall I go back in the 'dandy?'" How I hoped that they would not agree to my offer of returning, for I was enjoying the trip so much! Then the "High Official" looked more official than ever, but very kind as well, and summed up the situation.

"Going back is out of the question," he observed; "these four men could not possibly carry you up that hill, tired as they are: it is equally impossible to go on slowly, for we must get in before nightfall, and, remember, you are expected at the Mission. We have nineteen miles more to do, and therefore I suggest, my dear young lady—I am very sorry for you—I suggest that you must put appearances out of the question, and ride on one of these saddles astride."

"Oh, I could not do that," I said.

"You need not mind," said the "High Official" kindly; "the hill-people won't think it in the least out of the way, for all their women ride in that manner, and we are not likely to meet a single European, so just be plucky, and make the best of it. I wonder how the mistake was made."

"Can't think," said Tom, who was still whistling "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road" in a most unfeeling way; "well, my sister, are you ready to try acrobatic performances?"

"I am ready," I said solemnly, after a pause, during which many things ran through my mind. I looked at the question from every point of view, and decided there was no other way out of the difficulty. So, with a smile and a sigh, putting vanity out of my mind, and remembering, with comfort, that a lady is always a lady, and that one should adapt oneself to circumstances, I determined to make the best of it.

"Sensible girl," said the "High Official" encouragingly; "and now let us walk to the bridge, where my people may have work for me. By-the-bye," he continued, "they are sure to present me with eggs, plantains, and *murwa*, which we must partake of, or run the risk of giving great offence. Sometimes I have to refuse, for their taste is so peculiar that they offer, in all kindness, the most detestable stuff, such as absolutely putrid pork rolled up in paste. When I can though, I always accept and taste their gifts."

We came to the bridge, a beautifully-constructed suspension-bridge, which takes one across the Rungeet into independent Sikkim. The picturesque natives, clothed in different shades of blue, green, and brown, gathered round the "High Official," telling him of their doings, their joy at seeing him, and of the grievances that required redress. They naturally asked who we were? why we had come? and where we were going? Then from one of the many mud huts near the bridge was brought a rough table, which was placed in front of us as we sat on the green bank, then came hard-boiled eggs, large yellow plantains, and *murwa*, so that with our own luncheon and their gifts we had an excellent meal. The *murwa* was brought with some state; it is the millet-beer of the hills, and is kept in large polished bits of bamboo, scooped out and silver bordered. The seed is placed in this after preparation, hot water is poured over, and this is drunk through a little wooden tube, after the fashion of the straws in American drinks. *Murwa*, when properly made, is not intoxicating, and that supplied to us, being

the offering of the well-to-do people of the place, had been prepared with every care.

After we had washed our hands in the cool water of the Rungeet River, and said good-bye to the friendly people of the bridge, we prepared, with no little anxiety on my part, to mount our ponies.

A fat, subdued-looking grey animal was chosen for me, and brought near to the rock on which I had climbed. I had no fear, except for appearances, as I had ridden a great deal, and was never nervous on horseback; but this was to be different from anything I had ever done before! Mounting was difficult, but after several attempts I settled myself, arranging my habit in festoons. As the pony moved, I really doubted the possibility of reaching the journey's end in safety. Indeed, the least thing would have upset me, for I kept my seat entirely by balance. The "High Official" observed that it was a very sensible way to ride, and Tom said I looked most adventurous, and reminded him of several pictures he had seen of lady-explorers; I hope it was the memory of their exploits that made him laugh so much. The road we now took was a very pretty one, fairly broad and level, with the Rungeet River rushing along on the left side, below a bank on which grew trees and shrubs, and on the right another bank covered with moss and flowers. No spot in these hills is without vegetation; even the branches of the trees are clothed with many varieties of moss, hanging in fantastic festoons, like a gymnasium for fairies.

"My friends," said the "High Official," "we have eight miles of this delightful road, and then comes a terribly steep climb to Kalimpong; therefore it behoves us to make good use of our time and opportunities; will you fix your own pace?" he added politely to me.

"Yes, if I can fix on at all," I said ruefully, "but the saddle is very slippery; however, it is a way of gaining experience: let us try a trot."

We tried it, it did not answer, and I felt considerably ruffled, for I had the reputation of being a good rider: I had once won a trotting match, but that was on a lady's saddle, and oh, the difference to me! On this occasion, trotting, or rather jolting miserably along the banks of the blue Rungeet, I found it impossible to keep anything like proper balance, and wondered whether it would be better to be dashed against the bank on one side, or thrown down into the river on the other. All my dearest hopes, and all my wasted opportunities rose before me, and the future, as I had planned it in a dear green garden far away in Kent, and I wondered if . . . somebody, who had often walked with me there, would mind very much if I were killed and never came back to keep the promise I had . . . "I advise you to make your pony break into a canter," said the "High Official," interrupting my memories and looking round with rather a comical expression. I took his advice, and found this pace much more successful, for though the danger was greater, there was less time to think about it. And so we went on along the quiet road, the occasional singing of a bird, the swish of the river, the horses' hoofs and our own voices being the only sounds we heard. Presently the "High Official" called to us to pull up.

"This is where the Teesta and Rungeet Rivers join," he said: and we stopped to gaze at one of the most magnificent sights in the world. The blue waters of the Rungeet meet and mix with the great Teesta River, white with snow water, and for a short space they flow side by side, the two colours showing quite distinctly. The Teesta, which has its source in the snow mountains, is a very broad and beautiful river. We rode along its bank, now admiring the huge wooded mountains, now stopping while our *gyees* gathered for us

a rare fern or brilliant orchid, until we came to the great bridge. Close by is a little white-washed house, possessing three rooms, and a scanty amount of furniture, a rest-house where people may stay on payment of a small sum. We three, rather weary people, entered to rest for half an hour, and found the beautiful *murva* case, decorated with sprays of orchids, provided for the "High Official."

"You will hardly believe it," said the "High Official," as we rested, while the punkah was pulled overhead, to cool us, "but this is one of the most deadly places to live in. Fever is terribly common down here in the Teesta valley."

It was indeed hard to believe that so beautiful a spot should be so unhealthy. Meanwhile the saddles had been changed to the new ponies that were waiting for us, and we walked across the bridge, the villagers coming out of their huts to look at us. We had to go for about a hundred yards of the steep mountain path on foot, for no pony could have climbed it with a rider on its back, and then we mounted again. This time I had a nice little bay, not so thick-set as the grey pony, and pleasanter to ride, but in mounting I nearly fell over on the other side, and was obliged to remind Tom that if he tried riding on a lady's saddle in a habit, I might perhaps have cause to laugh at him, and he apologised.

The road was very steep and very beautiful; one great feature of these mountains is the number of terraced rice-fields cut in their lofty sides; all the ground is highly cultivated, the favourite crop being the graceful waving Indian corn, the staple food of the natives. No tea is allowed to be grown on this side of the Teesta, while on the Darjiling mountains nearly the whole ground is covered with tea plantations. The reason of this prohibition is that the ground has been broken up and held by natives for so long, that Government refuses to deprive them of their little plots of cultivation by selling the land to tea-planters. Our little ponies scrambled up the hill valiantly, but the "High Official's" dog grew so tired that its master took it up and it rode on the saddle before him. We passed groups of huts, and the babies, with the inevitable black pigs and puppy dogs came out to stare at us. We met a great many pack-ponies, heavily laden with wool, for there is a large wool trade between Tibet and Darjiling; the merchandise generally changes hands at Kalimpong or Sikkim, the Tibetans rarely coming all the way. The good little ponies trotted quietly down the hill, obedient to the slightest word from their drivers, who greeted us merrily as they passed. Then the sun began to sink, the air became cooler at every step, and the orchids and fern seemed to be more beautiful the further we went. Presently we came to a pretty pony waiting on the hill-side, with a groom, a basket of hard-boiled eggs, a plate of biscuits and some more *murva*: Raja Tenduk had sent these things for the use of the "High Official."

"Tenduk is a thorough gentleman," said the "High Official" as he shared his gifts with us, "you ought to go and see him. I'll introduce him to you to-morrow morning. He is a Lepcha, and has recently been made a Raja by Government, under whom he holds an appointment, being collector of rates and taxes, for he is very poor, and has a sort of position to keep up: he is a very good fellow."

"Has he a wife?" I asked.

"Two or three, I daresay," laughed the "High Official," "but they do not live together. There is only one at Kalimpong."

We reached Kalimpong just as the sun was casting a glory over the blue mountains. There, standing out clear and stately, was the Christian church, testifying to the worship of God in these far-away hills, where

good men, by teaching and example, are showing the heathen the way to Light. We rode through the one street, the bazaar, and up a hill to the pretty mission-house, where a kindly welcome awaited us from Mr. and Mrs. Graham. Tom was anxious to accompany the "High Official" part of the way on his march the next day, so I was left in the charge of my kind hostess. I was stiff and worn-out that evening, and went to bed very early, but the next day was beautiful, and the sunshine woke me streaming over the flowers in the well-kept garden. After breakfast the household assembled for prayers; not such a household as one is familiar with, neat house-maids, and a kind old cook; here there was only one woman-servant, a solemn old ayah, the other three were men, and it was very touching to see them kneeling in simple faith, to listen to the words of God's minister. The Holy Book was read, and prayers said in the language of the place. I could only understand a part, but the tears came to my eyes as I saw the bowed heads of the natives, and Mr. and Mrs. Graham, a tiny son on each side, praying for the welfare of the little flock, while the serene blue mountains spoke of peace, and the strength of the hills, which is His. Soon after prayers came Tom and the "High Official" to say, "Good-morning" and "Good-bye."

"I have brought Raja Tenduk to see you," said the latter, and a Lepcha gentleman came forward, smiling.

"What ought I to do?" I whispered, in some alarm, for I am not used to the society of Rajas.

"Shake hands," said the "High Official," and I did so.

The Raja has a frank pleasant face, he was clothed in a simple brown garment, the loose sleeves lined with red, his hair was brushed back and plaited into a tail under a cap of soft felt, and he wore a great many rings.

"I hear that the lady had much discomfort in journeying," he said, in very good Hindustani, which I fortunately understood.

"Yes, Raja Sahib, but it was worth all to see this new and pretty place," I replied.

He seemed pleased, and invited me to come to tea, at four o'clock, and then went away.

Later in the morning, Mr. Graham found time to show me the many interesting things I was so anxious to see. We went first to the beautiful new church. The Macfarlane Memorial Church (called after the first missionary who went to Kalimpong) is an imposing building with a tower, in which a large bell is soon to be hung, a duplicate of the Leopold Memorial bell at Cannes. The church is even now used for services, though not quite finished, and Mr. Graham told me that many Christian churches have been built on the lonely surrounding mountains, erected by native Christians, with their own hands, and in one or two of the recent ones, they have tried to copy, as far as possible, the Kalimpong church. The services, which are largely attended by the native Christians, are conducted by Catechists. Mr. Graham also took me to see a fine new hospital, which will be a great boon to the sick of the place. The Mission hope to get out a doctor soon to help in the good work by attending to the health of the people. At present Mrs. Graham dispenses medicine to all who ask for it, whether they be Hindus, Buddhists, or demon-worshipping Lepchas. Mr. Graham supervises the building of the new hospital himself, thus saving the expense of a contractor. He is much loved among the people, and it would be a wonder indeed were he not.

We wended our way to the girls' school, where a bright-eyed teacher was instructing the small dark hill maidens. Some were writing on slates, and others reading Hindi lesson books: there were sixteen of them, and

they are divided into three classes: they learn geography, reading, writing and arithmetic. Many girls who live a long distance off cannot attend school regularly, and the Mission wishes to establish girls' schools in the different mountains, so that the little ones may be taught near home. They are pretty children with brown complexions, red cheeks and bright eyes: they are very clever at needle-work, and knit socks that are sold to the planters about Darjiling.

We also visited the boys' school, and the Normal School, which is under the charge of Mr. Sutherland, the other missionary at Kalimpong. The boys in this school are educated to become teachers in the hills in the district: we found them hard at work writing the pretty Hindi character with much skill. Some of the boys were reading aloud, and others were teaching smaller boys. Mr. Sutherland took us into his laboratory, a small room adjoining where he had several electric batteries, and he told me that the little native boys take a very intelligent interest in the elementary science he teaches them. They are quite as quick as English boys of the same class, and understand all about the telegraph system, and other wonders wrought by electricity.

The ignorant hill-tribes are developing a love for reading, and there is a large sale of books among them. The whole vernacular education is entrusted to the Mission, and government helps it by a grant.

There is also an Anglo-Hindu school, for the higher class of boys, where they pay a small fee and learn English.

Mr. Graham then took me to see the cemetery, a charming spot, beautiful with wild flowers, and pointed out the grave of the missionary pioneer, Mr. Macfarlane. Here, in God's acre, natives and Europeans are buried side by side, brothers because they believed in the same Saviour, and because death has ended any division caused by race feeling. I would fain have lingered longer in that place of rest, but Mr. Graham's time was precious, and we made our way back to the flower-girt bungalow.

I asked if the people were very poor, and Mr. Graham said not very, though many of the Lepchas were badly off before the ripening of the Indian corn. "The crofters are very well off, on the whole," he said, "they have an ideal land settlement."

This kind missionary, with the interests of the people ever at heart, tries many experiments in the way of growing fruit, in the hope of finding an industry that will be a source of wealth to the people. Oranges reach great perfection at Kalimpong, and grapes and plums grow well there. We stopped to look at a coffee-bush, and a cinchona-tree; cinchona bark is made into quinine, that bitter medicine so much given in cases of fever.

During lunch I asked Mr. Graham to tell me about the natives and how he liked them. He said that he was very fond of them, they were honest and independent, not cringing like the people of the plains. "I wish you had been here yesterday," he said, "for there was a marriage that would have interested you. A young silk weaver had been in love with the daughter of an agricultural farm labourer—a Christian girl—and she returned his affections, but there came a rich wooer, an elderly man, whom the parents favoured. For a long time everything was against the young couple, and it seemed as though the acres of the rich suitor were to win him the bride. The poor young people were very miserable, but finally, the elderly aspirant to the maiden's hand, seeing how matters stood, proved himself to be kindly and sensible by withdrawing his offer, and the faithful lovers were married yesterday. The bride wore a beautiful silk shawl, bordered with red—the marriage colour—presented by

the silk expert at Berhampore, who had taught the bridegroom his trade, and had a high opinion of his capabilities."

After lunch Mr. Graham brought the marriage register for me to see; few of the couples being able to write, they put a cross by their names, over which Mr. Graham writes "his mark," and "her mark." It is the custom among these primitive people for the bridegroom to give three large marriage feasts, and until he has given the third of these feasts, the bride, even if she has been married for years, still belongs to her own people. The Mission endeavours to prevent this useless waste of money, and few of the native Christians conform to this extravagant custom.

At four o'clock my pony was brought round, with a borrowed side-saddle, and I set off with some trepidation; for was I not going—all alone—to visit an Indian Raja? Raja Tenduk's house is upon a hill, and I had to pass through the Kalimpong bazaar to reach it. It is a very pretty bazaar, full of quaint shops. In some were strange Tibetan and Chinese cups, in others, English cotton piece goods, then there were the sweet shops with white and creamy-looking sweetmeats, made of milk, sugar, and cocoanut. Perhaps the prettiest shops of all were those of the grain-merchants, where the different kinds of grain in their delicate shades of red and yellow were kept in large earthenware vessels. The people seemed to be accustomed to white faces, and did not evince any curiosity regarding me. The children, however, were rather excited, and ran after my pony, shouting, "Salaam" in shrill clear voices. Such dear, dirty children, some in little gowns of blue or brown, some with no clothes at all, for Kalimpong is fairly warm, and the babies are not all supplied with the expensive luxury of clothes, and their round little limbs grow strong and hardy from exposure. My small bay pony bore me gallantly up the hill to the palace—I supposed that it would be a palace—of the Raja. Indeed, when I saw nothing but a rather barn-like bungalow, I doubted whether I had come to the right place, and I inquired if this was the house of the Raja. I spoke Hindustani, which very few hill-people know, but the man understood the word "Raja," and nodded and smiled, so I rode to the verandah and dismounted. A servant, with a long pigtail, and a wondering smile, ushered me into a little sitting-room, where the furniture consisted of a table and three chairs; over each hung a carpet, more gaudy than beautiful. Above the door hung a wondrous Japanese screen, gay with dragons and monsters, and the white walls were almost covered with photographs of various English people of Raja Tenduk's acquaintance, from H. E. the viceroy, down to junior civilians. There were portraits of our "High Official" and his wife, and a very large one—of which the Raja is extremely proud—of Mr. Paul, who was for some time the political officer at Kalimpong, and practically made the place what it is. He afterwards looked after British interests on behalf of the government in the Tibetan trade treaty we have made with China, and which required to have some disputed points settled.

There were so many ancient photographs of people with albums, and smiles, and modern ones in bromide with artistic light and shade effects, that I really felt, to be in the fashion, I ought to have had one of myself at hand to present to the Raja; but I only possess one photograph of myself, and that was done in a dear green garden down in Kent. I am not alone in it, and I could never give that photograph away.

I was still admiring the interesting collection, when Raja Tenduk entered, and shaking hands bade me be seated. In the best Hindustani I could muster, I expressed my pleasure at visiting him, and my regret that owing to

my want of learning I could not converse freely. He remarked, in his turn, that his grief was great that he could speak no English, but he said his eldest boy was at school in Darjiling, and learning our language. Then I asked if I might be permitted to see the Rani and the children; Tenduk rose and went out, returning with two little boys. The eldest wore a cap of great magnificence, embroidered with gold and thickly studded with turquoises: they were dressed like their father, but the effect was slightly spoiled by their boots, which were tanned, and unmistakably English. They greeted me with some shyness, and their father explained that the Rani would presently come and make her salaams to me. We talked a little about the photographs, and where the people they represented now were: some were dead, some were still working in India, many had retired to spend the remainder of their days in old England, and one had settled in sunny Italy. The Raja seemed much interested in hearing about Italy, and I asked him if he had travelled at all. Yes, he had once been down to Calcutta, but he would never cross the sea to visit far-away England, and he had never been into Tibet. Then the door opened wide, and in came the Rani, clothed in rich attire of deep blue silk, with large hanging sleeves, and a sort of apron striped with many bright colours. On her head she wore the weighty and marvellous head-dress of the high-born dames of the hills, a three-cornered coronet, made of many strings of seed pearls, with large turquoises and coral, the latter looking very well against her abundant black hair, made more abundant still by the black silk cunningly plaited into it. The Rani is very handsome, with remarkably fine eyes, and the many jewels she wore set off her beauty; she was followed by a shy little girl, who clung to her skirts.

Then a servant brought in three quaint cups, without handles, and with the saucers on the top, and a wooden *chunga*, with the tube sticking out. "This," said the Raja, "is *murwa*, such as you drank on the road yesterday." And I pleased him by saying I thought it preferable to English beer. He told me that it was usually made from millet seed, but sometimes maize or rice is used instead, and it can be made sweet, sour or bitter. The top of the *chunga* was lifted off to show me the pretty red seed inside, and then tea was brought in.

Now when the Grahams had heard that I was going to tea with the Raja, they smiled meaningly, and said that they hoped I should enjoy it, and that I must remember to drain the cup to the dregs, or I should be wanting in courtesy. Therefore I felt rather excited when the cups were filled with a greasy-looking fluid, tea made in the Butia fashion, brick tea, with butter and salt. I hope I looked pleasant as I hurriedly drank this terrible mixture: my cup was promptly refilled, and again I drank it in one deep draught, for I would have suffered much rather than hurt the feelings of these kind people; but I was obliged to refuse a third cupful! I have been told though that Europeans find this tea very comforting on a cold day; it may be so, but personally I should never turn for comfort to such a dreadful mixture.

Then I produced a box of sweets, and the children nibbled one fondant in turn, and the baby was brought in by a pretty barefooted nurse, who wore a simple garment of a beautiful peacock-blue colour, a flower in her hair, and a necklace of rough coral round her brown neck.

I should have liked to have stayed longer, but Mr. Graham had promised to take me, and another lady guest, staying at the Mission,

to see a Buddhist monastery, and it was growing late. I made my farewells to the children, and the smiling Rani; we could only smile at each other, for she knows neither English nor Hindustani, and I am not acquainted with a word of Lepcha, or Nepali, and the Raja escorted me to the door. I met my two friends on the high road to Tibet; that forbidden land which no European may enter, was only forty miles away from us. It is a fine road, with here and there a well-built house, belonging to rich Butias. The monastery was built of plaster and wood, quaintly picturesque, with many unexpected little peep-holes and windows; we saw a Lhama, or Buddhist priest eyeing us from one of these. We first came to a large outer room, which is reserved for travellers from a distance to rest and eat in: the walls were painted, but it was too dark to see what was depicted upon them. The inner room however was very striking, and a great deal lighter. On the walls were represented the incarnations of Buddha, painted in brilliant colours, and fantastic attitudes: there are hundreds of them, the whole wall being covered by these strange figures. In a fine shrine sat a statue of Buddha, the Great Teacher, larger than life, and robed in real silk. He is represented sitting on a lotus, with folded hands and a peaceful expression. The rich shrine was ornamented with peacock feathers, and before it were brass bowls, containing rice and flowers, offerings from the devout: wondrous and hideous masks hung above. The three Lhamas who were

present advanced to speak to us: they had kindly faces, and were clothed in their sacred colour, yellow. They seemed pleased to see Mr. Graham, and showed us all their treasures. Cupboards containing the sacred books, which are of great antiquity, and only used at ceremonials; they were covered with dust, cymbals of wrought brass, which they clashed for our benefit, and curious prayer wheels. A part of the floor had become dented by the continual pressure of the knees of a devout gentleman, whose ambition lay in gaining a reputation for saintliness. The dents were so deep that we agreed afterwards that the man, who is now a recognised and distinguished Lhama saint, must have manufactured them by some other means than the attitude of prayer. There was a loft above, but we were not energetic enough to climb to it, so we bade farewell to the Lhamas, and walked home. I found that Tom had returned, after a pleasant day, and the next morning we were up betimes, to make our way reluctantly back to Darjiling. We said good-bye to our kind friends, the people who had opened their doors to us, strangers though we were, and had given us so hearty a welcome. They said they hoped we would come again someday, but dearly as I should like to revisit them, I fear it cannot be, for I am going home next spring, back to the dear green garden. The flowers will be out then, yellow primroses, and the sweet little violets, and the blossom of snow on the cherry trees, and I think that someone will find a reason for at once coming down to

Kent: how far away Kalimpong will seem then!

A lady had kindly lent me her saddle, and I rode back in state and ease and without any adventures. We had not brought any lunch with us, for we had an introduction to the hospitable manager of the Badamton tea estate, and after he had entertained us (I am afraid we finished his whole stock of lemonade and soda water), he took us all over the factory. We saw the whole process of tea manufacture, which would take an article to itself, were one to describe it, from the drying of the newly plucked leaf, to its final packing in the tin-lined wooden cases in which it goes home to the grocer to be sold at so much the pound. Then refreshed and grateful, we mounted our ponies and proceeded upwards, in sight now of the little houses, which dot the mountain of Darjiling. The great snow mountains were standing boldly out, the peaks of Kinchinjunga, which is nearly as high as Everest, and much more imposing, glowed golden in the setting sun.

The nearer blue mountains were covered with little cloudlets, that looked like masses of cotton wool. Up and up our ponies climbed, along the climbing road, past the Butia temple, into Darjiling itself, and as we approached our hotel, the snow mountains flushed to vivid pink, which faded even as we watched, leaving them stately and very cold in the coming darkness.

"Do make haste," said Tom, "we shall be late for dinner," and we went in, back to civilisation, and the routine of life.

## THE CARVED UMBRELLA

By LA PETITE.

### CHAPTER I.



YOU never saw such preparations for a dinner party!

Rachel stopped sweeping to laugh as the thought occurred to her, but recommenced operations vigorously the next minute as a glance at the clock reminded her of the flight of time. Only that morning she had comedown to Dasha-

ven to spend her Christmas holidays with Dr. and Mrs. Sylvin, the latter being her cousin, and from the first moment she entered the house, she had recognised the fact that pretty, thriftless, madcap Milly was a bad manager.

It did not seem to trouble either the house-keeper or her husband much, but to Rachel's neat and orderly mind, the confusion and discomfort that reigned were bad auguries for a successful dinner.

Milly was immersed in a cookery-book, the little maid-of-all-work was cleaning the upstairs portion of the house, and the doctor of course was out, so Rachel had good-naturedly offered to get the dining-room ready, which accounts for our discovering her enveloped in a huge apron with her skirt tucked up and a broom in her hands.

To Rachel Grey, who for three-fourths of

the year drudged in London as a daily governess, this was pure fun, and she hummed a gay little song to herself as she swept industriously, if not very professionally.

"A modern Cinderella," murmured a young man, who, passing through the hall, caught a glimpse of her, for she was not the only guest in the house, and this second visitor paused, himself unseen, to study her a little further.

Small, slight and graceful, Rachel Grey did not look her twenty-five years, and with her large dark eyes and abundant brown hair, would not have been bad looking if she had had a dash of colour in her sallow cheeks.

So thought the watcher as he softly withdrew, while Rachel, all unconscious of the keen scrutiny to which she had been subjected, put down her broom, and blithely took up a duster with which she performed prodigies of the admiration of another spectator who, however, stood boldly in the doorway, without attempting to disguise his interest in her operations.

Rachel quite jumped when she caught sight of the weird elfish little figure clad in a grey flannel dressing-gown miles too large for it, and trailing for yards on the ground, except where it was held bunched up in front in two chubby little hands.

Recollecting Milly's mention of her only child, "Baby Harold," she made a friendly movement towards it, but with an unearthly yell, the queer little imp incontinently fled, wildly flourishing the tail of the grey flannel dressing-gown like a banner of victory.

Rachel could not forbear laughing as she proceeded with her self-imposed work, though she sighed too at this fresh proof of the mother's shiftless ways, and many times during the day she found tears and laughter close together. The mingled odour of lamp-oil and cooking that pervaded the house offended her sensitive nose, as much as the dirt and

confusion displeased her fastidious eyes, and, having the instincts of a gentlewoman, she did nothing but wash and dust all day, for her soul revolted from making a grand show outside by merely covering up and hiding the dirt.

It was evident her Bohemian cousins lived beyond their narrow income in some ways by scraping and stinting in others; but how much better it would have been to be simple and honest!

Up to the last she was washing glass and china, arranging flowers and polishing silver, so when she entered the drawing-room she found the house party assembled, Milly looking as if she had never seen a cookery-book in her life, Dr. Sylvin in immaculate evening dress, and a second gentleman who was introduced to her as "Mr. Asteer."

In a brief cursory glance she saw he was dark, ugly, and intelligent-looking; but the company now began to arrive, and she found herself being introduced right and left.

Knowing prophetically that the dinner would be a dismal failure, she had hoped against hope that the guests would be of a kind not to notice it, but this was ruthlessly crushed as one by one they appeared. The Sylvins seemed to know good people, and her spirits sank lower and lower as the room gradually filled with stately dowagers in velvet, military-looking old gentlemen, and middle-aged bachelors with a fair sprinkling of pretty girls, and one or two young men.

By the time dinner was announced (twenty minutes late) she was so depressed by the prospect before them, that she did not glance at Mr. Asteer as she took his arm, and only looked up when he gave a queer little chuckle as they descended the stairs.

There, openly visible to all and regarding them solemnly, was the grey flannel imp, oblivious of the frantic signals of its agonised