

These Himalayas

A Sojourn in the Pindari Glacier

GORE

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A Sojourn in the Pindari Glacier

by

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TO
His Highness
Maharaja Sir Pratapsinh Gaekwar
Sena Khas Khel Samsher Bahadur
G. C. I. E., LL. D.
Farzand-i-Khas-i-Daulat-i-Englishia
MAHARAJA SAHEB OF BARODA
THIS RECORD OF
an expedition to the Pindari Glacier
is
by his kind permission
most respectfully and gratefully
DEDICATED



His Highness Sir Pratapsinh Gackwar, Maharaja Saheb of Baroda

P R E F A C E

I think the present work does not call for an apology from me in as much as it is not a laboured thesis on the Himalayas, "what they are and what they are not". It is but a simple effort to put on record the trip done to the PINDARI GLACIER by His Highness Sir Pratapsinh Gaekwar, Maharaja Saheb of Baroda, during September and October 1940. The thought of Himalayan beauty is so irresistible and moving that few could afford to contain it silently within themselves and consequently some have always tried to clothe it in words or perhaps, better still, paint it in poetry or picture. Although we had successfully attained our goal of reaching the Pindari Glacier at an altitude of 17,000 feet, we were captivated by mirages of nature's far off horizon and felt like being drawn towards them. In fact in this very striving man becomes stronger and purer till he gets an inspiration which subconsciously draws him closer to his MAKER. Probably we were nearer to Heaven than at any other moment of our life ! Of course exaltation and transport are primarily connected with ascent where there is urgent desire to look beyond the snow peaks that soar before you. But when you descend each parting summit pronounces a sad good-bye.

Our success was in no small measure due to the untiring zeal and faithful services of those sturdy races of the Hills, who formed our small retinue and but for whose ungrudging and spontaneous loyalty we would have had to face a lot of hardship. Their spirit of endurance and the knowledge of the treacherous behaviour of the mountain region, its climate, its paths, vegetation and customs is indeed marvellous and deserves recognition in no small measure.

If this book is successful in stimulating the imagination of the younger generation to learn more about the HIMALAYAS — the unconquered mountain which still holds its head high and looks down upon the vast plain of India—and what they contain with a view to researches in all their glory and richness still hidden from human eyes, I shall feel my labours amply rewarded.

My grateful thanks are due to Colonel Kumar Shivraj Singh, Naib Dewan, Baroda State, for kindly going through the manuscript and for his valuable suggestions. I am also much indebted to Mr. V. L. Devkar, M. Sc., of the Baroda State Museum, for checking up and identifying my biological collections and the description of vegetation and animal life.

I have to thank Mr. A. K. Kaul—who was with us here for some time for administrative training — for correcting the proofs and giving the finishing touches to the book.

K. B. G.

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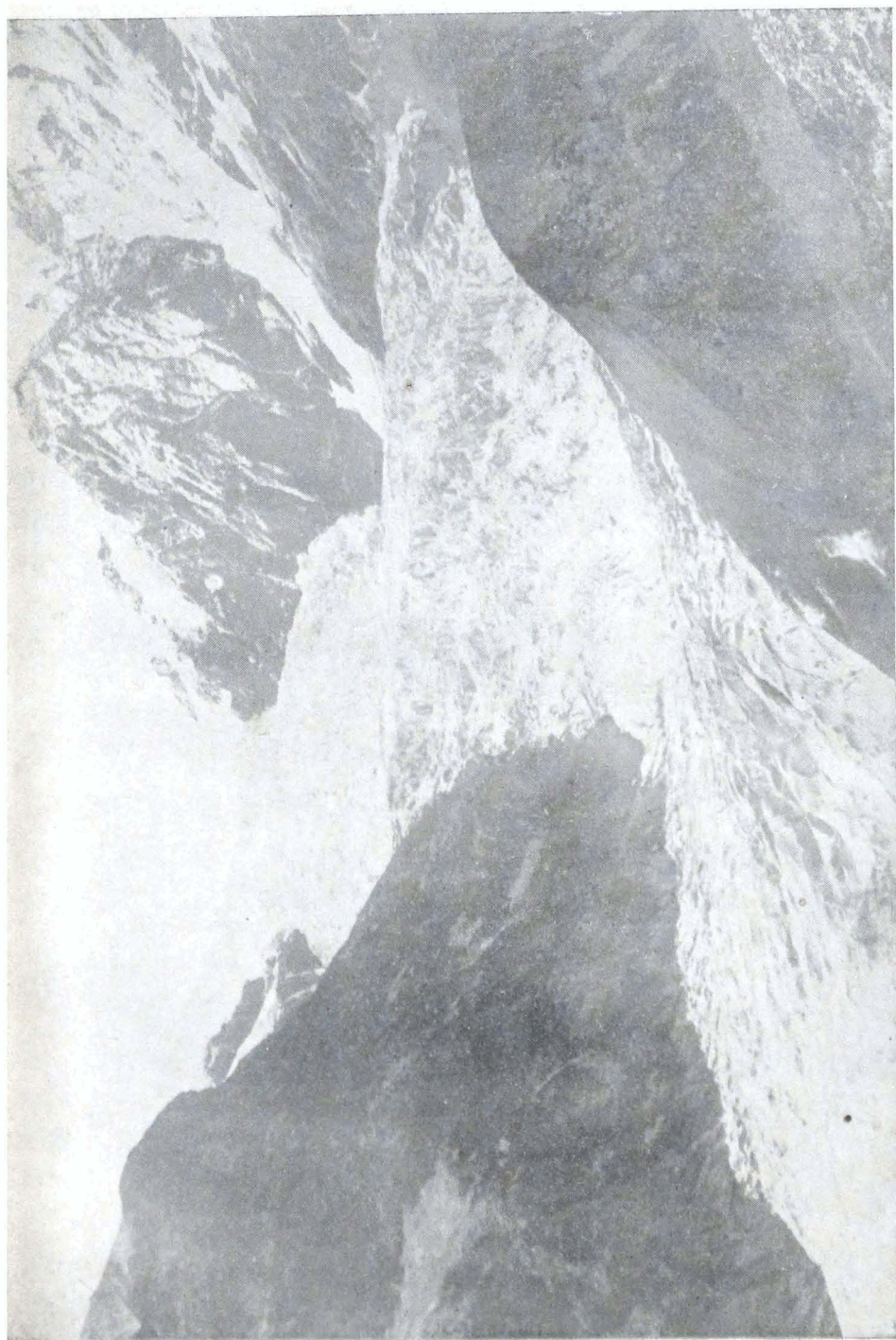
HIS HIGHNESS SIR PRATAPSIKH GAEKWAR

MAHARAJA SAHEB OF BARODA

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PINDARI GLACIER



Pindari Glacier in between two Nandas

CHAPTER I

General

One day a rumour went round Laxmi Vilas Palace that His Highness, Maharaja Sir Pratapsinh Gaekwar, Sena Khas Khel Samsher Bahadur, G. C. I. E., LL. D. Farzand-i-Khas-i-Daulat-i-Englishia, Maharaja Saheb of Baroda, was contemplating a long distance tour, and those on the personal staff were eagerly looking forward to the disclosure of the destination and speculations were rife as to who shall be the fortunate ones to have the privilege of accompanying His Highness.

It was no small wonder then to be told one fine morning that His Highness contemplated assaulting the Pindari Glacier in the Central Himalayas. The adventure was so hazardous and at once so perilous that some of us were actually taken aback as the contemplated journey meant untold hardships, besides involving, in no mean measure, danger to life and limb, and was one calling forth all that is best in man in the shape of courage, foresight, and a spirit of adventure and leadership.

I am not sure, but so far as my information goes no other member of the Princely Order has undertaken a trip to these mighty mountains. And His Highness' resolve to go up these snow-clad high peaks in all their natural beauty and glory was indeed praiseworthy and unparalleled in the history of the Ruling Chiefs of India.

From times immemorial the Himalayas have always been a source of awe and reverence to people who have gazed in reverential wonder the unexplored regions of this huge natural barrier – a wall that has separated India in the North from the world – under whose very shadow men have lived and toiled for ages.

I was one of those who had the proud privilege of accompanying His Highness when he undertook the trip to the Central Himalayas and in these few lines I have made a modest attempt to narrate, as faithfully as possible, all what we were privileged to see and all that we encountered in the perilous journey lasting over 3 weeks when for a period of 20 days we were entirely cut off from all traces of civilization.

As the name signifies—derived as it is from Sanskrit—the Himalayas mean the Abode of Snow, the perpetual Snow Line that gives the mountains all their glory and mystery. It extends from the Hindu Kush in the West to Northern Burmah in the east. Having these relative distances in mind it may be of further assistance to consider the territories through which the range passes. Starting from the Indus valley the chain runs for two hundred miles through Kashmir, continuing south-east for another two hundred miles through a number of

small States known as the Simla Hill States. Afterwards the range enters Garhwal and Kumaon. East of this, it runs for nearly six hundred miles through the independent State of Nepal. There are besides the two more independent States of Sikkim and Bhutan which together account for another two hundred miles of the Himalayas. Behind the chain to the north lies the plateau of Tibet at a general altitude of 15,000 ft. Here at a point almost opposite the centre of the chain rise the two great rivers, Indus and Brahmaputra, which flow in opposite directions and parallel to the Himalayas. From the axis of the highest elevation on the north the holy river Ganges and its tributaries (chief amongst them being the Pindari) originate. I am chiefly concerned with the centre of the Himalayan range of the Kumaon area.

CHAPTER II

Plains to Hills

His Highness the Maharaja Saheb and the party left Baroda on the midnight of 16th September 1940 by the Frontier Mail. After changing at Muttra, the birth place of Lord Krishna, we travelled by the special tourist car of the Rohilkhand Kumaon Railways. At dawn the next day we touched the border of the thick forest at the foot of the Kumaon hills. The tiny red engine after labouring for three and half hours, through these fertile lands and forests, which are well known for their sugarcane cultivation and forest products respectively, steamed into the Kathgodam station and brought us to the Kumaon hills.

His Highness and the party consisting, besides the writer, of Colonel Kumar Shivraj Singh, Thakur Kishan Singh, Captain R. B. Ghatge and Mr. T. Jaffery, breakfasted at the Railway Rest House which is situated at a higher level ground, commanding a good view of the high mountains covered with vegetation of various kinds.

After breakfast, the Maharaja Saheb, an all-round sportsman and an expert at the wheel, jumped into his two-seater black Mercury Ford and stepped on the accelerator on the asphalt motor road which winds its way amongst the steep forest-clad hills rising abruptly from the plains. The road where one has to take sharp turns and to negotiate many overhanging ridges, is surrounded with high Pine trees. The tops of the deodars (*Cedrus deodara*) in the forest touch each other in the wind. Thus, everything that is in the highest meets without injury and harm. Time was when quarrels were settled by single combat and decisions were reached by conference of Chiefs. So do the deodars discuss matters between themselves. As we ran along we filled our lungs with the cool scented air which was not slow to refresh us all after a sweated journey in the plains. The only product of these forests is Resin, the collection of which is under the Forest Department of the Government of India.

Twenty-three miles of motoring brought us to the King Edward VII Sanatorium at Bhowali. Dr. A. G. Shrikhande, the Medical Superintendent, welcomed and garlanded His Highness at the gate and took us round the Sanatorium. The various blocks and cottages were shown to us, particularly the cottage where the late Mrs. Kamla Nehru had stayed for couple of years. The Sanatorium is situated in the Kumaon hills at an altitude of 6,000 ft. above sea-level and possesses a beautiful estate of 225 acres of land surrounded by pine-clad hills. It was established in 1912 and has accommodation for 150 patients. After the round a group photograph of His Highness and the Medical staff of the Sanatorium

was arranged and we left amongst the shouts of "Three Cheers" called for the Maharaja Saheb.

The luncheon was served at the Cotton's View-Forth Hotel and an hour later the Maharaja Saheb left for Ranikhet. At the start the road is guarded by high mountains covered with forest of oak, magnolia, and pine trees decorated with creepers and ferns on one side, while across the valley there are apple gardens, and descends 3,500 feet in a zig-zag course. This descent of three miles brought us to the village called "Grum Pani" because of the hot springs. The road from this village ascends gradually and is dangerous for landslides and an hour and half brought us to the plateau of 6,000 feet height where Ranikhet, the Military Headquarters, lies. Ranikhet is the Military Station and has the civil administration under an Assistant Collector of Almora. It is clean and pretty small place with modern shops, fruit and vegetable markets. We walked through the bazar and His Highness made some purchases of films for the cameras. After taking tea at the Pine Hotel situated in the heart of the pine forest, we left for Almora at five O'clock. As we proceeded we had a good view of the beautiful golf course laid out at Ranikhet and shortly afterwards the asphalt road terminated and we had to travel on a rough track which was a very poor apology for a metalled road. The way cuts through a thick forest and terracing blocks of rice cultivation and one has to descend 2,600 feet to reach Koshi valley. This brought us to river Koshi and we had to travel across by a cement arched bridge near the side road to Baijnath. The road begins to ascend from the river and after covering a distance of 6



His Highness in conversation with Uday Shanker at the Indian Culture Centre

miles we reached Almora, where His Highness the Maharaja Saheb was welcomed and garlanded by the Executive Officer at the Municipal limits. He piloted the car, through the arches and decorated streets, to the Ramsey House where the Deputy Commissioner and the President of the Municipality were waiting to extend a warm and cordial welcome to the distinguished visitor.

Though the drive was far from pleasant due to the bad condition of the roads, and inspite of being at the wheel for a pretty long time to cover 82 miles, His Highness did not at all look tired and appeared to be in good spirits. He gaily chatted with the officers and was not without his usual humour. After refreshing himself with a cup of coffee, His Highness went round inspecting the staff quarters and looked into their comforts.

The next morning (18th September) Maharaja Saheb went out early and took a stroll in the garden wherein he was observed picking up flowers he appreciated. After breakfast we left for Uday Shankar's Indian Culture Centre. His Highness was welcomed and greeted by Uday Shankar at the steps of the Centre and was introduced to the Staff and Students of the Indian Culture Centre. In the huge dancing hall a special seat had been arranged for His Highness. Uday Shankar is not only the Director but the Founder and the very life of the Institution which has an International reputation and back ground. When His Highness and party first visited the institution the students were having lessons. The first thing

which struck one was discipline, organization, concentration and the calm and quiet atmosphere inside the Hall. The male and female inmates formed themselves into a square and began the day's lesson and we were all amazed to see various ideas being expressed in the most exquisite manner through facial and bodily movements. Dada was trying his best to take the inmates into his full confidence so that none may fight shy of each other or of him; he told them clearly that they were there to learn from each other and not to condemn in any case whatsoever. A good idea indeed which could with advantage be emulated by our educational institutions.

His Highness spent the noon in the garden under the violet rays of the sun in studying the routes to Pindari. In the evening Mr. D. Vira, the Deputy Commissioner, had arranged a garden party in honour of His Highness where the officials of the town and most of the artists of the Indian Culture Centre were presented to His Highness. The function was a great success, the presence of the ladies of the Culture Centre in rainbow colour saris lending a picturesque view to the whole scene. The Viras were with us on the dinner table and His Highness discussed with them the prospects of the ascent to the Pindari Glaciers.

Next morning Maharaja Saheb went for a long walk at early hours. Mr. Mohanlal Joshi, an advocate of Almora, brought some pictures of the Himalaya and Pindari Glacier to show to His Highness who went through them carefully and studied them. After the luncheon we discussed the programme of the trip and got busy in collecting the necessary equipments. At 5 O'clock in the

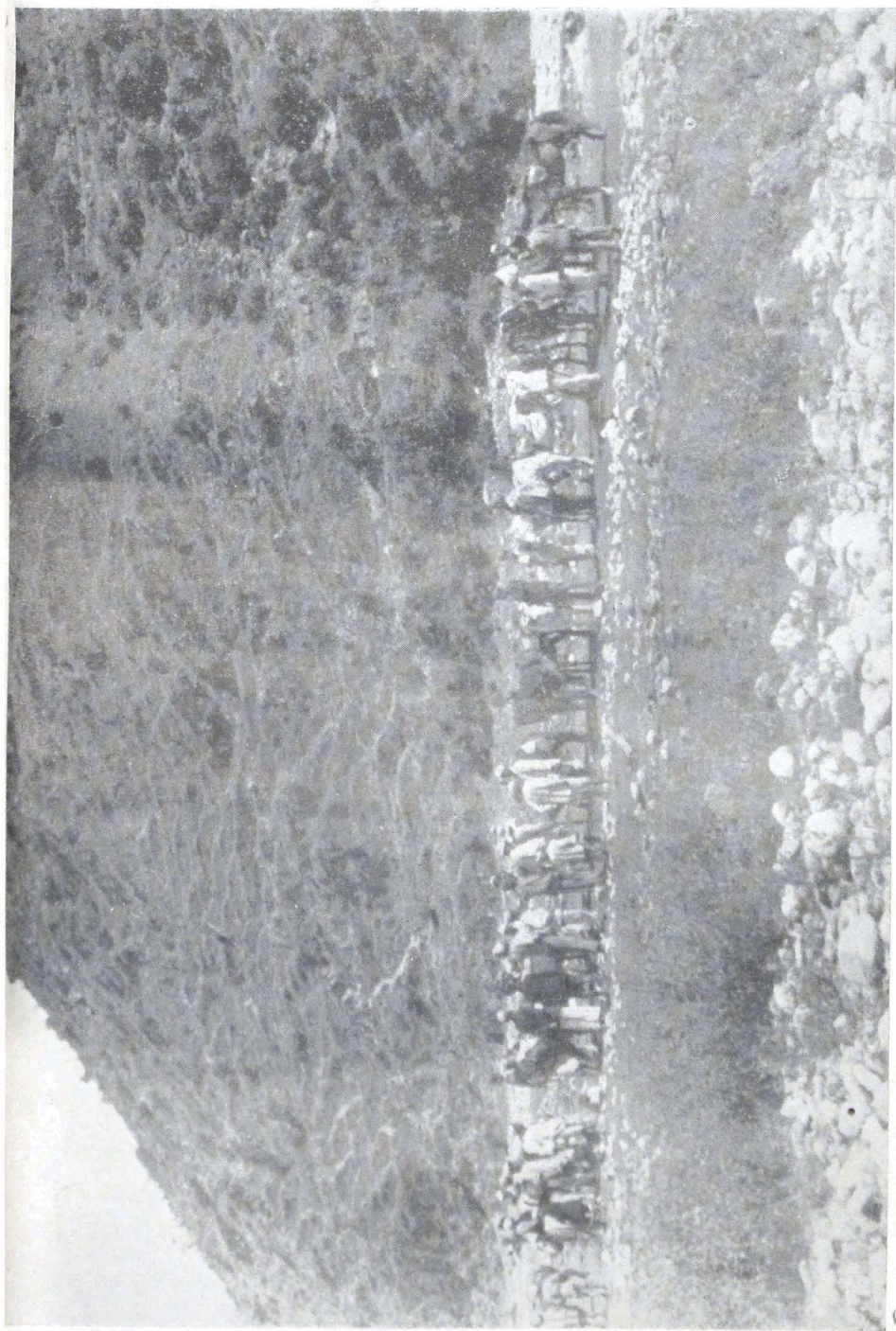
evening we motored to Udaya Shankar's Culture Centre once again to witness the special performance arranged in honour of His Highness the Maharaja Saheb of Baroda. The hall was packed with the elite of Almora. Among the items on the programme those showing Devajani, Sarmistha, Indra, Ras Leela and the new ballet "Labour and Machinery", were beyond praise. The audience witnessed the ancient culture and art with keen interest and enthusiasm. The new ballet "Labour and Machinery" besides dealing with a subject of vital importance in the world of today, presented many new features in the stage performance. In this ballet Dada has tried to combine dance, music, acting, singing, talking, realization, realism and scenic effect, and where possible, accompanied with a display of lights. It is a grand story wherein a grandfather is shown with men, women, boys and girls toiling with their hands and simple implements in rural India. Three persons, typifying the profiteer, the merchant, and a religious hypocrite, combine in an endeavour to exploit these simple village folks. An energetic young man is tortured at the thought of the misery he has brought to his people by leading them to the mechanical existence. At last the young man severs all connections with the profiteers and takes his people back to the old grandfather, to the country, and back to nature. Afterwards a compromise is made between labour and machinery, the future being left to the imagination of the audience and those, whom God in His Mercy, has called upon to control the destinies of mankind.

At the end of the performance Uday Shankar made a speech on the qualities of His Highness and his administration and keen interest in the welfare and advance-

ment of Indians and the development of their Art and Science. He also described the aim and object of the Centre. His Highness made a suitable reply, and in keeping with his cherished ideals for the regeneration of Indian Art and Culture, announced a Princely donation of Rs. 15,000 spread over a period of 5 years. The function came to a close with an expression of grateful thanks to His Highness by Uday Shankar on his behalf and that of the Institution for the very generous gift made in a noble cause.

The very night His Highness honoured the Viras by accepting an invitation to dine with them. On arrival at the Bungalow His Highness was greeted by the host and hostess at the steps leading to the Hall. On the eve of his departure His Highness was graciously pleased to announce a donation of Rs. 1,000 for the construction of a play ground for the school boys of Almora. This small incident is a testimony to His Highness' keen interest in sports as, inspite of his having done all that is humanly possible for the encouragement of games and sports in his State, he was still alive to the sporting spirit in the far off lands of Almora where the need of a good play ground did not escape his attention.

The last sixty hours were fully occupied in collecting necessary information and making preparations for our trip. We engaged 150 Dotials (coolies), 50 pack mules, 40 bridle ponies and 2 dandees. The Swiss Cottages, sixty pounds tents, provisions and stores were sent to Bageshwar via Taluka a day in advance. The surplus clothing and kit had to be packed away and handed over for safe custody at Almora on the morning of the 20th September.



Selection of Bridle Ponies

CHAPTER III

Bridle Path

His Highness and party left Ramsey House at 8 O'clock by car and after traversing zig-zag along soft and dangerous road of 25 miles, most of it running along the right bank of river Koshi, reached Someshwar 4,750 feet above sea-level. Immediately His Highness and Colonel Shivraj Singh were occupied in making selection of 40 bridle ponies for themselves and the members of the party including personal servants. His Highness chose for himself a grey sure-footed animal, named Moti, of Bhotia breed, and a strong dark grey Danpuri pony for his Doctor. Mr. Jaffery, who probably appeared to be a poor rider, having had little or no previous experience, was at pains to make his final selection which nearly took him three quarters of an hour. He was all the same in a mood to exchange it for a Donkey if one was forthcoming ! The dotials lost no time in making up their loads and starting for Bageshwar. We started for Bageshwar, the first stage of our seven days' march to Pindari. The march to the Glacier in the

afternoon was certainly not pleasant. One of the horses on which Mr. Jagtap was riding by my side was absolutely sluggish of temperament. He often came to a dead stop and the rider had to remind him of his duties with a whip. To a moderate stroke of whip he looked upon as a sort of caress and answered it with a cheerful neigh. In spite of the blows, the lazy creature plodded on at his usual phlegmatic pace. The bridge path after crossing the river Koshi was flat and most of it had to be climbed by untrained legs on a desperately hot day. After a march of two hours and half His Highness halted and we had cold lunch near a stream of icy cold water at the foot of Bhulegaon mountain. Without resting ourselves we advanced and reached the narrow ridge of the Dewaldhar about 6,500 feet high at 4 O'clock in the evening. These mountains are covered with tall trees of scarlet hibiscus, pine and bougainvillæas where the green grass makes a fine pasture for the cattle and goats. This spot commands a fine view of the snow clad mountains, our Journey's End. From here the path slopes down steeply, steadily, and runs along the river Gomti till we reached Bageshwar where the President of the Reception Committee welcomed and garlanded His Highness, half a mile this side of the village. He piloted His Highness over the hanging bridges of the Rivers Gomti and Sarju, and through the decorated bazar of the village to the rest house situated at the bank of holy Sarju. Bageshwar is a place of some antiquity and lies 3,200 feet above sea where Gomti joins the River Sarju. There are many sacred institutions, a bazar, a library, a dispensary, a school and a post office. The streets are paved with large stone slabs and the houses have stone-roofs and carved wooden doors. In the month of January the



Luncheon at Harshela Mountains. Natural tables and chairs are seen

festival of Utranee is held every year at this holy village, and the Bhotia traders come down to exchange their goods with the merchants from the plains.

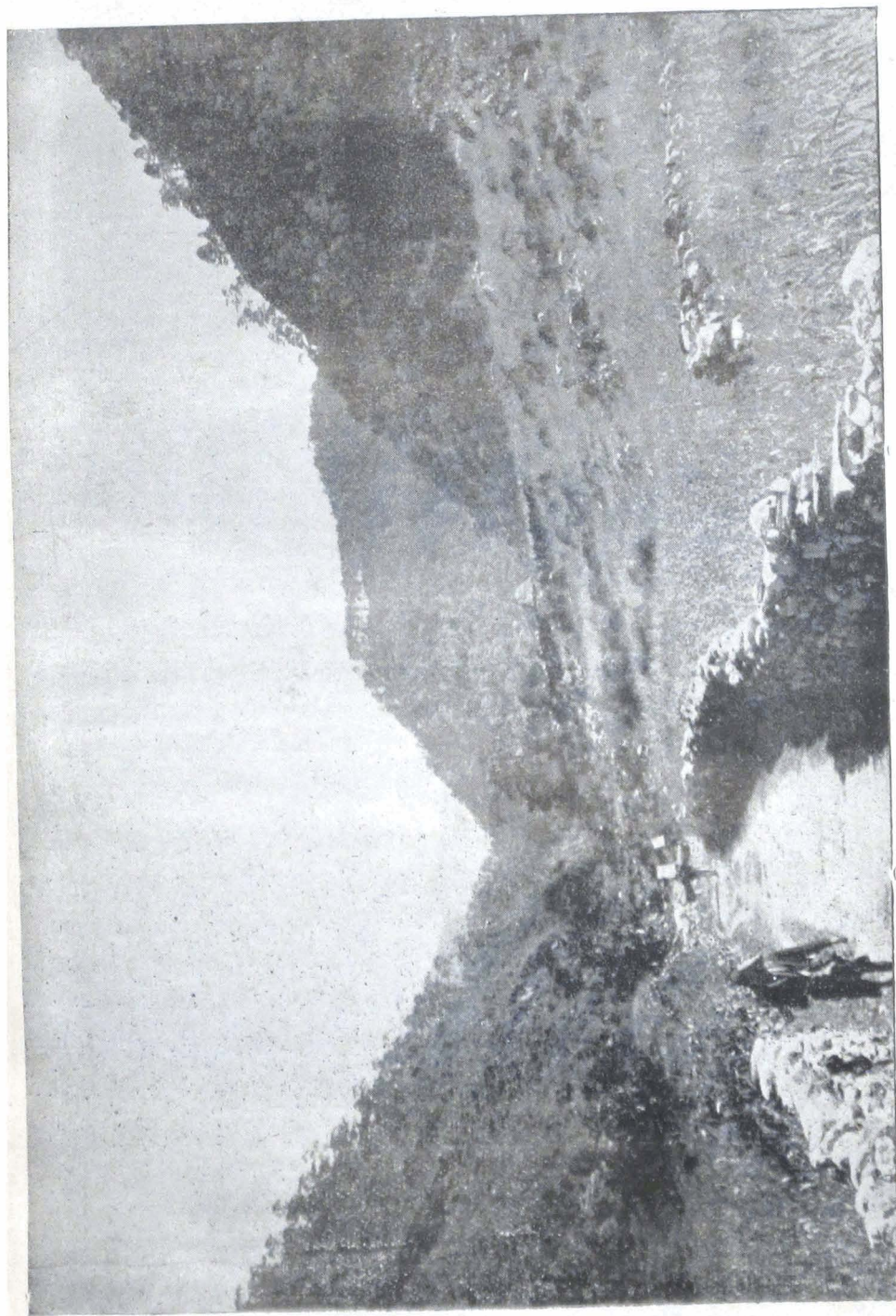
On reaching the rest house we seated ourselves in the verandah on cane chairs and with a hot cup of coffee our toils were soon forgotten. His Highness got himself busy in interviewing the President of the Reception Committee of the village and the heads of other institutions. Rawaljee, the head priest of Shiva temple offered his nazarana of fruits, fish, wild fowls, *chukor* and vegetables.

Late in the evening we learnt that a pack mule had slipped this side of the Dewaldhar ridge and that the bedding of Colonel Saheb had been lost. As luck would have it, this was recovered and arrived late at night. After dinner we felt that we had really come to close grips with this mountaineering affair and though still under a roof, the link with civilization was wearing thin. Our dotials seemed not very happy and late in the evening crawled painfully to the rest house after this 14 miles march. The blue sky was studded with bright stars but after midnight thick clouds gathered and drifted from east to west. Slight thunder and lightening was followed by heavy rains which flooded the low level ground and the canvases were put to test and were drenched.

The morning of the 21st September was bright and cold. His Highness had his favourite breakfast consisting of two hard boiled eggs with a cup of coffee and started for the next camp. After recrossing the suspension bridge of sacred river Sarju our path lay to the

valley of this river along its course, past many villages and well cultivated fields. The flats near the river were irrigated and were used for growing rice and great skill and industry was shown in the extensive terracing of the hill sides. The crop of rice, wheat and chowla was being reaped. Near villages with a hundred houses there were usually water flour mills. These villagers get just enough corn ground to suffice for a single meal at a time. Really, theirs is literally a hand-to-mouth existence. Across the river Sarju, the high mountains of Bhuraun were clad with beautiful forests of luxuriant vegetation. Independently of the gratification to be derived from contemplating the natural scenery, this spot offers a great attraction to a Botanist or Naturalist, the vegetation of the surrounding forest being most varied and interesting. At lower altitudes tree ferns twenty to thirty feet in height, cultivated bananas, wild palms, michelia and magnolia trees were growing. There were also orchids of the *Dendrobium*, *Coelogene* and *Cymbidium* families, mauve, white and yellow, and wonderful datura hedges. Orchids, they say are the rich man's toy, and to have seen them in gaily coloured masses, high up on some giant tropic tree, is to have seen a wonderful sight for a glimpse of which one may be humbly thankful. The dragon-like goat-tracks had made these mountains approachable and at places the river was crossed over by the trunks of long pine tree.

The heavy march of three hours in the hot sun brought us to a beautiful spot, at the foot of Hershela mountain, near the bank of the Sarju river, where we halted for luncheon, the natural rocks and ridges being used as chairs and tables. The strong and lusty dotials



Nearing Kopkote; altitude 3,750 Ft. Dotials marching with their loads

lowered their loads and took out several handfuls of sattu from their leather bags and went to the river bank to satisfy their appetite. An hour later we resumed the hot march and came across a very narrow path, hardly two feet wide, having an embankment on the river side and over hanging rocks on it. It extended about four furlongs and just at the point of descent, a large slab of rock was carved with the image of the Duba Bhel Goddess. This path with all its dangers was easy for our sure-footed Bhotia ponies. The rest of the journey was flat and we did in fifty minutes. Three quarter of a mile this side of the village Kopkote, His Highness was welcomed and garlanded by the heads of the village and school. The steady march of 14 miles brought us to a height of 3,750 feet.

His Highness after taking a cup of hot coffee went to the river bank and spent the rest of the day observing the charms of nature.

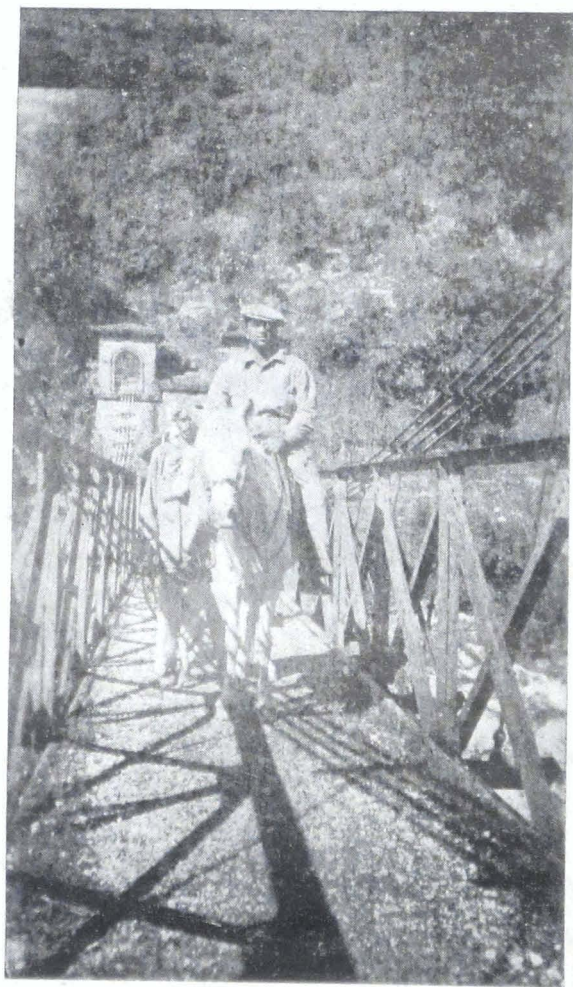
The night was cold and bright. The high peaks of the mountains, in front of our camp, were blazed like torches in the fire of pine-wood.

The morning of 22nd September was very pleasant. His Highness and Thakur Kishan Singh left for the higher camp early. After passing through the village, the bridle path runs a mile and half along the river Sarju. At the foot of Doteel mountains, Sarju is crossed by an iron hanging bridge and gradually you loose the sight of this long river. We went across a succession of ups and downs over a country almost bare of trees. There were hardly any cultivated fields; instead there was

the oppressive heat of the sun. Plodding up the dusty bridle path for three miles from our last camp, we came to a narrow path by the left bank of the river Bhensa. Here the path gets steep with an ascent of a thousand feet covering a half mile distance. After it we came to a flat path between the river and high mountains of Khar-Bagur covered with forest of oak, chestnut and magnolia. I noted caladiums, kolocasias and begonias growing on every rock, and the branches of the trees were frequently matted thick with orchids. The giant pothos, with shining leaves, and the vine creepers were seen gracefully going up the tops of the tall trees.

This pleasant path if followed straight will take you to Kailas. The path to Pindari turns to left and crosses the river Bhensa over a locally made wooden bridge $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide. Immediately after the crossing you touch the feet of huge bare mountains, Turturias, with plenty of landslips. On the bank an ideal spot, beautiful as only nature could make it, and drowsy with the murmur of water clashing against the rock, was selected by His Highness for lunch. Every one of us including a Matajee (Hindu Nun), who joined us at Kopkote, valued this break and spent two hours at this spot.

The steep climb of 1,500 feet of Turturia is not free from dangers and the remains of landslides keep you on the alert. A slow and steady climb brought us to the peak of Nachetidhar mountain which commands a good view of the country. In this season the low lands were covered with green and brown sheets of cultivated rice. From a height of 6,000 feet we dropped quickly down to the valley of the Sarju. After a descent of 3,500 feet



His Highness riding Bhotia pony on suspension bridge of the Sarju

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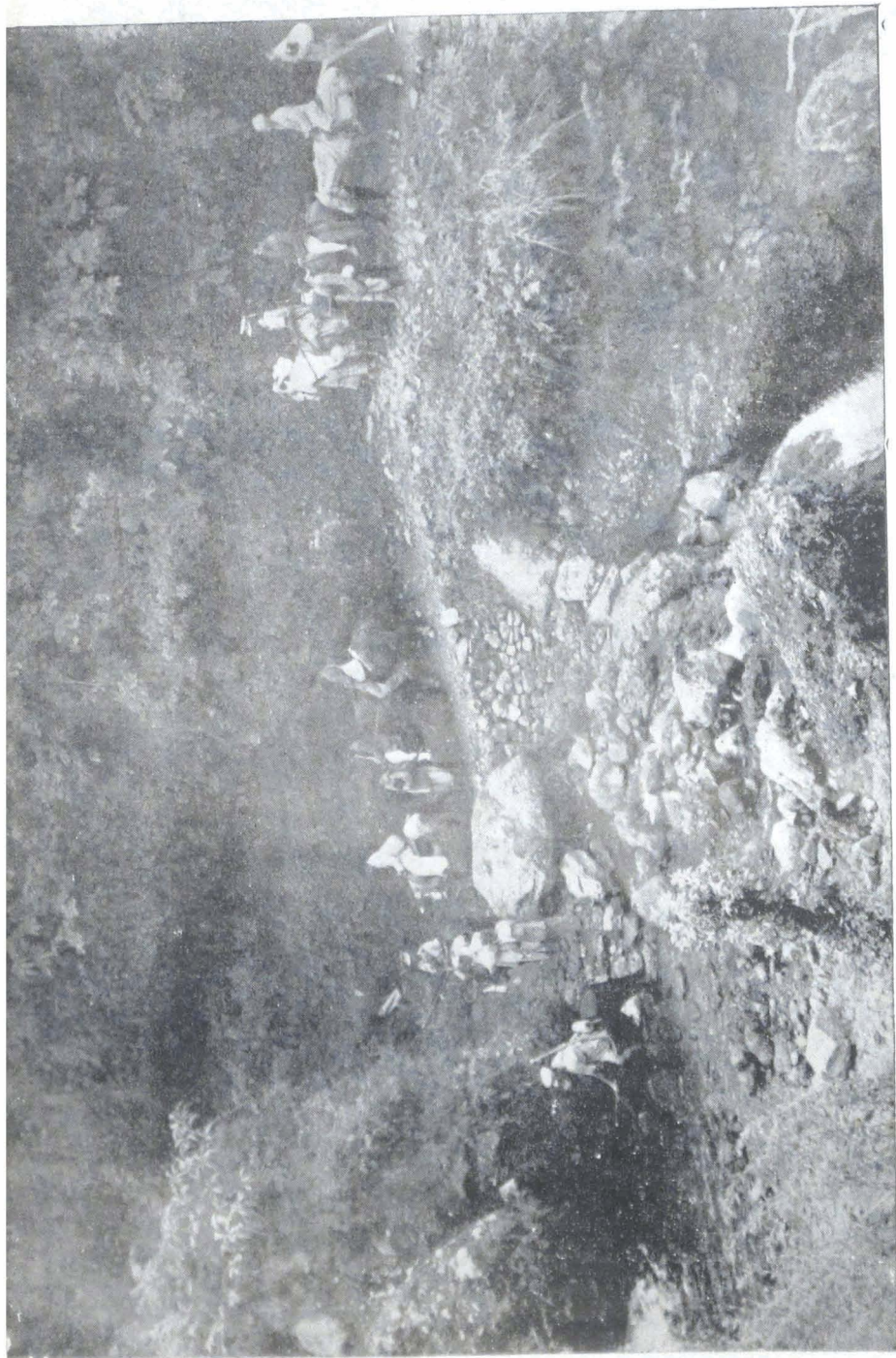
in this valley, we crossed the river Sarju by a wooden bridge. We wished good bye to our old friend, the river Sarju, and marched along the wide and flat path in the midst of cultivated fields.

The abrupt climb of 2,300 feet up the Gurerdia Dhar mountain is strewn with blocks of stones at stages and is very trying. At interval there are shady oaks and natural springs of cold water which are a great boon to the dotials carrying heavy loads on their backs.

His Highness arrived at the camp at ten minutes to four in the evening, and was welcomed by Thakur Ratan Singh on behalf of the villagers. He paid the nazarana of goats, honey, milk, fruit and vegetables. This gentleman was tall, well-built and warrior like with a moustache that did him credit. It was almost a foot long from point to point and it was an effort indeed to restrain ourselves from bursting into a laugh on his first appearance. He could have made an excellent exhibit for the "Times" Photographic competition, and it reminded us all of Ripley's "Believe it or not".

Maharaja Saheb interviewed the leaders of these villages and asked them about the facilities they have for educating their children in that part of the country. The village of Loharkhet, a few yards away from our Camp, situated at an altitude of 5,750 feet had a primary school and last post office. The march of nine miles was hot, tiring and we enjoyed the Fire Dance of hill tribes. It is a mixed dance of well dressed partners. They dance in a circle round a fire and sing songs of old romance.

In the early hours of the morning of 23rd September, His Highness and Captain Ghatge started off at 7 O'clock. The steep climb and sudden change in the weather begins from this stage. The bare hills of Loharkhet have a ladder like zig-zag ascent for a mile and a half and are famous for their *chukor* shooting. The *chukor* (*Caccabis chukor*) is a very noisy bird repeating constantly in a sharp clear tone that may be heard for a mile or more through the pure mountain air. Although bare grassy hills interspersed with a little cultivation are, I think, their favourite haunts, I saw them on hill sides thickly studded with rocks and bushes and in such situations very good sport may be obtained, if only you are accompanied by good markers and have a steady dog to retrieve wounded birds. From the top you get a good view of the high mountains crossed on the previous day and the beautiful golden yellow and red spikes of *Amarantus paniculatus* cultivated in terrace like fields. It is cultivated for its farinaceous grain which is the staple food of some of the hill tribes at this altitude where nature is not kind to any other crop. The villagers cook it like rice and grind it for making thick chapattis. Immediately, we got into the thick dense forest and everywhere the green was brilliant. The wild grass, ferns and alga were seen growing on the rocks and heavy stones. The rhododendrons of various descriptions were growing in the mixed forest of pine, yew, chestnut and birch (*Betula bhojpatra*) showing a luxuriant covering of foliose liverworts displaying every shade of red, yellow, brown and green. Hanging mosses and large-trailing creepers were ever varying delights. Strawberries of red and yellow colour grew wild among masses of herbs and shrubs



March to Loharkhet along the treacherous Bridle Path

of red and orange shaded flowers along the bridle path.

We came across pheasants and wild fowl picking their food early morning by the road side. The sweet conversation of chattering choughs could be heard at a distance.

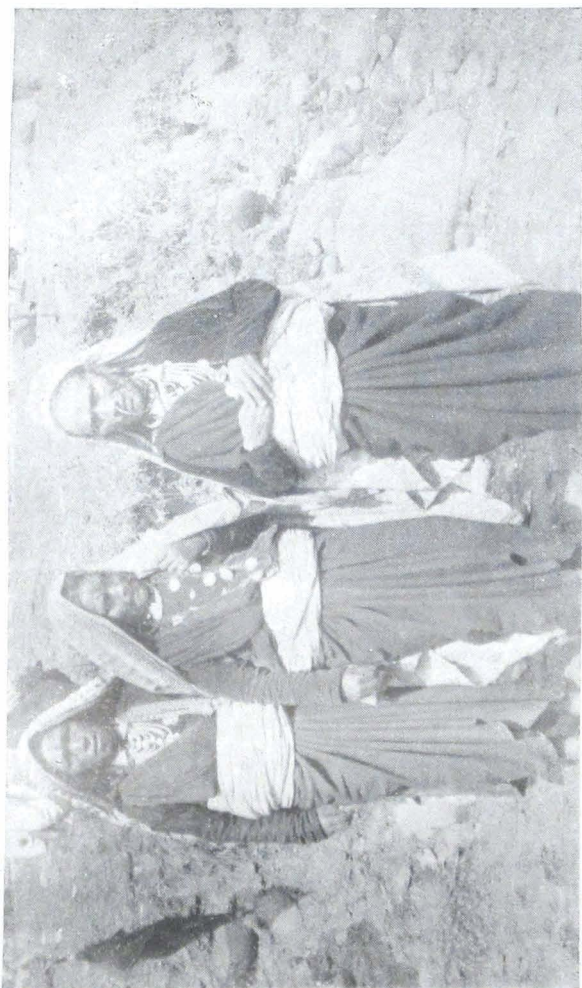
The path gets narrow, steep and dangerous from the 4th mile stone from Loharkhet and ascends 2,000 feet for a distance of six furlongs. On the right hand side of this dangerous path there is a thick forest sloping 10,000 feet downwards, while the other side is overhung with mountain. A few lazy souls of the lot who were still in their saddles had to leave them and jump down for their lives.

After this trying climb we came to a plateau covered with grass, with herds of cows, buffaloes and goats grazing on it. The cattle can stay at this spot till the end of October before the snow fall but the goats remain for twelve months. The gradual ascent of a further 1,250 feet brought us to a ridge 9,500 feet high. The ridge commands a splendid view of the snow clad mountains between Trisul and Bankattia, but we could not get the view owing to the heavy clouds at this hour of the day.

His Highness and the A. D. C. who reached this place in advance of us had a prelibation of the first aroma of its cold draughts. Due to scarcity of space, the Dhakuri camp was pitched on a low plateau surrounded by grassy land where our animals had their heavy feast. It took us $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours to cover this distance of 6 miles. In the afternoon the dark heavy clouds

moved fast and poured down for 45 minutes. Few things are more depressing in a mountain camp than a ceaseless heavy rain. The rattle of the rain on the tent becomes maddening. It beats into the brain and that is bad. There is something peculiarly malevolent in the ceaseless drip, drip, drip from the trees. The outlook becomes dismal and depressing. However at night the sky was blue and there was full moon with the stars shining bright. Mr. Jaffery was uneasy in this weather and was trying to see the snow clad mountains of the North through the wrong end of the binoculars.

The morning of the 24th September was cold, wet and free from mist and clouds. His Highness who rose early had splendid view of snow clad Trisul, Sunderdunga, Panjeel, Nanda Devi, Pindari and Bankattia running in a chain from west to east. The march which was to take us to Khati village, situated in Pindari Valley was not long and we started late. It took the Maharaja Saheb 2 hours and 15 minutes to cross this slippery path of 5 miles. There is a steep descent of 2,250 feet covering a mile and half which brings you to the vicinity of Pindari Valley. This path cuts through a thick forest of oak, walnut, spruce and pine trees. And lower down were fine white clematis, and a yellow berberis decorated with various shades of ferns and long-trailing creepers. The sweet voice of green parrots and the singing of mountain finches were pleasant to the ears. After crossing the forest we came to a plateau carpeted with green grass and rhododendrons of every colour—yellow, white, crimson and pink. Flocks of goats and herds of cattle were grazing and the shepherds seated on rocks were playing on their flutes. During the year from April to



Danpuri ladies in their gay attire

November this area gives shelter to these animals. At this spot a goat track shooting off to the left takes you down to the river Pindari. After crossing this river the track can be seen ascending like a dragon on the huge mountain of Sunderdunga. It takes 4 days to cover this dangerous track of 16 miles to reach the plateau of Sunderdunga which is the home of the thars, gorals and musk deer. We turned to the right and entered another forest of tall trees of oak, chestnut and pine. A march of 30 minutes brought us to a ridge in front of Sunderdunga Valley which is formed by the said mountain and mountains of Monia and Kala Ghar. The top of Kala Ghar remains covered with snow for twelve months in a year. The remaining path passes through cultivation of *Amarantus paniculatus* the spike of which resembles a cock's comb.

His Highness was welcomed at Khati village and garlanded by Thakor Gopal Singh. According to the Rajput custom, he offered goats, honey, milk and vegetables. We enjoyed a well earned and hot luncheon and rested in camp chairs under the rays of the Sun. Curiously enough in the afternoon we killed a snake of a fairly large size in the verandah of the rest house. Khati is the last village in this part of the world and has 25 houses. Cottage industries such as bee keeping, blanket weaving and bamboo matting are the chief sources of income. They grow *Amarantus* in summer months and remain indoors in winter during the snow fall.

At night we had a small incident which was a constant source of amusement to us all and it was not for-

gotten—though some of the party are sometimes still reminded of it—till we were back in Baroda. We heard an officer shout for his servant, who always believed that to be snug and comfortable in the hills one had to be in the kitchen. Out came the servant and we overheard the following interesting conversation :—

“ Where are you arranging my bed”, demanded the officer and added, “there hardly appears to be any room here”. The servant did not seem to share his master's views and quickly put in, “There is plenty of room, Sir, if you would allow me to remove the bath tub and the commode”. This appeared as a brainwave to the poor servant who was apparently pleased with himself for thus solving a problem that had baffled his master; the officer on the other hand could hardly contain himself and was half-amused and half-irritated at the idiocy of his bearer who, however, diplomatically saved the unpleasant situation deteriorating further by bringing in a cold bottle of beer and a tin of cigarettes, so that while he was thus comfortably seated, the poor man could think of some better place to accommodate his master.

Next morning His Highness got up very early and was ready for the climb of 2,000 feet covering seven miles. After wishing good bye to the last trace of civilisation we began our ascent on the morning of the 25th September. To begin with, the path runs through thick wood, along the left bank of river Pindari. The freshness of the early hours, the oaks, sycamores, chestnuts and silver firs along with ground orchids and sweet scented primulas made our journey very pleasant and enjoyable. In the forest were bushes of rhododendron as high as 10 feet



Hills where *Chukors* are plentiful

and were at their best shades from yellow to deep red. The tapping of the wood-peckers and the sweet song of the cuckoo could be heard from a distance. The narrow-necked wood-peckers belonging to the genus *Thriponax* are very skilful carpenters, for I saw them excavating holes in trees with the utmost precision and accuracy. After the ascent of two miles there is a gradual descent for a mile or more which brings you to the river which is crossed by a wooden bridge. On the other side of the river in front of us was another high ridge which followed the course of the river.

After a while we heard the tinkle of bells and the sweet whistle of the human voice. To our surprise we saw flocks of goats carrying little saddle bags full of hill products. The tinkle was from the bells tied round the neck of the sheep watch dogs. This is not such a contemptible form of transport as it may sound, as each animal carries 20 pounds, so that a flock of a hundred goats, which is the minimum, can move a ton of produce. During their halts the shepherds build these bags into a wall to break the wind and light the camp fire while the watch dogs guard the goats from the wild animals. Thus they carry the products, chiefly wool and white rock salt of high plateau, and bring the grains from the plains. One may envy these shepherds, who lead such a simple life and live most of the time away from our so-called civilisation. This flock of goats detained us for 30 minutes but we enjoyed their sight and the tinkling of the bells.

The path beyond 62 mile-stone was lined by strawberries of yellow and deep red colour growing wild. I collected about a pound and enjoyed eating them.

They are not so sweet as those got from the gardens. Across the river a dozen water falls dropping hundreds of feet in single sheets presented a picturesque sight. At the 64th mile stone we came across a wide mountain table giving shelter to travellers in stormy weather.

A pleasant march of three and quarter hours along the Pindari river brought us to the triangular plateau bounded on two sides by the Pindari and Kufnee rivers and the mountain of Hunt Phor on the third. This spot was surrounded by high mountains forming a valley and was covered with greens. His Highness decided to camp at Dwali (9,000 ft.) for three days in the hope of getting some shooting. From this place the Kufnee Glacier is only seven miles, and one could cover it in two days by going up a goat track.



Pindari Valley seen from Khati. Snow clad Nanda Khat with the notch of Nanda Devi

CHAPTER IV

Game on Altitudes

An hour after luncheon we planned and discussed the shooting programme. Unfortunately Captain Ghatge could not join us as he was running temperature due to tonsillitis. During the discussion, up came the news of a herd of "Thars" and "Gorals" feeding on the ridges of the high mountains of Punjail Bhain. His Highness jumped up and went up the path leading to Phurkia. A mile and half brought us right opposite to these herds which could not be seen easily in the beginning. His Highness adjusted the back sight of his rifle and fired a couple of shots which went low. Though the animals appeared near, yet they looked the size of a jack. The Maharaja Saheb was very quick in his judgment and readjusted the sight. This time the shots fell near the animals and wounded a "Thar" and a "Goral". The Goral (*Naemorhedus*) went into a cave and was lost, but the 'Thar' (*Hemitragus jemlalicus*) fell in the fast river Pindari from a height of 1,000 feet. The dotials went down for it with joy but returned disappointed, the rapid current of the river having washed away the animal.

The night was cold and the blue sky was studded with bright stars, which were apparently near. During these quiet hours in those solitary places the music produced by lapping of the waves against the rocks and the sound of rocks falling in the stream were sweet. One could hear the tinkle of the bells of the barking watch dogs guarding the flocks eighty feet below our camp.

The next morning we had the great task of climbing one thousand feet up the mountains Punthuva and shooting on the plateau on its top. His Highness, Thakore Saheb and myself left the camp at 9 O'clock and took the goat track leading upwards in a zig-zag through the thick forest. At places the dotials had to repair the track and cut the branches. After every 15 minutes of climbing we got breathless and had to rest. Two hours hard climbing brought us 300 feet high covering three quarter of a mile. Dark clouds started moving fast and down came the storm, and we were drenched to the skin. Our guide lost courage and advised us to return to the camp. The track was very slippery and it took us hours to reach the wet camp.

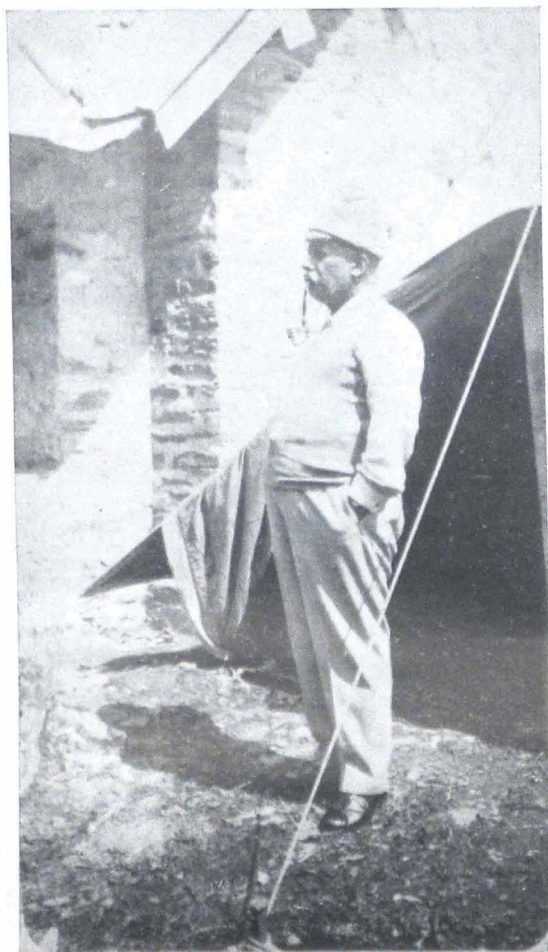
After luncheon we spent the day near the fire as it was pouring heavily. Late at night we were roused by Mr. Jaffery's faithful servant, 'David', who was sleeping in his tent. Probably the heat and toil of the day were responsible in working up his imagination and he dreamt of a tiger. This unnerved him so much that he ran for his life shrieking all the while in the dark and had it not been for the assurances of his fellow companions, he might have been on the run for his life which might have been short lived owing to the dangerous nature of the ground

he was treading on. This disturbed us in our sleep and caused much annoyance though the incidence was not without its humour, and every night we had to remind Mr. Jaffery to instil into David's head that if ever he dreamt of a tiger he should hold his ground and his breath, if possible.

During the night the heavy rains had washed the high mountains and flooded the ditches, pools and rivers. In the morning, His Highness left the camp after breakfast and went towards the North. The bridle path got narrow and ran along the left bank of Pindari river. Vegetation became scanty, the pines disappeared and the shrubs diminished in size. The huge trees were replaced by the birches, willows and junipers. Dwarf rhododendron of white and pink shades continued upto half way to Martoli. The gorgeous and the deep richly wooded valleys were left behind and the scanty grass of green, brown and red coloration on these mountains could be observed. Though there was a scarcity of plant life yet one could see herds of Thars and Gorals on the difficult straight high ranges of the mountains. It appears that in winter these animals grub in the ground and get at the roots of plants to subsist on. No doubt they survive inspite of the scarcity of food and cold till the summer season arrives when the snow melts and grass springs up.

The summits of these mountains were clad with snow and had many water falls of snow white colour.

This thin forest of shrubs had wild fowl, pheasant and moonal which were occasionally seen a few yards



Col. Shivraj Singh smoking *Hungarian Pipe* at Phurkia

away from the bridle path. The moonals or impeyan pheasants (*Lophophorus refulgens*) are some of the handsomest of all known birds, their plumage being metallic and of divers colours of green purple, and blue and they carry a crest of light spade-shaped plumes or curled feathers. There are few sights more striking, where birds are concerned, than that of a grand moonal glittering and flashing in the golden sunlight and then dropping stone like, with closed wings into the valley below. These pretty birds descend to lower elevations as the winter comes on.

The steep-climb of three miles brought us to an altitude of 10,700 feet. The camp was pitched near the Phurkia bungalow. Captain Ghatge was still invalid; His Highness therefore generously ordered me to put him in the room and pitch a tent for himself.

During luncheon we discussed about a flying visit to Martoli, the last camping part. At 2 O'clock the Maharaja Saheb with a party of two persons marched towards the huge mountains covered with snow. From a distance you could not see the Glacier as it lies in the valley formed by Nanda Khat and Nanda Koot. A continuous march of an hour and half brought us to the 74th mile stone from Almora. The plateau of Martoli was surrounded by rocks and was an ideal spot for camping. The compact clouds looking like an ocean had hidden these huge mountains. After selecting the site for camping, we returned late at evening to our base camp.

For the last two days of September 1940 we camped at Phurkia and visited Martoli to have a full view of the

Glacier, but our labours were not rewarded by nature owing to thick mist and snow white clouds. His Highness took photographs of the surrounding scenery with his cine-camera. On 30th September our Shikaris who were out on the high Bhuja mountains covered with brown grass near the edges of the heavy snow, brought two Kasturas (musk deer). This interesting animal which is represented from Himalaya to Siberia by a single species i. e. (*Moschus moschiferus*) has the fur of a peculiarly coarse and brittle nature, its general colour being speckled brownish-grey. The most peculiar feature about this animal is however the presence on the abdomen of the male of a large gland, discharging by a small orifice, and secreting the highly odoriferous substance known as musk, which is much used in perfumery and commands a high price in the market. For the sake of obtaining this precious product, musk-deer are regularly hunted by the hillmen and we were really fortunate in securing two fine specimens. We relished the flesh very much, for it was very tasty and had the scent of musk.



Martoli Camp; altitude 12,000 Ft.

CHAPTER V

Pindari Glacier

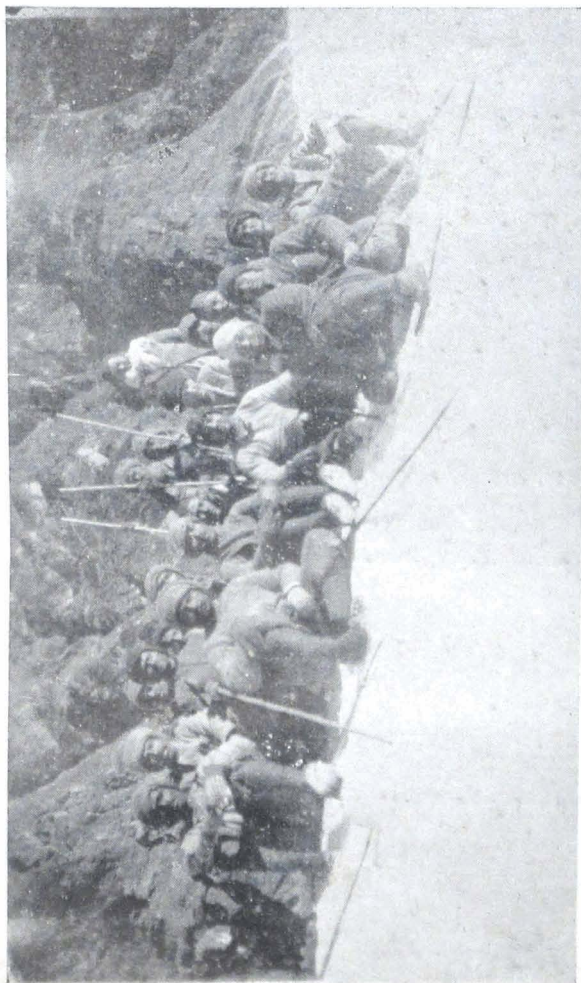
The new month started with a clear blue sky and the red rays of the Sun. Another roll of Cine-camera film was exposed and the grand views of the chain of mountains covered with snow, was caught. Immediately after lunch, His Highness with three others of the party, left for Martoli camp. The party was small as the rest stayed at Phurkia. This path cuts through the bare rocks devoid of vegetation and covers a distance of three and half miles. After several days of hard going we crossed the last marshy patch and arrived at the tableland of Martoli Camp. In the evening we had a snow fall lasting two and half hours. The tents and the camp ground were covered with snow. The wind was cold and bitter and as far as I could see, it appeared the nature had put on a white sheet. In spite of it our spirits were high and we enjoyed this phenomenon of nature at its best, or shall I say, worst. His Highness pulled us out of the canvas and we played with snow balls. Dark clouds preceded the night which however was lighted up with the camp fire.

The dining table had accommodation for four only and Mr. Jaffery found himself near the fire where he came in for good share of smoke created thereby and it was a funny sight indeed to watch him struggling with his fork and knife in between his tears which made one think that he was probably home-sick.

The Glacier was known for its remarkably fine views, so we prayed for a fine morning and resolved to leave our beds very early.

The dawn of October 2nd was free from clouds, the sky was clear and you could see the fading stars.

His Highness and party got up early in the morning and after having a hasty breakfast of eggs and coffee left the camp at 5-30 a. m. The ascent was very steep and we had to halt at places to recover breath and reached the 75th mile stone after 45 minutes. The morning was beautifully clear and cold and we were amply rewarded for all our troubles. As we raised our heads above, we were privileged to see some of the most impressive mountains of the world standing in all their majesty and frowning at us for having violated their virginity. The peaks, from west to east, of Rat Paer, Lumb Cher, Cherec Dunga, Neela Chotee, Nanda Khat with the hump of Nanda Devi, Nanda Koot (Bankattia) covered with heavy white snow were picturesque. In the valley formed by two Nandas the Glacier of Pindari appeared almost motionless with its waves. They say that it moves down at the rate of a fraction of an inch a year. It is difficult to behold the Himalayas without being moved to "wild surmise".



His Highness and party on the Glacier; altitude about 14,000 Ft.

To reach the edge of God's glory we descended about 1,000 ft. The real task started now, the troubles increased and breathing became more difficult. Man's physical functions are influenced in no small degree by the rarefaction of the air; and in order to ascertain in what way this acted, I sometimes felt my pulse and also recorded the temperature. I found that the temperature decreases and the pulse quickens as the altitude increases. With the altitude there also appears to ensue a certain degree of sluggishness.

The mountains covered with fresh snow were terribly slippery. A slow and steady climb of 45 minutes brought us to a flag post (a canvas bag of sand) marked by the members of an expedition, who had climbed the Glacier a few months before us. It was dangerous to walk on these sharp ridges, yawning crevices and deep fissures hidden by the snow. A member of the party stepped upon a snow covered crevice and was caught in its bottled neck. As good luck would have it, his companion pulled him out with great presence of mind. Some of us were tired out and wanted to return.

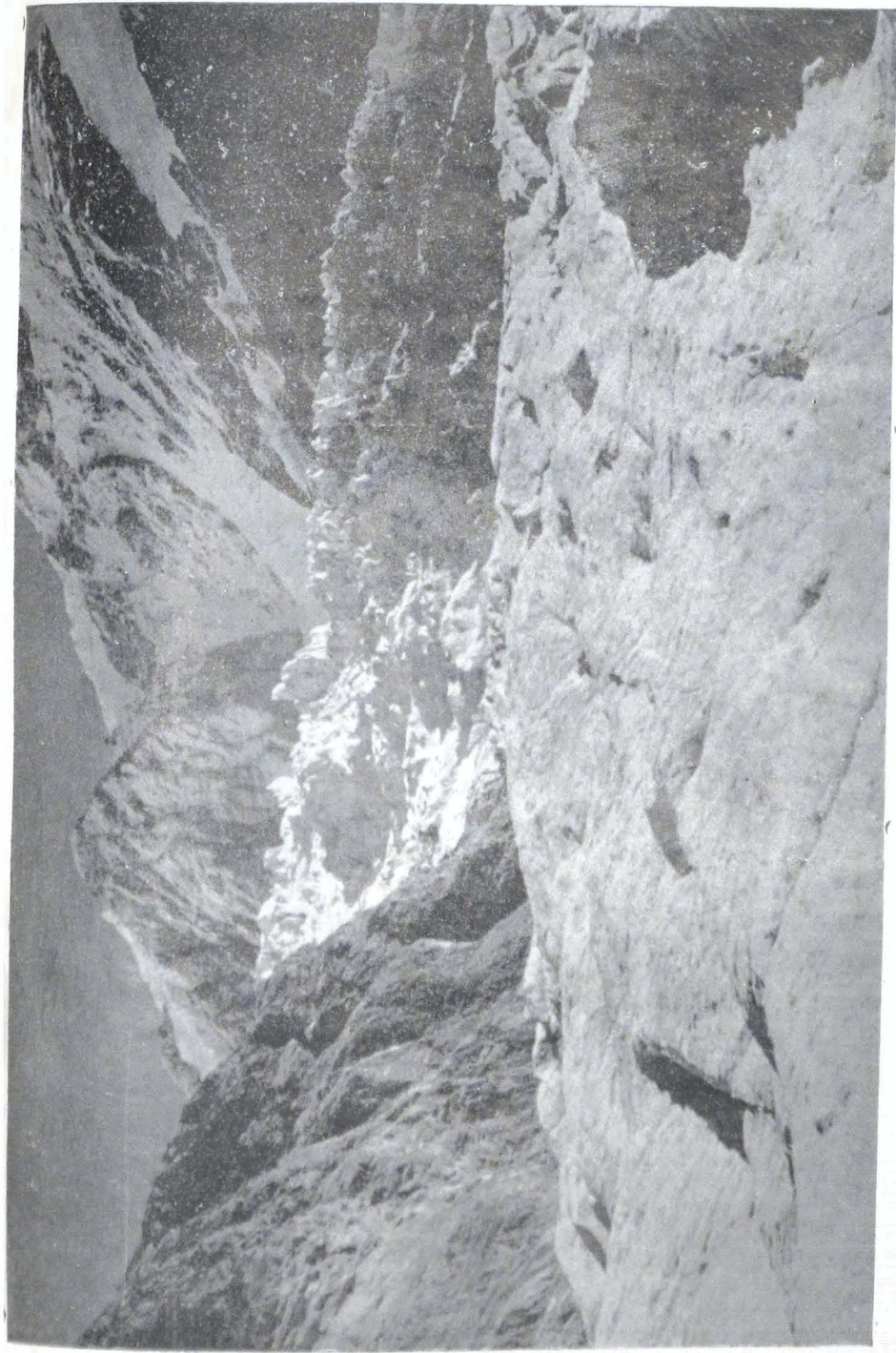
His Highness, the strenuous pioneer and splendid mountaineer that he is, made up his mind to reach the Traill Pass (23,400 ft.). With his spike-nailed boots and snow climber's stick he overcame the obstacles and went on ascending till he touched an altitude of about 17,000 ft.

The Traill Pass is named after Mr. Traill, a former Commissioner of Kumaon. In 1830, he ascended the Glacier Pindari and crossed the pass at its head into

the Milam Valley. It is one of the passes which take you to Nanda Devi which is 25,600 ft. high.

The bright Sun was fairly up and the hot rays were melting the fresh snow. Gopal Singh, the guide requested the Maharaja Saheb to return as the deep fissures and crevices were multiplying dangerously. After a little discussion, His Highness decided to descend; but felt that to come to the Glacier and not see the Snout would be like going to Agra and yet missing the Taj.

We were overjoyed at His Highness' idea and made our way down to the Snout of the river Pindari. It took us 50 minutes to reach the magnificent gorge, one of the finest specimens of water erosion ever seen. The scene was like the tongue of a Glacier, it was impossible to remain unmoved at the sight of the white flood rushing from a black cave of ice under a tower wall of snow which marked the end of the Pindari Glacier. The cave was 35 feet wide, 20 feet high and 25 feet deep. We could notice the play of colours white, blue and green on the blocks of the ice-walls as we entered. I should say that words are in vain to express or convey the adequate idea of the unrivalled grandeur and sublimity of the scene. I stood there mute and still as if I was an involuntary witness of some dread manifestation or had rashly penetrated some divine secret too fearful for mortal eyes to be seen. In front of us stood the colossal mountain masses soaring up a giddy height to the ethereal workshops in which the eternal snow spins the delicate webs which it sends down the slopes of the mountains as offerings to the Sun and where the stillness of the death divides sovereignty with the bitter cold. A few of



God's glory at 17,000 Ft. The Trail pass at the bend, lion like yawning crevices and fissures are clearly visible
P. 32

us had dips in this extremely cold holy water and tendered our humble gratitude to His Highness for the splendid and successful expedition.

The river Pindari originates in the South-eastern extremity of the Nanda Devi group, in Pindari Glacier. At the Snout it is 20 feet wide and travels a few hundred miles gathering its tributaries at various places before joining the Mother Ganges.

His Highness waded the river and saw the far end of the cave. Immediately outside the mouth, the sides of mountains were over hanging considerably. On a tiny edge, a mountain crow known as Alpine Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) with red legs and bright yellow bill, had built its nest and therein laid two white shining eggs in perfect security.

After taking photographs we marched back to the camp. We lost our way and if the merit acquired was proportionate to the energy expended, ours must have been great. We toiled along a devious route through over hanging hills and valleys. The short distance of a mile and a half took us more than a hour and we reached the camp after 12 O'clock. A hot cup of black coffee after the successful expedition warmed us up and we enjoyed the splendid views.

The view was free from clouds and mist till evening, when we broke camp and marched back to our headquarters. On our return to the headquarters, His Highness ordered ten goats for distribution among the dotials and the grooms of the sure-footed animals. The

expedition had not tired us in the least. Col. Shivraj Singh who was nearing 65 years, was young in spirit and full of jokes at the table. After dinner we slipped into our beds.

The next morning the whole camp echoed with the singing of these sturdy and stout hill tribes. The day was not bright but cloudy. Thakur Dungar Singh, the mate, brought the goats and according to custom offered prayers and distributed the " Prashad " (mutton). Each one of them ran with his share to the natural caves which gave them shelter in this cold weather. You could see the clouds of smoke rushing out of these caves and it looked as if the huge mountains were on fire.

After lunch we got goat's horns and practised tent pegging on foot. In the evening we did a lot of engraving on a flat rock the top edge of which projected outwards. The night was lit with the camp fires scattered all over a radius of $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile. The hill songs accompanied by the flutes were very pleasing. We had early dinner and enjoyed the singing and fire dancing of these tribes.



The Cave of Ice

CHAPTER VI

The Descent

On the 4th of October we felt for the separation of the nature's abode. The camp was broken up early in the morning and we left for Khati after breakfast.

The down hill journey was not hard and every one of us walked fast. The day was bright and warm and the high water-falls scattered rainbow of a thousand lines amidst the foam and spray of the descending torrents. Again we passed by the sides of high mountains covered with dense forest. The river Pindari was crossed twice and at noon we reached the camp at Khati.

The villagers welcomed us with their offering of milk and honey. His Highness purchased a few simple objects such as the old flint and steel, bamboo mats and baskets which now form interesting ethnological exhibits in the Baroda Museum. These articles reflect in a suggestive manner the occupation and modes of life of those Kumaonis who live

more in dependence on Nature than do those who are called cultured or civilized races. Many of these articles, which may be considered of little exhibitional value, will be of great importance some years hence as illustrating the history and mode of life of generations passed or passing away. Many customs change with great rapidity and all evidences of their existence disappear or only remain in literary allusions, often difficult to understand without actual illustrations. Take for instance the old flint and steel, the universal source of illumination in our early days. Most living people accustomed to the daily use of one of the greatest triumphs of applied science know nothing of the difficulties their forefathers had to contend with in supplying this most essential need of everyday life. I doubt if many of our generation could recognise the apparatus and its use, and though one must have existed in every cottage in the country fifty years ago, I am sure it would be difficult to procure one now even for a Museum. Take again the threshing flail, an instrument in universal use with little change for thousands of years, now rapidly disappearing in many districts. Specimens of all these, and many others which will readily suggest themselves are a direct aid to the increase of knowledge and His Highness' small acquisition for the museum shows in a striking manner his cherished ideals of fostering intellectual development amongst his subjects. The Maharaja Sahib ordered me to distribute three goats among the poor. Without wasting time they got busy in slaughtering the goats and sharing them. After dinner they got dressed in their best countenance and entertained us with the mixed fire and sword dance.



Pindari Mukh "The Source of Pindari"

The idea of camping at Dhakuri was dropped and we made two halts the next day. The steep bridle path beyond the ridge was slippery due to rains overnight. The weather was pleasant and every one of us was anxious to reach Loharkhet. We could hear the sweet voices of singing birds and parrots. The green fields, which we saw on our way up, had disappeared and the farmers were busy collecting the fruits of their toil. These crops are filled in big baskets and stored for the severe winter when snow carpet is seen all over.

We reached the camp which was pitched a little late in the afternoon. The stalwart Rajput Thakur was again ready with his offerings of milk and honey.

His Highness ordered five goats for the villagers of Loharkhet and well rewarded the Thakurs, who had accompanied us to the Glacier Pindari, with valuable watches. The night was severely cold and so we went to bed early.

As the altitude decreased the weather became warmer. The Maharaja Saheb ordered an early start to traverse the path cutting through soft rocks which were well known for their landslides. The ponies looked happier as they approached their homes and covered the distance of ten miles in less than three hours. On the plateau this side of the hanging bridge which crosses the river Sarju, we saw the camp of Bhotia shepherds with flocks of goats. The snow white wool and picturesque horns of these tiny animals attracted the sight of His Highness who ordered me to purchase a couple of

pairs for the carriages of the Royal children. We bought two pairs of Bhotia and a pair of Chinese goats and brought them along with us. After luncheon His Highness, Col. Kumar Shivraj Singh and myself went to swim in the river Sarju at Kapkot. The water was knee deep but cold and the current was so forcible that we were carried along with it. The hot rays of the Sun from above kept us in water for over an hour. The Maharaja Sahib inspected the working of water mill which supplied the needs of the poor villagers.

Before sunset the red bearded shikari brought two beautiful king fishers. In this part of the Himalayas these pied king fishers are represented by "*Ceryle lugubris*", a large species with the hovering habits and a great fish eater. These king fishers were quite common and rank amongst the brightest of our indigenous birds and form the most beautiful ornament of the mountain rivers and ponds. Our specimens were $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length with a chestnut under surface and a brilliant cobalt blue black, which shows vividly when the bird flies. The taxidermist got himself busy in skinning these birds and we watched his dissection. One of us relished its meat very much. They say it acts as an aphrodisiac.

The morning of the 7th October was warm. The flat path which ran parallel to the course of the river Sarju covered fourteen miles. The cultivated fields on either side of the river were bare and dry. The farmers were busy in threshing and preparing the grain for winter storage.

Under the thick shade of a banyan tree on the bank of holy Sarju we had our lunch. As we approached



Eastern side of the river Pindari. His Highness is standing with his hands crossed

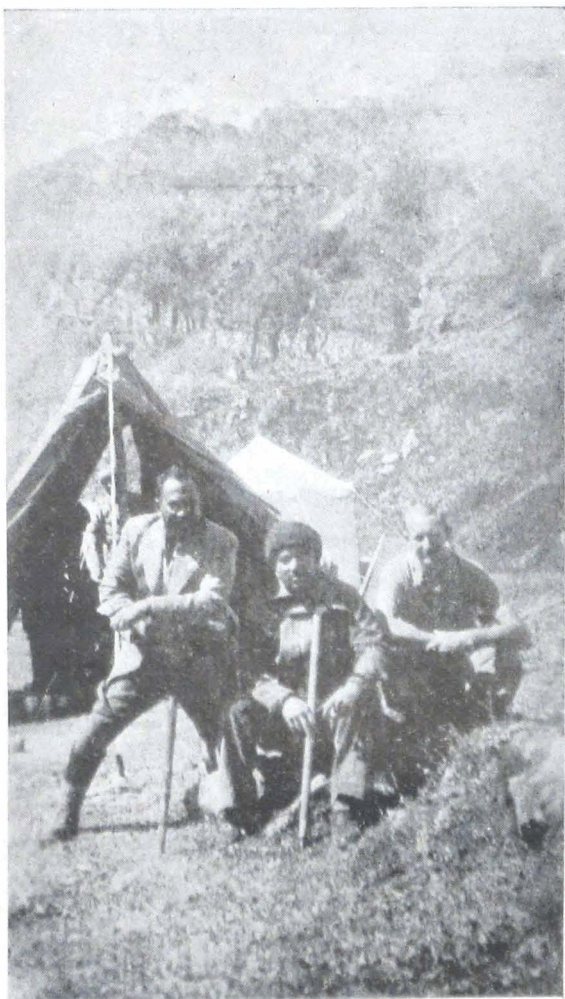
Bageshwar, the Hindu pilgrimage, the Sadhus of Suraj Kund announced the arrival of His Highness by blowing conches. We reached the camp just before one O'clock.

The arrival of His Highness at Bageshwar was the signal for the heads of the different institutions to flock round our camp with a view to wait upon His Highness. Though tired, Maharaja Saheb did not like to send them back in disappointment and so all had the good fortune of being presented to him and he gaily chatted with them on many vital points. His Highness had a word of cheer for every one of them, some of whom received wholesome advice on burning subjects concerning their amelioration. After tea somebody suggested fishing and His Highness in the company of Thakur Kishan Singh went out with his rod. Good luck attended them and they returned to the Camp with 2 fine Mahseers.

Friday the 8th October was a very busy day as the representatives of the various Educational and Religious Institutions were there to receive the Princely gifts so graciously granted by His Highness. After staying there overnight, we left early morning for Someshwar. The day was very hot and the journey extremely tiring and reminded us of the day of our first ascent to the hills of the bridge path. We had to wade through the river Koshi once again and reached our destination before 10 a. m. Here cars were in attendance to take us 22 miles to the west about 5,000 ft. above sea level, to Kausani Estate, a beauty spot among the spontaneous and wild growth of the hills. History has it that sometime in the Nineteenth Century this Estate was owned by a few

Englishmen who had practically settled there and made it their permanent abode. After their demise the British Government took possession of the property which was later on distributed as Jagirs to the Kumaonis, Garhwalis and Gurkhas for their achievements in loyalty and chivalry in the Boer and the last Great War. These retired Officers and men of the Indian Army have settled down here for over a generation and have founded a middle school for the education of their children. Here His Highness was given a right royal reception by these sturdy old timers who escorted him to the Forest Bungalow through a well decorated and picturesque avenue. The very evening His Highness accompanied by Thakur Kishan Singh drove 10 miles west on a zig-zag road to reach Baijnath, the age-old famous Hindu pilgrimage.

Thereafter the party returned to Kausani and it was here that we all celebrated the annual Dasehra festival. It evoked vivid and pleasant memories of what we had been used to see and go through on this sacred and memorable occasion in Baroda which celebrates it on a very grand scale in all its Oriental pomp and grandeur. In a foreign land, away from home and our people, we celebrated it as best as was possible in the circumstances and we did not allow these thoughts to depress our feelings. In the absence of any other ritual, we sacrificed goats to Goddess Bhawani and the kitchen was instructed to do its level best to serve some extra delicious dishes possible in the circumstances. We invited many hillmen to join us and we had a feast on a small scale! Lest I forget I should also own that we did sacrifice something else—I refer to our beards which had grown out of all



Return to Martoli Camp. His Highness seen sitting in centre

proportion—and not without some element of sorrow which comes of a long association. All these days we had practically not given it any thought, away as we were from civilization which expects everyone to be a barber the sooner he opens his eyes in the morning; and no wonder, as man's has been an eternal fight with Nature. We had almost forgotten by now that we had anything like a beard, though the first few days without a shave, were not without a feeling of uneasiness and untidiness almost bordering on irritation, divorced as we were from that happy feeling that comes of a clean shave which leaves the skin soft and smooth. And it was a relief indeed to get our faces rid of a mass of weed growing wild all these days, and giving us all an appearance of Father Christmas. There was a frantic search for razors which were lying packed up in some corner and for once we thought that a razor was the choicest gift of God to humanity and I for one would not have exchanged it for an Empire. It was a genuine pleasure to stroke the smooth chin now freed as it was of the goatce beard that had hung round all these 3 weeks.

10th October was an exceptionally fine and clear day and the distant ranges of the Himalayas were clearly visible to the naked eyes in all their natural beauty and majesty. This being so we could not stand idly admiring it; cameras clicked, reels were exposed and His Highness shot a very good view of these distant snow-laden peaks covering a very long range.

Before we left Kausani we had two days' complete rest and after a tiresome journey of 6 hours covering 115 miles we reached Naini Tal — the Queen of the Hill

Stations in India — and so back once again to the fold of civilization and normal life.

Before I take leave, I cannot help remarking that under His Highness the Maharaja Saheb's leadership all the dangerous bamboo bridges over the thundering mountain torrents, all the slippery steps on the age-old Pindari Glacier, all the unavoidable inclines before each successive ascent, and the storms, thunder, cold and heat were all surmounted and there was joy and pride for the achievement. None of the party had any previous experience of mountaineering, yet at high altitudes we did feel quite justifiable pride in ourselves as perfect mountaineers. This was particularly because of the inspiring leadership of His Highness. Of marvellous energy, full of pluck and dash, and of that rare combination of caution and daring, which is essential for a great enterprise, His Highness maintained the cohesion of the large party so vital under irritable and trying conditions of higher altitudes. His spirit was infectious, the whole party catching it.

Colonel Kumar Shivraj Singh, though in advanced years, was possessed of a level disposition and was an example to us all of determined calm in the face of real danger. He has an extraordinary mixture of buoyancy and old age, and if spared to hit up his century he will still be young. Had he not been on the wrong side of 60 he would have probably been on the very top of the WORLD (the Everest) shouting in the sheer joy of having done the impossible !



Kausani Forest Bungalow; altitude 5,000 Ft. The unshaven chins can be easily seen

APPENDIX

Equipment

For a large measure of success a traveller to the mountains must possess a good equipment. The very short period during which climbing is possible, the uncertainty of the monsoon, the danger of landslides, extremes of heat and cold, and for a greater period being away from all traces of civilization, makes the task of choosing the equipment more difficult. We made some mistakes in choosing our equipment inspite of all care and thought devoted to it; the subject is one that needs very careful attention even down to the minute details as to the size and the shape of various items of baggage which determine, more than anything else, if one gets a quick start every morning.

I have therefore considered that it will not be out of place to add a small appendix based on our experience dealing with the outfit, stores and provisions, and other minimum necessities, that an intending traveller should carry with him. This information should be treated as a guide and alterations and additions should be made to suit every taste and pocket.

The baggage should be kept as light as possible, not exceeding 60 lbs., and should be handy to carry on the back.

Garments

Cotton Khaki Twill Shirts (short sleeve)	3	
Cotton coloured shirts	3	
Cotton Khaki shorts	2	pair
Cotton Coloured trousers	2	„
Grey flannel trousers	2	„
Breeches		
Jodhpurs	2	„
Woollen	1	„
Woollen Sweater	2	
Woollen underwear	3	
Cotton „	3	
Cotton coloured coat	2	
Woollen coat	2	
Sleeping kit cotton	2	
Sleeping kit woollen	1	
Woollen putties full size	1	pair
„ „ ankle size	1	„
Socks woollen	4	pairs
„ cotton	2	„
„ leather (ankle size).	1	pair
Stocking	2	pairs
Mufflers woollen	2	
Gloves leather	1	pair
Sola hat	1	
Balaclava cap	1	
Woollen Great Coat	1	
Rainproof coat	1	

Boots

Long boots with spiked nails	1	pair
Pathani Chappals with hob nails	1	„
Golf shoe brown	1	„
Sleeper	1	„

Bedding

Woollen heavy blankets	2
„ light „	2
Cotton coloured bed sheets	2
Cotton coloured pillow cases	2
Mattress—weighing 20 lbs.	1
Durree	1
Waterproof sheet	1
Waterproof Hold-all	1

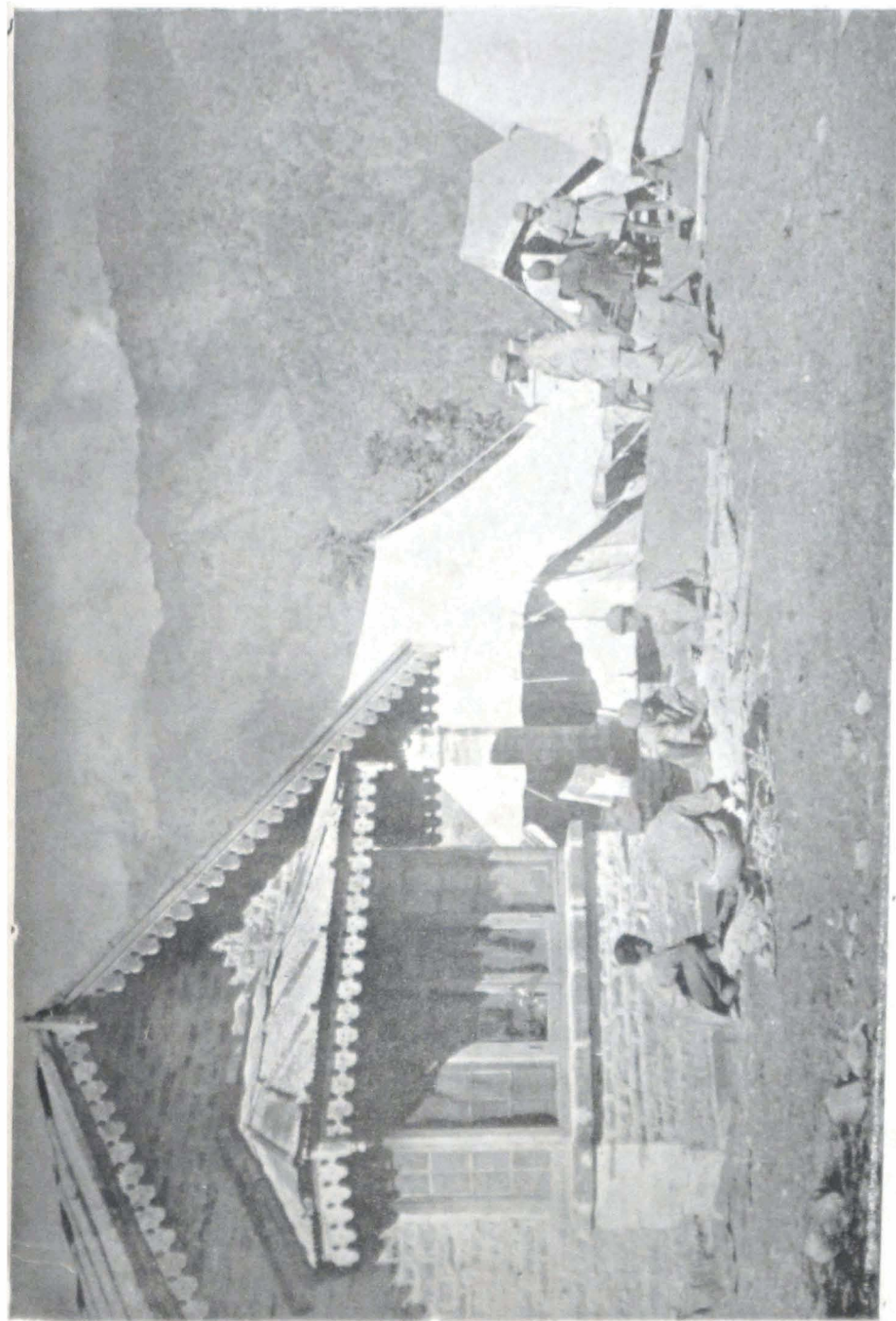
Other necessary articles

Camera, binoculars, dark glasses, walking stick with steel point, Alpine stick, Coil of silk cord, water bottle, hot water bottle, haversack, two waterproof sheets with side holes, basin with leather cover to keep toilet articles, Camp cot.

Stores, Provisions and Drugs

Kerosene oil, sugar, tea, coffee, ovaltine, tinned biscuits, fruits and vegetables, potatoes, onions, dry fruits, good quantity of cheap cigarettes for Dotials. Other articles are locally available. Meat diet is necessary and goats should be bought at Loharkhet and Khati.

A quantity of medicines of every day household use should be carried for emergency for the party and the servants. The following will be of considerable



Pitching the tents at Loharkhet; altitude 5,750 Ft.

help for ordinary ailments to which a human body is subject in the hills :—Quinine Hydrochlor or Bisulphate, Phenacetin Co., Aspro, Cascara Sagrada, Allenbury's Pastilles, Tr. Iodine, Mistol, Chlorodyne, Cosylon Syrup Co., Brandy, Iodex and Antiphlogistine. A few bandages and dressing should also be carried. Salajit—lb. $\frac{1}{2}$ and Musk tola $\frac{1}{2}$ from Bageshwar is always handy.

There are 3 and 2 roomed Dak Bungalows at all the halts but the last one at Phurkia is very small. If one wants to camp higher up in the mountains, one should carry 80 lbs. tent per requirements.

Plenty of small change should be carried as it is difficult to obtain change for coins and currency notes in the villages.

Among the servants two cooks should be included; one to attend to the kitchen and the other to go up to the next camp with the advance party.

When camping, the dotials could be expected on payment of small extra amount, to attend to the bringing of firewood and water.
