



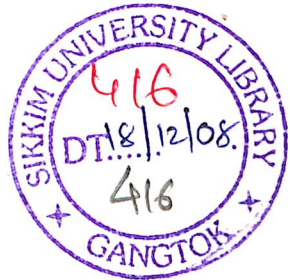
TOURS IN THE HIMALAYA

ACCOUNT OF AN ATTEMPT TO PENETRATE BY BEKHUR TO
GAROO, AND THE LAKE MANASAROWARA

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER GERARDS

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By
CAPTAIN ALEXANDER GERARDS

Being Vol. II of the
'Narrative of a Journey from Caunpoor to
the Boorendo Pass in the Himalaya Mountains'
By William Lloyd & Alexander Gerards

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INTRODUCTION

The Editor takes the liberty of extracting the passages below from some recent letters from Captain Alex. Gerard to him, in order to explain several portions of the following Narrative.

“ You will see that the letters were written on the spot, in a very hurried manner; sometimes after a fatiguing journey of eight or ten hours on my feet, for I had no other conveyance, except once, when I got a pony for nine or ten miles.

“ The whole, with the exception of the notes which I have marked J. G. G., was written by myself, but my brother wished his name to be put down, as he accompanied me part of the way, as

far as Sungla, but he was obliged to leave me on the afternoon of the 23rd of June (1821); so as far as Sungla, 28th June, are letters I wrote to an intimate friend. All the rest were addressed to my brother James at Soobahtoo.

“ From the 23rd June, until I reached Kotgurh, I was entirely alone,

“ I should now say something regarding the heights of the principal places, which you will find somewhat different from those published in the *Calcutta Journal*, but not very much. As my letters were originally written on the spot, I of course had no correspondent observations of the barometer, and I took them as I had found them in former years at Soobahtoo. After my return, I recalculated them from corresponding observations taken by my brothers, Patrick and James, so those I sent are by far the most correct. There is also a difference between my heights and those by Captain Herbert, in vol. 14 of the *Asiatic Researches*, sometimes I believe 300 or 400 feet. This is easily accounted for. In the first place, Herbert had no barometer, whilst I had two of

the very best, by Dollond. Herbert's heights were calculated from the boiling-point of water, a degree of the thermometer being equal to 500 feet, whereas it requires half an inch of the barometer to make that difference. Again, the degrees of the thermometer are so small, that they cannot be minutely subdivided.

“ When Herbert was at Soobahtoo, he made several comparisons between his thermometer and my barometers, and a difference of a degree, and sometimes a degree and a half, in two different trials, even in the space of a few minutes, was no uncommon occurrence. This arose from the difficulty of making the water always boil the same, the least alteration in the state of the fire would make this difference; but you may take down the barometer and put it up again, and there never will be a difference of the two hundredth part of an inch, equivalent to five feet, even if the mercury in the cistern is lowered and readjusted. Besides, Herbert had no correspondent observations, whereas I always had at Soobahtoo or Kotgurh,

or both places. Even Herbert allowed that my heights were more accurate than his, as he was aware that his thermometer could never be compared to my mountain barometers. The differences in the heights in general are very little, and Herbert deserves great credit for getting them so correct with such an instrument.

“ With regard to the latitudes, where our places of encampment were the same, I do not believe the difference ever exceeds more than a few seconds, which is of no consequence, since I have only put them down to single minutes, which is correct enough for most maps. I could give them to seconds were it necessary. The longitudes are different. Mine were reckoned chiefly from Soobahtoo, where I got at least twenty immersions and emersions of Jupiter’s first Satellite, nine occultations, two solar eclipses, and fifty or sixty lunar transits. I also observed satellites on the route, as you will see by the narrative. Herbert’s and my longitudes do not, however, differ more than a couple of miles at most, if so much. It is now

many years since I examined them, so I speak from recollection. When Herbert and I observed at Kotgurh with different telescopes, and different chronometers, each taking his own time, there was never once a single second difference in the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites."

CHAPTER I.

SNOWY PASSES.

Departure from Rol: ascent of Shatool 15,555 feet above the level of the sea: Musquitoes: halt at the Pass: return part of the former route: ascend Sheear Pass: grand Scenery: descend to Jangleeg, crossing the Seepon river: fruitless attempts to induce the people to accompany us to Soondroo Pass.

We left Soobahtoo in the beginning of June 1821, and the first part of the way was travelled expeditiously, that we might have more leisure.

We were well supplied with instruments. We had two perambulators, three theodolites, one of which was by Troughton, divided to 20", a 50-foot chain, a 5-foot standard scale, by Dollond, two

excellent 10-inch sextants, graduated to 10", a Troughton's reflecting circle, and two mountain barometers, by Dollond; these last were of the most improved construction: they had glass cisterns, scales of eighteen inches, which could measure heights of 23,000 feet, and all the necessary adjustments; we had spare tubes, filled and boiled by Dollond, to fit into the frames, thermometers, and several other instruments, besides a capital transit and chronometer. From Soobahtoo to Rol is 101 m. 4 f.

June 6.—Rol is a small division containing five villages, in Chocara, one of the large districts of Busehur; the villages are from 9000 to 9400 feet above the level of the sea, which last is the highest inhabited land in this quarter on the south-western face of the Himalaya; the crops are wheat, barley,* ooa,† p'hapur, and peas;‡ the upper limit of cultivation is 10,000 feet, and the grains frequently do not ripen.

* Barley. *Hordeum hexastychon*.

† Ooa. *Hordeum cæleste*.

‡ P'hapur. *Fagopyrum esculentum*.

Having reduced our baggage, and completed our preparations, we left Rol at 3 P. M., intending to halt at the highest trees; the footpath at first was a gentle ascent upon turf, it then rose rapidly through a beautiful wood of oak, yew, pine, rhododendron, and horse-chestnut, with some beds of juniper; we overtopped the forest by half-past 4, and a mile of good road upon grass brought us to Boochkal Pass, which is the highest limit of forest. The barometer showed 19.465; the temperature of the mercury 63° , and that of the air 51° , answering to an elevation of 11,800 feet; the rest of the way to our camp at a halting-place named Reoonee, on the bank of a rivulet, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Rol, was extremely difficult and tedious, leading amongst piles of loose stones, that seemed to have lately descended from the cliffs above. Our camp was at the height of 11,750 feet, and around were stunted birches, dwarf oaks, pines, and juniper, and two plants resembling rhododendron, one is called talsar* by the natives, and the leaves, when rubbed, emit a strong aromatic smell;

* Talsar. *Rhododendron aromaticum* ?

plenty of thyme and cowslips flourished in a moist, black, rich turf, not unlike peat, which might probably burn well when dry.

June 7.—Water froze, and at sunrise the thermometer was 35° . The road to Shatool makes a bend to the eastward, and as we had travelled it before, we struck across the ridge to see if we could discover any thing new. We ascended the verdant slope of a grassy glen, decorated with odoriferous flowers, the summer abode of shepherds and their flocks; we passed many rills trickling amongst turf, and at half-past eight halted in the chilly recess of a huge granitic rock, near a rivulet, arrested in its precipitous course by frost; after observing the thermometer, which was 45° , we proceeded alternately through snow-beds and swamps. The snow became more frequent till we attained the crest of the ridge, where it is continuous at this season, although next month it will be dissolved; here the barometer was 18.320, and the temperature of the air 42° , equal to an elevation of 13,450 feet; from this spot we descended upon angular fragments of gneiss, granite, and

quartz, jumbled together in wild disorder; every step was dangerous and fatiguing, and we were somewhat tired when we reached our halting-place at Kunneejan, a distance of only 5 miles. Our guides started objections to our proceeding further to-day, so we indulged them in their own wishes. The height of this place is 13,400 feet, and the ground is but seldom seen at this season, there being much snow around, and in the bed of the Undretee River, one of the branches of the Pubur, which rises near Shatool. There was no want of many various beautiful flowers where the snow had melted, but there were no bushes, and the fire-wood was brought from the last camp.

From this spot the piles of stones at the Pass, now half buried in snow, were clearly visible, and the great eastern peak, named Dunerko, had a formidable appearance; the ascent seemed no less appalling, for the crest was nearly 2200 feet above us, and the angle seldom under 25° ; here and there a solitary rock projected its black head, but all else was a dreary waste of unfathomable snow, aching to the sight. To the E. and S. E. was

seen a low part of the Himalayan Chain. Its altitude is considerably less than Shatool, but it is rendered impassable by a perpendicular wall of gneiss, that forms an impracticable barrier for several miles. During the day the thermometer did not rise above 43° , and at sun-set it was 34° .

June 8.—At day-break we heard, as we had often done before, at these elevations, the sound of the wings of large flocks of pheasants, passing to the southward over our heads; these birds live at the edge of the snow in general, and come lower down as it descends; in winter they are rarely seen under 6000 feet; there are many species, amongst which are the Golden and Argos Pheasant.

At sun-rise the thermometer was 29° , and the ground frozen hard; at this time, and for an hour afterwards, we observed the shadow of the eastern peak of the Pass, projected upon the sky in a beautiful black streak.

By the advice of the guides we did not move till half-past nine, as they said we should otherwise find it difficult, from slipping, to ascend the

snow-bed before the sun's rays had melted the upper surface.

We reached the crest a little past eleven, distant two miles and a half, and the ascent, although laborious, was easier than we expected, for the snow generally sunk two inches, and afforded good footing, so we had to cut steps in but few places. The barometer, during our halt here, ranged from 17.040 to 17.120, and the thermometer from 24° to 41° , which, compared with correspondent observations at Soobahtoo, gives 15,556 feet for the height of this pass; the barometers used were those by Dollond, and it is worthy of remark, that the height now deduced is only two feet more than what my brother James made it last year by barometers of our own construction.

We were astonished to find the snow completely covered with an insect resembling a musquito. They were in a state of torpidity, and we thought them dead; but breathing upon them caused them to jump about, and the sunshine revived them.

The rocks here are chiefly mica-slate and gneiss,

with some granite; the direction of the strata is almost perpendicular to that of the range, which forms a series of inclined planes sloping to the E. and E. S. E., at an angle of from ten to twenty degrees with the horizon. In some places the stones are pure mica, yielding easily to the hatchet, so by clearing away the snow, and cutting the mica, we got a place for our small tent.

This was the first camp that was ever pitched here, and we were the first people who visited Shatool this year, indeed nobody had crossed the pass since September last, when my brother James effected the passage with great difficulty, and lost two of his servants, who were frozen to death at mid-day; we found the body of one in October, about a month afterwards, and that of the other was discovered eight or ten months later.

Strange to say, our servants, inhabitants of the hot plains of India, were the only people who would remain with us; our hill-porters, and even the guides, who were constantly in the habit of crossing these mountains, went down to pass the night in a sheltered ravine, two miles beyond our former

camp. We had plenty of fire-wood, so we detained ten of our servants with us, and as we could not keep a fire in the tent without being incommoded with the smoke, we regaled ourselves with the hookah, cherry-brandy, and rum-punch, to keep out the cold.

June 9.—At sun-rise the thermometer was eight degrees below the freezing-point; we slept but little during the night from headaches and difficulty of breathing, and the chilling wind whistled through the tent, and kept us in constant alarm lest it should come down; for the ropes were indifferently secured, by a few short iron pins (the only ones that would penetrate the rocks), and some stones to which the ropes were tied.

We found some mosses on the few rocks, and saw several birds like ravens and linnets. Here, as at all lofty Passes, there are piles of stones erected by travellers, to propitiate the Deotas or Spirits of the mountains. This evening we had a smart shower of snow.

June 10.—The thermometer was 26° at sun-

rise. We marched at half-past eight, and in an hour reached our former camp at Kunneejan, having slid down upon the snow beds a considerable part of the way. We proceeded down the dell of the Undretee, crossing the stream frequently by arches of snow, and passing over the ruins of recent avalanches, we gathered some leeks in full bloom, at 12,000 feet. The first bushes we met with were the Talsar, or Aromatic Rhododendron; these were succeeded by birches, oaks, pines, horse-chestnuts, and roses; at noon we reached the lowest point of the road, where the barometer marked 20.010 or 11,000 feet, hence the path ascended very steeply through a thick tangled wood, it was often rugged, and sometimes tedious, from our slipping back several feet upon the dry leaves of the pine; at 2 P. M., we encamped on a pleasant spot at the height of 12,300 feet, just above the limit of forest, on the bank of a rivulet named Deengroo, which rushes down a steep declivity of a single rock in a flood of sparkling spray. The distance from Shatool is seven miles.

The ground is a rich sward, cut up into

innumerable grooves, by a large kind of field-rat, without a tail.*

There was a shower of sleet and snow in the evening, but it did not lie on the ground. Our halting-place at Reoonee, across the Undretee, was visible; there the range is grassy, has a gentle slope, and there is little snow; on this side of the river the mountains are precipitous, showing large portions of naked rock; this is the case with all the Himalayan valleys, the face exposed to the N. W., being invariably rugged, and the opposite one shelving, and it may be remarked that the roads to the most frequented passes are on the gentle declivity.

We found the leeks pretty well tasted, but they would have been better had they been younger.

June 11.—At sunrise the thermometer was 35° , and water froze.

We marched at nine, and had a laborious ascent of a mile and a half; the path was very steep, and crossed several snow-beds, inclined at an angle of 20° or 30° . Here we were obliged to

* Spalax. (Mus typhlus?)

cut steps with a hatchet, which delayed us much ; the next mile was less dangerous, but fully as tiresome ; it led amongst gigantic oblong blocks of mica-slate and gneiss, disengaged from the impending crags that frowned above us ; the latter part of the way to Shear Ghat was better, and it rose gently upon snow and turf. This Pass is 13,720 feet by barometer. The ground here is plain for about 100 feet. It is a swampy turf, sinking some inches. From this spot the prospect is extensive ; towards the Plains on the S. W., appeared the Choor mountain, 12,143 feet by barometer ; on the east the flanks of Boorendo, but not the Pass itself ; and to the S. E., snowy summits of immense altitude in the direction of Jumnoutree, rose one above another, in majestic disorder, presenting mountains of perpetual snow towering to the clouds. The source of the Pubur at the foot of Goonas Pass was visible, and beyond it one of the huge Ruldung peaks, upwards of 21,000 feet ; across the Pubur to the S. E. is the Chasheel range, through which are several Passes between 13,000 and 14,000 feet ; below us were

seen dark forests of oak and pine, and still further down, the villages of Rol and Jangleeg, with their green meadows and crops, interspersed with horse-chestnuts in bloom. From Sheear we descended upon soil, grass, and turf, and at the limit of forest we observed the barometer 19.560, equal to 11,800 feet; this is the general height of trees on the southern face of the Himalaya; the northern slope is not so steep, and has more soil, which is for the most part formed of decayed vegetables; it is better wooded than the southern declivity, and the trees extend higher. Three miles of a gentle descent, through a stately wood of tall oaks and pines, brought us to Tangno, a small district comprising five villages; we passed abundance of thyme, strawberries, raspberries, nettles, thistles, and other European plants. The height of this place is 8800 feet, and the houses are shaded by horse-chestnuts, walnuts, and apricots.

We wished to visit Soondroo Pass, and although we promised a large present if the guides would conduct us to the first snow-bed, nobody would

consent. After stopping some time, we marched at 5 P. M., and in an hour reached Jangleeg, 9200 feet; we descended 600 feet to the Seepon, and thence ascended 900 feet. At the union of the Seepon and Pubur, the streams are of considerable size; they are pent up between crags nearly perpendicular, overhung by oaks and pines, most part of whose roots are bare; the declivity of the land is very great, and the torrents dash with extreme fury over rocks, and exhibit nothing but a sheet of white foam. On our arrival we sent for the most intelligent people to inquire about Soondroo and Yoosoo Passes, they told us that the inhabitants of Tangno only were in the habit of crossing them; we made large promises if they would show us the way, but to no purpose; we called other people, and received the same answer, and after collecting almost every body in the place we dismissed them, as it was very late: shortly afterwards two of them returned, and on condition of receiving a handsome reward, said, they would conduct us to Yoosoo, but they would

not visit Soondroo upon any account. You shall have a description of Yoosoo in my next from Boorendo Pass, where we intend to halt a couple of days. Distance travelled to-day, $11\frac{3}{4}$ miles.

Camp, Jangleeg, 12th June, 1821.