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A Trip to the Himalayas

(By Rev. Homer Wroten, in the 'Presbyterian Banner.')
There are many reasons why Europeans and Americans living in India desire to get a vacation in the hills and moun-

tains during the hot season. Of course, the first and principal one is to escape a few weeks of intense heat. Seven months of withering heat, with little variation of temperature, thins the blood, takes away energy and ambition, ruins the appetite. Sleepless nights and sweltering days soon take the tint from the most rosy cheeks, and make the least exertion a burden. And then the plains are plains indeed, with not even the variation of the most level western prairie. The rivers move very sluggishly for hundreds of miles. Railways can be built, in some places, for 500 miles without cut or fill. Not many English speaking people can tolerate the monotony of such a landscape without a keen desire to see something resembling their native hills.

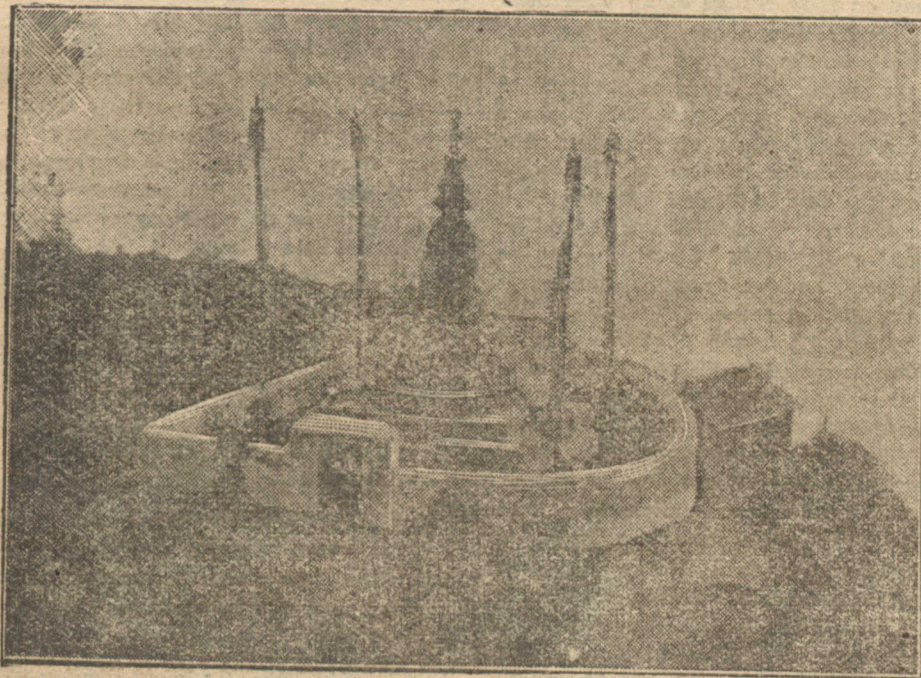
The Himalayan mountain range runs across northern India, east and west, and a line dropped due south from Darjeeling, the mountain resort nearest Mt. Everest, would reach Calcutta in about 500 miles. I started for Darjeeling, or a small station not far from it, May 17, intending to remain two or three weeks. The trip to the heights is worth the time and money of any sightseer, no matter of what he may boast of having seen before. I never shall forget the impression made upon my weary brain and body with the first sight of the awful grandeur of that mountain range. I had ridden all night through the stuffy atmosphere of the lowlands, and, with the breaking of the morning a whiff of mountain air came through my open car window. I fancy it was like the sound of chariot wheels to a Roman charger, or the smell of blood to a famishing tiger. That cool, balmy, fragrant

breeze sent a tingling sensation along my nerves, thrilling me through and through. A little later, when the rugged peaks burst into view, I could have cried for joy. To anyone unfamiliar with such an experience, it is altogether indescribable. It is strange, but true, that where the

to the desired elevation. The little carriages seat but twelve persons. The sides are open, to allow free view, so that baggage needs careful attention, or it may take a header over the precipice, saying good-bye to the traveller forever. It is one step only from the seat to the ground, and the speed is often so slow that lads along the way jump on and ride until driven off. The miniature engine screams with all the vehemence of a larger breed, and starts off puffing with all the brag-gadocio of a Mogul.

Slowly we rattle along into the jungle, and cut again into the sunshine, curving this way and turning that, until the train, like a cat, seems to be playing with its own tail; round and round some hill-top like a spiral, and then turning off across a gorge above its lower path to an adjoining hill; up, up the mountain side, and sometimes stopping to back up a grade, and again make a new start from a higher point, forming the letter 'z'—right up into the clouds and into the cool air. Starting with thinnest coat, soon a heavier one is necessary, until, finally, an overcoat is not at all uncomfortable. For someone more familiar with botany and natural history than I am this trip would give ample material for a book. The variety in flora and fauna is noticeable even to a novice like myself. Flowers and plants and trees, animals and birds and insects, all change.

As I ramble about the mountains I am forced to chide myself often for not having studied plant and animal life more



A THIBETAN TOMB IN THE HIMALAYAS

plain ends the mountains begin. The change is quite abrupt.

One of the most daring and skilful engineering feats is the little narrow-gauge railway from Siliguri, the last station on



A LOOP OF THE NARROW GAUGE ROAD ON THE HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS.

the plains, to Darjeeling—about 7,000 feet above sea-level. In about forty miles this grade of nearly 7,000 feet is made. The whole affair looks like a toy, but it succeeds in getting passengers and freight

thoroughly. Ferns of all descriptions grow everywhere in the dense shade on the mountain sides—even the fern tree, which is just now very beautiful with its new season canopy. Mosses and li-