

EXTRACT FROM

A TOUR IN THE HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS,

EAST INDIES.

BY J. C. H.

CHENESE IN KOONAWUR,
July 18, 1843.

* * * * * We left Siala on the 17th of June; our first two marches were through the valley of the Giree, which, being low, we found very hot, and enjoyed our bath in the evening, watching with some interest the numerous monkeys descending to drink, and envied the ease with which they accomplished the most precipitous ascent. Our next march was one of fourteen miles, the first eight of which still ascent—then gradual descent. We should have found this dreadfully fatiguing, had not the lofty and beautiful mountains of forest and grass attracted so much of our attention. All these stages were the residences of hill chiefs—immense wooden buildings, that at one time must have been most stately, as well from their elaborate carvings as from their secluded and romantic situations. The next five marches were through the valley of the Pabur; most beautiful, wild and romantic was the scenery in many parts; every stage brought us higher, and thus it became cooler. We crossed the Sepun close to its junction with the Pabur. I stood for some time on the loose bridge of spars, to admire the magnificent grandeur of the scene, where the two rivers meeting with a stunning roar, at one point displayed a perfect bed of foam, dashing with unresisting fury, and heedless rapidity, against the hidden and encompassed rocks, and whirling their snowy spray to a height of many feet; the mountains rose almost perpendicularly to a towering height, presenting a profile, rough, rugged and irregular, nearly concealed by jutting pines and creepers. Our encampment was sometimes under huge old horse chesnut trees, with their luxuriant blossoms just arriving at maturity. On the 23th we started for Settee, where there is no village but a bungalow, built by Lady William Bentinck for travellers. We found it, however, roofless—consequently, uninhabitable. For some distance we passed through a pine forest; then over grass-covered hills of great extent. It was like walk-

ing through corn-fields at home, the grass being from one to two feet in height; there was a fine view of the Borenda pass, over the snowy range; the mountains around, especially the northern face, are in many places thickly covered with snow, and rise up in sharp peaks to an immense height. At some distance from us on the opposite side of the valley, on a ravine filled up with snow, we observed a black spot which appeared to be moving, and on applying my spy-glass, to our great joy discovered it to be a huge black bear. We drew the shot from our guns, and loaded them with ball, and having got directly opposite, took up a station on this side of the valley, at a distance of about two hundred and fifty or three hundred yards from him. Seeing, however, that he had not altered his position, but was still walking backwards and forwards on the snow, we determined to get within lesser range, so descended to and crossed the Pabur by a bridge of snow; with some difficulty we climbed up the other side, and managed to get within one hundred yards of the bear, a perfect monster, by far the largest I had ever seen. Apparently having perceived us, he was making large strides to gain a small wood close at hand; from this spot we might have had capital shots, but were determined not to lose so great a prize by any undue precipitation. Now, to tell the plain, honest truth, at that time I would rather have taken deliberate shot from the other side of the valley, than to have gone under the very nose of a brute that I had never before seen in a wild state, especially as we happened to be on ground where he would have the decided advantage of us in every way; but as H. was with me, and being also well armed—he with a double-barrelled gun, and I with a single one and a rifle, we determined to proceed. On therefore, we trudged, and a truly difficult and slippery task we found it. We saw the bear enter the wood, whither we followed him, having to cross a huge ravine, blocked up by snow, in a horizontal direction. H. found it so difficult and slippery that twice he fell, and slid down a distance of twenty feet; but