

one, but on the whole it must be said that the function was a great success and made a vivid impression on the minds of the audience. The Principal in a nice little speech congratulated the students on their organising and managing the whole affair so well within such a short time. The closing song over, the proceedings came to a close at 10 P.M. with a vote of thanks to the chair.

A STUDENT.

### BOTANICAL EXCURSION TO DARJEELING.

Our party consisting of the B. A. & B. Sc. students of Botany started on a botanical excursion on the 15th April at 3-24 P.M. by the Assam Mail with Prof. Anutosh Das-Gupta. Our revered Principal gladly paid all our passage to and from Darjeeling. We had scarcely travelled an hour when we were overtaken by a severe rain-storm, and some of us got badly wet in the carriage. But the weather cleared up again very soon, and the refreshing effect of the rain was greatly appreciated. Owing perhaps to the oscillation of the train, or having nothing to do we felt hungry a little too soon, and partook of a sumptuous tiffin. Towards evening the train passed roaring over the great Sara Bridge which some of us had not seen before. The bridge is one and one-eighth miles in length, and is regarded as one of the finest feats of engineering skill in the annals of the Indian railways. We are told that at high flood level about two and a half million cubic feet of water pass under it at every second. On both sides of the river we noticed large tracts of the sand-banks covered with acacias. At Parbatipur Junction the broad-gauge ceased, and we changed for the Siliguri train. We found tea and refreshments at the stall, and some of us refilled the empty spaces in their stomach. Some friends who used the tap

for washing their hands and face experienced a burning sensation in the eyes. The more learned amongst us scientifically suggested that it was due to contamination by the berries of *Capsicum frutescens* contained in the curries of *Solanum tuberosum* producing an irritation of the conjunctiva of the visual organs. So they turned round and cautioned the vendor against using large quantities of chillies in the potato-curries. It was past midnight, and darkness prevailed on all sides. Our station which was powerfully lighted shone like a beautiful planet in the dark chaos. By this time we noticed how the half-shaded moon and Jupiter, the giant planet, both situated in Capricornus ( *বকর রাশি* ), were rising slowly above the eastern horizon; and looking up in the sky we recognised Saturn situated in Libra, reflecting a reddish tint of light, and very much resembling Arcturus ( *স্বাতী নক্ষত্র* ), the brightest star in Bootes. All these were clearly visible in the heavens, and we have a vivid recollection of this hour at Parbatipur Junction. We slept comfortably in the train unconscious of the nature's change as the night passed into the day. When we woke up early in the morning we were delighted to see the great Himalayan range greeting us at a distance. We reached Siliguri at 5-20 A.M., and hurriedly secured our seats in a miniature train that was in waiting for us, and all our luggage was placed in the brake-van. At Sukna the train began to ascend the hills winding its way through forests of *Shorea robusta* interspersed with trees, shrubs, and climbers unknown or less seen in the plains. Acacias, rattans, buteas, cotton trees, sterculias, figs, terminalias, pandanus, and tall bamboos were some of the familiar plants we noticed among a host of other unknown trees and lianes forming impenetrable wildernesses. As the train rose higher and higher we noticed a gradual alteration in the character of the vegetation and dense forest-trees covered with pendulous mosses, lichens, and epiphytes up to the top. At times the train passed over dizzy precipices and we looked out of the carriage to see the bottoms of deep gorges with a thrill of fear and pleasure; sometimes it entered a dense

cloud anon again passed into clear weather ; and the cloud-effects on the peaks above, slopes around, and gorges below, were an imposing sight. A friend unable to suppress his emotions exclaimed that we were travelling towards the abode of gods and were already in the cloud-land. At Kurseong a frugal friend shared with us excellent sweatmeat which he had carefully saved on the previous night, and Bhutia women who were vending tea and 'pan' supplied us hot tea in brass bowls. In the physiognomy of these hill-people a Chinese element was clearly in evidence, and it was conjectured that the same might also be true in the physiognomy of the local flora. And all were agreed that a botanical excursion to China might correctly solve this problem. We noticed beautiful specimens of the Himalayan tree-ferns 15-20 ft high at an elevation of about 5000 ft. From Sonada to Goom the road was enveloped in dense fog, and our train was detained for an hour owing to derailment of an engine. Our young excursionists alighted and gathered some clusters of small white flowers from shrubs which were identified as *Spireae corymbosa*, beautiful Chinese plants now very common in Darjeeling. We reached Darjeeling at 2-30 P.M. Our luggage was carried by female coolies on their backs. Two of our party went to the L. J. Sanitarium, where they had booked their seats in advance, and the rest preferred to put up at the National Hindu Boarding House where no hard and stringent rules would interfere with our liberty. The proprietor and his employees were all attention to us, and we were highly pleased with their courtesy and exceedingly obliging manners. The young tourists occupied a spacious room commanding a splendid view of the snows, and our professor lived in a separate room. For the first few days we thought very little of collection, and visited all places of interest. The weather was very fine, and the temperature was found to be 59° F when a reading was taken. We walked uphill and downhill all day long stopping for breath every now and then, and explored all roads and lanes we came across at Darjeeling. Some friends took to ponies

for a jolly-ride along the hill-side with the syce running about the neck of the horse as a safe-guard against accidents; and some hired bicycles and rode to Lebong to see the parade ground which we had spied through glasses from Observatory Hill. Some friends in the hope of quickly improving in health took buns, biscuits, bread, butter and bananas with their tea, and also one or two ray eggs which appeared to be somewhat smaller than we take at home. We visited Observatory Hill from the top of which we obtained a magnificent view of the stupendous snowy range of the mighty Himalayas extending from east to west; and towering over many snow-capped peaks rose the lofty peak of Kangchenjunga which, bathed in the early rays of the sun, displayed all colours of the rainbow. It was a majestic sight, too grand to describe, and for ever imperishable from the memory. We accompanied our Professor to the Lloyd Botanic Garden from day to day to study the large collection of indigenous and exotic plants, and made use of the Herbarium. We are very thankful to the Curator who was very kind to us, and helped us whenever his help was sought. We are also thankful to the Overseer who showed us round the garden and helped us in many ways. Some of our important collections can be referred to the following orders which are not widely distributed in the plains:—Ranunculaceae, Magnoliaceae, Berberidaceae, Pittosporae, Hypericaceae, Ternstroemiaceae, Geraniaceae, Cornaceae, Caprifoliaceae, Vaccinieae, Styraceae, Cupiferae, Betulaceae, Rosaceae, Ericaceae, Gesneraceae, Primulaceae, Boraginaceae, Salicineae, Buxaceae, Onagraceae, and Myrsinaceae.

We have no space to mention our plants in details, and their scientific names would be perplexing to many of our readers. We went for our collection upto Ghoom, Sanchal, and Tiger Hill, and picked up numerous specimens along the road-side. On the slopes of Sanchal we penetrated deep in the primaeval forests abounding in oaks and magnolias, with an undergrowth of sub-tropical vegetation; but a forest-officer cautioned us against further exploration as these solitary places were the favourite haunts of wild boars. We also

collected plants from Jalapahar, Katapahar, and from both sides of the Cart Road upto Birch Hill ; and engaged Bhutia boys to collect alluring plants growing upon steep mountain-sides ; and all our specimens were carefully identified. There was a profusion of flowers every where in Darjeeling, and rhododendrons white, pink, and red were in full bloom. Each of our tourists had a list of such plants in his pocket-book. While climbing mountains our Professor never cried halt or ordered a retreat except when his juvenile companions complained of hunger and thirst, or when all were drenched in rain : he was active and nimble and climbed dizzy heights for the sake of plants. After the day's hard work we invariably met at the Mall which attracted all visitors in the evening. Ladies and gentlemen, young and old, lean and corpulent, swift-footed and staggering, all came here to breathe the bracing mountain-breezes charged with ozone, and ever and anon became invisible in the mist. Some Bengalee ladies excelled their European sisters not only in the smartness of their dress but also in the art of riding in the hills. We met friends we had known before, and it was a pleasure to see familiar faces amid strange surroundings. The night-view of Darjeeling with the myriads of lamps burning in the terraces of the hills, was reminiscent of our lamp-festival and could be best obtained from a vantage ground near Government House. Our visit to Darjeeling attracted the notice of all people ; and the simpler folks wondered what we might do with plants that possessed no beauty or fragrance. We returned to Calcutta with a visible glow of health in our cheeks as our friends observed, but the congestion of blood in the face was quickly relieved by the increased atmospheric pressure in the plain.

ONE OF THE TOURISTS.

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