

One of the most picturesque portions of the colossal chain of the Himalaya is the district of Sikkim, which lies in the shadow of Kanchinjinga. In this surprising region are combined the most majestic contrasts. Glaciers roll their slowly-moving masses above the realms of snow; lower down, the roaring torrents sink, lost to sight in profound abysses; still lower, through a leafy screen of magnolias, calm lakes spread out their glassy waters in the midst of emerald-green pastures, tenanted by the small Tibetan cow, and of fertile valleys, inhabited by pastoral mountaineers. Kanchinjinga rears its crest fully 21,200 feet above the table-land of Dorjeeling, which is itself some 6800 feet above the level of the sea. In the landscape placed before the reader, in Figure 66, the Kanchinjinga rises conspicuously sublime; on the left he will notice the great torrent Rungeit, which precipitates itself into a deep gulf.

The most eloquent pen, says the eminent botanist, Dr. J. W. Hooker, the most skilful pencil, are equally powerless to place before the eye the forms and colours of these snowy mountains, or to excite in the imagination the sensations and the thoughts which such sublime phenomena at once arouse when developed in their reality. Nothing can render the precision and sharpness of their lines, and still less the marvellous effects of the hues playing on the snowy slopes, the luminous masses formed by the combinations of orange, gold, and crimson, the clouds illumined by the sunset, and finally the fantastic tint with which everything is clothed at the moment of twilight.

The most impressive characteristic of the Himalaya is the breadth of its mountain-system, the vast area which it occupies. In the Alps, the summits are disposed in narrow belts, the valleys are open as the plains; here, on the contrary, the whole chain bristles with peaks, it is an irregular and capricious labyrinth of black pinnacles, of precipitous chasms, and of glaciers which intersect each other in every direction. Sometimes we meet with summits cut horizontally like a table, or undulating crests which intercross and combine in irregular