

JUNGLE LIFE IN INDIA;

OR THE

JOURNEYS AND JOURNALS

OF AN

INDIAN GEOLOGIST.

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"Calum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt."

HORACE.

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CHAPTER VI

SECTION I.

BIRBHUM, RAJMAHAL HILLS, BHAGULPUR.

1869-70.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SEASON'S WORK—START FOR RANIGUNJ—MARCH IN COMPANY WITH A COLLEAGUE.—ROCKS AT DUBRAJPUR—OBSTRUCTION BY POLICE—SURI, THE CAPITAL OF BIRBHUM—TUNGSULI COAL-BASIN—MAHOMED BAZAAR IRON-WORKS—NATIVE IRON-FURNACES AT DEOCHA—THE RAJMAHAL AND RAMGURH HILLS—PROGRAMME OF OPERATIONS—VALLEY OF THE BRAHMINI—THE SONTALS—HINDU MONEY-LENDERS—WOLVES—WILD ELEPHANTS—THE LAST RHINOCEROS—REST-HOUSES—SCENERY ROUND MUSUNIA—MAL PAHARIAS—SPEAR GRASS—USUL PAHARIAS, OR MALÉS—TRAP FOR PIGS AND PEA-FOWL—MHOWA-GURHI HILL—SICKNESS IN CAMP—VISIT CALCUTTA FOR CHRISTMAS—BIRDS COLLECTED—THE IMPERIAL PIGEON—PACHWARA PASS—TROPICAL VEGETATION—ALEXANDRINE PAROQUET—PAHARIA VILLAGE—INTOXICATED SONTALS—THE SWINGING FESTIVAL—DESCRIPTION OF THE SONTALS—ALBINO—MEET THE ASSISTANT-COMMISSIONER—HYÆNA AND CUBS—BEAT FOR TIGER—VALLEY OF THE GUMANI—KHARMATAND—COLUMNAR BASALT AT TELOBAD—PAHARIA ORGIE—COAL-MEASURES DISAPPEAR—OLD VOLCANO—MUNJWA PASS—SIGNS OF HOT SEASON—FOSSIL PLANTS—PAHARIA LANGUAGE—FIRST VIEW OF GANGES—OPEN COUNTRY TO THE EAST—IMPROVED CULTIVATION—CAMP VISITED BY A TIGER—COLGONG—ROCKY ISLANDS—CHANGES IN THE BED OF THE GANGES—PATHARGHATA—HINDU TEMPLES—FOOT PASSENGERS TO CALCUTTA—INDICATIONS OF A CHANGE IN THE FLORA—PINK-HEADED DUCK—SAHIBGUNJ—MY SANITY DISCUSSED—MAHARAJPUR FALL—HINDU FESTIVAL—SUPPOSED COAL-SEAM—DUCK AND PARTRIDGES—BUFFALOES AND TIGER—ZAMIN MUSJID—TALJHERI MISSION SETTLEMENT—UDWANALA—SKIMMERS—STONE QUARRIES—SCENERY NEAR BHAWA—ROAD-MAKING—A BURNT CHILD—BURHAIT—MAHADEO'S CAVE-TEMPLE—HINDUISM AND THE ABORIGINES—THE NATHS—WATERFALL—LUKRA-GURH—BEHURS—GREAT HEAT—SONTAL FESTIVALS—MHOWA CROP—TEPID SPRING—TIGER TRAP—NORTH-WESTERS—CALCAREOUS TUPA—JUNGLE THIN AT THIS SEASON—THE PARADISE FLY-CATCHER—YELLOW-BREASTED GROUND-THRUSH—THEFT IN CAMP—“JOE” IS LOST—BEAT FOR GAME—LEAVE SONTALIA BEHIND—RETURN TO CALCUTTA.

My instructions for this season included the revision of old work done in former years by the Geological Survey in the Sontal Purgunas,* more particularly in the Rajmahal Hills,

* The nearest English equivalent to a Purguna is a Barony, a Zilla corresponding to a county.

placed upon it by the Birbhum Company which bought up the sole right to manufacture, and owing also to the royalty subsequently inflicted by the native landlord. To the best of my belief these furnaces are, for their size and the magnitude of their results, by far the largest and most important in the whole of India. Each furnace could make about 15 cwt. of iron per week; and the total estimated out-turn in 1852 from seventy of these furnaces was put down at 1700 tons by Dr. Oldham. The Lohars or iron-makers here were Hindus; but further to the north, in the vicinity of the Ramgurh Hills, there is another race of iron-makers, who use the ordinary small furnaces, and are called Kols. It is probable that they are identical with the Aguriahhs of Hazaribagh and Palamow, whom I shall describe on a future page.

November 20th.—Sydachatore to Dhurumpur.—I was now daily engaged in examining the sections of the south-west corner of the hilly country which extends from the Dwarka river northwards for 170 miles, to the Ganges at Sahibgunj. These highlands may collectively be spoken of as the Rajmahal hills; but a portion of them, situated south of the Brahmini river, should properly be distinguished as the Ramgurh Hills. This division is, as I shall subsequently explain, coincident with an ethnical distribution.

My programme was to march northwards to the Ganges, along the western margin of the hills, branching off from that direction where the existence of valleys and passes cut by rivers from west to east yield opportunities for obtaining cross sections of the central plateau portion; and then, having rounded the hills on the north, to return southwards along the eastern margin.

November 22nd.—Panchbaini.—The first pass, of the nature just described, was that through the valley of the Brahmini river. The floor of this valley is formed of the coal-measures in which there are several coal-seams of inferior value, though worked in former times. These coal-measures are overlaid by a group of coarse sandstones in certain places; and these again, unconformably by vast sheets of basaltic trap, with which thin beds of mud-stones alternate, and often afford

to obtain seed in some years when without such aid no cultivation could take place.

It is easy to condemn the authorities for this state of things, but it is very much less easy to suggest a practical remedy. A law or laws for the recovery of debt which may, in the abstract, be just, will not meet the case. An executive, however strong in numbers, if compelled, as it must necessarily be, to employ a subordinate native staff, which is sure to be corrupt and bribable by the richest party, is clearly incapable of dealing with millions of ignorant victims, who themselves are unlikely to take the initiative and come forward to state their cases. Within the last decade, the unrest of the Sontals and other tribes has, in different parts of India, been the cause of special and local legislation, with the merits of which the political economist and jurist are alone competent to deal.

The hospitality of the Sontals which touched me was the spontaneous way in which they would bring in, often from a distance, without being asked—one man a couple of eggs, another a jar of milk, another an ounce of ghi, sometimes on presentation simply saying the word *khao* (eat). Even my servants, who were not endowed with any unusual fineness of feeling, were often struck by this simplicity, and instead of dealing with the contributions in the ordinary way, would bring the bearers to my tent in order that they might have the gratification of making the present in person. With many of them, I believe, it was the case of the widow's mite; yet not unfrequently they would refuse to receive a return present of any kind, saying that what they did was out of respect for the Sirkar or Government.

Close to Panchbaini I saw a couple of wolves; but met with no others during my trip. Indeed, the hunting proclivities of the various races in this region have almost resulted in the extermination of all wild animals. Strangely enough, however, there were two wild elephants living somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Brahmini, as I frequently came upon their tracks, but they appeared to be great wanderers, in consequence probably of

the rarity of cover sufficiently dense for their concealment. They were the sole existing representatives of the herds of elephants, which, as is described by the author of the "Annals of Rural Bengal," * committed serious devastations in Birbhum. Having mentioned the injury and loss caused by tigers in the years 1789-90, Dr. Hunter writes:—"The ravages of the wild elephants were on a larger scale, and their extermination formed one of the most important duties of the Collector for some time after the district passed directly under British rule. In two parishes alone during the last few years of the native administration, fifty-six villages with their communal lands 'had all been destroyed and gone to jungle, caused by the depredations of the wild elephants.' And an official return states that forty market towns throughout the district had been deserted from the same cause." At no very distant period the rhinoceros occurred in the vicinity of these hills, but there are none to be found south of the Ganges at the present day.

November 24th.—Mosunia.—A custom prevails within the limits of the Daman-i-Koh which I have not met with in any other part of India. It consists in the erection near the larger villages of thatched bungalows with mud walls, to the repair and support of which the Sontals of the surrounding circle of villages contribute labour and materials. These rude bungalows are intended as rest-houses for officers on tour. I often found them fairly comfortable, and occupied them as a change from the monotony of a tent. Not unfrequently, however, they were tenanted by swarms of wasps and hornets, whose nests rested on or hung from the uncovered beams of the roof. But Indian wasps are much less pugnacious and vindictive insects than their English representatives, and I never knew them to sting except under great provocation.

Before taking leave of the hilly region south of the Brahmini river, it will be convenient here to state that the Ramgurh hills, as

* First Edition, p. 66.

CHAPTER XIII.

SECTION I.

ORISSA, SAMBALPUR, PATNA, KARIAL.

1876-77.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SEASON'S OPERATIONS—VOYAGE TO CUTTACK—FALSE POINT—ORISSA CANALS—FIRST MARCH—UNINVITED CAMP-FOLLOWERS—BANKI—CLIMATE OF ORISSA—JUGERNATH PILGRIMS—TOPSIE RESCUED FROM A LEOPARD—BARMUL PASS—ANOTHER LEOPARD—FOREST SCENERY—SALT CARTS—SUPERINTENDENT OF GURJAT POLICE—HOT SPRINGS AND TEMPLES—BÔD—THE GRASSCUTTER'S CASTE—THE URIAS—SONPUR—THE RAJA AND THE DELHI DURBAR—BINKA—MEET THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF SAMBALPUR—BEHREN—SCHOOL—BURPALI—DANCING BOYS—JACKALS—DUCK—BEAT FOR GAME—HEARS AND JACKALS AMONG THE SUGAR-CANES—PART FROM MY COMPANION—MADRASSI SERVANT—PATNA RAJA—PATHAN SETTLER, HIS LIFE AND ADVENTURES—KABUL POLITICS—BOLANGIR—DUCKS—TEMPLES—THE TEHSILDAR—BEATS FOR GAME—SHOOT A TIGER—KABUL MERCHANTS—ATHGAON—SHOOT A LEOPARD—DIAGAON—SOINTILA—DURAMGURH—WILD BUFFALO—THE GAONTIA A THAUMATURGIST—GRAPHITE—LAPIR—MONDOL—BRAHMIN BEATERS—SHOOT A SAMBAR—CASTE—GUMANI—GRAPHITE—TOADS IN A HOLE—ESCAPE OF THE ELEPHANTS—GUNDAMURDAN RANGE—LATERITE—NURSINGHNATH—CAVE OF SHIV—SITAMA—SCORPIONS—HARISHANKAR—BINJWALS AND BHUMIAS—RAIN—GAME—PAINTED PARTRIDGES—NURSINGHNATH—SERENADED BY A TIGER—ENTER KARIAL—TARNOT—GEOLOGY BECOMES MORE INTERESTING—LEAVE CAMP TO VISIT MARAGURA—JONK RIVER—BHIM-ER-LAT—JUNLAGOR—WATERFALL—SAMBAR—MAD DOG BITES AN ELEPHANT—DRENCHED BY DEW ON THE LONG GRASS—SPUR FOWL—TORBA—THE RAJA'S OFFICIALS—SUPPLIES GRATIS—FEVER—BIRD-CATCHERS—BEAT FOR TIGER—UNDER RIVER—TROGLODYTES—HEAR OF A HERD OF BUFFALO—ADVENTURE WITH THE BUFFS—NEWS FROM THE CIVILIZED WORLD—HOT SPRING—ISOLATED TEAK FOREST—SYMPTOMS OF THE HOT SEASON—BEAT FOR TIGERS—A DYING BOY—KARIAL—THE RAJA'S VISIT—TEMPLES OF RANIPUR-JURAL—LEAVE KARIAL.

My instructions for this season were to explore as great an area as I possibly could of the wide region which extends from the Mahanadi river in Orissa and Sambalpur, to the Godavari river in the northern provinces of the Madras Presidency. The native

animal that was carrying her off, came running towards me, but dropped exhausted before she could reach me. Though I must have been within a few feet of the animal, I failed, owing to the undergrowth, to get sight of it. No doubt it was a leopard, and possibly it was the animal first pursued by the dogs, as a leopard will often fly before a small dog. If such were the case, he probably tracked us down the hill, and took a favourable opportunity for springing on the dog. His method of procedure was apparent from the wounds. A tear on the flank showed where he had struck her, in order to turn her into position for grasping her in his mouth by the neck. He had buried his four canines deeply in her neck; but thanks to her thick covering of fat, she had escaped receiving a fatal wound. Carrying her back to the bungalow in my arms, I then, with the aid of the native doctor, bathed and bandaged the wounds. For many days she was on the sick-list, and was unable to walk the marches for about six weeks. She proved on the whole a good patient, but began to hate the very sight of the native doctor when—owing to the too quick healing of the wounds, and suppuration setting in—it became necessary for him to use the lancet. Physically her recovery was complete, but I found that her spirits were affected, and she showed a marked disapproval of evening strolls in the jungle, particularly, it seemed to me, when she saw that I did not carry a gun. Poor dog! after this and other less stirring adventures and escapes, it was her fate to die miserably of distemper on my return to Calcutta. Those, and those only, who have had for the companion of their solitude an affectionate dog, with a good deal of character and intelligence (why call it otherwise), can appreciate the full measure of my loss.

The next march was to Barmul—thirteen miles. Close by is the famous Barmul Pass,* one of the great show places of Orissa.

* Figured in Hunter's "Orissa," Frontispiece, Vol. 1. In the year 1803, a battle was fought at the Barmul Pass between the British troops, which were sent to subjugate Orissa, and the Maharatta forces. This was the last stand made by the latter, who were completely routed; in consequence of which the Rajas of Bôd and Sonpur came in and tendered their submission.

complain of the injury done by the bears as of that of which jackals were the authors. By careful watching the bears might be kept off, but no amount of watching could save the crop from the insidious attacks of the jackals, who would bite across ten canes for one that they would eat. Our beat was unsuccessful, the only animal seen being a boar. As yet, therefore, I had had no chance of trying the effects of a new "Express" rifle I had bought before leaving Calcutta. Next morning the Assistant-Commissioner returned northwards to Sambalpur, where he had to go in order to make arrangements for the Imperial rejoicings on the 1st of January.

After another day devoted to the geology of the neighbourhood of Gainslot I marched to Jornapali, six miles. On the road a Madrassi servant I had recently engaged, and who was represented to me as being a model servant, was found by the rear-guard helplessly drunk. On my remonstrating with him he excused himself by saying it was his "first chance"—meaning, I presume, first offence. When crossing one of the streams on the road, some of the men reported having seen a bear taking a sand-bath.

At Kasm, the next halting-place, two days were spent examining the neighbourhood. I had a visit here from a Babu, a relative of the Patna Raja, who was then under suspension on account of misconduct and oppression of his ryots; his territory being administered by a Tehsildar under the Deputy-Commissioner of Sambalpur. On entering my tent the Babu flung a couple of rupees down on the table. This in itself was an indication that I was entering among a people with somewhat primitive habits, as the custom of making such offerings on ordinary occasions is now becoming obsolete in British India.

At the next halting-place—Simlia, on the Sokethel river, I was surprised to find a settler, an old Pathan, who had first come into this part of the country many years previously as a merchant. He related to me a long story of his vicissitudes of fortune. Just before the mutiny he had, he said, amassed a considerable fortune, but lost it all during those disturbed times. He had

many stories of ill-treatment by the Rajas. The land and village which he now occupied had been given him by the Patna Raja in acquital of a debt of long standing; but after he had spent money upon it, and made a tank, the Raja again resumed possession of it, and threw him into prison. After his release he appealed to the Deputy-Commissioner who satisfied himself that the deed granting the land was a genuine one, and reinstated him, though the Raja declared it to be a forgery. One of his ventures in his travelling days was a rhinoceros which he bought in Calcutta for a thousand rupees, and marched down at the rate of from six to eight miles a day, driving it, as he described it, like a cow, before him. Finally he disposed of it to the Raja of Jaipur for the fancy sum of sixteen thousand rupees, which sum, however, he declared he was never paid, though fed on promises for several years. The old man did not disguise his dislike to the Uria-speaking people among whom he lived. He said he would migrate to some other part of India if he could afford to do so. By his wife, a Benares woman, he had a number of children who were growing up uneducated, as he would not allow them to learn Uria—the only language taught in the neighbouring schools. On Kabul affairs he waxed eloquent, and insisted on the fortification of the Khyber Pass as the great point to which the Indian Government should address itself.* He expressed some disgust with the Amir for imprisoning his son Yakub Khan.

The next march was to Bolangir, six miles. I had a long day's work in the intervening country. At one village the people complained to me of the excessive damage caused to their rice crops by wild geese, ducks, and teal; and, indeed, I could see that whole fields of grain near a tank had been totally destroyed. I diminished the marauders by half-a-dozen, when they flew off to other pastures.

* Recent events have shewn what a good knowledge of the "situation" this old man possessed.