

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE LATE EDWARD BLYTH, ESQUIRE.

By YOUNG NIMROD.

THE announcement of the death of this distinguished Naturalist, Mr. Edward Blyth, who zealously laboured for over one-fifth of a century amongst us as Curator of the Asiatic Society's Zoological Museum in Calcutta on a paltry stipend, will be received with profound grief by all who had the good fortune of knowing him out here, and there are, I think, not a few who enjoyed that privilege. Old Indian sportsmen must be familiar with the able papers on Natural History subjects that adorn the pages of the late Mr. James Hume's well-known sporting periodical, to wit the *Indian Sporting Review*, both Old and New series, under the signature of Z, or *Zoophilus*, which were all from the accomplished pen of Blyth. A collection of these articles, if published separately, would be of essential service to Indian sportsmen desirous of becoming acquainted with the habits, etc., of the beasts and birds they are accustomed to meet with in their excursions to the jungles in quest of sport.

Mr. Blyth, as Z, edited for sometime the Natural History Department of the *Indian Field* (while Mr. James Hume conducted that hebdomadal), and that he most ably performed the duties assigned to him must be well known to all the readers of that journal.

The following extract regarding Mr. Blyth's invaluable services in this country is from the pen of that ready writer, Mr. Allan Hume, his "friend and pupil,"—worthy pupil of a worthy master—and will, I dare say, be read with interest: it is from the *Scrap Book*, edited by Mr. Hume, 1869, pp. 181-182.

"It must not be supposed that this is any reflection on Mr. Blyth. This gentleman made the Calcutta Museum, and for some twenty years his talents shed a lustre on the Asiatic Society. * * * Talking of Mr. Blyth's great services in the cause of science, during his twenty years' *slavery* (for it was little else) in Calcutta, one can not help feeling that there is a sort of retributive justice, even in this world. The pompous Jacks in office, who alternately neglected, and attempted to patronize Mr. Blyth (whose invaluable services they pretended to remunerate by a pittance less than they would have presumed to offer their French cooks), are now either dead, or dragging out their crotchety existence in some old-Indian-peopled watering-place; in either case unknown and unhonoured; while the name of Blyth the Naturalist is known and respected by men of science throughout the civilized world."

Many years ago, when my knowledge of all that pertains to Indian Natural History was very limited indeed, I remember being set right by Mr. Blyth, in his usual kind manner, regarding the so-called toucan, or hornbill, in the columns of the *Englishman*. Then the Cachar correspondent of the leading journal (a well-known Indian writer, Mr. Paterson Saunders, being referred to the (so-called) Toucan being found in Cachar during a

certain period of the year, I believe I asked him some question regarding the nidification and breeding habits of that bird, when Mr. Blyth was good enough to point out to us that the name used was a misnomer, and that the proper designation was hornbill. I, conscious of my ignorance of the subject, was glad to be corrected, but not so the doughty Cuchar correspondent aforesaid, who waxed wroth, and had a tilt with Z, or Mr. Blyth, with what result may easily be imagined. I had the pleasure very soon afterwards of making the acquaintance of Mr. Blyth, and from that time I date my desire of acquiring a competent knowledge of Indian Natural History.

In a paper contributed by me in 1866 to the *Oriental Sporting Magazine*, Old Series, vol. I, giving a history of the rise, progress, and decline of the *Indian Sporting Review*, I find Mr. Blyth thus alluded to:—"Zoophilus's 'elaborate 'sketches in Natural History,' &c., proclaim the author to be none other than the scientific Edward Blyth, the ex-Curator of the Asiatic Society's Zoological Museum, who, not long since, retired home for good, with a somewhat substantial acknowledgment of his long and able services by the Society, in the shape of a life-annuity. We trust he has long ere now renovated his shattered constitution by his stay in England, and is able to enjoy his *otium cum dignitate* in harmonious intercourse with his 'brothers savants.'"

I feel sure that no apology is needed for appending the paragraph which appeared few days ago in the *Englishman*, taken from the *Land and Water*, and written by the well-known Naturalist, Mr. Frank Buckland. I regret exceedingly that I have not sufficient spare time at present to add more, but I can not delay any longer in paying a tribute to the memory of the gifted Naturalist, the subject of this brief sketch, who has so soon followed one whose death I recently recorded in this goodly Magazine; I mean Dr. T.C. Jerdon, of the Madras Army.

KHULNA, JESSORE. }

February 22nd, 1874. }

"Blyth was originally educated as a chemist, but at an early age took a great fancy to Natural History, spending most of his time in the country, studying the habits of birds, &c. He contributed much to *Lowden's Magazine* and other works, and was appointed Curator to the then existing Ornithological Society, which held its meetings in Pall Mall. He resigned this appointment on being elected Curator of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, —a position which he occupied for twenty-two years. Returning to England with a vast fund of Natural History knowledge, he contributed many exceedingly valuable papers under the *nom de plume* of 'Zoophilus' both to *Land and Water*, and afterwards to the *Field*. His series of chapters on 'Wild Types' in *Land and Water* is acknowledged by all naturalists to be a most valuable contribution to modern zoological literature. I therefore sincerely trust that they may shortly be published in the form of a book, in which should also be included his writings on the *Fishes of Calcutta*, *Our Horn Gallery*, and other able essays. He was almost a daily visitor at the Zoological Gardens, and continually attended the meetings at Hanover Square. Blyth was remarkable as having a most remarkable memory, especially as to scientific names of mammals and birds; he was also a first-rate botanist. He knew geology and shells, both fossil and recent, quite well; and I do not recollect any man who united in himself such a vast various knowledge of Natural History. By the death of Mr. Blyth science has lost one of her most able Professors, and Natural History circles a kind-hearted and generous-minded friend."