

# A STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF BENGAL

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DISTRICTS OF MURSHIDÁBÁD AND PÁBNÁ.

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is ferruginous ; but the ore is not worth smelting, owing to the very scanty portion of the metal which it contains. Belia Náráyanpur, a large village on the right bank of the Páglá *nadí*, is described by the Revenue Surveyor in 1857 as being a market for iron ore. There were at that time sixty-two furnaces at work there, but the ore was all brought from the neighbouring District of Birbhúm. Stone is also to be found in Palsá *tháná*, but the quality is not suitable for building purposes. The calcareous earth called *ghutin* is obtained in several parts of the *thánás* of Palsá and Mirzápur, and is extensively used for making lime. In the same localities, and generally over the whole of the Rárh or western half of the District, *kankar* or nodular limestone is found and applied to the purpose of road-making.

FORESTS AND WILD VEGETABLE PRODUCTS.—There is one *sál* forest in the District, called the Mohrapur forest, in the Palsá *tháná*. It is now the property of Jái Sankar Rái, who purchased it for £300. Besides timber, it yields *tasar* silk and beeswax. *Santámul* and *anantámul*, medicinal drugs of great repute, are also found in it; the latter of these is said to be an excellent substitute for sarsaparilla. In the west and north-west parts of the District, the lac insect has to a certain extent been domesticated on jute plants and the *Butea frondosa*. The people who rear it drive an extensive trade in lac. The tribes who earn their livelihood by trading in jungle products are mostly the Santáls and the Dhángars.

In the south-west of the District, at the confluence of the Mor and the Dwarká rivers, there is a tract of low-lying country, about sixteen square miles in area, known as the Hejál, which is used for pasturing cattle. During the rains it is covered with water, and produces *áus* and *boro* rice ; but during the dry season the Goálás drive hither numerous herds of cattle. Besides the Hejál, there are numerous smaller spots of pasturage ground scattered over the District.

FERÆ NATUREÆ.—Wild beasts are now very uncommon in the District of Murshidábád. The Revenue Surveyor, in 1857, gives the following information :—‘Tigers are occasionally found in the hilly parts to the north-west, which have probably strayed from the Santál Parganá. Leopards, civet cats, and wild cats find cover in the jungles about the native villages. Rhinoceros have been seen in the north of the District ; a few buffaloes still remain in the Nawarangá and Saulmárf *bíts* ; and wild hog are found about the

different swamps and on the *chars* of the Ganges. All, however, are yearly becoming more and more scarce, and but little sport is now to be found in the District. The advance of cultivation is rapidly driving the wild animals away.' Monkeys of two sorts abound, especially in the Rárh or western half of the District. In the Rárh, also, several kinds of deer are found, among which are the spotted deer, the hog deer, and the antelope. These animals are hunted both for their meat and for their skins. The birds found in the District include the black and red partridge, quail, ortolan, snipe, plover, wild duck, wild goose, and several sorts of doves, at least two kinds of the parrot family, the fish-eagle, and many sorts of hawks, the common vulture, adjutant, herons, etc. To the list of fishes given on a previous page in connection with Fisheries (pp. 31, 32), may be added the Gangetic porpoise and the crocodile.

The average annual number of deaths from wild beasts during the years 1864-68 was 13; and the average number of deaths caused by snake-bite during the same period of five years was 222. In the year 1869-70 the sum of Rs. 19. 10. 0, or just under £2, was paid in rewards for the destruction of wild beasts; but no such rewards have ever been offered for keeping down venomous snakes.

Apart from the fisheries, and a small trade in deerskins carried on in the north-west, the *feræ naturæ* do not contribute in any way to the wealth of the District.

POPULATION ESTIMATES PRIOR TO 1872.—It is hardly necessary to state that before the Census of 1872 there existed no trustworthy estimates of the population of Murshidábád District. The totals arrived at were formed, not by actual enumeration, but by some rough process of average calculations. The old figures, however, have a certain interest, though it would be most unsafe to use them for purposes of comparison with the results of the authoritative Census. The area of the District has not been altered during the present century to such an extent as to require any modification on this account. The Census Report by Mr. Beverley, C.S., p. 102, supplies the following information:—'In 1801, the population was estimated at 1,020,572 persons. In 1829, a tolerably accurate Census of the District was taken by Mr. H. V. Hathorn, the Magistrate. The results were as follow:—Hindus—males 268,148, females 269,162; total Hindus, 555,310: Muhammadans—males 216,478, females 196,344; total Muhammadans, 412,822: grand total 968,132. In 1837, Mr. Adam took a Census of the *tháná*