

A WINTER
IN
INDIA AND MALAYSIA
AMONG THE
METHODIST MISSIONS

written
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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A drive alone to the well-known Zoological Gardens of Calcutta was one of the rich afternoons to a transient sight-seer. The assistant superintendent, a native, Mr. B. L. Dutt, on my asking in vain for a catalogue of the animals and birds, kindly went with me several hours, explaining much that I could not otherwise have known. In this garden I found a very full representation of the fauna of rich tropical Asia. Here was the white peacock, as fond of his faded feathers as those who retain the brightest tints ; strange monkeys—one, the Hoolock gibbon, from Assam, whose exceedingly loud cries could be heard in the farthest corner of the garden ; the nylghau, or “blue cow” of India, a thick, heavy deer common in the jungles ; a curious cow from Chittagong called the gyat ; the hog-deer, as thick-set as a goat, or more swine-like ; the wild hog, black and heavy-built, and the two-horned, hairy-eared rhinoceros. The birds were also fine. The famous mandarin duck from China was the most gorgeous of its kind I have ever seen. Toucans, cockatoos, herons, red macaws, the argus pheasant, jungle fowls from which our common barn-yard fowl came, and many others were there. In a pond was the snakefish, from Lake Baikal, that would swim around on the top of the water, with its eyes out of it. Some Bactrian dromedaries, patient and evidently of the most hardy endurance, as their country would demand, slowly munched the hay given them. A department was given up to the cat family, and in it were various species, from the possible wild progenitor of the house-cat to the royal Bengal tiger and majestic African lion. Among the tigers was one that had a bad reputation. He was accused of having eaten three hundred people before he was captured. His capture was accomplished by luring him into a pit, where he was wound up in nets and

ropes till he could be handled with safety. The native prince in whose dominions he was taken presented him to the British authorities. He was a gigantic fellow, about twelve feet long, a breast fully twenty-four inches deep, and a forearm that would girth twenty inches. His dulled teeth showed his great age, and his fierceness was awful. I stayed till the time of feeding the animals their meat. Most of them ate it at once; but this aged sinner crouched over his food and would not eat it while people were looking at him. He would now and then rise, and with terrific growls, his battery of glittering teeth all uncovered, suddenly dash to the front of his cage and strike out through the bars with his mighty paw as far as he could reach at the people looking on. All would scud backward from the iron rail that kept us three or four feet from the cage, and I did so once or twice; but when I saw he could not reach as far as that I stood still to mark his rage and actions. Finally the crowd went away, and I lingered to see those fine beasts that I should never see again. The old tiger wanted me to go away so he could eat his beef, but I still stayed. I thought, too, that I could stand there and gaze at him no matter how sudden might be his useless spring toward me. Growling at me in deep but moderate basso, he suddenly sprang with but a step or two full at me with a withering snarl, dashing against the iron bars, and reaching one of his great paws through them, and I, with all my self-congratulatory nerve and certainty that I could endure any menace as long as I knew I was absolutely safe, suddenly jumped back, with a big, dismayed thump in my heart. A fine black bear from America looked good to me, and such was my patriotic sentiment toward any thing from the great republic that I wanted to hug his bruinship, and I

have no doubt he would have been fully willing to reciprocate the act, seeing I also was an American.

Another day was spent in the Botanical Gardens. These are on the west side of the Hoogly River, while the city is on the east side. As the draw-bridge was open I had to cross far below the city on a "dingi," or small ferry-boat, directly into the gardens. If the day before I had obtained extensive knowledge of the fauna in the Zoological Gardens I here added to my knowledge of the flora. This garden, founded by General Kyd, of whom there is a fine statue in the middle part of the grounds, is located in a tropical forest, the great native trees, palms, bamboos, vines, and the like forming deepest mazes and most entrancing drives, while the places cleared away for flower-gardens, parks, ferneries, and imported species of plants, are like open fields in the woods. One of the palms brought from tropical America had a body shaped like some Greek column, and almost as smooth as polished marble. An avenue of these was like a long colonnade. The mahogany trees, also imported from America, have already become a hundred feet high and two feet in diameter. In these damp tropical forests the trees and plants seem to grow the year round, since they never shed their leaves like trees in a temperate climate, but broad-leaved foliage, looking like maples, basswood, and elms, remaining green during the winter months the same as the pine and spruce in America. Arbors for ferns, orchids, bignonias, dwarf palms, and the like were made by being lightly covered over with boughs and bamboos.

The great banyan tree wholly took me. Every traveler seeing the sights of Calcutta is cited to these gardens, the most attractive feature of which is this tree.