

(5) I. Everett

OBSERVATIONS

ON

INDIA.

BY

A RESIDENT THERE MANY YEARS.

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"That place is jist like a hot-bed, and the folk like the plants in it. People do grow rich fast; but they look kinder spindlin' and weak, and they are e'en amost choked with weeds and toadstools, that grow every bit and grain as fast, and twice as nateral."—SAM SLICK ON NEW ORLEANS.  
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LONDON:

JOHN CHAPMAN, 142, STRAND.

MDCCCLIII.

ther end of it, a goat is tied as a bait; and the door, which is sliding, is supported by a string, so contrived as to give way when the animal enters, and attempts to seize his prey. If he were to remain silent, afterwards, there might be some chance of his being able to work his way out, before daylight; but, no sooner does he find out, that he is caught, than he falls to roaring, and raving, so loud, as to inform all the neighbourhood, what is the matter with him. The spot, where we now stood, was separated from the rest of the island, by a narrow creek; on the opposite, or western, side of which stood a Hindoo temple, which made, rather a venerable appearance, from the grove of lofty, and spreading, trees that surrounded it. The land around is uncleared, and uninhabited, except by a Fakir, or native hermit, who had made a vow to spend, a certain number of years, there. His predecessor had made a similar vow, for the term of seven years; but two of these were not completed before the tigers had made a meal of him. The present man then succeeded to the situation, and had remained there, for above a twelvemonth, at the time of our arrival. In the month of January, vast multitudes flock here to perform their devotions, at the temple; and, some years back, part of the religious ceremony consisted, in women throwing their infants, into the sea, to be eaten by the sharks. The Government, however, forbade the performance of this rite, and has, ever since, sent a guard of soldiers to prevent the recurrence of it.

About two miles to the south of Saugor lies a tract of land, called Edmonstone's Island, covered with creeping vegetation, and with a hut upon it. This, ten

years before, was Saugor sand, only visible, at low water ; and, at the time of our visit, for a circumference of three, or four, miles, it was above the reach of the tide. Since this (by 1840) it has been nearly washed away again. The soil of Saugor is not, as has been stated, a loose sand, but a stiff clay, like the rest of Bengal, that I have seen. The rice crops on it are most abundant ; but the plantains, and cocoa-nut trees, do not, as yet, thrive well there. The wild animals are not many : besides tigers and deer, there are the common small monkey of Bengal, and Hindostan (*Papio rhesus*), and, very rarely, the rhinoceros. The jungle fowl, the origin of our domestic poultry, is not uncommon. They are very shy, and not often seen, though we heard one, now and then, crowing in the woods, at morning and evening. The weather had been showery, during the spring months, February, March, April, and May, as it usually is, in Bengal, which somewhat abated the excessive heat, until the commencement of the rainy season (towards the latter end of June), when the country was flooded. By this union of heat, and moisture, vegetation starts forward with a rapidity unequalled, even by the changes of the Arctic Circle. Night, at this period, brings neither stillness nor repose. The noises of the numerous insect tribes, frogs, toads, and other abominations, sound, perpetually, like the hum of a crowded city. The climate of Chinsurah is, so very nearly that of Calcutta, that an abstract of the registers, at the latter place, will best convey an idea of it. The following is an abstract of the observations made, at the Surveyor General's Office, from 1831 to 1838, both inclusive :—

	Thermometer. Average of Monthly Returns.				Barometer.			Mean Rain.
	Min.	Max.	Gen. Mean.	Mean Range.	10 A.M.	4 P.M.	Mean.	
	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	
January .	54.90°	76.29°	65.59°	21.39°	30.045	29.946	29.995	0.09
February .	62.60	81.62	72.11	19.02	29.985	.878	.931	0.92
March . .	70.20	90.46	80.08	20.26	.896	.784	.840	0.96
April . .	75.60	95.38	85.50	19.78	.783	.676	.729	2.25
May . .	80.57	97.52	89.04	16.95	.657	.560	.608	5.79
June . .	80.93	91.86	86.39	10.93	.546	.467	.506	10.18
July . .	79.96	87.79	83.87	7.83	.527	.452	.489	9.92
August .	78.63	86.74	82.68	8.11	.563	.489	.526	11.71
September	79.20	87.02	83.11	7.82	.633	.594	.638	8.52
October .	76.07	86.42	81.24	10.35	.844	.753	.798	6.06
November	65.61	81.60	73.60	15.99	.979	.894	.936	0.63
December	59.39	77.45	68.42	18.06	.039	.942	.990	0.33
	71.97	86.68	79.30	14.71	29.796	29.703	29.749	57.36

The minimum temperature was observed, at sunrise, the maximum at 2^h 40^m P.M. The greatest heat observed, during this whole period was 118° on the 1st of June, 1836; and the greatest cold 44°·3 on the 20th of January, in the same year. The greatest depression of the barometer was, on 21st of May, 1833, at 4½ P.M., when it stood at 28.867 inches; but changes, of this kind, occur rarely, say once, in two or three years, and then, last, only for a few hours, during a violent storm; otherwise, the variations are very small, not exceeding one-tenth, or two-tenths, on each side the monthly mean.

There yet remain to be noticed, the variations in the moisture, as indicated, by the depressions of the wet-bulb thermometer, besides, the winds, and the nightly oscillations of the barometer, for which last, we are indebted to the observations of the late Mr. Prinsep, at the Mint.

	Depression of Wet Bulb Thermometer.		Winds. Number of Days in each Month, at 2.40 P.M.					Barometer.	
	Sunrise.	2.40 P.M.	N. to E.	E. to S.	S. to W.	W. to N.	Calm	4 & 5 A.M.	10 P.M.
January . .	2.1°	14.1°	32	0	11	44	0	29.985°	30.011°
February . .	2.1	12.3	27	5	17	30	6	.914	29.935
March . .	2.5	16.6	24	4	34	26	5	.801	.836
April . .	1.4	11.5	9	15	60	5	1	.709	.728
May . .	1.4	11.0	10	22	55	5	1	.554	.595
June . .	1.7	7.2	13	40	31	1	5	.505	.546
July . .	1.7	4.7	21	34	27	2	8	.512	.542
August . .	1.1	4.2	16	34	29	6	8	.533	.570
September .	1.3	4.8	20	39	20	2	9	.610	.639
October . .	1.2	7.7	37	15	30	8	1	.778	.810
November .	1.7	15.2	42	3	1	42	1	.953	.984
December .	1.2	7.9	47	3	2	32	5	.952	.980
Mean . .	1.62	9.88						29.734	.765
Annual Mean . . .									29.749°

The depressions of the wet bulb thermometer, and the directions of the wind, in each month, are taken from the observations of three years, viz. 1831, 1832, and 1833, and the nightly heights of the barometer, from those of two years, viz. 1833 and 1834. The mean amount of rain is rather less, than what would be obtained, by taking a longer series of years.

On the 24th of July, we embarked at Calcutta, for Penang, and dropped down the river. It took us more than a week to reach Saugor; and, we had advanced thus slowly, partly, owing to the contrary monsoon, and, partly, to the indolence of the pilot. Whenever he espied a shower rising in the sky, he brought up, and turned in, to console himself with a comfortable glass; and then, there was no more stirring for the day. I once ventured to hint, that we might reach somewhat further, but got