

Travels of Sebastian MANRIQUE I

4620

CHAPTER XXX

In which the Author continues of his voyage in the Mountains of Maum and of what more occurred to him when he left them in order to return to the City of Arracan.

[185/1] AS soon as our Raulin patron saw that most of the guards were already paying the debt of their debauch in its usual form, and that the rest were also under its influence in proportion to the quantity they had drunk, he left the table and had it cleared. We then set out on our journey, each man carrying his own luggage on his shoulders. At the gate we encountered two guards, who, under the influence of the liquor, of which they had had a share, were more cheerful than usual and so let us by with many sumbayas or reverences and somewhat incoherent speeches, in which they absolved us from all the suspicion we had aroused at our entrance.

So, happily past this, we began to [185/2] climb the mountains, some of our band alternately shouting from time to time or letting off the two arquebuses they had with them, on account of the large number of Tigers, Rhinoceroses, and Buffaloes¹ to be met with in that part. These mountains are so rocky and difficult to climb that it was impossible to travel over them by night, and we were obliged to halt half a league from the gate and climb into some trees to await daylight. With daylight we recommenced our climb and proceeded

¹ Three kinds of rhinoceroses are met with still in India, two having one horn and one variety two horns. The species mentioned was probably the one-horned species (*R. sondaicus*), still occurring in Burma. Rhinoceroses were hunted by the Mughals in the sixteenth century.

The buffalo was no doubt the Gaur, the "bison" of sportsmen (*Bos gaurus*), a magnificent animal, the bulls often standing over six feet at the withers, with horns up to three feet in length to twenty inches at the base.

onwards in this way for three days, always spending the night in trees on account of the wild beasts, as I have mentioned. On the fourth day we reached some very wide plains where we saw some Barbarians clothed in the skins of tigers and goats, with their heads bare and shaven.² They were attending large [186/1] flocks of cattle, cows, and goats, and a few tame Buffaloes. After passing them by we reached certain villages with fields of rice, vegetables, and cotton. Numerous houses stood there, made of bambus and thatched. These stood far apart from one another, as these wild Maghs were accustomed to live separate from each other, with their families in the midst of their fields.³ They also had a few roughly built shrines for their idols. After travelling through these cultivated lands we climbed mountains again for three or four leagues, and then darkness fell, and we rested for the night in a Varela which stood at this point. The Raulin here told me that if we made good progress next day we should sleep in his brother's house. Five days had passed since we entered the mountains. Now most of the road had lain through rocky and stone-strewn country. I was going bare-footed, as this was required by the robe I was wearing; for no Maghs use any shoes, excepting indeed the Xoxam Pungri, the High priest, as I have remarked. When, therefore, we came to the end of the last day but one, I arrived with the soles of my feet bereft of skin and so severely injured in some places as to make walking out of the question during the rest of the journey. They were, therefore, obliged to make me a litter, called in these parts cirian.⁴ [186/2] To make it they cut strong bambus and withies to bind them together. I was lifted on this upon four men's shoulders, who took turns, hour by hour. As this meant that we had to proceed more leisurely than the Raulin had expected, he sent on a messenger to acquaint his brother-in-law with what had taken place and

² It is impossible to identify these folk.

³ This appears to be a common feature in the settlements of jungle folk. The Bhils and other forest tribes in Central India invariably build their huts far apart, so that quite a small village will straggle over a large area. The reason there given is distrust of neighbours!

⁴ See Chap. XIV, n. 1.

Before he allowed us to depart he ordered us to be given two rings set with rubies, each valued at eighty pesos in our currency. I would willingly have given away the ring to see myself safely, not merely out of Arracan City, but out of the Kingdom altogether.

So the festivals over, owing to the permission thus granted, we obtained the necessary passports and left for [221/2] Dianga in a swift Geliā which brought us safely there in a few days. There I was given an affectionate and genuine welcome from the Brethren and all the Christian community.

Here I at once prepared myself to make a complete confession, for nearly two years had elapsed since I had been able to confess owing to the want of a confessor.

My confession was completed with Divine assistance, and I set to work as secretly as possible to carry out the orders I had received from my superiors in India, and also those from the Count of Liñares,³ who was at that time Viceroy of the Estates.

With this object in view the Father gave orders for the equipping of a Geliā, as if with the object of searching for prizes. When this had been successfully accomplished an order was issued to take the vessel to a point two leagues below the city, to the port of Patanga.⁴ Here, one night, when all was at its stillest, I embarked, and being rowed at full speed we made the island of Sundiva before Aurora had aroused the sleeping birds to leave their beloved nests and sally forth to greet her with their sweet melodies.

We then continued on our way to the island of Xavaspur,⁵ leaving on our right the famous isle of Sogoldiva,⁶ which was

³ Viceroy from 1629 to 1635. See Chap. XXIX, n. 2.

⁴ At the mouth of the Karnaphuli river. See Chap. XI, n. 6.

⁵ A large island now known as "Dakhin Shābāzpur". It lies in an estuary of the Meghna river, and is included in the Bākarganj District. It contains over 400 villages, with some 270,000 inhabitants. The island is formed of silt, and while it is being washed away on the north and east, it is receiving accretions on the west. It is named after Shābāz Khān, Governor of Bengal from 1584 to 1589.

⁶ No such island is marked, even in early maps. Manrique says he passed between this island, which lay on his right, and Shābāzpur. The only island corresponding to this position is Hatia island, which is not of any great importance. "Sogoldiva" must be a corruption of *Sagar-*

so highly estimated as to be known in Bengali as *the richest of all*.

These very fertile islands are now desolate, [222/1] owing to the incessant war between the Maghs, Mogors, and Portuguese.

The island of Xavaspur contains a large number of thorny fruits, mainly limes of various species and of enormous size, which owing to the fertility of the soil are independent of the care of skilled gardeners and horticulturists.

Passing between these two islands we entered one of the branches of the mighty and ancient Ganges. The pilot followed the least frequented route, and we travelled for eleven days, meeting only with fierce denizens of the jungle or hideous Crocodiles of great length, lying stretched along the banks of the crystal Gangetic stream, basking in the rays of the fiery Planet.

We also came across many Rhinoceroses, whose horns, offensive in life, are after their death used in a defensive drug.⁷

We likewise saw in these solitary branches of the river another smaller species of Crocodile, of which the largest was not more than six feet long. They have long pointed snouts and are not as fierce or so carnivorous as the others.⁸

We left those unpopulated streams on the eleventh day and, to our subsequent ill-fortune, entered those frequented by rowing boats.

We crossed, with considerable difficulty, a very wide and rapid stream and entered the borders of the kingdom [222/2] of Anglim,⁹ whence after two days' journey they were to

dwīpa or Sagar island, but this really lies much farther east than his route indicates (Chap. XXVII, n. 7).

⁷ Cf. Harvey, *Burma*, 98. This fact is mentioned by many other writers. See *Hobson-Jobson*, s. v. Abada, in a quotation from Barker (1592); *Linschoten*, ii. 9. These animals swarmed in this swampy region. See *Bowrey*, 199, 211.

⁸ The two species of crocodile are the short-nosed *Magur* (*Crocodilus palustris*), of which there are two varieties, and the long-nosed (*Gharial* (*C. gavialis*)). The latter, as Manrique says, is comparatively innocuous, being a fish-eater. Of the short-nosed, one species (*C. porosus*) attains great length, as much as thirty feet long. It is met with in Indian and Burmese estuaries. See Chap. XXXVI, n. 2.

⁹ See Chap. II, n. 1.

Travels of S. Manrique I