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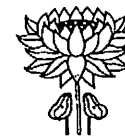
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# People and Wildlife in and around Saigon (1872-1873)

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*moschatus*), an animal of very small size, with hair almost red and which carries two short antlers terminated by two tines. It does not use them as defensive weapons but in its upper jaw it has two teeth which are worth horns; I have lost more than one good dog because of some old *Con man* and"—he adds showing me Flo, his last bloodhound, which walked in front of us—"this poor animal still wears the glorious scars of its last fight. The third deer, the most common of all, is the *Con nai* (*Cervus Aristotelis*); we will probably eat some tonight."

Here I interrupted him pointing out to him the dog which was searching with a feverish ardor. This animal only barked at great events and followed the trace until complete exhaustion of its strength. This time it took us across the glade forest of the mountain flank. "There," D. suddenly burst out, "get down and look! These are traces from last night and we have again to do with a *Con man*. I know its tricks," he added, "and we will not have to walk too much." Indeed, the *Con man* describes in its flight an almost complete circle and usually comes back very near the place where it has been tracked. This time the hunt would be short. The dog tracked the animal and by its rare noises we figured out the direction it had taken. Suddenly a red mass passed before us like a lightning, I fired. "Hit!" shouted D., who, wanting to leave the honor to me, had not shot himself: a pleasant trait for the fanatical hunter he is. "Yes," I told him, "but not fully in the body." The poor animal could only run on three legs and nevertheless it still went fast. It ended, its sense of direction lost no doubt, by going in the direction of the village and took to the water in the arroyo a few meters away from the bridge. All the dogs of the area were barking. We finished the wounded animal from the top of the bridge and the boy of D. took fishing it out upon himself. It was a female, in the belly it had a fetus as big as a Cochinchina hare. In fact, it appears the month of June is the period of gestation for these animals. A few days later D. killed another female, also in calf.

A few days later, I made, with D., a last excursion in the game-rich vicinity of Tromdo. We went slowly, each sleeping in his own vehicle; it

was about four p.m. and the heat was still suffocating. I was half asleep when an exclamation from my driver woke me up. I looked and saw a black mass coming to meet us. I recognized a rhinoceros. The road was not wide: it was necessary that one of us jump into the forest or go backwards. I knew that it does not lie in the habits of a large pachyderm to make way to whomsoever, and on the other hand, I did not ignore the fact that he had the strength to make our two carts fly in the air and us at the same time. D., who had descended from his cart, came to walk close to me and told me: "We cannot hesitate, I'm going to shoot." I let his hand, more exercised than mine, fire. The rhinoceros shuddered and made an about face. A hurrah answered its flight. It had disappeared, but it was quite easy for us to follow it. The bullet has no doubt gone through the lung or some big vessel; the soil was sprinkled with blood left and right. Finally, after about sixty meters, we found the body; a few convulsions shook it and, fearing for a last access of rage which could be fatal to one of us, D. fired the shot of mercy almost into the ear. Then we were able to examine it as we pleased. It was a big male of more than two meters in length, but its single horn was not very developed: it did not exceed a foot. It was no doubt a specimen of the species *Rhinoceros sondaicus*. Our Annamites, who had joined us, collected the bloody earth and the blood which ran from the body and when we gave them the order to carve up the animal, they soaked all the linen they could decently shed in its blood.

This custom exists, as I know, in Africa, but I was surprised to find it in the hearth of Asia. The blood of the rhinoceros is considered a universal panacea and the local pharmacies buy it at a high price, as they do the body. In the same way they believe that the gall bladder of a dead bear which died a violent death is excellent as an ointment against contusions; the head of a monkey reduced to powder and swallowed gives intelligence to idiotic children; certain bones of the tiger give strength; dragons heal bronchitis, etc., etc.

We took the head and the four members of our rhinoceros and left the huge cadaver to the crows and the vultures.

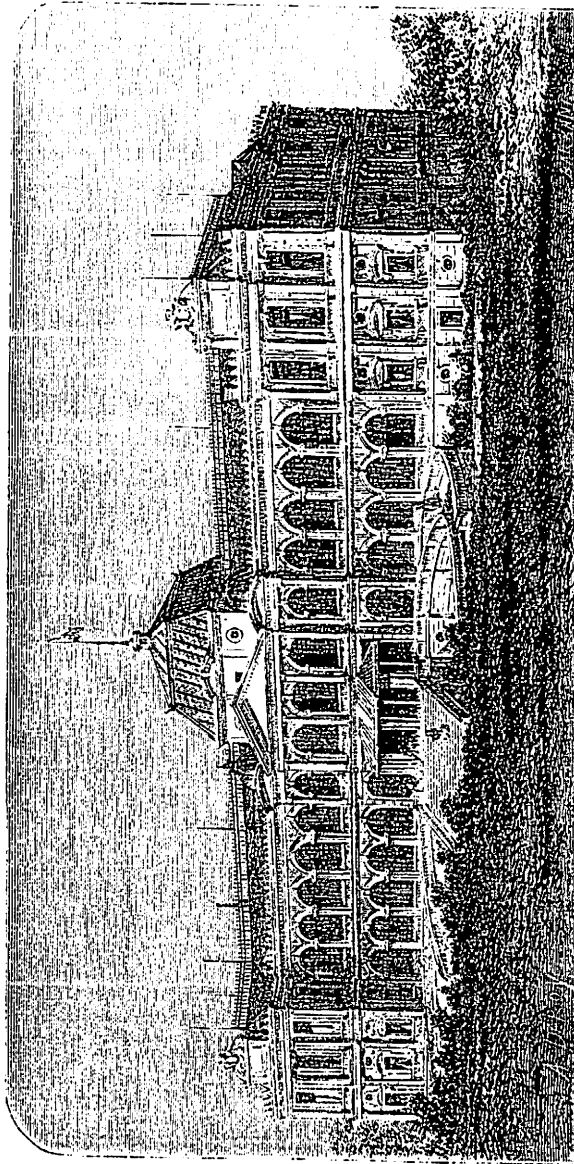


Plate 46. The palace of the governor of Cochinchina in Saigon  
(drawing by A. Deroy, based on a photograph).

A few days after this last hunt, I left Tayninh and returned to Saigon.

The day of my departure was approaching and I had wanted, before leaving the soil of Indochina where my curiosity had been so well satisfied with lively events, to see Saigon, which had been considerably embellished in the last seven months. They had completed very large sidewalks in bricks, made fields which allowed one to walk with dry feet during the rainy season; completely European shops, outlets for tobacco and export merchandise from Paris rose up along the great streets, notably close to the house of the police. There were still, it is true, a few not entirely healthy wards, especially on the other side of the Chinese arroyo, but the European houses already began to invade this quarter so far too uniformly Asiatic and the splendid palace of the governor dominated the high city of Saigon proudly showing the national flag. The Chinese and Annamite shops of the rue Catinat still existed, but little by little they made place for European shops; finally, everything showed that Saigon was vigorously on the way to a completely French prosperity, of which we have the more right to be proud, as the time when only poor local huts decorated the banks of the Donai is not very far from us.

Finally, on 20 September 1873, I embarked on the *Sarthe* and said goodbye or rather *au revoir* to this land of Cochinchina, to which I was indebted for so much new interesting knowledge. Its zoological richness has for me an irresistible attraction and I hope soon to be able to leave again, to continue these naturalist's studies, from the dear tyranny of which it is impossible to escape as soon as one has started them.

