

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

BY

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SUPERINTENDENT, CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS.

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CHAPTER XII.

Sporting tendency of Hill men—Training of youth—Traps and snares for big Game and birds—High estimates of shikar-prowess. Varieties of big game—kukis avoid rhinoceros—Variety of sport—Fishing—Seasons—Varieties of fish, snakes and other reptiles—Insect life—Conclusion.

The inhabitants of the hills are all keen sportsmen, and start their training at a very early age. Armed with a pellet bow and a plentiful supply of sun-baked clay pellets, the hill-boy goes forth seeking what he may destroy. Was beside the squirrel or any small feathered game that may come within reasonable distance of his deadly aim. I was having my *elaks* *Asari* one day in the verandah of a village house, and seeing a lad armed with a pellet bow I stuck an egg-shell on a post and offered a prize of four annas if he could hit the shell in three shots. The lad smiled blandly, and took up a position some fifteen paces distant from the post. The first pellet struck the post, the second smashed the eggshell to pieces. I thought this might have been only a lucky shot, and placed a second shell on the post and repeated the offer. The eggshell this time did not survive the first shot. I noticed two or three young sportsmen carelessly strolling up with pellet bows: they evidently scented money in the game, but I was content with the prowess I had already seen and made no further offer.

The youths are carefully trained in the manufacture and setting of snares and traps, and considerable skill and ingenuity are shown in their construction. The

following are some of the traps and snares in general use. Should a tiger or leopard be worrying a village community, a spot is selected on the village road, the jungle is cleared, and a trap is set on the principal of the three-bricks-and-a-tile trap that used to delight our youthful days. Several heavy logs are cut in lengths of sixteen feet; these are strongly bound together with cane or creeper. They are then raised on a slant and carefully balanced on a support. A hole is dug in the centre of the space beneath the logs, and inside this a young pig securely tied up so that he cannot straggle. A rope is attached from the bound pig to the support. The pig vociferates loudly against its enforced restraint, but cannot move. The large foliines have a marked partiality for pork, and should one be within hearing distance the cries of the pig are sure to attract it to the spot. The attempt to drag the porcine bait from the hole loosens the prop, and the logs fall and squash the intruder as flat as a pancake. Advantage is taken of the knowledge that animals will always pass along paths through the jungle, or which communicate with water, to set spring traps and nooses along them. A gun is generally set for a tiger, and sharpened bamboo spears for pig and deer. The spear may be attached to a strong bow, or a plant sapling is cut and bent down and the spear attached to it; a piece of cane fixed to the bait that holds the spear in position is stretched across the path; the advancing animal strikes the attachment; this releases the bolt, and the animal receives the charge of the gun or the spear in its side, and is as a rule instantaneously killed, or if wounded is tracked down by the village dogs and then killed. Occasionally a human being falls a victim to these horrible traps. I recall an instance where a stalwart young Chakma set a spear

for pig on the approach to his *plu* and forget all about it. In the evening, hearing his dog barking furiously at the edge of the jungle, he picked up his gun and ran to the spot, expecting doubtless to find the dog had brought some game to bay. He rushed into the trap he had himself set and was impaled through the stomach on his own spear, dying a horrible death. The strictest orders are in force that when such traps are set the approaches must be marked to warn any one that may be passing along the path, but, in spite of all precautions, accidents occur. A noose set to a strong sapling that has been bent to the ground is a favourite way of snaring pig or deer. The foot strikes the catch in the centre of the noose, releases the sapling, and the animal is hung up by the leg. In the Lushai Expedition days we had a Garkha sepoy who put his foot into such a noose when on the march, and was at once swung up into the air to his great agitation and discomfort, but to the huge delight of his comrades. I once found a sambar stag hung up in one of these traps, and a passing tiger had taken advantage of the situation to have a good meal off the catch. I sat up in a tree, hoping to ascertain for the tiger, but he did not return. Occasionally a big hunt will take place. A high fence is erected across a big stretch of country, different sized openings are left, and in these are set spring guns, spears, nooses, heavy logs, &c. The beaters surround the country and drive everything towards the fence, and the game, endeavouring to escape through the openings, fall a victim to one or other of the traps set. Strong rope nets sometimes take the place of the fence: the driven game gets entangled in the nets, and is then speared or clubbed to death. This method is only indulged in by the wealthy, as such nets are very costly. The reader will wonder how any game can possibly survive, but he must remember that

the area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts alone is over five thousand square miles, and of this more than a quarter is reserved forest in which no hunting is allowed, and an excellent and safe refuge is afforded to bird and beast in which to propagate their respective species. In addition to the above area are the large tracts of country which comprise Independent Hill Tipara, the Chin, Lushai, and Arakan Hill Tracts, and the reserved forest in the Chittagong district. The whole of this country is densely covered with forests and very sparsely populated. The hillmen levy a heavy toll on the bird-life of the district by means of elaborate snares. The use of the decoy jungle-fowl is a favourite method, and is as follows:—The decoy-cock is kept covered up with a cloth, when a suitable spot is found. The decoy-bird fastened to a string is pegged down in the open near the jungle where the wild birds have been heard calling. The diameter of the circle in which the bird is fastened will be from fifteen to twenty feet. Running-nooses made of pineapple fibre are set round the circumference, each noose touching the other and about three inches off the ground. The decoy-bird is, therefore, surrounded with a circle of nooses. The man retires to a suitable place of concealment and awaits developments. The decoy bird, finding himself free, soon flaps his wings and gives a shrill crow. The challenge is speedily taken up by the wild jungle cock, and a series of crows are interchanged. Suddenly a rustling is heard in the jungle, and out rushes a brilliant plumaged jungle cock in a high state of indignation at the intrusion of a foreign bird on his own preserves. His comb and wattles are purple with wrath. He catches sight of the decoy-bird, and with lowered crest and ruffled neck he charges down to engage the intruder in mortal combat. Alas his valour is in vain: his rush is stopped by a noose, the hillman

emerges from his hiding-place, wrings the poor bird's neck, takes up the decoy and success, and sets forth to seek a fresh spot; for it is useless to attempt a second capture on the same ground. The taste of birds for berries is carefully studied, and when such a tree is found in fruit it is systematically noosed all over, and the unfortunate birds on coming to feed are caught in numbers. If a nest is found with eggs or young success are so skilfully arranged that the parent birds are invariably captured. The Kakis are the keenest of hunters, and a successful *shikari* or hunter is held in high esteem. The name of "Taughua," the equivalent of our Nimrod, or a great hunter, is given to him, but to gain this distinction the hunter must have slain an elephant, gyal, big bear, sloth bear, stag and wild bear. It will be remarked that the tiger is omitted. The reason for this is that the flesh of the tiger, though eaten, is not particularly sought after. In addition to this a considerable risk attends an individual attempt to shoot a tiger with a flint gun, and the Kaki will never dream of taking any unnecessary risks. His marvellous skill in jungle craft enables him to slay the other varieties of game with the minimum amount of risk to himself. The shooting of an elephant from a big tree in itself constitutes a great deed of valour, and formerly ranked only second to securing a human head.

Trophies of the chase are greatly valued among the Kaki, and the verandah walls of each house are decorated with the skulls and heads of the various animals that the master of the house or his ancestors may have slain.

The Hill Tracts abound in big game of all sorts, and excellent sport can be enjoyed by those who care to devote a month or two to the pursuit of big game. Elephants are found in numbers, but shooting them is prohibited by law. A few years ago the Kakis used to organise hunting expeditions, and entering the Hill

Tracts they destroyed numbers of elephants. The tusks were extracted and as much meat as they could carry was smoked and taken back to their village. Baked elephants' feet have the reputation of being excellent eating, but smoked elephant I know to be an utter abomination.

The two-horned variety of rhinoceros is fairly plentiful, the valleys of the Thaga, Mynee and Tuisong being their favourite haunts. Rhinos are to be found on the feed in the early morning and are easily killed if hit in the right spot—the neck and base of the ear are deadly spots. A wounded rhino should be treated with respect and attacked with great caution; for it will charge furiously and can inflict fearful wounds with its incisors, which resemble the tusks of the wild bear but are considerably thicker. The rhinoceros uses his horn only for purposes of grabbing up roots and tearing down succulent creepers. Rhino horn is greatly prized by the Chinese, who work it up into amulets and charms. The black ivory will fetch as much as forty rupees a pound. The flesh and powdered horn are also considered a certain cure for barrenness amongst Hindu women. I once received an urgent request from a former Inspector of Police, who had served under me in Bengal, for some of the above, and as luck would have it the Gurkhas of the Police Battalion had recently shot a rhino and I was able to gratify his desire. The remedy apparently proved efficacious, and I earned his lifelong gratitude.

The Kukis will not interfere with a rhinoceros, as they say it brings very bad luck, the truth being that they are afraid of the animal and dare not attack it. The flesh of the young rhino is excellent eating, and a steak is very succulent. Gyal, which are akin to the Indian bison or gaur, are found all over the district; the best hunting grounds are to the north, in the neighbour-

hood of Rangpur and Moulkoberi. April and May are the best months for stalking. The *chiru* grass has then been fired, and the new shoots of grass are springing up on the hillside. Gyal are extremely partial to this grass, and the herds come in the morning and evening to graze on these open spaces, and can then be fairly easily approached.

Buffalo, though rare, are to be found in the upper reaches of the Pheni and Mynee rivers.

Sambar, serow, and barking-deer are to be found throughout the district, and occasionally chital; while wild pigs are numerous everywhere. Tiger and leopard are occasionally met with, and it is always advisable to carry a rifle in addition to a shot gun. I was jungle-fowl shooting with a party on Christmas Day of 1901, and the hunters had just entered the jungle, when I saw a tiger quietly moving down the hillside towards me. I exchanged my shot gun for the rifle, and bowled him over as he was crossing the open about fifty yards from where I was posted. The same day we accounted for two fine sambar stags, in addition to a bag of jungle-fowl pheasants and a couple of woodcock—a mixed bag that should satisfy the most fastidious of tastes. On another occasion we were out, and a tiger bounded over the head of the ladies of the party who had accompanied the shooters, and were sitting quietly in the shade of a nah. The tiger was subsequently secured, though at the moment he got off without a single shot being fired at him.

Jungle-fowl shooting is very good sport, and much resembles pheasant shooting at home in outlying spinnays. Excellent bags can be obtained by beating the patches of jungle that are found at the fringe of the hills in the neighbourhood of cultivation. January and February, when all the crops are off the ground, are the

best months for this sport. In boats of this nature the kalij and argus-eyed pheasants are frequently put up, as also snipe and woodcock. The latter birds come in about November and leave in March. Sidge arrives very early and can be shot in the middle of August; they stay late, and I have shot several in May. The pintail are in the majority, but the common or "fall" snipe are also found.

The sportsman who is fond of fishing can get lots of it, for the rivers of the Hill Tracts teem with fish. The Karaphull is the easiest river to fish. Mahasour abound, and they run very big. I have seen a fish over eighty pounds in weight caught by a hospital assistant with an ordinary bamboo having a strong line and a hook baited with a piece of plantain. As soon as the fish was hooked he abandoned the rod, jumped into a small boat, and followed the fish, which dashed off downstream, dragging the bamboo pole after it; this acted as a break, for after some time the fish became quite exhausted, and was ignominiously towed to shore and landed some three miles below the spot where it was originally hooked. The hysterical delight of the Bata on securing this monster was too comical for words. The fish was strung up on a paddle and carried by two hillmen, while the Bata danced in front shouting incoherent sentences relative to his marvellous skill and prowess. The natives frequently catch monstees in a similar way with baits of boiled rice, plantains or flour-paste. I have never landed a fish over twenty-four pound, and that I caught one hot summer's morning. The fish would not look at spoon or live-bait, but I noticed that several big fellows were on the feed at the tail end of a rapid. On examining the water I saw that a lot of fresh water moss or weed was floating down, and the fish were taking this as a dainty salad.

Map of the South
Coast of Java



Scale 1:50,000

Legend

- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Railway
- Canal
- Irrigation Canal
- Drainage Canal
- Boundary
- Contour
- Hachure
- Spot Height
- Water
- Forest
- Cultivated Land
- Uncultivated Land
- Sand
- Swamp
- Mountain
- Hill
- Plain
- Valley
- Gorge
- Cliff
- Beach
- Bay
- Strait
- Inlet
- Peninsula
- Island
- Shoal
- Reef
- Bank
- Embankment
- Dike
- Dam
- Bridge
- Tunnel
- Viaduct
- Station
- Post
- Telegraph
- Cable
- Light
- Buoy
- Beacon
- Lighthouse
- Fort
- Castle
- Citadel
- Barracks
- Camp
- Encampment
- Fortification
- Wall
- Rampart
- Bastion
- Tower
- Spire
- Monument
- Obelisk
- Column
- Pillar
- Statue
- Shrine
- Temple
- Church
- Mosque
- Synagogue
- School
- Hospital
- Prison
- Jail
- Prisoner
- Soldier
- Officer
- Captain
- Major
- Colonel
- Lieutenant
- Sergeant
- Corporal
- Private
- Soldier
- Officer
- Captain
- Major
- Colonel
- Lieutenant
- Sergeant
- Corporal
- Private