

THE
HILL TRACTS OF CHITTAGONG

AND THE
DWELLERS THEREIN;

WITH
COMPARATIVE VOCABULARIES OF THE HILL DIALECTS.

BY
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“Nullus est liber tam malus, ut non aliqua parte prosit.”

“There is no book so bad as not to be useful in some way or other.”

I think that all details become interesting when they relate to, and serve to depict, the characteristics of people of whom we have known little until now, and with whom it is desirable to cultivate more intimate terms.—(*Letter from Lieutenant Samuel Turner, Ambassador to Thibet, addressed to Mr. John Macpherson, Governor-General of Bengal, 2nd March 1784.*)

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without fear, as there are no thieves in the hills. One of these deserted villages presents a curious spectacle ; there are all the evidences of occupation and recent life, but every living creature has disappeared. Granaries may be seen half full of grain : large wooden mortars for pounding the grain, the weaving implements of the women, and some half-finished clothes, all left behind for them to take away at their leisure. They have gone probably a long distance (two days' journey) to the new site of the village ; and on arriving there, every family has to build its own house.

Each tribe in the hills has a different way of building ; and of this, I shall speak further, when referring to the distinctive peculiarities of each tribe. Our own tributary hill tribes all build their houses of bamboo, raised from the ground about ten feet, on bamboo supports, with numerous smaller bamboo props supporting the floor, the roof, and the walls, in every conceivable direction. The floor and walls are made of bamboo split and flattened out ; the numerous crevices give free access to every breeze, and render a hill house one of the coolest and most pleasant of habitations. The roof is also of bamboo cross-pieces, thatched with palmyra, or "atop" leaves, called by the Bengallees "krook pata." This forms an impervious and lasting roof, which need only be renewed once in three years, whereas the ordinary grass-thatched roof has to be repaired every year. A hill house perched in an exposed position on the ridge or spur of a lofty eminence looks the frailest structure in the world ; its strength, however, is surprizing, and in spite of the fearful tempests that sometimes sweep over the hills, I never heard of a house having fallen or being injured by the wind.

The domesticated animals of the hill people are the "guyal" (the cow), buffaloe, goat, dog, cat, pig, and the common fowl.

The four last named animals are common to the whole district. Long-haired varieties of the cat, dog, and goat, are found among the independent tribes. The guyal, also, are rarely found with any tribe save those that are independent of our authority. The cow and buffaloe are principally found among the people inhabiting the Fenny River country, as that part of the district offers the greatest advantages for pasturage.

One of the most marked peculiarities of the Hill Tract forests is their silence. There would seem to be but few wild animals in the hills, numerically speaking. I have travelled for miles in the wildest part of the district without seeing fur or feather ; almost every

species of wild animal, however, is found in the hills; and to be a good and successful hunter is a great merit in the eyes of the tribes.

The gibbon monkey (*hoolua*) is found throughout the hills, and towards the south on the coast the fisher monkey (*simia synomolgus*) is met with. The lemur is also not unfrequently met with. There are also the small common monkey, which, in large flocks, does dire mischief to the standing crops of the hill men, and a long-tailed white-whiskered variety,—the lungoor. The flying fox (*pteropus edulis*), the horse-shoe bat, and the small house-bat or flitter mouse, are all found in the hills; also the musk-rat, the badger, the Malay black bear, and several species of wild cats. Tigers are not uncommon, but they do not do much harm. The wild dog is said to be met with, but I have not seen it. The mongoose, the large dark-brown squirrel, the red squirrel, the yellow-bellied variety, the field rat, the bamboo rat, and the porcupine (*histris leucurus*), are all more or less frequently met with. The elephant and the Assam rhinoceros are common. The former roam in large herds of 100 to 150 all over the district. The double-horned Sumatran species of rhinoceros was formerly thought not to be a native of this part of the country, but a specimen has recently been captured alive, and brought to Chittagong by Captain Hood, of the Khedda Department. It was smooth-skinned and unmistakably two-horned. A small, black species of hog is found throughout the district, as also the barking deer, the muntjak, and samber; guyal and wild buffalo are not uncommon. Of birds we have the following varieties:—the beemra (*edolius remifer*), shrikes, the bulbul, warblers, the water-wagtail, hoopoe koel, the carrion crow (this bird is found largely along the western frontier, but ceases entirely on going far east), minah, hornbill (*buceros cavatus*), small, green parrots, a large blue king-fisher with a red neck, a small variety of the same species, the night jar, the anvil bird, the peacock, Argus pheasant, the matoora or Arracan pheasant, the button quail, jungle fowl, green pigeon, the large wood-pigeon, ring-dove, kites, fish-eagles, and a few wild duck and snipe. I have seen one partridge, but they are very rarely found in the district. The boa-constrictor is common, and is found of enormous size. Several kinds of poisonous snakes are also met with.

The hills and sea-board of Chittagong, until the rise and

The rise and progress of British authority, were the border-land upon which several races struggled for supremacy. Arracanese, Moguls, and Portuguese all