

WILD RACES

OF

SOUTH-EASTERN INDIA.

BY CAPT. T. H. LEWIN,

Deputy Commissioner of Hill Tracts.

“ 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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PART I.

THE HILL TRACTS.

RISING from the rice swamps and level land of the Chittagong District, of which it forms the eastern boundary, there stretches out a vast extent of hilly and mountainous country, inhabited by various hill races. Of this country and of these people I purpose here to give some account, but more especially I shall notice such part of it as, lying between Lat. $21^{\circ} 25'$ and $23^{\circ} 45'$ north, and

Long. $91^{\circ}45'$ and $92^{\circ}50'$ east, is subject to British rule, and distinguished by the name of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The country in question lies on the south-eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal, and is bounded on the west by the maritime District of Chittagong; on the south and east, as far as the Blue Mountain, by the Province of Arracan; on the north, by the Fenny River, which divides the Hill Tracts from Hill Tipperah, a semi-independent State; while to the north and north-east the boundary is undefined, and may be said to be conterminous with the extent to which the influence of the British Government is acknowledged amongst the hill tribes in that direction.

The extent of the district, however, may be roughly summarized as the country watered by the Rivers Fenny, Kurnafoolee, Sungoo, and Matamooree, with their tributaries from the water-sheds to the entry of these rivers into the Chittagong District.

The River Fenny and the western major tributaries of the Kurnafoolee have their

rarely found with any tribe save those that are independent of our authority. The cow and buffalo 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 (hooluq) 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 (*pterus 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 Elephant 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 consolidation of British authority, were the border-land upon which several races struggled for supremacy. Arra-