

REMINISCENCES

OF

SEVENTY YEARS'

LIFE, TRAVEL, AND ADVENTURE;

*MILITARY AND CIVIL;  
SCIENTIFIC AND LITERARY.*

BY

A RETIRED OFFICER OF H.M.'s CIVIL SERVICE:

*Fellow of the Imperial Institute; Member of the British Association, Royal Institution of Great Britain, Society of Arts, National Indian Association, and Library Association of the United Kingdom; Associate of the Victoria Institute, etc.*

R. G. Hobbes  
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IN TWO VOLS.

VOL. I.

SOLDIERING IN INDIA.

LONDON

ELLIOT STOCK, 62 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1893.



differs from the languages of the Aryan family ; it is thought to be probably that form of speech which prevailed in the Gangetic provinces before the Aryan conquest. Their religion also differs from the religions of the inhabitants of the plains, and they hate and dread the Hindoos. They have a kind of National Father, or Protector, symbolised under the name of "The Great Mountain," and each household worships its own deity—*an evil being* ; they believe in the existence of innumerable demons, who, as well as common ghosts, haunt the villages, and whom they seek to propitiate by sacrifices ;\* and they have, as it would seem, in each of their villages, a priest, and a grove of sal trees, where they believe all the household gods assemble, and where on certain periodical occasions they gather together to worship them. Ancestors, too, are worshipped. The Santhals burn the dead, and consign the bones to the Ganges. They have no written records. Their traditions, however, are said to bear a strong resemblance to the Mosaic accounts of the Creation, the Deluge, etc. *No missionary seems yet to have been sent among them.*†

centre, who, fluting, drumming, and dancing too, are the motive power of the whole, and form an axis of the circular movement. We are told that Krishna, when he thought the lovely light of autumn propitious for the Rasa dance, with Rama commenced singing sweet-toned strains in various measures such as the milkmaids loved ; and they, as soon as they heard the melody, quitted their homes and joined him : just so, on a moonlight night, the Santal youths invite the Santal maidens."—*Dalton*.

\* "In seasons of scarcity the priests of Lower Bengal still offer up children to the insatiable demons who terrified the forest tribes three thousand years ago."—*Hunter*.

† A mission to the Santhals was begun by the Church Missionary Society in 1857, *under the auspices of the Indian Government, which made itself responsible for all expenses*. It has been so successful that they have now an ordained ministry. A church has been erected "on the top of the hills" at Taljhari, and there is a community of several thousand Christians. "Up the hillside to the house of God on the summit may be seen numbers of Santhal worshippers, no longer half naked, as they were a few years back, but clad in simple white, wending their way with their wives and little ones. The church holds about eight hundred, and on more than one occasion it has been quite full ; and sometimes more than a hundred and fifty, perhaps nearly two hundred, have at one time within its walls met to partake of the Lord's Supper. Below the church hill stand the simple, unpretending bungalows of the missionaries, rows of trees leading up to them, and the whole place looking, in the sweet rural quietness, a most charming spot. Round the bungalows, at a little distance, are grouped the training and practising schools, girls' and infant schools, and the houses of the native Christians. From the top of the church hill many Santhal villages may be seen, half hidden in the jungle and underwood, and two or three of these



Another aboriginal race, the Kols, of whom we can learn but little, appear to have their villages alternating with those of the Santhals. They are a middle-sized, strong, very dark, black-haired, and thick-lipped people; are divided into a number of small tribes; have no regular system of religion, but *worship the dog*, the Sahajan tree, and other objects, and live on berries, and game, and the flesh of animals that have died a natural death, as well as of those they have slain. Like the Santhals, they appear fond of dancing. With some tribe of these Kols, in the neighbourhood of the Station to which we are appointed, we were recently at war. They use the bow and arrow in warfare,\* the arrow-head being of rough iron, double barbed, and often poisoned; they also use a war-hatchet to cut down horses in action; it is sometimes fixed at the end of a long bamboo, to enable them to hamstring horses at a distance. They gave our troops a good deal of trouble, but were eventually reduced to submission.

Yet a third, and a very interesting aboriginal race, the Puharees, a Dravidian family, inhabit the tops of the Rajmahal Hills; and of these, Bishop Heber gives a long account in his Journal.† He describes them as a peculiar race, of dwarfish stature, fairer than the Bengalees, and reminding him of the Welsh; distinct from the people of the plains in features, language, civilisation, and religion; having no castles and no idols; caring nothing for the Hindoo deities; though living on plunder,‡ yet honest among themselves, and *regarding a lie as the greatest of all crimes*. He further describes them as living chiefly by the chase, for which they are provided with bows

villages are almost entirely occupied by Christians. A few years ago this spot was the haunt of the wild elephant and rhinoceros, and no foot had trodden it but those of the wild, freebooting Puharees. Sixty years ago Bishop Heber expressed a hope that something might be done to make known the Gospel to the dwellers among the Rajmahal Hills, and now indeed his wish has been most nobly accomplished." The *Church Missionary Gleaner* gives us a picture of nine Santhal Christians, which we regret that we cannot here reproduce.

\* "In India, as in other countries, the oldest and the most important of national weapons is the *bow*."—*Mukharji*.

† Vol. i., p. 258, *et seq.*

‡ "They were encouraged in predatory habits by the zemindars at the foot of the hills, who invited the chiefs to plunder neighbouring estates, giving them a passage through their territory for the purpose, on condition of getting the lion's share of the spoil. Thus not only were the roads near the hills made unsafe, but even the boats on the Ganges."—*Dalton*.



commences to cultivate he finds, from very significant threats, that he must withdraw and leave the hillmen to profit by his toil."

Not a few of our party would gladly linger at Rajmahal. I have already become aware that India as a sporting country is almost, if not altogether, unequalled. Here the huntsman and the fowler are in all their glory, and find enjoyment unparalleled. The former has only to choose between tiger, leopard, elephant, bear, rhinoceros, hog, buffalo, wolf, civet-cat, deer, antelope, jackal, fox, hare, rabbit, badger, otter, and a variety of other animals, all of which afford good sport; the latter between partridge, grouse, curlew, coslen, bittern, plover, kingfisher, peafowl, woodcock, quail, bustard, calidge, ortolan, pigeon, ptarmigan, buzzard, florekin, wild goose, wild duck, jungle-fowl,\* pheasant, snipe, chickore, teal, lark, and an innumerable multitude of birds whose names are not familiar to the English ear, but with which our countrymen soon become acquainted in the East. And yet sportsmen of the present day are not so well provided for as were those of fifty years ago. Many of the larger stations, which were then surrounded by forests and low jungle, are now environed by cultivated fields, and thus cover for game has been destroyed; while manufactories set up in the heart of the wilderness, and the havoc created by our sportsmen, have affrighted the denizens of the woods from their old haunts, and driven them to seek refuge in the interior recesses of the land.

But we still have the jackal, even in our Indian cities, and here it abounds. An instance of the voracity of this species may be mentioned. Two of our men died in these wilds of cholera. As coffins were not procurable, they were sewn up in their beds, and so committed to the earth; while their names, corps, and the dates of their respective deaths were pricked out by their comrades with a fork on the bottom of a tin mess-plate (the soldier's apology for a tombstone), and nailed against a tree over the place of their interment. Shortly after we had reached our destination, a detachment of recruits, who had left Calcutta a few days subsequent to ourselves, arrived there. From these we learned that they had encamped near the place at which we had buried these men,

\* The stock to which all common fowls owe their origin.



and the navigation dangerous, and which was famous of old for its banditti,\* who descended upon it from their eyries in the neighbouring hills of Rajmahal—we pass three picturesque hills of granite, rising abruptly from the bosom of the river, rudely sculptured with mythological devices, covered with trees and shrubs, and inhabited by numbers of the feathered race (and also, as we hear, by some Hindoo devotees, whose wretched habitations form a hideous contrast to the beauty of all around them); and come to the junction of the river Koosie with the Ganges. Opposite this stands another lofty hill (Pattergutta), on which is a Temple with a cave, into which, it is said, a native prince once entered with a hundred thousand followers at his heels, each holding a torch in his hand, and carrying a measure of oil, and *never came back!* Truly this is a land of wonders! Next we come to Secreegully, a village at the foot of a high rocky eminence, on the summit of which gleams the white tomb of the Mahomedan saint, Peer Pointee, one of the conquerors of Bengal, “as devout as he was valiant.” It is stated to be three hundred years old. Tradition says that every Thursday night a tiger visits the tomb, couches close to the grave, and remains there till morning. Farther on we pass the Mootie Jhurna waterfall, a beautiful cascade. The country about here affords capital sport, and is often visited by shooting parties from a great distance. Here game laws are unknown. Tiger, hog, rhinoceros, leopard, and boar hunting may be enjoyed in perfection.

We now approach the Rajmahal hills, the home of that interesting tribe the Santhals (referred to in our first upward march), and pass the desolate city of Rajmahal (also before alluded to), where once stood the palace of the Emperor Jehanghire, and where, amid a luxuriant bamboo jungle, still stand the remains of that of Sultan Sujah, visited and described by Heber.† The ruins are very picturesque as seen from the river, and remind the visitor familiar with our Anglo-Indian poet Richardson of his memorable lines written

See page 495.

† Much of this has disappeared, having been removed in the construction of the railway which now connects Rajmahal with Calcutta. The hall, of black marble, which once formed Sultan Sujah’s *baitakana*, now makes a comfortable room for the railway engineer.