

KORNO SIGA,

THE MOUNTAIN CHIEF;

OR,

LIFE IN ASSAM.

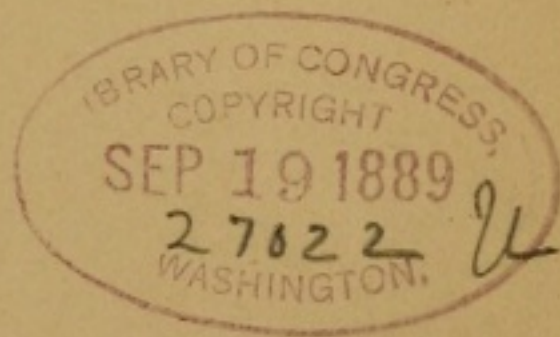
BY

MRS. MILDRED MARSTON. *psend.*

Scott, Mrs. Anna (Kay)

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE HON. JAMES M. HOYT.



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that some god lives in that tree and will bless the giver of even a handful of rice.

As we have before remarked, there is little doubt that these mountain tribes once inhabited the plains, and lived in a greater degree of civilization and refinement. But the ancient Aryans invading the country in the remote ages drove these unsuspecting people, by treachery, back into the barren mountains and cheated them of their long possessed country. In the same selfish manner did our most revered Puritan fathers treat the North American Indians. And we, as their descendants, have as yet learned but little more of that true spirit of Christian philanthropy that would lead us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In all that pertains to the comforts and elegancies of civilized life, these tribes inhabiting the mountains of northeastern India are poor indeed.

Vermin of all kinds live luxuriously among them, and often after entertaining a company of these people in my drawing-room, I have seen twenty and more of the species *Cimex* creeping away from where my guests have been seated. Six or seven of these loathsome bugs are given internally by the people to prevent ague.

Fleas also abound, and during the months of March and April, they seem literally to take possession of our houses. On arising from our beds an armed host seemed to attack our feet, cov-

ering them so thickly that we could hardly discern by sight, whether they were human flesh or parasitic fleas. The dust of the earth during these two months swarms with them, but as the rainy season sets in they disappear as if by magic.

The mountain jungles abound with mammoth trees: oaks, chestnuts, and birches thrive on the higher ranges, and lower down we find the rubber, the teak and the *hal*.* Here and there all over the hills are acacia trees, and the use of the bark is well recognized by the natives.

Wild animals abound in the dense jungles, and human life is not safe while travelling even short distances. The huge man-eating Bengal tiger has found his way into these mountains, and is ever on the alert for human flesh. The elephant, rhinoceros, the buffalo and the bear are numerous, and leopards, jackals and monkeys are as thick as peas in a pod. Birds of gorgeous plumage abound, but we miss the sweet singers of our native land; the only singers I have met among the birds of India being the *mina* and the *bim raja*.

* The *hal* or *sal* (for the natives use "h" and "s" interchangeably) is a hard wood. We used to call it the Assamese mahogany.