

To Lt Colonel & Mrs A. Waddell  
with the author's respects -  
**HOURS WITH NATURE.**

*Proof Copy Edition*

BY

**RAMBRAMHA SANYAL, C.M.Z.S.**

**SUPERINTENDENT, ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN, CALCUTTA;  
AUTHOR OF THE "HAND-BOOK ON THE MANAGEMENT OF  
ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY IN LOWER BENGAL."**

**"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom  
hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."**

*Psalms.*

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*Sanyal*

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ance of such a common bird as the kingfisher had amused him vastly, but like the good boy that he was, he volunteered to tell us all about the bird.

### **OARSMAN'S STORY OF KINGFISHERS.**

You must all know that riversides are favorite resorts of various kinds of birds and beasts. Then, there are others which though not living close by, habitually come to the bank at least once a day for a drink. I remember having once seen within twenty-four hours thirty-five different kinds of animals, including a tiger and a huge rhinoceros. This happened while we were pulling up a stream in the Sunderbuns. That, however, is another story. Let me tell you about the kingfishers that I have seen. There are several species of kingfishers, but my favorite among them is the Gureal. It is a very handsome bird with large stout bill of a bloodred colour. It is found along rivers and streams, but I have never seen it where there are no trees with dense foliage to hide it. It sits on a branch overhanging the water and watches for its food as you have just seen that one do. I dare say you have heard its peculiar call, a sort of *peer peer pur* uttered several times in succession. It is a powerful bird, I assure you, and quite a match for a hawk or a bird of that kind. I have heard that it breeds in hollow trees, but I don't know much about that. I have, however, once seen a nestling removed from the mud wall of a deserted shed. By the bye, some of you ought to find out whether they do breed in hollow trees or not. It

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**Phoenix farinifer**—which is another kind of date palm, is a native of dry, barren, and sandy tracts on the east coast of Southern India. Its trunk yields a sago-like substance which is largely consumed by the poorer classes of the people during scarcity or famine.

**The Arabian date palm**—Of this, there were several varieties from Persia, Egypt, Bussorah, and the Persian Gulf. When carefully cultivated the Arabian date palm thrives in the climate and soil of India, especially in its drier regions. In countries where this species is largely cultivated, the method adopted for impregnating the female flower consists in making a slit in the spathe a little before it would burst naturally, thrusting into it a branch, or a part of the male spadix, and lightly tying them up with a string. The sweet date of commerce is a product of this palm.

**The Hental palm.**—A long row of *hental* (*Phoenix paludosa*) fringed the western border of the palmetum. It grows luxuriantly in the impenetrable thickets of the Sunderbuns, where, regardless of the tiger, the rhinoceros, and the deadly snakes which infest the jungles, the woodcutters penetrate, and collect loads of the smaller trunks of this palm, which are made into walking sticks. Tradition declares that snakes get out of the way of persons carrying *hental* sticks.

### A SYLVAN BREAKFAST.

It was now breakfast time, and as the sun had mounted high and shone glaringly from a cloudless sky, we were