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AN ACCOUNT OF THE
DISTRICT OF PURNEA

IN

1809-10



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BY

FRANCIS BUCHANAN

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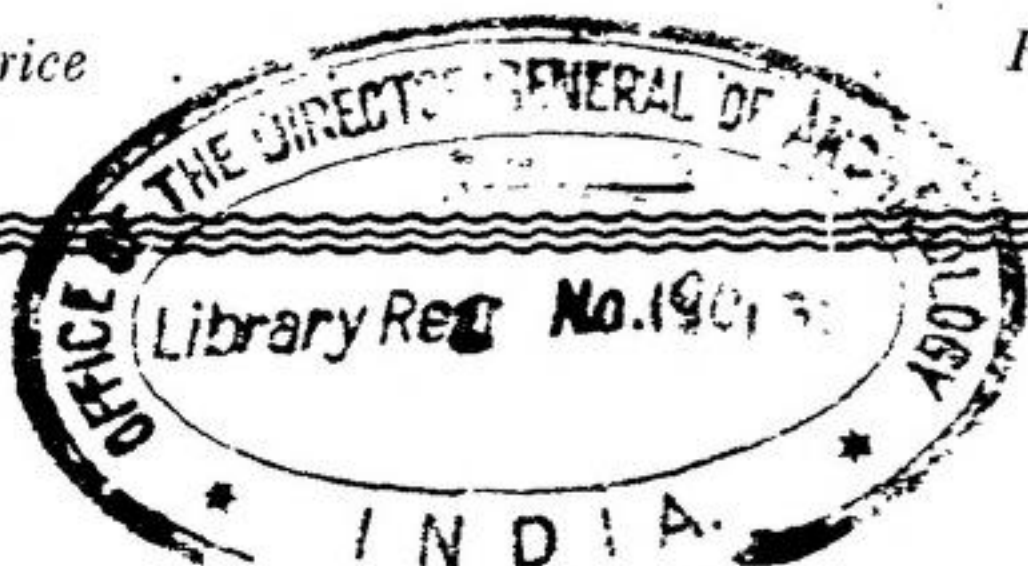
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PART III

NATURAL PRODUCTIONS OF PURANIYA.

CHAPTER I.

WILD ANIMALS—BIRDS—REPTILES—FISH—INSECTS.

The only monkey that I have seen wild in this district is the Markat, or *Simia Rhesus* of Audibert, mentioned in my account of Dinajpur. In the ruins of Gaur there are a great many, and I saw them nowhere else; but I am told that in the marshy woods of the south there are many.

WILD ANIMALS.

Wherever they are numerous they do much harm; but no one kills them.

For some years three or four wild elephants have frequented the woods in the southern parts of the district, and it is from thence, probably, that the two mentioned in my account of Dinajpur made their incursion into the ruins of Peruya. Here they have been extremely destructive, so that, to the total disgrace of the police, they have every year destroyed some villages, and unless checked they seem to be in a fair way of ruining the whole of that vicinity. The farmers are so timid, and the zemindars are on such mutual bad terms, that unless the magistrate interferes, there is not the smallest hope that the elephants will be disturbed. It would, however, be unreasonable that any expense should be incurred, except by the zemindars. These have plenty of tame elephants, and the whole of these being assembled, and a couple of good musketeers placed on each, in the course of a few days the wild ones might to a certainty be killed.

Towards the northern frontier herds of forty or fifty elephants make occasional incursions from Morang. The people make a noise, but never attempt to repel them by violence.

A rhinoceros lately made his appearance in the marshy woods of the south; but fortunately he thrust himself into the premises of an indigo planter, and was shot.

The jackal (Seyal) and Indian fox (Khikir) are common. The former is supposed to steal both money and cloth, which it conceals. This I presume is a fabrication of those who pilfer, in order to account for the disappearance of many things that they have been suspected of taking.

I heard of no wolves or hyænas. At Nathipur, however, in the course of the beginning of the year 1810, some children were carried away in the night, as was supposed by some animal, and this was naturally thought to be a wolf (Hunda); but the attacks were always in the dark, the people were too much terrified to pursue, and their search in the day was without effect; so that the animal was never seen. Formerly such accidents were common; but since the country in the neighbourhood has been cleared, the wolves have disappeared. They do not seem ever to have frequented the southern parts of the district.

Except in the ruins of Gaur, tigers and leopards are not common. By both Moslems and Hindus they are considered as the property of the old Muhammedan saints, who it is imagined are offended at their death: so that in general the natives are far from being pleased at the sport of tiger hunting, although they admire the courage of those by whom it is practised. I am indeed of opinion that a few tigers in any part of the country that is overgrown with woods or long grass are useful in keeping down the number of wild hogs and deer, which are infinitely more destructive. The natives seem to be in general of this opinion, and the number of either people or cattle that the tigers destroy, even at Gaur, is very trifling. If the number of other wild animals on which the tigers prey was reduced, they no doubt would become destructive, and it would become of