Reid Mayne

# The Plant Hunters: Adventures Among the Himalaya Mountains

Томас Майн Рид

# The Plant Hunters: Adventures Among the Himalaya Mountains

**Майн Рид Т.**

The Plant Hunters: Adventures Among the Himalaya Mountains / Т. Майн Рид — «Public Domain»,

# Содержание

# Mayne Reid
# The Plant Hunters: Adventures Among the Himalaya Mountains

## Chapter One.
## The Plant-Hunter

"A Plant-Hunter! what is that?

"We have heard of fox-hunters, of deer-hunters, of bear and buffalo-hunters, of lion-hunters, and of 'boy-hunters;' of a plant-hunter never.

"Stay! Truffles are plants. Dogs are used in finding them; and the collector of these is termed a truffle-hunter. Perhaps this is what the Captain means?"

No, my boy reader. Something very different from that. My plant-hunter is no fungus-digger. His occupation is of a nobler kind than contributing merely to the capricious palate of the gourmand. To his labours the whole civilised world is indebted – yourself among the rest. Yes, you owe him gratitude for many a bright joy. For the varied sheen of your garden you are indebted to him. The gorgeous dahlia that nods over the flower-bed – the brilliant peony that sparkles on the parterre – the lovely camelia that greets you in the greenhouse, – the kalmias, the azaleas, the rhododendrons, the starry jessamines, the gerania, and a thousand other floral beauties, are, one and all of them, the gifts of the plant-hunter. By his agency England – cold cloudy England – has become a garden of flowers, more varied in species and brighter in bloom than those that blossomed in the famed valley of Cashmere. Many of the noble trees that lend grace to our English landscape, – most of the beautiful shrubs that adorn our villas, and gladden the prospect from our cottage-windows, are the produce of his industry. But for him, many fruits, and vegetables, and roots, and berries, that garnish your table at dinner and dessert, you might never have tasted. But for him these delicacies might never have reached your lips. A good word, then, for the plant-hunter!

And now, boy reader, in all seriousness I shall tell you what I mean by a "plant-hunter." I mean a person who devotes all his time and labour to the collection of rare plants and flowers – in short, one who makes this occupation his *profession*. These are not simply "botanists" – though botanical knowledge they must needs possess – but, rather, what has hitherto been termed "botanical collectors."

Though these men may not stand high in the eyes of the scientific world – though the closet-systematist may affect to underrate their calling, I dare boldly affirm that the humblest of their class has done more service to the human race than even the great Linnaeus himself. They are, indeed, the botanists of true value, who have not only imparted to us a knowledge of the world's vegetation, but have brought its rarest forms before our very eyes – have placed its brightest flowers under our very noses, as it were – flowers, that but for them had been still "blushing unseen," and "wasting their sweetness on the desert air."

My young reader, do not imagine that I have any desire to underrate the merits of the scientific botanist. No, nothing of the sort. I am only desirous of bringing into the foreground a class of men whose services in my opinion the world has not yet sufficiently acknowledged – I mean the botanical collectors – the *plant-hunters*.

It is just possible that you never dreamt of the existence of such a profession or calling, and yet from the earliest historic times there have been men who followed it. There were plant-collectors in the days of Pliny, who furnished the gardens of Herculaneum and Pompeii; there were plant-collectors employed by the wealthy mandarins of China, by the royal sybarites of Delhi and Cashmere, at a time

when our semi-barbarous ancestors were contented with the wild flowers of their native woods. But even in England the calling of the plant-hunter is far from being one of recent origin. It dates as early as the discovery and colonisation of America; and the names of the Tradescants, the Bartrams, and the Catesbys – true plant-hunters – are among the most respected in the botanical world. To them we are indebted for our tulip-trees, our magnolias, our maples, our robinias, our western *platanus*, and a host of other noble trees, that already share the forest, and contest with our native species, the right to our soil.

At no period of the world has the number of plant-hunters been so great as at present. Will you believe it, hundreds of men are engaged in this noble and useful calling? Among them may be found representatives of all the nations of Europe – Germans in greatest number; but there are Swedes and Russ as well, Danes and Britons, Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Portuguese, Swiss and Italians. They may be found pursuing their avocation in every corner of the world – through the sequestered passes of the Rocky Mountains, upon the pathless prairies, in the deep barrancas of the Andes, amid the tangled forests of the Amazon and the Orinoco, on the steppes of Siberia, in the glacier valleys of the Himalaya – everywhere – everywhere amid wild and savage scenes, where the untrodden and the unknown invite to fresh discoveries in the world of vegetation. Wandering on with eager eyes, scanning with scrutiny every leaf and flower – toiling over hill and dale – climbing the steep cliff – wading the dank morass or the rapid river – threading his path through thorny thicket, through "chapparal" and "jungle" – sleeping in the open air – hungering, thirsting, risking life amidst wild beasts, and wilder men, – such are a few of the trials that chequer the life of the plant-hunter.

From what motive, you will ask, do men choose to undergo such hardships and dangers?

The motives are various. Some are lured on by the pure love of botanical science; others by a fondness for travel. Still others are the *employés* of regal or noble patrons – of high-born botanical amateurs. Not a few are the emissaries of public gardens and arboretums; and yet another few – perchance of humbler names and more limited means, though not less zealous in their well-beloved calling, – are collectors for the "nursery."

Yes; you will no doubt be astonished to hear that the plain "seedsman" at the town end, who sells you your roots and bulbs and seedlings, keeps in his pay a staff of plant-hunters – men of botanical skill, who traverse the whole globe in search of new plants and flowers, that may gratify the heart and gladden the eyes of the lovers of floral beauty.

Need I say that the lives of such men are fraught with adventures and hair-breadth perils? You shall judge for yourself when I have narrated to you a few chapters from the experience of a young Bavarian botanist, – Karl Linden – while engaged in a *plant-hunting* expedition to the Alps of India – the stupendous mountains of the Himalaya.

# Chapter Two.
# Karl Linden

Karl Linden was a native of Upper Bavaria, near the Tyrolese frontier. Not high-born, for his father was a gardener; but, what is of more importance in modern days, well brought up and well educated. A gardener's son may still be a gentleman; and so may a gardener himself, for that matter, or he may not. There are many senses to this much-abused title. It so happens, that young Linden was a gentleman in the *true* sense; that is, he was possessed of a feeling heart, a nice sense of honesty and honour, and was, notwithstanding his humble lineage, an educated and accomplished youth. His father, the gardener, was a man of ambitious spirit, though quite unlettered; and, having himself often experienced the disadvantage of this condition, he resolved that his son never should.

In most parts of Germany, education is considered a thing of value, and is eagerly sought after. It is provided liberally for all classes; and the Germans, as a people, are perhaps the best educated in the world. It is partly owing to this fact, and partly to their energetic industry, that they exercise so great an influence in the affairs of the world; in the arts and sciences, in music, painting, and the study of nature – above all, in a knowledge of botany. I cannot believe that the Germans stand highest as an *intellectual* race, but only as an *educated* people. What a pity I could not add, that they are a free people; but in that their condition differs less from our own than we fondly imagine.

At nineteen years of age, young Karl Linden did not consider them as free as they deserved to be. He was then a student in one of the universities; and, naturally enough, had imbibed those principles of patriotic liberty, that, in 1848, were stirring in the German heart.

He did more than advocate his faith by empty words. Joined with his college compatriots, he endeavoured to have it carried into practice; and he was one of those brave students, who, in 1848, gave freedom to Baden and Bavaria.

But the hydra league of crowned heads was too strong to be so easily broken; and, among other youthful patriots, our hero was forced to flee from his native land.

An exile in London – "a refugee," as it is termed – he scarce knew what to do. His parent was too poor to send him money for his support. Besides, his father was not over well pleased with him. The old man was one of those who still clung to a belief in the divine right of kings, and was contented with the "powers that be," no matter how tyrannical they be. He was angry with Karl, for having made a fool of himself by turning patriot, or "rebel," as it pleases crowned monsters to term it. He had intended him for better things; a secretary to some great noble, a post in the Custom-house, or, may be, a commission in the bodyguard of some petty tyrant. Any of these would have fulfilled the ambitious hopes of Karl's father. The latter, therefore, was displeased with the conduct of his son. Karl had no hope from home, at least until the anger of the old man should die out.

What was the young refugee to do? He found English hospitality cold enough. He was free enough; that is, to wander the streets and beg.

Fortunately, he bethought him of a resource. At intervals, during his life, he had aided his father in the occupation of gardening. He could dig, plant, and sow. He could prune trees, and propagate flowers to perfection. He understood the management of the greenhouse and hothouse, the cold-pit and the forcing-pit; nay, more – he understood the names and nature of most of the plants that are cultivated in European countries; in other words, he was a botanist. His early opportunities in the garden of a great noble, where his father was superintendent, had given him this knowledge; and, having a taste for the thing, he had made botany a study.

If he could do no better, he might take a hand in a garden, or a nursery, or some such place. That would be better than wandering idly about the streets of the metropolis, and half-starving in the midst of its profuse plenty.

With such ideas in his mind, the young refugee presented himself at the gate of one of the magnificent “nurseries,” in which great London abounds. He told his story; he was employed.

It was not long before the intelligent and enterprising proprietor of the establishment discovered the botanical knowledge of his German *protégé*. He wanted just such a man. He had “plant-hunters” in other parts of the world; in North and South America, in Africa, in Australia. He wanted a collector for India; he wanted to enrich his stock from the flora of the Himalayas, just then coming into popular celebrity, on account of the magnificent forms of vegetation discovered there, by the great “plant-hunters” Boyle and Hooker.

The splendid pine-trees, arums, and screw-pines; the varied species of bambusa, the grand magnolias and rhododendrons, which grow so profusely in the Himalaya valleys, had been described, and many of them introduced into European gardens. These plants were therefore the rage; and, consequently, the *desiderata* of the nurseryman.

What rendered them still more interesting and valuable was, that many of those beautiful exotics would bear the open air of high latitudes, on account of the elevated region of their native habitat possessing a similarity of temperature and climate to that of northern Europe.

More than one “botanical collector” was at this time despatched to explore the chain of the Indian Alps, whose vast extent offered scope enough for all.

Among the number of these plant-hunters, then, was our hero, Karl Linden.

# Chapter Three.
# Caspar, Ossaroo, and Fritz

An English ship carried the plant-hunter to Calcutta, and his own good legs carried him to the foot of the Himalaya Mountains. He might have travelled there in many other ways – for perhaps in no country in the world are there so many modes of travelling as in India. Elephants, camels, horses, asses, mules, ponies, buffaloes, oxen, zebus, yaks, and men are all made use of to transport the traveller from place to place. Even dogs, goats, and sheep, are trained as beasts of burden!

Had Karl Linden been a Government emissary, or the *employé* of some regal patron, he would very likely have travelled in grand style – either upon an elephant in a sumptuous howdah, or in a palanquin with relays of bearers, and a host of coolies to answer to his call.

As it was, he had no money to throw away in such a foolish manner. It was not *public* money he was spending, but that of private enterprise, and his means were necessarily limited. He was not the less likely to accomplish the object for which he had been sent out. Many a vast and pompous expedition has gone forth regardless either of expense or waste – ay, many a one that has returned without having accomplished the object intended. “Too many cooks spoil the dinner,” is a familiar old adage, very applicable to exploring expeditions; and it is a question, whether unaided individual enterprise has not effected more in the way of scientific and geographical discovery, than has been done by the more noisy demonstrations of governments. At all events, it is certain enough, that the exploring expeditions to which we are most indebted for our geognostic knowledge are those that have been fitted out with the greatest economy. As an example, I may point to the tracing of the northern coasts of America – which, after costing enormous sums of money, and the lives of many brave men, has been done, after all, by the Hudson’s Bay Company with a simple boat’s crew, and at an expense, that would not have franked one of our grand Arctic exploring expeditions for a week!

I might point to the economic mode by which the Americans are laying open their whole continent – a *single* officer having lately been sent to descend the Amazon alone, and explore its extensive valley from the Andes to the Atlantic. This was performed, and a copious report delivered to the American government and to the world at an expense of a few hundred dollars; whereas an English exploration of similar importance would have cost some thousands of pounds, with perhaps a much scantier return, for the outlay.

As with the American explorer, so was it with our plant-hunter. There was no expensive equipment or crowd of idle attendants. He reached the Himalayas on foot, and on foot he had resolved to climb their vast slopes and traverse their rugged valleys.

But Karl Linden was not alone. Far from it. He was in company with him he held dearest of all others in the world – his only brother. Yes, the stout youth by his side is his brother Caspar, who had joined him in his exile, and now shares the labours and perils of his expedition. There is no great difference between them in point of size, though Caspar is two years the younger. But Caspar’s strength has not been wasted by too much study. He has never been penned up within the walls of a college or a city; and, fresh from his native hills, his stout build and bright ruddy cheek present a contrast to the thinner form and paler visage of the student.

Their costumes are in keeping with their looks. That of Karl exhibits the sombre hue of the man of learning, while on his head he wears the proscribed “Hecker hat.” Caspar’s dress is of a more lively style, and consists of a frock of Tyrolese green, a cap of the same colour, with long projecting peak, over-alls of blue velveteen, and Blucher boots.

Both carry guns, with the usual accoutrements of sportsmen. Caspar’s gun is a double-barrelled fowling-piece; – while that of Karl is a rifle of the species known as a “Swiss yäger.”

A true hunter is Caspar, and although still but a boy, he has often followed the chamois in its dizzy path among his native mountains. Of letters he knows little, for Caspar has not been much to school; but in matters of hunter-craft he is well skilled. A brave and cheerful youth is Caspar – foot-free and untiring – and Karl could not have found in all India a better assistant.

But there is still another individual in the train of the plant-hunter – the guide, *Ossaroo*. It would take pages to describe Ossaroo; and he is worthy of a full description: but we shall leave him to be known by his deeds. Suffice it to say, that Ossaroo is a Hindoo of handsome proportions, with his swarth complexion, large beautiful eyes, and luxuriant black hair, which characterise his race. He is by caste a "shikarree," or hunter, and is not only so by hereditary descent, but he is one of the noted "mighty hunters" in the province to which he belongs. Far and wide is his name known – for Ossaroo possesses, what is somewhat rare among his indolent countrymen, an energy of mind, combined with strength and activity of body, that would have given him distinction anywhere; but among a people where such qualities are extremely rare, Ossaroo is of course a hunter-hero – the Nimrod of his district.

Ossaroo's costume and equipments differ entirely from those of his fellow-travellers. A white cotton tunic, and wide trousers, sandals, a scarlet sash around the waist, a check shawl upon the head, a light spear in the hand, a bamboo bow, a quiver of arrows on his back, a long knife stuck behind the sash, a shoulder-belt sustaining a pouch, with various trinket-like implements suspended over his breast. Such is the *coup d'oeil* presented by the shikarree.

Ossaroo had never in his life climbed the mighty Himalayas. He was a native of the hot plains – a hunter of the jungles – but for all that the botanist had engaged him for a *guide*. It was not so much a guide to enable them to find their route, as one who could assist them in their daily duties, who knew the way of life peculiar to this part of the world, who knew how to *keep house in, the open air*, Ossaroo was the very man of all others.

Moreover the expedition was just to his mind. He had long gazed upon the gigantic Himalaya from the distant plains – he had looked upon its domes and peaks glittering white in the robes of eternal snow, and had often desired to make a hunting excursion thither. But no good opportunity had presented itself, although through all his life he had lived within sight of those stupendous peaks. He, therefore, joyfully accepted the offer of the young botanist, and became "hunter and guide" to the expedition.

There was still another of the hunter-race in that company – one as much addicted to the chase as either Ossaroo or Caspar. This was a quadruped as tall as a mastiff dog, but whose black-and-tan colour and long pendulous ears bespoke him of a different race – the race of the hound. He was, in truth, a splendid hound, whose heavy jaws had ere now dragged to the ground many a red stag, and many a wild Bavarian boar. A dog to be valued was Fritz, and highly did his master esteem him. Caspar was that master. Caspar would not have exchanged Fritz for the choicest elephant in all India.

# Chapter Four.
# Is it Blood?

Behold the plant-hunter and his little party *en route*!

It was the same day on which they had engaged the guide Ossaroo, and this was their first journey together. Each carried his knapsack and blanket strapped to his back – and as each was to be his own travelling attendant, there was not much extra baggage. Ossaroo was some paces in the advance, and Karl and Caspar habitually walked side by side, where the nature of the path would permit. Fritz usually trotted along in the rear, though he sometimes busked up to the side of the guide, as if by instinct he recognised the born hunter. Although the acquaintance was but a short one, already had Fritz become a favourite with the "shikarree."

As they trudged along, the attention of Caspar was drawn to some red spots that appeared at intervals upon the path. It was a smooth road, and a very small object could be discerned upon it. The spots had all the appearance of blood-spots, as if quite freshly dropped!

"Blood it is," remarked Karl, who was also observing the spots.

"I wonder whether it's been a man or a beast," said Caspar, after an interval.

"Well, brother," rejoined Karl, "I think it must have been a beast, and a pretty large one too; I have been noticing it for more than a mile, and the quantity of blood I've observed would have emptied the veins of a giant. I fancy it must have been an elephant that has been bleeding."

"But there's no trace of an elephant," replied Caspar; "at least no tracks that are fresh; and this blood appears to be quite newly spilled."

"You are right, Caspar," rejoined his brother.

"It cannot have been an elephant, nor a camel neither. What may it have been, I wonder?"

At this interrogatory both the boys directed their glances along the road, in the direction in which they were going, hoping to discover some explanation of the matter. There was no object before them as far as they could see except Ossaroo. The Hindoo alone was upon the road. The blood could not be from him – surely not? Such a loss of blood would have killed the shikarree long ago. So thought Karl and Caspar.

They had fixed their eyes, however, upon Ossaroo, and just at that moment they saw him lean his head to one side, as though he had spat upon the ground. They marked the spot, and what was their astonishment on coming up and discovering upon the road another red spot exactly like those they had been noticing. Beyond a doubt Ossaroo was spitting blood!

To make sure, they watched him a little longer, and about a hundred yards farther on they saw him repeat his red expectoration!

They became considerably alarmed for the life of their guide.

"Poor Ossaroo!" exclaimed they, "he cannot live much longer after the loss of so much blood!"

And as this remark was made, both ran forward calling upon him to stop.

The guide wheeled round, and halted, wondering what was the matter. He quickly unslung his bow and placed an arrow to the string, fancying that they were attacked by some enemy. The hound, too, catching the alarm, came scampering up, and was soon upon the ground.

"What's the matter, Ossaroo?" demanded Karl and Caspar in a breath.

"Matter, Sahibs! me knowee noting – matter."

"But what ails you? are you ill?"

"No, Sahibs! me not ill – why my lords askee?"

"But this blood? See?"

They pointed to the red saliva on the road.

At this the shikarree burst out laughing, still further perplexing his interrogators. His laughter was not intended to be disrespectful to the young "Sahibs," only that he was unable to restrain himself on perceiving the mistake they had made.

"Pawnee, Sahibs," said he, drawing from his pouch a small roll like a cartridge of tobacco-leaves, and taking a bite off the end of it, to convince them that it was it – the "pawn" – which had imparted to his saliva such a peculiar colour.

The boys at once comprehended the nature of their mistake. The roll shown them by Ossaroo was the celebrated *betel*; and Ossaroo himself was a "betel-chewer," in common with many millions of his countrymen, and still more millions of the natives of Assam, Burmah, Siam, China, Cochin China, Malacca, the Philippine, and other islands of the great Indian Archipelago.

Of course the boys were now curious to know what the betel was, and the shikarree proceeded to give them full information about this curious commodity.

The "betel," or "pawn" as it is called by the Hindoos, is a compound substance, and its component parts are a leaf, a nut, and some quicklime. The leaf is taken from an evergreen shrub, which is cultivated in India for this very purpose. Ossaroo stated that it is usually cultivated under a shed made of bamboos, and wattled all around the sides to exclude the strong rays of the sun. The plant requires heat and a damp atmosphere, but exposure to the sun or dry winds would wither it, and destroy the flavour and pungency of the leaf. It requires great care in the cultivation, and every day a man enters the shed by a little door and carefully cleans the plants. The shed where it grows is usually a favourite lurking-place for poisonous snakes, and this diurnal visit of the betel-grower to his crop is rather a dangerous business; but the article is so profitable, and the mature crop yields such a fine price, that both the labour and the danger are disregarded. Ossaroo chanced to have some of the leaves in his pouch still in an entire state. He only knew them as "pawn-leaves," but the botanist at once recognised a rare hothouse plant, belonging to the pepper tribe, *Piperacea*. It is in fact a species of *Piper*, the *Piper-betel*, very closely allied to the climbing shrub which produces the common black-pepper of commerce, and having deep green oval and sharply-pointed leaves of very similar appearance to the leaves of the latter. Another species called *Piper siriboa* is also cultivated for the same purpose. So much for one of the component parts of this singular Oriental "quid."

"Now," continued Ossaroo, facing to one side of the path and pointing upwards, "if Sahibs lookee up, dey see de pawn-nut."

The boys looked as directed, and beheld with interest a grove of noble palms, each of them rising to the height of fifty feet, with a smooth cylindrical shank, and a beautiful tuft of pinnated leaves at the top. These leaves were full two yards in breadth, by several in length. Even the pinnae, or leaflets, were each over a yard long. Just below where the leaves grew out from the stem, a large bunch of nuts of a reddish orange colour, and each as big as a hen's egg, hung downward. These were the famous *betel-nuts*, so long recorded in the books of Oriental travellers. Karl recognised the tree as the *Areca catechu*, or betel-nut palm – by many considered the most beautiful palm of India.

Of the same genus *Areca* there are two other known species, one also a native of India, the other an American palm, and even a still more celebrated tree than the betel-nut, for it is no other than the great "cabbage-palm" of the West Indies (*Areca oleracea*). This last tree grows to the height of two hundred feet, with a trunk only seven inches in diameter! This beautiful shaft is often cut down for the sake of the young heart-leaves near the top, that when dressed are eaten as a substitute for cabbage.

Ossaroo showed his young masters how the betel was prepared for chewing. The leaves of the betel pepper are first spread out. Upon these a layer of lime is placed, moistened so as to keep it in its place. The betel-nut is then cut into very thin slices, and laid on top; and the whole is rolled up like a cheroot, and deposited with other similar rolls in a neat case of bamboo – to be taken out whenever required for chewing.

The nut is not eatable alone. Its flavour is too pungent, and too highly astringent on account of the tannin it contains; but along with the pepper-leaf and the lime, it becomes milder and more

pleasant. Withal, it is too acrid for a European palate, and produces intoxication in those not used to it. An old betel-eater like Ossaroo does not feel these effects, and would smile at the idea of getting "tipsy" upon pawn.

A singular peculiarity of the betel-nut is that of its staining the saliva of a deep red colour, so as to resemble blood. Ossaroo, who possessed a large share of intelligence, and who had travelled to the great city of Calcutta and other parts of India, narrated a good anecdote connected with this fact. The substance of his relation was as follows: —

A young doctor, fresh from Europe and from the university, had arrived in one of the Indian cities in a big ship. The morning after his arrival he was walking out on the public road near the suburbs, when he chanced to meet a young native girl who appeared to be spitting blood. The doctor turned and followed the girl, who continued to spit blood at nearly every step she took! He became alarmed, thinking the poor girl could not live another hour, and following her home to her house, announced to her parents who he was, and assured them that, from the symptoms he had observed, their daughter had not many minutes to live! Her parents in their turn grew alarmed, as also did the girl herself – for the skill of a great Sahib doctor was not to be doubted. The priest was sent for, but before he could arrive the young girl *actually died*.

Now it was from *fear* that the poor girl had died, and it was the doctor who had *frightened* her to death! but neither parents, nor priest, nor the doctor himself, knew this at the time. The doctor still believed the girl had died of blood-spitting, and the others remained in ignorance that it was upon this he had founded his prognosis.

The report of such a skilful physician soon spread abroad. Patients flocked to him, and he was in a fair way of rapidly accumulating a fortune. But ere long he had observed other people with symptoms of the same complaint which had caused the death of the poor girl, and had learnt also that these symptoms proceeded from chewing the betel-nut. Had he been discreet he would have kept his secret to himself; but, unluckily for his good fortune he was a talker, and could not help telling his companions the whole affair. He related it rather as a good joke – for, sad to say, the life of a poor native is held but too lightly by Europeans.

In the end, however, it proved no joke to the doctor. The parents of the girl came to understand the matter, as well as the public at large, and vengeance was vowed against him by the friends of the deceased. His patients deserted him as rapidly as they had come; and to get rid of the scandal, as well as to get out of the danger that surrounded him, he was but too glad to take passage home in the same ship that had brought him out.

# Chapter Five.
# The Fishing-Birds

Our travellers were following up one of the tributaries of the Burrampooter, which, rising in the Himalayas, and running southward joins the latter near its great bend. The plant-hunter designed to penetrate the Bholan Himalaya, because it had not yet been visited by any botanist, and its flora was reported to be very rich and varied. They were still passing through a settled part of the country, where fields of rice and sugar-cane, with groves of bananas, and various species of palm, were cultivated; some of the latter, as the cocoa-palm and betel, for their nuts, while others, as the large-leaved *Caryota*, for the wine which they produce.

The opium-poppy was also seen in cultivation, and mango-trees, and the great broad-leaved pawpaw, and black-pepper vines, with beautiful green leaves, trained against the stems of the palms. Jack-trees with their gigantic fruit, and figs, and nettle-trees, and the singular screw-pines, and euphorbias, and various species of the orange, were observed along the way.

The botanist saw many trees and plants, which he recognised as belonging to the Chinese flora, and he could not help remarking many other things that reminded him of what he had read about China. In fact, this part of India – for he was very near the borders of Assam – bears a considerable resemblance to China, in its natural productions, and even the customs of the people assimilate somewhat to those of the Celestial land. To make the resemblance more complete, the cultivation of the tea-plant has been introduced into this part of the world, and is now carried on with success.

But as our travellers proceeded, they became witnesses of a scene which brought China more vividly, before their minds than anything they had yet observed.

On rounding a clump of trees they came in view of a moderate-sized lake. On the water, near the edge of this lake, they perceived a man in a small light boat. He was standing up, and held in his hands a long slender pole, with which he was poling the boat out towards the centre of the lake.

Our travellers, Ossaroo excepted, uttered exclamations of surprise, and came at once to a halt.

What had caused them such astonishment? Not the boat, nor the man in it, nor yet the long bamboo pole. No. Such were common objects seen every day on their journey. It was none of these that had brought them to so sudden a stop, and caused them to stand wondering. It was the fact that along both sides of the boat – on the very edge or gunwale – was a row of large birds as big as geese. They were white-throated, white-breasted birds, mottled over the wings and back with dark brown, and having long crooked necks, large yellow bills, and broad tails rounded at the tips.

Although the man was standing up in his boat, and working his long pole over their heads, now on one side, then on the other, the birds appeared so tame that they did not heed his manoeuvres; and yet not one of them seemed to be fastened, but merely perched upon the edge of the skiff! Now and then one would stretch its long neck over the water, turn its head a little to one side, and then draw it in again, and resume its former attitude. Such tame birds had never been seen. No wonder the sight astonished the Bavarian boys. Both turned to Ossaroo for an explanation, who gave it by simply nodding towards the lake, and uttering the words —

“He go fishee.”

“Ah! a fisherman!” rejoined the botanist.

“Yes, Sahib – you watchee, you see.”

This was explanation enough. The boys now remembered having read of the Chinese mode of fishing with cormorants; and even at the distance at which they saw them, they could perceive that the birds on the boat were no other than cormorants. They were the species known as *Phalacrocorax Sinensis*; and although differing somewhat from the common cormorant, they possessed all the

characteristic marks of the tribe, – the long flat body, the projecting breastbone, the beak curving downward at the tip, and the broad rounded tail.

Desirous of witnessing the birds at work, our travellers remained stationary near the shore of the lake. It was evident the fisherman had not yet commenced operations, and was only proceeding towards his ground.

After a short while he reached the centre of the lake; and then, laying aside his long bamboo, he turned his attention to the birds. He was heard giving them directions – just as a sportsman might do to his pointer or spaniel – and the next moment the great birds spread their shadowy wings, rose up from the edge of the boat, and after a short flight, one and all of them were seen plunging into the water.

Now our travellers beheld a singular scene. Here a bird was observed swimming along, with its keen eye scanning the crystal below – there the broad tail of another stood vertically upwards, the rest of its body hidden below the surface – yonder, a third was altogether submerged, the ripple alone showing where it had gone down – a fourth was seen struggling with a large fish that glittered in its pincer-like beak – a fifth had already risen with its scaly prey, and was bearing it to the boat; and thus the twelve birds were all actively engaged in the singular occupation to which they had been trained. The lake, that but the moment before lay tranquil and smooth as glass, was now covered with ripples, with circling eddies, with bubbles and foam, where the huge birds darted and plunged, and flapped about after their finny prey. It was in vain the fish endeavoured to escape them – for the cormorant can glide rapidly through the water, and swim beneath with as much rapidity as upon the surface. Its keel-like breastbone cuts the liquid element like an arrow, and with its strong wings for paddles, and its broad tail acting as a rudder, the bird is able to turn sharply round, or shoot forward with incredible rapidity.

A singular circumstance came under the observation of our travellers. When one of the birds had succeeded in bringing up a fish, which was larger than common, and too large for its captor to convey to the boat, several others might be seen rushing forward, to render assistance in carrying the fish aboard!

You will wonder that these creatures – whose food is the very prey they were capturing for their master – did not swallow some of the fish they were taking. In the case of the younger birds, and those not fully trained, such little thefts do occasionally occur. But in such cases the fisherman adopts a preventive precaution, by fastening a collar round the necks of the birds – taking care that it shall not descend to the thick part of the throat, where it might choke them. With well-trained old birds this precaution is unnecessary. No matter how hungry the latter may be, they bring all they "take" to their master, and are rewarded for their honesty by the smaller and more worthless fish that may have been caught.

Sometimes a bird becomes lazy, and sits upon the water without attempting to do his duty. In such cases, the fisherman approaches with his boat, stretches forward his bamboo, strikes with violence close to where the indolent individual is seated, and scolds him for his laziness. This treatment seldom fails in its effect; and the winged fisher, once more roused by the well-known voice of its master, goes to work with renewed energy.

For several hours this fishing scene is kept up, until the birds, becoming tired, are allowed to return and perch themselves on the boat; where their throat-straps are removed, and they are fed and caressed by their master.

Our travellers did not wait for this finale, but kept on their route; while Karl related to Caspar how that, not a great while ago, so late as the time of King Charles the First, the common cormorant of Europe was trained to fish in the same way in several European countries, and especially in Holland; and that, at the present day, in some parts of China, this mode of fishing is followed to so great an extent, that the markets of some of the largest cities are supplied with fish caught altogether by cormorants.

Certainly, no people exhibit more ingenuity in the training either of plants or animals, than do these same *oblique-eyed inhabitants* of the Celestial Empire.

# Chapter Six.
# The Teräi

In approaching any great chain of mountains from the sea-level, you will find a large tract of country consisting of elevated hills and deep ravines, intersected by rapid streams and torrents. This tract is more or less broad, in proportion to the grandeur of the mountain chain; and, in the case of mountains of the first class, it is usually from twenty to fifty miles in breadth. Such a tract of country lies along both sides of the great chain of the Andes in South and North America, and also marks the approach to the Rocky Mountains and the Alleghanies. It is well-known in Italy, under the Alps; and "Piedmont" is the French appellation for this sort of country, which is designated, in our language, by an equally appropriate phrase, "foot-hills."

The "Alps of India" are not without this geological peculiarity. Along their whole southern flank, facing the hills of Hindustan, extends a belt of foot-hills, often above fifty miles in breadth; and characterised by steep ascents, deep dales and ravines, rapid foaming torrents, difficult paths and passes, and, consequently, by wild and picturesque scenery.

The lower part of this belt – that is, the portion which lies contiguous to the Lot plains, is known to Europeans as the "Teräi."

The Terai is an irregular strip, of from ten to thirty miles in width, and extends along the whole base of the Himalayas, from the Sutledge River, on the west, to Upper Assam. Its character is peculiar. It differs both from the plains of India and from the Himalaya Mountains, possessing a botany and zoology almost totally distinct from either. It differs from both, in the malarious and unhealthy character of its climate, which is one of the deadliest in the world. In consequence of this, the Teräi is almost uninhabited; the few scattered settlements of half-savage Mechs, its only inhabitants, lying remote and distant from each other.

Most of the Terai is covered with forest and thick jungle; and, notwithstanding its unhealthy climate, it is the favourite haunt of the wild beasts peculiar to this part of the globe. The tiger, the Indian lion, the panther and leopard, the cheetah, and various other large *Jelidae*, roam through its jungly coverts; the wild elephant, the rhinoceros, and gyal, are found in its forests; and the sambur and axis browse on its grassy glades. Venomous snakes, hideous lizards, and bats, with the most beautiful of birds and butterflies, all find a home in the Terai.

Several days' marching carried our travellers beyond the more settled portions of the country, and within the borders of this wild, jungle-covered district. On the day they entered the Teräi, they had made an early start of it; and, therefore, arrived at their camping-ground some hours before sunset. But the young botanist, filled with admiration at the many singular and novel forms of vegetation he saw around him, resolved to remain upon the ground for several days.

Our travellers had no tent. Such an incumbrance would have been troublesome to them, travelling, as they were, afoot. Indeed, all three had their full loads to carry, as much as they could well manage, without the additional weight of a tent. Each had his blanket, and various other *impedimenta*; but one and all of them had often slept without roof or canvas, and they could do so again.

At their present halting-place, they had no need for either. Nature had provided them with a cover quite equal to a canvas-tent. They had encamped under a canopy of thick foliage, the foliage of the *banyan* tree.

Young reader, you have heard of the great banyan of India; that wonderful tree, whose branches, after spreading out from the main trunk, send down roots to the earth, and form fresh stems, until a space of ground is covered with a single tree, under whose shade a whole regiment of cavalry may bivouac, or a great public meeting be held! No doubt, you have read of such a tree, and have seen pictures of one? I need not, therefore, describe the banyan very particularly. Let me say, however, that

it is a fig-tree; not the one that produces the eatable fig, of which you are so very fond, but another species of the same genus – the genus *Ficus*. Now, of this genus there are a great many species; as many, perhaps, as there are of any other genus of trees. Some of them are only creeping and climbing plants; adhering to rocks and the trunks of other trees, like vines or ivy. Others, like the banyan, are among the largest trees of the forest. They are chiefly confined to tropical countries, or hot regions lying on the borders of the tropics; and they are found in both hemispheres, that is, both in America and the Old World. Some splendid species belong also to Australia. All of them possess, more or less, the singular habit of throwing out roots from their branches, and forming new stems, like the banyan; and frequently they embrace other trees in such a manner, as to hide the trunks of the latter completely from view!

This curious spectacle was witnessed by our travellers where they had encamped. The banyan which they had chosen as their shelter was not one of the largest – being only a young tree, but out of its top rose the huge fan-shaped leaves of a palm-tree of the kind known as the palmyra palm (*Borassus flagelliformis*). No trunk of the palm-tree was visible; and had not Karl Linden been a botanist, and known something of the singular habit of the banyan, he would have been puzzled to account for this odd combination. Above spread the long radiating fronds of the palmyra directly out of the top of the trunk of the fig, and looking so distinct from the foliage of the latter as to form a very curious sight. The leaves of the banyan being ovate, and somewhat cordate or heart-shaped, of course presented quite a contrast to the large stiff fronds of the palmyra.

Now the puzzle was, how the palm got there. Naturally one would suppose that a seed of the palm had been deposited on the top of the banyan, and had there germinated and thrown out its fronds.

But how did the palm seed get to the top of the fig? Was it planted by the hand of man? or carried thither by a bird? It could not well have been by the latter mode – since the fruit of the palmyra is as large as a child's head, and each one of the three seeds it contains as big as a goose's egg!! No bird would be likely to carry about such a bulky thing as that. If there were only one palm-tree growing from the top of one banyan, it might be conjectured that some one had so planted it; but there are many such combinations of these trees met with in the forests of India, and also in districts entirely uninhabited. How then was this union of the two trees to be accounted for?

Of our three travellers Caspar alone was puzzled. Not so Karl and Ossaroo. Both were able to explain the matter, and Karl proceeded to offer the elucidation.

"The fact is," said the botanist, "that the palm has not grown out of the fig, but *vice versa*. The banyan is the true parasite. A bird – wood-pigeon, or minobird, or tree-pheasant perhaps – has carried the berries of the fig-tree, and deposited them in the axil of the palmyra. This the smallest birds may easily do, since the fruit of the banyan is not larger than a diminutive cherry. Once in its place the seed has germinated, and sent its roots downward along the trunk of the palm until they have reached the ground. These roots have then flattened around the stem of the palm, until they have enveloped it completely, with the exception of the top, as you see. Afterwards the fig has thrown out lateral branches, until the whole has assumed the appearance of a banyan-tree with a fan-palm growing out of its trunk!"

This was the true explanation. Ossaroo added some remarks stating that the Hindoo people always regard such a union of the two trees with great veneration, and believe it to be a holy marriage instituted by Providence. For himself, Ossaroo – not being a very strict sectarian, nor much given to religion in any form, laughed at the superstition, and called it "humbug."

# Chapter Seven.
# Tapping the Palmyra

Almost the first thing done by Ossaroo after he had got relieved of his baggage was to climb the banyan. This he was able to do with ease, as the trunk, in consequence of the peculiar mode of its growth, was full of ridges and inequalities, and moreover Ossaroo could climb like a cat.

But what wanted he up the tree? Was he after the fruit? It could not be that, for the figs were not yet ripe, and even had they been quite mellow, they are but poor eating. Maybe he was going up for the nuts of the palmyra? No – it could not be that either, for these were not shaped. The great flower-spathe had not yet opened, and was only beginning to burst its green envelopes. Had the nuts been formed, and still in their young state, they would have afforded delicate eating. As already stated, the palmyra nuts grow to the size of a child's head. They are three-cornered, rounded off at the corners, consisting of a thick succulent yellowish rind, each containing three seeds as large as goose-eggs. It is the seeds that are eaten when young and pulpy; but if allowed to ripen, they become quite hard and blue-coloured, and are then insipid and uneatable. But it could not be the seed either which Ossaroo was after, since there were no seeds, nor nuts – only the flower, and that still hidden in its great spadix.

The boys watched Ossaroo narrowly. He had carried up with him a bamboo-joint which he had cut from a very thick cane. It was open at one end, and formed a vessel that would hold rather more than a quart. Another thing they had observed him to take with him; and that was a stone about as big as a paving-stone. Still another implement he carried up the tree – his long knife.

In a few seconds the shikarree had reached the top of the banyan; and clutching the great leaf-stalks of the palm, he climbed up among its huge fronds. Here he was observed to lay hold of the spathe of the flower, and bending it against the trunk, he commenced hammering away with the stone, evidently with the intention of crushing the young inflorescence. With a few blows he succeeded in doing this effectually. He then drew the knife from his scarf, and, with an adroit cut, detached the upper half of the flower-spike, which fell neglected to the ground.

The bamboo vessel was next brought into service. This he fixed on the spathe in such a manner that the incised end remained inside the hollow of the cane. Both flower-spike and cane were then tied to one of the leaf-stalks of the palm, so that the bamboo hung vertically bottom downward; and this arrangement having been completed, the shikarree flung down his hammering stone, replaced his knife under his belt, and defended from the tree.

"Now, Sahibs," said he, as soon as he had reached terra firma, "you waitee hour – you drinkee Indoo champagne."

In an hour or so his promise was fulfilled. The bamboo-joint was released and brought down; and, sure enough, it was found to be full of a cool clear liquor, of which all of them drank, esteeming it equal to the best champagne. In fact, there is no more seducing and delicious drink in all India than the sap of the palmyra palm; but it is also very intoxicating, and is used too freely by the natives of the country where this splendid tree flourishes.

Sugar can also be manufactured from this sap, simply by boiling it down. When sugar is to be made, the tree is tapped in a similar manner; but it is necessary to have a little lime in the vessel while collecting the liquid, else it would ferment, and thus spoil it for sugar-boiling.

The reason why Ossaroo was so ready in tapping this particular *tree*, was because the banyan which enveloped its trunk offered him an excellent means of getting at it. Otherwise it would have been no easy matter to have ascended the smooth slender shaft of a palmyra, rising thirty or forty feet without knot or branch. Of course Ossaroo, as soon as the bamboo was empty, once more climbed up and readjusted it to the "tap," knowing that the sap would continue to run. This it does for many

days, only that each day it is necessary to cut a fresh slice from the top of the flower-stalk, so as to keep the pores open and free.

Though the day had been hot, as soon as twilight came on the coolness of the air rendered it necessary for our travellers to kindle a fire. Ossaroo was not long in striking a light out of his tinder-box, and having set fire to some dry leaves and moss, a blaze was soon produced. Meanwhile Karl and Caspar had broken some branches from a dead tree that lay near the spot, and carrying them up in armfuls, piled them upon the burning leaves. A roaring fire was created in a few minutes, and around this the party seated themselves, and commenced cooking their supper of rice, with some pieces of dried meat, which they had brought along from the last village.

Whilst engaged in this occupation, so agreeable to men who are hungry, the botanist, whose eye was always on the alert for matters relating to his favourite calling, remarked that the wood out of which their fire had been made burned very much like oak. On taking up one of the fagots, and cutting it with his knife, he was astonished to find that it *was* oak in reality – for there is no mistaking the grain and fibre of this giant of the northern forests. What astonished him was the existence of oak-trees in a country where the flora was altogether tropical. He knew that he might expect to find representatives of the oak family upon the sides of the Himalayas; but he was still only at their foot, and in the region of the palms and bananas.

Karl knew not then, nor is it yet generally known, that many species of oaks are tropical trees – in fact, many kinds may be found in the torrid zone, growing even as low as the level of the sea. It is no less strange, that although there are no oaks in tropical South America and Africa, in Ceylon, or even in the peninsula of India itself, yet there are numerous species in East Bengal, the Moluccas, and the Indian islands – perhaps a greater number of species than grows in any other part of the world!

The sight of this old acquaintance, as they termed the oak, had a cheering effect upon the Bavarian boys; and after supper they sat conversing upon the subject, determined as soon as it was day to look out for some of the living trees as further confirmation of the strange fact they had observed.

They were about thinking of wrapping themselves up in their blankets, and retiring to rest, when an incident occurred that kept them awake for another hour or two.

# Chapter Eight.
# The Sambur Stag

"See!" cried Caspar, who was more sharp-eyed than Karl.

"Look! look yonder! two lights, I declare!"

"Indeed, yes," replied Karl; "I see them – bright round lights! What can they be?"

"An animal!" answered Caspar; "I can affirm that much. Some wild beast, I fancy!"

They regarded the strange object with some uneasiness, for they knew they were in the haunts of dangerous wild beasts.

"Maybe a tiger?" suggested Karl.

"Or a panther?" added his brother.

"I hope neither one nor the other," said Karl.

He was interrupted by Ossaroo, who had now observed the shining spots, and who with a single word reassured the whole party.

"Samboo," said the shikarree.

Both knew that Ossaroo meant by "Samboo," the great deer or stag known to Europeans as the sambur deer. It was the eyes of a deer, then, glancing back the blaze of the oak fagots, that had alarmed them.

Their fears were suddenly changed to feelings of joy. They had a double motive for being pleased at the sight. To shoot and bring down the deer would be such excellent sport; besides, a fresh venison steak was a delicacy which both could appreciate.

All of them, Ossaroo included, were too well accustomed to the habits of hunters to act rashly. Any sudden movement among them might frighten the game; and if it bounded off into the forest, or even turned its head, it could no longer be seen in the pitchy darkness that surrounded them. The shining eyes were all of it that were visible; and if the creature had but chosen to *shut its eyes* it might have stood there till the morning light, without the least chance of being aimed at.

The animal, however, was too full of its own curiosity to adopt this precaution. Instead, it remained where it had been first observed – its great round orbs uncovered to their full extent and gleaming in the light like a pair of "bull's-eyes."

Caspar in a whisper cautioned the others to remain silent and not to move hand or finger. He, himself, gradually dropped his arm, until he was able to grasp his large double-barrelled gun; and then, raising the piece slowly to a level, took aim and fired. He very prudently did not aim for the centre spot between the eyes. Had it been a bullet that was in his gun he might have done so; but he knew that his piece was only loaded with shot, and shot – even though they were "buckshot" – might not penetrate the hard thick skull of a stag so strong as the sambur. Instead of aiming for the eyes, therefore, he took sight at least a foot below them, and in a direct line below. He had already conjectured, from the even set of the eyes, that the deer was standing full front towards the camp-fire, and his object was to send the shot into its breast and throat.

The instant after he had delivered the first barrel, although the shining eyes went out like the snuffing of candles, he fired the second, so as to take advantage of a random shot.

He might have spared his load, for the first had done the business; and the noise of kicking and sprawling among the dry leaves told that the deer was knocked over, and, if not killed, at least badly wounded.

The dog Fritz had already leaped forth; and before the hunters could procure a torch and reach the spot, the huge hound had seized the quarry by the throat, and finished its struggles by strangling it to death.

They now dragged the carcass up to the light of the fire, and it was just as much as the three of them could manage – for the sambur deer is one of the largest animals of its kind, and the one that had fallen into their hands was a fine old buck, with a pair of immense antlered horns, of which no doubt in his lifetime he had been excessively proud.

The sambur deer is one of the most distinguished of the deer tribe. Although not equal in size to the American wapiti (*Cervus Canadensis*), he is much superior to the stag or red-deer of Europe. He is an active, bold, and vicious animal; and, when bayed, a dangerous antagonist either to dogs or hunters. His coat is close, the hair harsh, of a brown colour, and slightly grizzled. Around the neck it is long and shaggy, but particularly upon the under line of the throat, where it forms a mane similar to that of the American wapiti. Another mane runs along the back of the neck, adding to the fierce bold appearance of the animal. A blackish band encircles the muzzle, and the usual "crupper mark" around the tail is small and of a yellowish colour.

This is the description of the common sambur deer (*Cervus hippelaphus*) best known to Europeans, and among Anglo-Indian sportsmen called "stag"; but it is to be observed that in different parts of Asia there are many different species and varieties of the sambur. Zoologists usually class them in a group called *Rusa*; and one or other of this group may be found in every district of India from Ceylon to the Himalayas, and from the Indus to the islands of the Indian Archipelago. They haunt in timber, and usually by the banks of streams or other waters.

America has long been regarded as the favourite region of the deer tribe, as Africa is the true home of the antelopes. This belief, however, seems to be rather an incorrect one, and has arisen, perhaps, from the fact that the American species are better known to Europeans. It is true that the largest of the deer – the moose (*Cervus alces*) – is an inhabitant of the American continent in common with Northern Europe and Asia; but the number of species on that continent, both in its northern and southern divisions, is very limited. When the zoology of the East – I mean of all those countries and islands usually included under the term East Indies – shall have been fully determined, we shall no doubt find not only twice, but three times the number of species of deer that belongs to America.

When we consider the vast number of educated Englishmen – both in the array and in the civil service – who have idled away their lives in India, we cannot help wondering at the little that is yet known in relation to the *fauna* of the Oriental world. Most of the Indian officers have looked upon the wild animals of that country with the eye of the sportsman rather than of the naturalist. With them a deer is a deer, and a large ox-like animal a buffalo, or it may be a gayal, or a jungle cow, or a gour, or a gyall; but which of all these is an ox, or whether the four last-mentioned bovine quadrupeds are one and the same species, remains to be determined. Were it not that these gentlemen have had spirit enough occasionally to send us home a skin or a set of horns, we might remain altogether ignorant of the existence of the creature from which these trophies were taken. Verily science owes not much to the Honourable East India Company. We are not blind to such noble exceptions as Sykes, Hodgson, and others; and, if every province of India had a resident of their character, a fauna might soon be catalogued that would astonish even the spectacled *savant*.

# Chapter Nine.
# A Night Marauder

Ossaroo soon stripped the stag of its skin, cut the carcass into quarters, and hung them on the limb of a tree. Although the party had already supped, the excitement which had been occasioned by the incident gave them a fresh appetite; and venison-steaks were broiled over the oak-wood cinders, and eaten with a relish. These were washed down by fresh draughts of the delicious palm-wine; and then the travellers, having gathered some of the hanging moss, "*Usnea*," and strewed it near the fire, rolled themselves in their blankets, and went to sleep.

About midnight there was a camp alarm. The sleepers were awakened by the dog Fritz; who, by his angry baying and fierce demonstrations, showed that some creature must have approached the fire that had no business to be there. On rousing themselves they thought they heard footsteps at a little distance, and a low growl as of some wild beast; but it was not easy to distinguish any sound in particular, as at this season the tropical forest is full of noises – so loud that it is often difficult for persons to hear each other in conversation. What with the chirruping of cicadas, the croaking of swamp-frogs, the tinkling of tree-toads, and the hooting and screeching of owls and night-hawks, the Indian forest is filled with a deafening din throughout the whole night.

Fritz ceased barking after a time; and they all went to sleep again, and slept till morning.

As soon as day broke, they were up, and set about preparing breakfast. Fresh fagots were piled upon the fire, and preparations made for a savoury roast of venison rib. Ossaroo climbed up to his tap, while Caspar went for the meat.

The quarters of the deer had been suspended upon a tree, at the distance of about fifty paces from the camp-fire. The reason of their being hung at such a distance was that a stream flowed there, and in order to clean the meat, they had carried it down to the water's edge. A horizontal branch, which was about the proper height from the ground, had tempted Ossaroo, and he had chosen it for his "meat-rack."

An exclamation from Caspar now summoned the others to the spot.

"See!" cried he, as they came up, "one of the quarters gone!"

"Ha! there have been thieves!" said Karl. "That was what caused Fritz to bark."

"Thieves!" ejaculated Caspar. "Not men thieves! They would have carried off the four quarters instead of one. Some wild beast has been the thief!"

"Yes, Sahib, you speakee true," said the shikarree, who had now reached the spot; "he wild beast – he very wild beast – big tiger!"

At the mention of the name of this terrible animal, both boys started, and looked anxiously around. Even Ossaroo himself exhibited symptoms of fear. To think they had been sleeping on the open ground so close to a tiger – the most savage and dreaded of all beasts – and this, too, in India, where they were constantly hearing tales of the ravages committed by these animals!

"You think it was a tiger?" said the botanist, interrupting Ossaroo.

"Sure, Sahib – lookee here! – Sahib, see him track!"

The shikarree pointed to some tracks in the selvedge of sand that lined the bank of the rivulet. There, sure enough, were the foot-prints of a large animal; and, upon inspecting them closely, they could easily be distinguished as those of a creature of the cat tribe. There were the pads or cushions smoothly imprinted in the sand, and the slight impression of the claws – for the tiger, although possessed of very long and sharp claws, can retract these when walking, so as to leave very little mark of them in the mud or sand. The tracks were too large to be mistaken for those either of a leopard or panther, and the only other animal to which they could appertain was the lion. There were lions in

that district. But Ossaroo well knew how to distinguish between the tracks of the two great carnivora, and without a moment's hesitation he pronounced the robber to have been a tiger.

It now became a matter of serious consideration what they should do under the circumstances. Should they abandon their camp, and *move* forward? Karl was very desirous of spending a day or two in the neighbourhood. He made no doubt of being able to find several new species of plants there. But with the knowledge of having such a neighbour they would not sleep very soundly. The tiger would, no doubt, return to the camp. He was not likely to stay away from a quarter where he had found such hospitable entertainment – such a good supper. He must have seen the rest of the venison, and would be sure to pay them another visit on the following night. True, they might kindle large fires, and frighten him off from their sleeping place; still, they would be under an unpleasant apprehension; and even during the day they had no confidence that he might not attack them – particularly if they went botanising in the woods. The very places into which their occupation would lead them, would be those in which they were most likely to meet this dreaded neighbour. Perhaps, therefore, it would be best to pack up, and proceed on their journey.

While eating their breakfasts the thing was debated among them. Caspar, full of hunter-spirit, was desirous of having a peep at the tiger anyhow; but Karl was more prudent, if not a little more timid, and thought it was better to "move on." This was the opinion of the botanist; but he at length gave way to Caspar, and more particularly to Ossaroo, who proposed *killing* the tiger if they would only remain one night longer upon the ground.

"What! with your bow, Ossaroo?" asked Caspar; "with your poisoned arrows?"

"No, young Sahib," replied Ossaroo.

"I thought you would have but little chance to kill a great tiger with such weapons. How do you mean to do it then?"

"If Sahib Karl consent to stay till to-morrow, Ossaroo show you – he kill tiger – he catch 'im 'live."

"Catch him alive! – In a trap? – In a snare?"

"No trapee – no snaree. You see. Ossaroo do what he say – he take tiger 'live."

Ossaroo had evidently some plan of his own, and the others became curious to know what it was. As the shikarree promised that it was unattended with danger, the botanist consented to remain, and let the trial be made.

Ossaroo now let them into the secret of his plan; and as soon as they had finished eating their breakfasts, all hands set to work to assist him in carrying it into execution.

They proceeded as follows. In the first place, a large number of joints of bamboo were obtained from a neighbouring thicket of these canes. The bark of the banyan was then cut, and the canes inserted in such a manner that the white milky sap ran into them. Each joint was left closed at the bottom, and served as a vessel to collect the juice, and such stems of the fig only were tapped as were young and full of sap. As soon as a sufficient quantity of the fluid had been distilled into the canes, the contents of all were poured into the cooking-pot, and hung over a slow fire. The sap was then stirred – fresh juice being occasionally thrown in – and in a short while the whole attained the toughness and consistency of the best birdlime. It was, in fact, true birdlime – the same that is used by the bird-catchers of India, and quite equal to that manufactured from the holly.

During the time that this was being prepared, Karl and Caspar, by the directions of Ossaroo, had climbed into the trees, and collected an immense quantity of leaves. These leaves were also taken from the banyan figs, and for this purpose they had selected those that grew on the youngest trees and shoots. Each leaf was as large as a tea-plate, and they were covered with a woolly pubescence, peculiar only to the leaves upon the younger trees – for as the banyan grows old its leaves become harder and smoother on the surface.

The fig-leaves having been gathered to his hand, and the birdlime made ready, Ossaroo proceeded to carry out his design.

The two remaining quarters of the venison still hung on the tree. These were permitted to remain – as a bait to the singular trap that Ossaroo was about to set – only that they were raised higher from the ground, in order that the tiger might not too readily snatch them away, and thus defeat the stratagem of the hunter.

The venison having been hung to his liking, Ossaroo now cleared the ground for a large space around – directing his assistants to carry off all the brush and dead wood to a distance from the spot. This was quickly done, and then the shikarree put the finishing stroke to his work. This occupied him for two hours at least, and consisted in anointing all the fig-leaves that had been gathered with a coat of birdlime, and spreading them over the ground, until they covered a space of many yards in circumference. In the centre of this space hung the venison; and no creature could have approached within yards of it without treading upon the smeared leaves. The leaves had been anointed upon both sides, so that they adhered slightly to the grass, and a breeze of wind could not have disarranged them to any great extent.

When all was fixed to their satisfaction, Ossaroo and the others returned to the camp-fire, and ate a hearty dinner. It was already late in the day, for they had been many hours at work, and they had not thought of dining until their arrangements were complete. Nothing more remained to be done, but to await the result of their stratagem.

# Chapter Ten.
# A Talk about Tigers

I need not describe a tiger. You have seen one, or the picture of one. He is the great *striped* cat. The large *spotted* ones are not tigers. They are either jaguars, or panthers, or leopards, or ounces, or cheetahs, or servals. But there is no danger of your mistaking the tiger for any other animal. He is the largest of the feline tribe – the lion alone excepted – and individual tigers have been measured as large as the biggest lion. The shaggy mane that covers the neck and shoulders of an old male lion gives him the appearance of being of greater dimensions than he really is. Skin him and he would not be larger than an old male tiger also divested of his hide.

Like the lion, the tiger varies but little in form or colour. Nature does not sport with these powerful beasts. It is only upon the meaner animals she plays off her eccentricities. The tiger may be seen with the ground-colour of a lighter or deeper yellow, and the stripes or bars more or less black; but the same general appearance is preserved, and the species can always be recognised at a glance.

The range or habitat of the tiger is more limited than that of the lion. The latter exists throughout the whole of Africa, as well as the southern half of Asia; whereas the tiger is found only in the south-eastern countries of Asia, and some of the larger islands of the Indian Archipelago. Westwardly his range does not extend to this side of the Indus river, and how far north in Asia is uncertain. Some naturalists assert that there are tigers in Asia as far north as the Obi River. This would prove the tiger to be not altogether a tropical animal, as he is generally regarded. It is certain that tigers once did inhabit the countries around the Caspian Sea. There lay Hyrcania; and several Roman writers speak of the Hyrcanian tigers. They could not have meant any of the spotted cats, – ounce, panther, or leopard, – for the Romans knew the difference between these and the striped or true tiger. If, then, the tiger was an inhabitant of those trans-Himalayan regions in the days of Augustus, it is possible it still exists there, as we have proofs of its existence in Mongolia and northern China at the present day.

Were we to believe some travellers, we should have the tiger, not only in Africa, but in America. The jaguar is the tiger (*tigre*) of the Spanish Americans; and the panther, leopard, and cheetah, have all done duty as “tigers” in the writings of old travellers in Africa.

The true home of this fierce creature is the hot jungle-covered country that exists in extended tracts in Hindostan, Siam, Malaya, and parts of China. There the tiger roams undisputed lord of the thicket and forest; and although the lion is also found in these countries, he is comparatively a rare animal, and, from being but seldom met with, is less talked about or feared.

We who live far away from the haunts of these great carnivora, can hardly realise the terror which is inspired by them in the countries they infest.

In many places human life is not safe; and men go out upon a journey, with the same dread of meeting a tiger, that we would have for an encounter with a mad dog. This dread is by no means founded upon mere fancies or fabricated stories. Every village has its true tales of tiger attacks and encounters, and every settlement has its list of killed or maimed. You can scarce credit such a relation; but it is a well-known fact that whole districts of fertile *country* have from time to time been abandoned by their inhabitants out of pure fear of the tigers and panthers which infested them! Indeed, similar cases of depopulation have occurred in South America, caused by a far less formidable wild beast – the jaguar.

In some parts of India the natives scarce attempt resistance to the attack of the tiger. Indeed, the superstition of his victims aids the fierce monster in their destruction. They regard him as being gifted with supernatural power, and sent by their gods to destroy; and under this conviction yield themselves up, without making the slightest resistance.

In other parts, where races exist possessed of more energy of character, the tiger is hunted eagerly, and various modes of killing or capturing him are practised in different districts.

Sometimes a bow is set with poisoned arrows, and a cord attached to the string. A bait is then placed on the ground, and arranged in such a way that the tiger, on approaching it, presses against the cord, sets the bow-string free, and is pierced by the arrow – the poison of which eventually causes his death.

A spring-gun is set off by a similar contrivance, and the tiger shoots himself.

The log-trap or "dead-fall" – often employed by American backwoodsmen for capturing the black bear – is also in use in India for trapping the tiger. This consists of a heavy log or beam so adjusted upon the top of another one by a prop or "trigger," as to fall and crush whatever animal may touch the trigger. A bait is also used for this species of trap.

Hunting the tiger upon elephants is a royal sport in India, and is often followed by the Indian rajahs, and sometimes by British sportsmen – officers of the East India Company. This sport is, of course, very exciting; but there is nothing of a *ruse* practised in it. The hunters go armed with rifles and spears; and attended by a large number of natives, who beat the jungle and drive the game within reach of the sportsmen. Many lives are sacrificed in this dangerous sport; but those who suffer are usually the poor peasants employed as beaters; and an Indian rajah holds the lives of a score or two of his subjects as lightly as that of a tiger itself.

It is said the Chinese catch the tiger in a box-trap, which they bait simply with a looking-glass. The tiger, on approaching the looking-glass, perceives his own shadow, and mistaking it for a rival, rushes forward to the trap, frees the trigger, and is caught. It may be that the Chinese practised such a method. That part is likely enough; but it is not likely that they take many tigers in this way.

Perhaps you may be of opinion that the plan which Ossaroo was about to follow was quite as absurd as that of the Chinese. It certainly did sound very absurd to his companions, when he first told them that it was his intention to *catch the tiger by birdlime*!

# Chapter Eleven.
# A Tiger taken by Birdlime

The plan of the shikarree was put to the test sooner than any of them expected. They did not look for the tiger to return before sunset, and they had resolved to pass the night among the branches of the banyan in order to be out of the way of danger. The tiger might take it into his head to stroll into their camp; and although, under ordinary circumstances, these fierce brutes have a dread of fire, there are some of them that do not regard it, and instances have occurred of tigers making their attack upon men who were seated close to a blazing pile! Ossaroo knew of several such cases, and had, therefore, given his advice, that all of them should pass the night in the tree. It was true the tiger could easily scale the banyan if the notion occurred to him; but, unless they made some noise to attract his attention, he would not be likely to discover their whereabouts. They had taken the precaution to erect a platform of bamboos among the branches, so as to serve them for a resting-place.

After all, they were not under the necessity of resorting to this elevated roost, – at least for the purpose of passing the night there. But they occupied it for a while; and during that while they were witnesses to a scene that for singularity, and comicality as well, was equal to anything that any of them had ever beheld.

It wanted about half-an-hour of sunset, and they were all seated around the camp-fire, when a singular noise reached their ears. It was not unlike the “whirr” made by a thrashing-machine – which any one must have heard who has travelled through an agricultural district. Unlike this, however, the sound was not prolonged, but broke out at intervals, continued for a few seconds, and then was silent again.

Ossaroo was the only one of the party who, on hearing this sound, exhibited any feelings of alarm. The others were simply curious. It was an unusual sound. They wondered what was producing it – nothing more. They quite shared the alarm of the shikarree, when the latter informed them that what they heard was neither more nor less than the “purr” of a tiger!

Ossaroo communicated this information in an ominous whisper, at the same instant crouching forward towards the main trunk of the banyan, and beckoning to the others to follow him.

Without a word they obeyed the sign, and all three climbed, one after the other, up the trunk, and silently seated themselves among the branches.

By looking through the outer screen of leaves, and a little downward, they could see the quarters of venison hanging from the limb, and also the whole surface of the ground where the glittering leaves were spread.

Whether the haunch which the tiger had stolen on the preceding night had not been sufficient for his supper, and he had grown hungry again before his usual feeding-time, is uncertain. But certain it is that Ossaroo, who understood well the habits of this striped robber, did not expect him to return so soon. He looked for him after darkness should set in. But the loud “purr-r-r” that at intervals came booming through the jungle, and each time sounding more distinctly, showed that the great cat was upon the ground.

All at once they espied him coming out of the bushes, and on the other side of the rivulet – his broad whitish throat and breast shining in contrast with the dark green foliage. He was crouching just after the manner of a house-cat when making her approach to some unwary bird – his huge paws spread before him, and his long back hollowed down – a hideous and fearful object to behold. His eyes appeared to flash fire, as he bent them upon the tempting joints hanging high up upon the branch of the tree.

After reconnoitring a little, he gathered up his long back into a curve, vaulted into the air, and cleared the rivulet from bank to bank. Then, without further pause, he trotted nimbly forward, and stopped directly under the hanging joints.

Ossaroo had purposely raised the meat above its former elevation, and the lowest ends of the joints were full twelve feet from the ground. Although the tiger can bound to a very great distance in a horizontal direction, he is not so well fitted for springing vertically upwards, and therefore the tempting morsels were just beyond his reach. He seemed to be somewhat nonplussed at this – for upon his last visit he had found things rather different – but after regarding the joints for a moment or two, and uttering a loud snuff of discontent, he flattened his paws against the ground, and sprang high into air.

The attempt was a failure. He came back to the earth without having touched the meat, and expressed his dissatisfaction by an angry growl.

In another moment, he made a second spring upwards. This time, he struck one of the quarters with his paw, and sent it swinging backwards and forwards, though it had been secured too well to the branch to be in any danger of falling.

All at once, the attention of the great brute became directed to a circumstance, which seemed to puzzle him not a little. He noticed that there was something adhering to his paws. He raised one of them from the ground, and saw that two or three leaves were sticking to it. What could be the matter with the leaves, to cling to his soles in that manner? They appeared to be wet, but what of that? He had never known wet leaves stick to his feet any more than dry ones. Perhaps it was this had hindered him from springing up as high as he had intended? At all events, he did not feel quite comfortable, and he should have the leaves off before he attempted to leap again. He gave his paw a slight shake, but the leaves would not go. He shook it more violently, still the leaves adhered! He could not make it out. There was some gummy substance upon them, such as he had never met with before in all his travels. He had rambled over many a bed of fig-leaves in his day, but had never set foot upon such sticky leaves as these.

Another hard shake of the paw produced no better effect. Still stuck fast the leaves, as if they had been pitch plasters; one covering the whole surface of his foot, and others adhering to its edges. Several had even fastened themselves on his ankles. What the deuce did it all mean?

As shaking the paw was of no use, he next attempted to get rid of them by the only other means known to him; that was by rubbing them off against his cheeks and snout. He raised the paw to his ears, and drew it along the side of his head. He succeeded in getting most of them off his foot in this way, but, to his chagrin, they now adhered to his head, ears, and jaws, where they felt still more uncomfortable and annoying. These he resolved to detach, by using his paw upon them; but, instead of doing so, he only added to their number, for, on raising his foot, he found that a fresh batch of the sticky leaves had fastened upon it. He now tried the other foot, with no better effect. It, too, was covered with gummy leaves, that only became detached to fasten upon his jaws, and stick there, in spite of all his efforts to tear them off. Even some of them had got over his eyes, and already half-blinded him! But one way remained to get rid of the leaves, that had so fastened upon his head. Every time he applied his paws, it only made things worse. But there was still a way to get them off – so thought he – by rubbing his head along the ground.

No sooner thought of than done. He pressed his jaws down to the earth, and, using his hind-legs to push himself along, he rubbed hard to rid himself of the annoyance. He then turned over, and tried the same method with the other side; but, after continuing at this for some moments, he discovered he was only making matters worse; in fact, he found that both his eyes were now completely "bunged up," and that he was perfectly blind! He felt, moreover, that his whole head, as well as his body, was now covered, even to the tip of his tail.

By this time, he had lost all patience. He thought no longer of the venison. He thought only of freeing himself from the detestable plight in which he was placed. He sprang and bounded over the

ground; now rubbing his head along the surface, now scraping it with his huge paws, and ever and anon dashing himself against the stems of the trees that grew around. All this while, his growling, and howling, and screaming, filled the woods with the most hideous noises.

Up to this crisis, our travellers had watched his every movement, all of them bursting with laughter; to which, however, they dare not give utterance, lest they might spoil the sport. At length, Ossaroo knew that the time was come for something more serious than laughter; and, descending from the tree with his long spear, he beckoned the others to follow with their guns.

The shikarree could have approached and thrust the tiger, without much danger; but, to make sure, the double-barrel, already loaded with ball, was fired at him, along with Caspar's rifle; and one of the bullets striking him between the ribs, put an end to his struggles, by laying him out upon the grass dead as a herring.

Upon examining him, they found that the fig-leaves go covered his eyes, as to render him completely blind. What prevented him from scratching them off with his huge claws was, that these were so wrapped up in the leafy envelope as to render them perfectly useless, and no longer dangerous, had any one engaged with him in close combat.

When the exciting scene was over, all of the party indulged in hearty laughter; for there was something extremely ludicrous, not only in the idea, but in the act itself, of trapping a royal tiger by so simple a contrivance as birdlime.

# Chapter Twelve.
# A Rare Raft

Ossaroo did not fail to skin the tiger, and to eat for his supper a large steak, cut off from his well-fleshed ribs. The others did not join him in this singular viand, although the shikarree assured them that tiger-beef was far superior to the venison of the sambur deer. There may have been truth in Ossaroo's assertion; for it is well-known, that the flesh of several kinds of carnivorous animals is not only palatable, but delicate eating. Indeed, the delicacy of the meat does not seem at all to depend upon the food of the animal; since no creature is a more unclean feeder than the domestic pig, and what is nicer or more tender than a bit of roast pork? On the other hand, many animals, whose flesh is exceedingly bitter, feed only on fresh grass or sweet succulent roots and plants. As a proof of this, I might instance the tapir of South America, the quaggas and zebras of Africa, and even some animals of the deer and antelope tribes, whose flesh is only eatable in cases of emergency.

The same fact may be observed in relation to birds. Many birds of prey furnish a dish quite equal to choice game. For one, the flesh of the large chicken-hawk of America (eaten and eagerly sought after by the plantation negroes) is not much, if anything, inferior to that of the bird upon which it preys.

It was not for the "meat," however, that Ossaroo stripped the tiger of his skin, but rather for the skin itself; and not so much for the absolute value of the skin, for in India that is not great. Had it been a panther or leopard skin, or even the less handsome hide of the cheetah, its absolute value would have been greater. But there was an artificial value attached to the skin of a tiger, and that well knew the shikarree. He knew that there was a *bounty of ten rupees* for every tiger killed, and also that to obtain this bounty it was necessary to show the skin. True it was the East India Company that paid the bounty, and only for tigers killed in their territory. This one had not been killed under the British flag, but what of that? A tiger-skin was a tiger-skin; and Ossaroo expected some day not distant to walk the streets of Calcutta; and, with this idea in his mind, he climbed up the great banyan, and hid his tiger-skin among its topmost branches, to be left there till his return from the mountains.

The next two days were spent in the same neighbourhood, and the plant-hunter was very successful. The seeds of many rare plants, some of them quite new to the botanical world, were here obtained, and like the skin of the tiger deposited in a safe place, so that the collectors might not be burdened with them on their journey to the mountains. It was in this way that Karl had resolved upon making his collections, leaving the seeds and nuts he should obtain at various places upon his route; and, when returning, he trusted to be able to employ some coolies to assist in getting them carried to Calcutta or some other sea-port.

On the fourth day the travellers again took the route, still facing due northward in the direction of the mountains. They needed no guide to point out their course, as the river which they had resolved upon following upwards was guide enough; usually they kept along its banks, but sometimes a thick marshy jungle forced them to abandon the water-edge and keep away for some distance into the back country, where the path was more safe and open.

About midday they arrived at the banks of a stream, that was a branch of the main river. This stream lay transversely to their route, and, of course, had to be crossed. There was neither bridge nor ford, nor crossing of any kind to be seen, and the current was both wide and deep. They followed it up for more than a mile; but it neither grew shallower nor yet more narrow. They walked up and down for a couple of hours, endeavouring to find a crossing, but to no purpose.

Both Caspar and Ossaroo were good swimmers, but Karl could not swim a stroke; and it was entirely on his account that they stayed to search for a ford. The other two would have dashed in at once, regardless of the swift current. What was to be done with Karl? In such a rapid running river

it was as much as the best swimmer could do to carry himself across; therefore not one of the others could assist Karl. How then, were they to get over?

They had seated themselves under a tree to debate this question; and no doubt the habile Ossaroo would soon have offered a solution to it, and got the young Sahib across, but at that moment assistance arrived from a very unexpected quarter.

There was a belt of open ground – a sort of meadow upon the side opposite to where they were seated, which was backed by a jungly forest.

Out of this forest a man was seen to emerge, and take his way across the meadow in the direction of the river. His swarthy complexion, and bushy black hair hanging neglected over his shoulders – his dress consisting of a single blanket-like robe, held by a leathern belt around the waist – his bare legs and sandalled feet – all bore evidence that he was one of the half-savage natives of the Terai.

His appearance created a great sensation, and astonished all the party – Ossaroo, perhaps, excepted. It was not his wild look nor his odd costume that produced this astonishment, for men who have travelled in Hindostan are not likely to be surprised by wild looks and strange dresses. What astonished our travellers – and it would have had a like effect upon the most stoical people in the world – was that the individual who approached was carrying a *buffalo upon his back*! Not the quarter of a buffalo, nor the head of a buffalo, but a whole one, as big, and black, and hairy, as an English bull! The back of the animal lay against the back of the man, with the head and horns projecting over his shoulder, the legs sticking out behind, and the tail dragging about his heels!

How one man could bear up under such a load was more than our travellers could divine; but not only did this wild Mech bear up under it, but he appeared to carry it with ease, and stepped as lightly across the meadow as if it had been a bag of feathers he was carrying!

Both Karl and Caspar uttered exclamations of surprise, and rapid interrogatories were put to Ossaroo for an explanation. Ossaroo only smiled significantly in reply, evidently able to explain this mysterious phenomenon; but enjoying the surprise of his companions too much to offer a solution of it as long as he could decorously withhold it.

The surprise of the boys was not diminished, when another native stepped out of the timber, buffalo on back, like the first; and then another and another – until half-a-dozen men, with a like number of buffaloes on their shoulders, were seen crossing the meadows!

Meanwhile the foremost had reached the bank of the river; and now the astonishment of the botanists reached its climax, when they saw this man let down the huge animal from his shoulders, embrace it with his arms, place it before him in the water, and then mount astride *upon its back*! In a moment more he was out in the stream, and his buffalo swimming under him, or rather he seemed to be pushing it along, using his arms and legs as paddles to impel it forward!

The others, on reaching the water, acted in a precisely similar manner, and the whole party were soon launched, and crossing the stream together.

It was not until the foremost Mech had arrived at the bank close to where our travellers awaited them, *lifted his buffalo out of the water, and reshouldered it*, that the latter learnt to their surprise that what they had taken for buffaloes were nothing more than the inflated skins of these animals that were thus employed as rafts by the rude but ingenious natives of the district!

The same contrivance is used by the inhabitants of the Punjaub and other parts of India, where fords are few and bridges cannot be built. The buffaloes are skinned, with the legs, heads, and horns left on, to serve as handles and supports in managing them. They are then rendered airtight and inflated, heads, legs, and all; and in this way bear such a resemblance to the animals from which they have been taken, that even dogs are deceived, and often growl and bark at them. Of course the quantity of air is for more than sufficient to buoy up the weight of a man. Sometimes, when goods and other articles are to be carried across, several skins are attached together, and thus form an excellent raft.

This was done upon the spot, and at a moment's notice. The Mechs, although a half-savage people, are far from uncivil in their intercourse with strangers. A word from Ossaroo, accompanied

by a few pipes of tobacco from the botanist, procured the desired raft of buffalo-skins; and our party, in less than half-an-hour, were safely deposited upon the opposite bank, and allowed to continue their journey without the slightest molestation.

# Chapter Thirteen.
# The tallest Grass in the World

As our travellers proceeded up-stream, they were occasionally compelled to pass through tracts covered with a species of jungle-grass, called "Dab-grass," which not only reached above the heads of the tallest of the party, but would have done so had they been giants! Goliath or the Cyclops might have, either of them, stood on tiptoe in a field of this grass, without being able to look over its tops.

The botanist was curious enough to measure some stalks of this gigantic grass, and found them full fourteen feet in height, and as thick as a man's finger near the roots! Of course no animal, except a giraffe, could raise its head over the tops of such grass as this; but there are no giraffes in this part of the world – these long-necked creatures being confined to the Continent of Africa. Wild elephants, however, are found here; and the largest of them can hide himself in the midst of this tall sward, as easily as a mouse would in an English meadow.

But there are other animals that make their layer in the dab-grass. It is a favourite haunt both of the tiger and Indian lion; and it was not without feelings of fear that our botanical travellers threaded their way amidst its tall cane-like culms.

You will be ready to admit, that the dab-grass is a tall grass. But it is far from being the tallest in the world, or in the East Indies either. What think you of a grass nearly five times as tall? And yet in that same country such a grass exists. Yes – there is a species of "panic-grass," the *Panicum arborescens*, which actually grows to the height of fifty feet, with a culm not thicker than an ordinary goose-quill! This singular species is, however, a climbing plant, growing up amidst the trees of the forest, supported by their branches, and almost reaching to their tops.

This panic-grass you will, no doubt, fancy *must be the tallest grass in the world*. But no. Prepare yourself to hear that there is still another kind, not only taller than this, but one that grows to the prodigious height of a hundred feet!

You will guess what sort I am about to name. It could be no other than the giant *bamboo. That is the tallest grass in the world*.

You know the bamboo as a "cane;" but for all that it is a true grass, belonging to the natural order of *gramineae*, or grasses, the chief difference between it, and many others of the same order, being its more gigantic dimensions.

My young reader, I may safely assert, that in all the vegetable kingdom there is no species or form so valuable to the human race as the "grasses." Among all civilised nations bread is reckoned as the food of primary importance, so much so as to have obtained the sobriquet of "the staff of life;" and nearly every sort of bread is the production of a grass. Wheat, barley, oats, maize, and rice, are all grasses; and so, too, is the sugar-cane – so valuable for its luxurious product. It would take up many pages of our little volume to enumerate the various species of *gramineae*, that contribute to the necessities and luxuries of mankind; and other pages might be written about species equally available for the purposes of life, but which have not yet been brought into cultivation.

Of all kinds of grasses, however, none possesses greater interest than the bamboo. Although not the most useful as an article of food, this noble plant serves a greater number of purposes in the economy of human life, than perhaps any other vegetable in existence.

What the palm-tree of many species is to the natives of South America or tropical Africa, such is the bamboo to the inhabitants of Southern Asia and its islands. It is doubtful whether nature has conferred upon these people any greater boon than this noble plant, the light and graceful culms of which are applied by them to a multitude of useful purposes. Indeed so numerous are the uses made of the bamboo, that it would be an elaborate work even to make out a list of them. A few of the purposes to which it is applied will enable you to judge of the valuable nature of this princely grass.

The young shoots of some species are cut when tender, and eaten like asparagus. The full-grown stems, while green, form elegant cases, exhaling a perpetual moisture, and capable of transporting fresh flowers for hundreds of miles. When ripe and hard, they are converted into bows, arrows, and quivers, lance-shafts, the masts of vessels, walking-sticks, the poles of palanquins, the floors and supporters of bridges, and a variety of similar purposes. In a growing state the strong kinds are formed into stockades, which are impenetrable to any thing but regular infantry or artillery. By notching their sides the Malays make wonderfully light scaling ladders, which can be conveyed with facility, where heavier machines could not be transported. Bruised and crushed in water, the leaves and stems form Chinese paper, the finer qualities of which are only improved by a mixture of raw cotton and by more careful pounding. The leaves of a small species are the material used by the Chinese for the lining of their tea-chests. Cut into lengths, and the partitions knocked out, they form durable water-pipes, or by a little contrivance are made into cases for holding rolls of paper. Slit into strips, they afford a most durable material for weaving into mats, baskets, window-blinds, and even the sails of boats; and the larger and thicker truncheons are carved by the Chinese into beautiful ornaments. For building purposes the bamboo is still more important. In many parts of India the framework of the houses of the natives is chiefly composed of this material. In the flooring, whole stems, four or live inches in diameter, are laid close to each other, and across these, laths of split bamboo, about an inch wide, are fastened down by filaments of rattan cane. The sides of the houses are closed in by the bamboos opened and rendered flat by splitting or notching the circular joints on the outside, chipping away the corresponding divisions within, and laying it in the sun to dry, pressed down with weights. Whole bamboos often form the upright timbers, and the house is generally roofed in with a thatch of narrow split bamboos, six feet long, placed in regular layers, each reaching within two feet of the extremity of that beneath it, by which a treble covering is formed. Another and most ingenious roof is also formed by cutting large straight bamboos of sufficient length to reach from the ridge to the eaves, then splitting them exactly in two, knocking out the partitions, and arranging them in close order with the hollow or inner sides uppermost; after which a second layer, with the outer or concave sides up, is placed upon the other in such a manner that each of the convex pieces falls into the two contiguous concave pieces covering their edges, thus serving as gutters to carry off the rain that falls on the convex layer.

Such are a few of the uses of the bamboo, enumerated by an ingenious writer; and these are probably not more than one tenth of the purposes to which this valuable cane is applied by the natives of India.

The quickness with which the bamboo can be cut and fashioned to any purpose is not the least remarkable of its properties. One of the most distinguished of English botanists (Hooker) relates that a complete *furnished* house of bamboo, containing chairs and a table, was erected by his six attendants in the space of one hour!

Of the bamboos there are many species – perhaps fifty in all – some of them natives of Africa and South America, but the greater number belonging to southern Asia, which is the true home of these gigantic grasses. The species differ in many respects from each other – some of them being thick and strong, while others are light and slender, and elastic. In nothing do the different species vary more than in size. They are found growing of all sizes, from the dwarf bamboo, as slender as a wheat-stalk, and only two feet high, to the *Bambusa maxima*, as thick as a man's body, and towering to the height of a hundred feet!

# Chapter Fourteen.
# The Man-Eaters

Ossaroo had lived all his life in a bamboo country, and was well acquainted with all its uses. Hardly a vessel or implement that he could not manufacture of bamboo canes of some kind or another, and many a purpose besides he knew how to apply them to. Had he been obliged to cross a tract of country where there was no water, and required a large vessel, or "canteen," to carry a supply, he would have made it as follows. He would have taken two joints of bamboo, each a couple of feet long and six or seven inches in diameter. These he would have trimmed, so that one of the nodes between the hollow spaces would serve as a bottom for each. In the node, or partition, at the top, he would have pierced a small hole to admit the water, which hole could be closed by a stopper of the pith of a palm or some soft wood, easily procured in the tropical forests of India. In case he could not have found bamboos with joints sufficiently long for the purpose it would have mattered little. Two or more joints would have been taken for each jar, and the partitions between them broken through, so as to admit the water into the hollow spaces within. The pair of "jars" he would have then bound together at a very acute angle – something after the form of the letter V – and then to carry them with ease he would have strapped the bamboos to his back, the apex of the angle downwards, and one of the ends just peeping over each shoulder. In this way he would have provided himself with a water-vessel that for strength and lightness – the two great essentials – would have been superior to anything that either tinker or cooper could construct.

As it happened that they were travelling through a district where there was water at the distance of every mile or two, this bamboo canteen was not needed. A single joint holding a quart was enough to give any of the party a drink whenever they required it.

Now had the Mechs not arrived opportunely with their rafts of inflated buffalo-skins, there can be no doubt that Ossaroo would have found some mode of crossing the stream. A proof that he could have done so occurred but a few hours after, when our travellers found themselves in a similar dilemma. This time it was the main river, whose course they were following, that lay in the way. A large bend had to be got over, else, they would have been compelled to take a circuitous route of many miles, and by a path which the guide knew to be difficult on account of some marshes that intervened.

Ossaroo proposed fording the river, but how was that to be done? It would be a longer swim than the other, and there were no natives with their skin-rafts – at least none were in sight. But there grew close by a clump of noble bamboos, and the guide pointed to them.

"Oh! you intend to make a raft of the canes?" inquired the botanist.

"Yes, Sahib," replied the shikarree.

"It will take a long time, I fear?"

"No fearee, Sahib; half-hour do."

Ossaroo was as good as his promise. In half-an-hour not only one raft, but three – that is, a raft for each – was constructed and ready to be launched. The construction of these was as simple as it was ingenious. Each consisted of four pieces of bamboo, lashed together crossways with strips of rattan, so as to form a square in the centre just large enough to admit the body of a man. Of course, the bamboos, being hollow within, and closed at both ends, had sufficient buoyancy to sustain a man's weight above water, and nothing more was wanted.

Each of the party having adjusted his burden upon his back, stepped within the square space, lifted the framework in his hands, walked boldly into the river, and was soon floating out upon its current. Ossaroo had given them instructions how to balance themselves so as to keep upright, and also how to paddle with both hands and feet: so that, after a good deal of plashing and spluttering,

and laughing and shouting, all three arrived safely on the opposite bank. Of course, Fritz swam over without a raft.

As the river had to be re-crossed on the other arm of the bend, each carried his raft across the neck or isthmus, where a similar fording was made, that brought them once more on the path they were following. Thus every day – almost every hour – our travellers were astonished by some new feat of their hunter-guide, and some new purpose to which the noble bamboo could be applied.

Still another astonishment awaited them. Ossaroo had yet a feat in store, in the performance of which the bamboo was to play a conspicuous part; and it chanced that upon the very next day, an opportunity occurred by which the hunter was enabled to perform this feat to the great gratification not only of his travelling companions, but to the delight of a whole village of natives, who derived no little benefit from the performance.

I have already said, that there are many parts of India where the people live in great fear of the tigers – as well as lions, wild elephants, panthers, and rhinoceroses. These people have no knowledge of proper fire-arms. Some, indeed, carry the clumsy matchlock, which, of course, is of little or no service in hunting; and their bows, even with poisoned arrows, are but poor weapons when used in an encounter with these strong savage beasts.

Often a whole village is kept in a state of terror for weeks or months by a single tiger who may have made his lair in the neighbourhood, and whose presence is known by his repeated forays upon the cows, buffaloes, or other domesticated animals of the villagers. It is only after this state of things has continued for a length of time, and much loss has been sustained, that these poor people, goaded to desperation, at length assemble together, and risk an encounter with the tawny tyrant. In such encounters human lives are frequently sacrificed, and generally some one of the party receives a blow or scratch from the tiger's paw, which maims or lames him for the rest of his days.

But there is still a worse case than even this. Not infrequently the tiger, instead of preying upon their cattle, carries off one of the natives themselves; and where this occurs, the savage monster, if not pursued and killed, is certain to repeat the offence. It is strange, and true as strange, that a tiger having once fed upon human flesh, appears ever after to be fonder of it than of any other food, and will make the most daring attempts to procure it. Such tigers are not uncommon in India, where they are known among the natives by the dreaded name of *man-eaters*!

It is not a little curious that the Caffres and other natives of South Africa, apply the same term to individuals of the lion species, known to be imbued with a similar appetite.

It is difficult to conceive a more horrible monster than a lion or tiger of such tastes; and in India, when the presence of such an *one* is discovered, the whole neighbourhood lives in dread. Often when a British post is near, the natives make application to the officers to assist them in destroying the terrible creature – well knowing that our countrymen, with their superior courage, with their elephants and fine rifles, are more than a match for the jungle tyrant. When no such help is at hand, the shikarrees, or native hunters, usually assemble, and either take the tiger by stratagem, or risk their lives in a bold encounter. In many a tiger-hunt had Ossaroo distinguished himself, both by stratagem and prowess, and there was no mode of trapping or killing a tiger that was not known to him.

He was now called upon to give an exhibition of his craft, which, in point of ingenuity, was almost equal to the stratagem of the limed fig-leaves.

# Chapter Fifteen.
# The Death of the Man-Eater

The path which our travellers were following led them into one of the native villages of the Teräi, which lay in a sequestered part of the forest. The inhabitants of this village received them with acclamations of joy. Their approach had been reported before they reached the place, and a deputation of the villagers met them on the way, hailing them with joyful exclamations and gestures of welcome.

Karl and Caspar, ignorant of the native language, and, of course, not comprehending what was said, were for some time at a loss to understand the meaning of these demonstrations. Ossaroo was appealed to, to furnish an explanation.

"A man-eater," he said.

"A man-eater!"

"Yes, Sahib; a man-eater in the jungle."

This was not sufficiently explicit. What did Ossaroo mean? A man-eater in the jungle? What sort of creature was that? Neither Karl nor Caspar had ever heard of such a thing before. They questioned Ossaroo.

The latter explained to them what was a man-eater. It was a tiger so called, as you already know, on account of its preying upon human beings. This one had already killed and carried off a man, a woman, and two children, beside large numbers of domestic animals. For more than three months it had infested the village, and kept the inhabitants in a state of constant alarm. Indeed, several families had deserted the place solely through fear of this terrible tiger; and those that remained were in the habit, as soon as night came on, of shutting themselves up within their houses, without daring to stir out again till morning. In the instance of one of the children, even this precaution had not served, for the fierce tiger had broken through the frail wall of bamboos, and carried the child off before the eyes of its afflicted parents!

Several times the timid but incensed villagers had assembled and endeavoured to destroy this terrible enemy. They had found him each time in his lair; but, on account of their poor weapons and slight skill as hunters, he had always been enabled to escape from them. Indeed on such occasions the tiger was sure to come off victorious, for it was in one of these hunts that the man had fallen a sacrifice. Others of the villagers had been wounded in the different conflicts with this pest of the jungle. With such a neighbour at their doors no wonder they had been living in a state of disquietude and terror.

But why their joy at the approach of our travellers?

This was proudly explained by Ossaroo, who of course had reason to be proud of the circumstance.

It appeared that the fame of the shikarree, as a great tiger-hunter, had preceded him, and his name was known even in the Teräi. The villagers had heard that he was approaching, accompanied by two Feringhees, (so Europeans are called by the natives of India,) and they hoped, by the aid of the noted shikarree and the Feringhee Sahibs, to get rid of the dreaded marauder.

Ossaroo, thus appealed to, at once gave his promise to aid them. Of course the botanist made no objection, and Caspar was delighted with the idea. They were to remain all night at the village, since nothing could be done before night. They might have got up a grand battue to beat the jungle and attack the tiger in his lair, but what would have come of that? Perhaps the loss of more lives. None of the villagers cared to risk themselves in such a hunt, and that was not the way that Ossaroo killed his tigers.

Karl and Caspar expected to see their companion once more try his stratagem of the birdlime and the leaves; and such at first was his intention. Upon inquiry, however, he found that no birdlime was to be had. The villagers did not know how to prepare it, and there were no fig-trees about the neighbourhood, nor holly, nor trees of any other kind out of which it could properly be made.

What was Ossaroo to do under these circumstances? Must he abandon the idea of destroying the man-eater, and leave the helpless villagers to their fate? No. His hunter pride would not permit that. His name as a great shikarree was at stake. Besides, his humanity was touched – for, although but a poor Hindoo, he possessed the common feelings of our nature. Karl and Caspar, moreover, had taken an interest in the thing, and urged him to do his best, promising him all the assistance it was in their power to give.

It was resolved, therefore, that, cost what it might, the tiger should be destroyed.

Ossaroo had other resources besides the birdlime and the battue, and he at once set to work to prepare his plan. He had an ample stock of attendants, as the villagers worked eagerly and ran hither and thither obedient to his nod. In front of the village there was a piece of open ground. This was the scene of operations.

Ossaroo first commanded four large posts to be brought, and set in the ground in a quadrangle of about eight feet in length and width. These posts when sunk firmly in their place stood full eight feet in height, and each had a fork at the top. On these forks four strong beams were placed horizontally, and then firmly lashed with rawhide thongs. Deep trenches were next dug from post to post, and in these were planted rows of strong bamboos four inches apart from each other – the bamboos themselves being about four inches in thickness. The earth was then filled in, and trodden firmly, so as to render the uprights immovable. A tier of similar bamboos was next laid horizontally upon the top, the ends of which, interlocking with those that stood upright, held the latter in their places. Both were securely lashed to the frame timbers – that had been notched for the purpose – and to one another, and then the structure was complete. It resembled an immense cage with smooth yellow rods, each four inches in diameter. The door alone was wanting, but it was not desirable to have a door. Although it was intended for a “trap cage,” the “bird” for which it had been constructed was not to be admitted to the inside.

Ossaroo now called upon the villagers to provide him with a goat that had lately had kids, and whose young were still living. This was easily procured. Still another article he required, but both it and the goat had been “bespoke” at an earlier hour of the day, and were waiting his orders. This last was the skin of a buffalo, such a one as we have already seen used by these people in crossing their rivers.

When all these things had been got ready it was near night, and no time was lost in waiting. With the help of the villagers Ossaroo was speedily arrayed in the skin of the buffalo, his arms and limbs taking the place of the animal’s legs, with the head and horns drawn over him like a hood, so that his eyes were opposite the holes in the skin.

Thus metamorphosed, Ossaroo entered the bamboo cage, taking the goat along with him. The stake, that had been kept out for the purpose of admitting them within the enclosure, was now set into its place as firmly as the others; and this done, the villagers, with Karl and Caspar, retired to their houses, and left the shikarree and his goat to themselves.

A stranger passing the spot would have had no other thoughts than that the cage-like enclosure contained a buffalo and a goat. On closer examination it might have been perceived that this buffalo held, grasped firmly in its fore-hoofs, a strong bamboo spear; and that was all that appeared odd about it – for it was lying down like any other buffalo, with the goat standing beside it.

The sun had set, and night was now on. The villagers had put out their lights, and, shut up within their houses, were waiting in breathless expectation. Ossaroo, on his part, was equally anxious – not from the fear of any danger, for he had secured himself against that. He was only anxious for

the approach of the man-eater, in order that he might have the opportunity to exhibit the triumph of his hunter-skill.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.