

**FERINGHI, AND
OTHER STORIES OF
INDIAN GIPSY LIFE**

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Feringhi, and other stories of Indian gipsy life by A. Dumbarton

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A. DUMBARTON

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Page 3.

A DEAD "MAN-EATER."

[Frontispiece.]

FERINGHI

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BY

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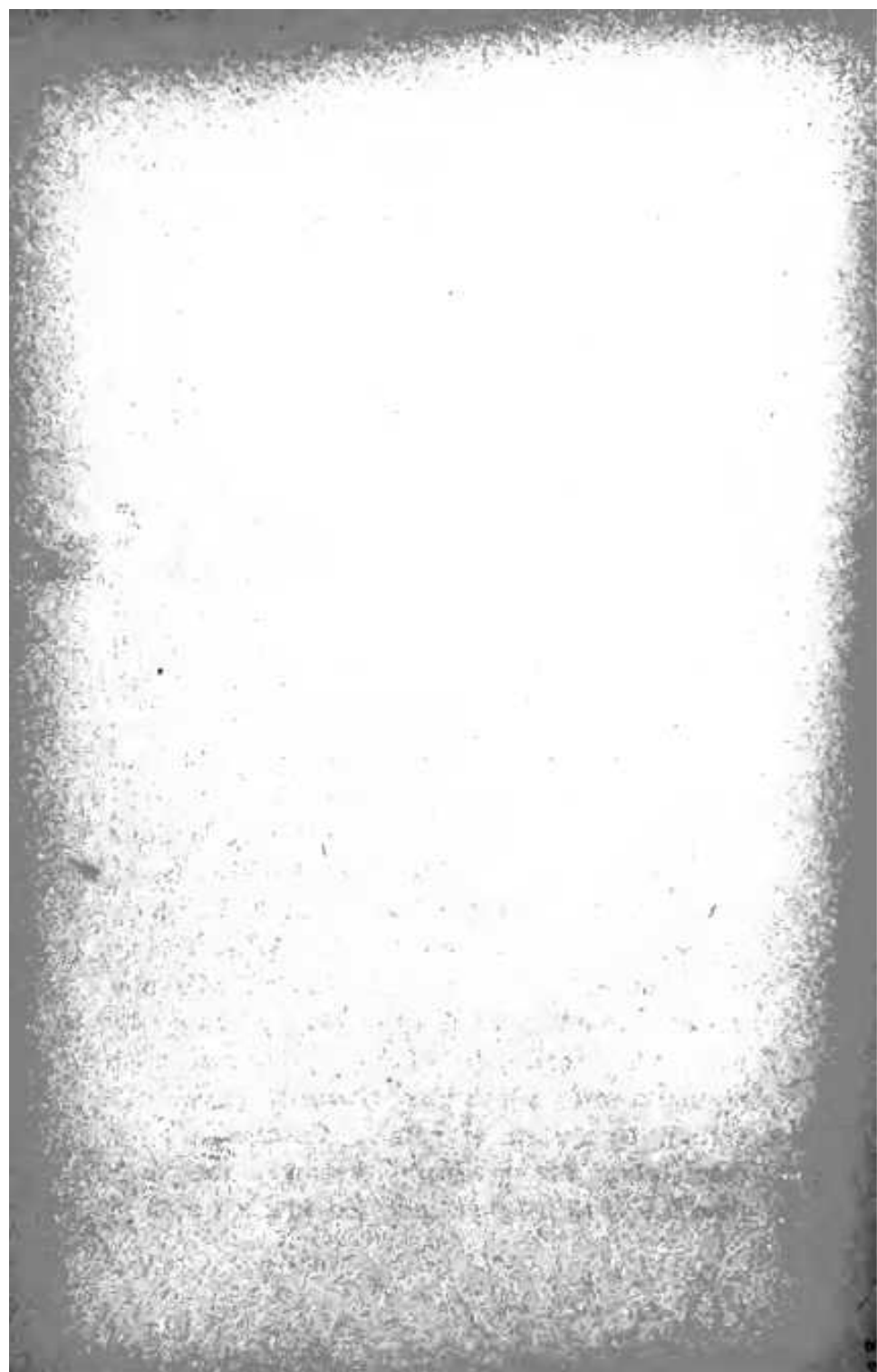
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"GIPSY LIFE IN THE MYSORE JUNGLE."

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Annex

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PREFACE



THE Mysore Province, in Southern India, contains a population of about five millions. Numbered among these are some seventy thousand who belong to what are known as "forest and hill tribes." They represent that section of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country whose present-day customs and beliefs preserve with least change the features of primitive life in the extensive jungles. For the most part, they continue to be found amidst scenes long familiar to the tiger and other beasts of prey, steeped in superstition, wild and vicious in life. What change has come over some is largely due to civilisation having pushed its way—more rapidly during the past century than ever before—into those portions of the country which were formerly given over entirely to a state of nature. Contact with the outer world has gradually destroyed the long-time fear of their fellows and led to a few settling

down in the vicinity of large towns. With regard to marriage, religion, and language, they are as tenacious as ever, each tribe being a law unto itself in these and other things.

Two of these tribes, known as Koramas and Korachas, are dealt with in the following stories. By origin they are pure gipsies, and in large measure still keep up their nomadic habits. They number altogether about twenty-five thousand, with twenty subdivisions. Basket-making and mat-making are followed as a livelihood, their native jungles supplying in abundance the necessary material in the shape of bamboos and date-palms. The name "thieving Korama" has long since passed into common use as a byword. It indicates other pursuits which are by no means followed exclusively by the one branch. While the Korama carries his head high, boasting a superiority which exists alone in caste pride, the Koracha retaliates by insinuating, without reason, that the evil practices of the other are entirely responsible for their common ill-fame. So notorious have they become, that they appear on police registers among the "criminal and suspected classes" of the country. Add to this the fact, that they are devil-worshippers, polygamists, and hardened drunkards—not to mention other features possessed

in common with most low-class Hindus—and the gipsy character may be painted in colours dark enough to strike any imagination.

About forty years ago, a man went from a camp of one of these tribes, as a coolie emigrant, to South Africa. There he was brought under the influence of the gospel, and converted. On returning to the Mysore, after an absence of ten years, he and his family were baptized. Nothing could better attest the genuineness of his conversion than the great devotion he displayed in seeking the reclamation of his fellow-tribespeople. The work which was begun by him thirty years ago has been steadily growing, and continues to form one of the most promising, as well as interesting, features of missionary enterprise in the Mysore Province.

The aim in writing these stories has been to present as truthfully as possible certain pictures of gipsy life, making the wild, wide jungle and the little Christian village alternately the background. The one which describes the providential origin of the work is almost throughout biographical; the others are largely composed of facts, incidents, and personal experiences. Names have been changed, except in the case of Punyadása, where no good purpose was to be served by treating as obscure a character so well known.

It has not been possible to avoid entirely the use of common vernacular words. The meanings, in many cases, are apparent ; but where any difficulty is experienced, the following brief list may be consulted :—

- Anna* . . . Term of respect, sometimes affixed to feminine proper names, equivalent to Mrs. Additional meaning, mother ; and also used to denote a female divinity.
- Ayah* . . . Nurse.
- Ayya* . . . More respectful than *appa*, which is the masculine form of *anna*, meaning sir.
- Ayyo !* . . . Exclamation denoting sorrow and pain.
- Bhūta* . . . Devil, evil spirit, ghost.
- Choudi* . . . Evil spirit worshipped by the gipsies, supposed to inhabit the banyan tree.
- Coolie* . . . A labourer employed in various capacities.
- Dud* . . . Coin equal to one-third of a penny.
- Feringhi* . . . Foreigner or foreign.
- Kappu Kadala* . . . Literally, black sea, the common name for sea or ocean.
- Lōta* . . . Brass vessel for holding water.
- Mahā Dēvaru* . . . Great God.
- Pātri* . . . Missionary.
- Panchāyat* . . . A village council, composed of five principal men.
- Pang !* . . . Exclamation denoting great anger, peculiar to the Koramas.
- Pāpā* . . . Oh dear ! dreadful !
- Patil* . . . Chief village authority.
- Pial* . . . Mud platform commonly found in front of houses.
- Pie* . . . Smallest Indian coin, one-twelfth of anna or penny.