

**JUNGLE
PIONEERING
IN GONDLAND**

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Jungle Pioneering in Gondland by A. W. McMillan

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A. W. MCMILLAN

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Jungle Pioneering in Gondland

BY

A. W. McMILLAN

(Now of L.M.S.)

"I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the Kingdom of Christ. If anything will advance the interests of that Kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping of it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity."

—DAVID LIVINGSTONE

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12 PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, E.C.

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1906

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PREFACE

FROM 1868 to 1872 and 1880 to 1884 I passed more than eight of the happiest years of my life as Deputy-Commissioner in charge of the then new district of Bálághát ("above the passes"). This tract of more than three thousand square miles—one quarter well cultivated rice plain-land, about one thousand feet above the sea, the remainder the southern part of the Satpura Mountains, from 2,500 to 2,763 feet high, the most remote and wild parts of the Bhandará and Mandlá districts—was made into a separate district by the great administrator, Sir R. Temple, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, with the object of inducing the good cultivating classes of the plains to take up the many thousand acres of first-class land amongst the successive ranges of hills above. The whole country was without one made road of any kind, and while the ordinary country carts could slowly traverse the rough tracts in the plains below, there were no wheeled vehicles above the hills, for none could possibly get there, unless

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taken to pieces and carried on men's heads, and, when there, could not be moved about unless empty. Colonel Newmarch—a Deputy-Commissioner of Bhandará—in about 1865 reported that the foot-tracks up the hills were "fit only for Gonds and monkeys"!

The whole of the uplands were practically covered with primæval forest, with scattered clearings, made and scratched, not cultivated, by a scanty, shifting population of Gonds, while at still greater intervals the less rugged slopes of the hills were temporarily cleared by the Baigás. These wild and simple aborigines were amongst the most interesting of my charge. The Baigás, especially the Bharotias, the wildest of the three tribes, were my particular care. Some of the Gonds had one or two ploughs and bullocks; but a Baigá's whole stock-in-trade consisted of one axe, which cost sixpence and lasted a lifetime. Both Gonds and Baigás began their clearings with "bewarh" (forest cut down and burnt where it lay), and continued with "dáhia" (wood brought and spread on the land and burnt). The Baigás used no plough, so that their clearings were soon again covered with forest. Both Baigás and Gonds, uncontaminated by the low castes of the plains, I

found cheerful, happy, peaceful, honest and truthful. The Baigás especially were so; their word could be relied on. I have heard Baigá witnesses in my Court, when charged by the accused with telling lies, exclaim, "What!—a Baigá tell a lie? Never!"

Intimate as was my acquaintance with the whole district—nearly every village and hamlet (tolá), and very nearly all the people—I am glad that the Mission I advocated in my "Notes on the Baigás" has been so successful; and I hope that the interesting anecdotes and experiences of Mr. McMillan, narrated in this book, will draw the attention of the good people of this country to these remote but promising subjects of his Majesty our King.

Space compels me merely to add that the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Johnson, in 1882 came to my house at Bálághát to see about two hundred men and women of the Baigás, who came down from the hills to meet him.

ALFRED BLOOMFIELD, *Colonel,*
Indian Army (retired).

GLEMHAM GROVE,
SAXMUNDHAM, SUFFOLK:
November, 1906.

INTRODUCTION

It has been my happy privilege to spend five years in one of the most isolated districts of the Indian Mission-field, during the greater part of which time I have lived a nomadic life amongst degraded aboriginal hill-tribes, often for long periods without seeing a European or visiting any centre of civilization.

It was far from my intention to write a detailed account of what I experienced during those years; but, since coming to England, certain friends persuaded me to put into book-form some of the incidents I had been relating at missionary meetings, thinking my story might in this way afford interest to a larger section of the Christian public than the few thousands who have listened to my addresses.

The illustrations have been made from photographs taken by myself, most of them places and subjects which, as far as I know, have never been produced in a missionary journal.

A. W. M.

GOFF'S OAK, HERTS:
November, 1906

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