

**MATHERAN HILL:  
ITS PEOPLE, PLANTS  
AND ANIMALS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649644735

Matheran Hill: Its People, Plants and Animals by J. Y. Smith

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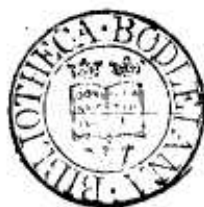
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EDINBURGH:

MACLACHLAN & STEWART, 64 SOUTH BRIDGE,  
BOOKSELLERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

1871.

226. j. 153.

PRINTED BY NEILL AND COMPANY, EDINBURGH.

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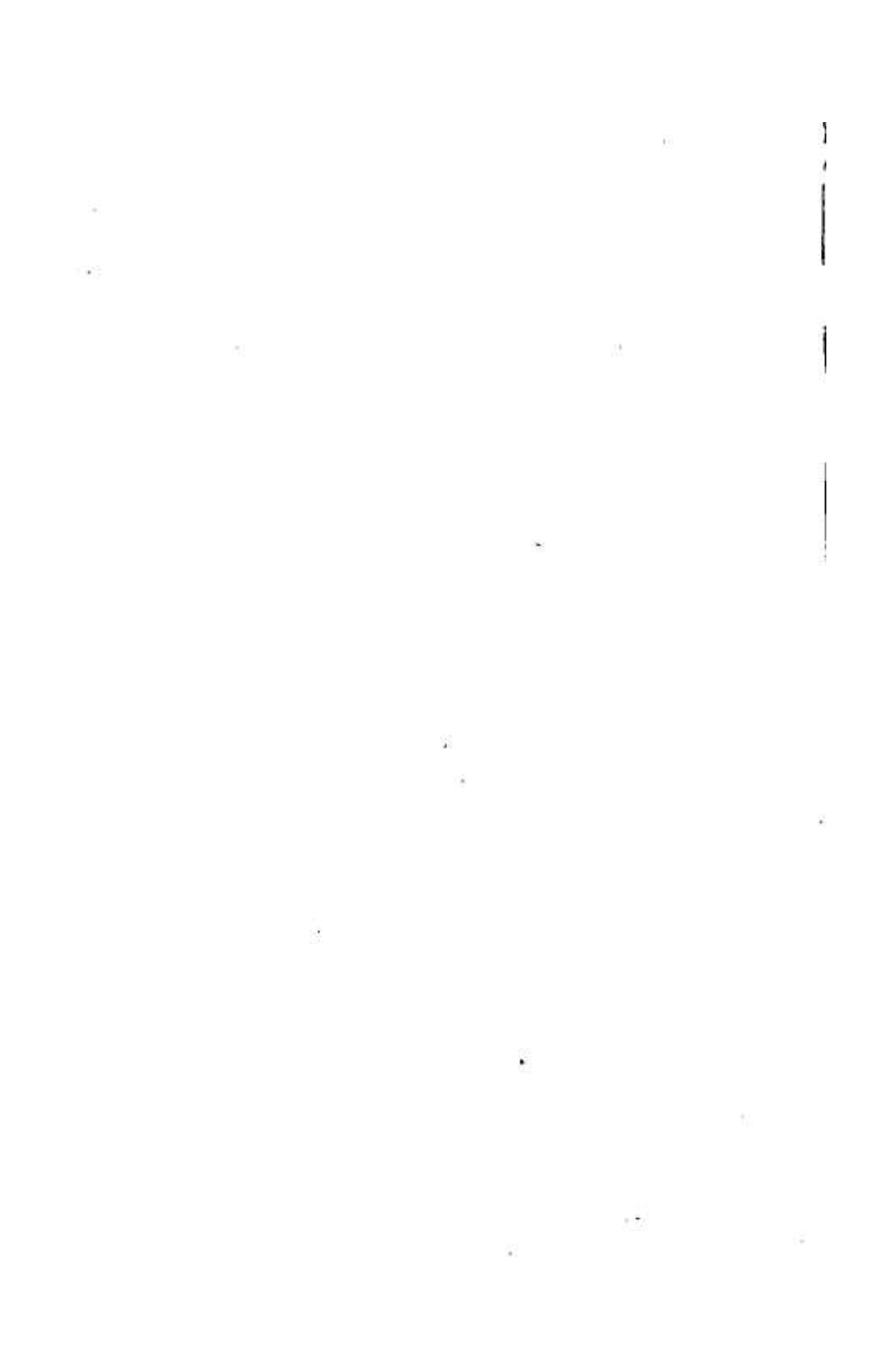
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## CHAPTER I.

*Early English History, as related by the Kotwal, with remarks on the Scenery of the Hill, its Climate, Rock-structure, and Water supply.*

**I**N the month of May 1850, Mr Hugh Malet of the Bombay Civil Service, while halting at the Chauk Bungalow on his way from Poona to Tanna, strolled one evening, with his gun in his hand, half way up the hill ; and, having satisfied himself that it was worthy of further exploration, returned next day, under the guidance of the Patel of Soondeewarra, with a determination to reach the summit. The ascent was made by the small footpath that skirts the Amraee, or Mango Grove, on the westward side of Chauk Point. It is still used by coolies, and emerges on the brow of the hill close to the column of black rock, bearing a single jambul tree, that conspicuously marks the spot. From thence Mr Malet

and his guide made their way to the small stream that then ran freely, even in May, through the Bund valley; they drew from it two bottlesful of clear water, then dug from the site of the old bazaar a basketful of earth, and chipped some laterite stone, to take away with them for more careful examination thereafter. Carrying with them the water, earth, and stone, they descended by the path that runs along the opposite side of the Chauk spur and traverses the magnificent grove of mangoes, jambuls, palms, and other fine forest-trees, with their tortuous rigging of climbers that clothes the plateau under Sphinx Point—the Amraee of those days, but now better known as the Ram Bagh. There Mr Malet parted with his guide, and, greatly pleased with all he had seen, went on his way to Tanna for the season.

In the following September he sent up to the Patel supplies of sheep, fowls, rabbits, &c., with instructions to have them conveyed to the hill top, and there await his arrival. Meanwhile, Madhoo Rao, the son of the village chief, and long *facile princeps* of the hill-people, set about building a hut on site No. 2, and in the course of six weeks got it ready for the collector. The latter came up to occupy it on the 1st of November, and had his office-tents pitched around him. He remained about a month, and, having cleared footpaths to the several points, departed on his annual tour through the district. In February of 1851 he returned for the third time,

accompanied by Captain Harry Barr, who had, unknown to Madhoo Rao, repeatedly climbed the hill before, and knew it well. Site No. 13 was selected by Captain Barr, and he built a wattle-and-dab house on it after the monsoon of the same year. At that time, also, Mr Malet had three more bungalows constructed, two of them temporary, on sites No. 1 and 9, and one of stone, now known as "The Byke." Mr Fawcett then chose the fine piece of flat ground near Echo Point for a house, having an iron framework and walls of bamboo; it is still standing and in fair order, but nearly all the others, that were originally temporary, have since since been replaced by substantial structures of stone and lime. In 1852 Mr Malet, to whom all who love the hill are so much indebted, obtained a grant of Rs.500 from government for the improvement of the path leading to Chauk. This had, up to that time, been little better than the bed of a torrent, and was traversed with difficulty; but, on its repair, Mrs Malet, the first English lady whose foot trod the soil of Matheran, was carried up in a common chair fastened with ropes to poles of bamboo. The Kotwal relates that her eyes were bound with a handkerchief as her bearers climbed the successive bands of black rock that separate the forest belts encircling the hill, and that, on gaining the last giddy steep, they were unclosed that she might gaze with delight on the far-reaching range of the Sahyadrees that overhang the Konkan. Matheran was now