

THE WILD MONKEYS OF INDIA.

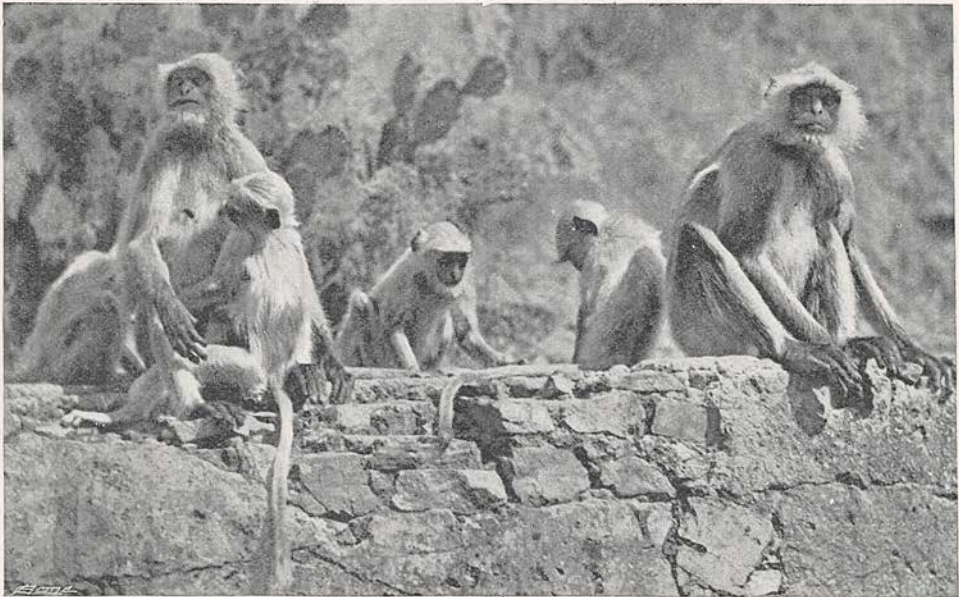
Written and Illustrated by GAMBIER BOLTON, F.Z.S.



VISITORS to the northern parts of peninsular India are often wonder-struck on seeing for the first time the large langurs, or hanúmán monkeys, racing about over the roofs of the houses in native cities like Jeypore and many others, or leaping from rock to rock with prodigious bounds, or from tree to tree, as the traveller, either on elephant or in a pony-cart, drives through the mountains. One soon gets used to the sight of the little rhesus monkeys, for they

sky over their heads, make up a typical Indian picture and concert of sounds.

But all this is changed when we seek the hanúmán in his home, for although constantly present in many of the cities and villages, it is amid the eternal silence of the mountains, or amidst the ruins of some ancient city or temple, far removed from the haunts of man, that we see these large monkeys thoroughly in their element. And having recently taken part in an excursion to the ruined temple at Gulta, near Jeypore, Rajputana, the photographs taken by the writer will, it is hoped,



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A FAMILY GROUP OF HANÚMÁN MONKEYS.

may be seen nearly everywhere when once away from the cities, and few more charming sights than a troop of these mischievous little rascals, playing, fighting and feeding near a water tank, or quarrelling over the fallen fruit under a large shady tree near the roadside, can be imagined. Always up to some kind of mischief or devilry, they are most interesting to watch, and their shrieks mingle with the screams of the little green paroquets which fly around them, whilst the shrill cry of the ever-present buzzard sitting in the trees close by or flying in circles in the blue

prove of interest to all lovers of animal life.

Known to naturalists as *Semnopithecus entellus*, the hanúmán is one of the largest monkeys in the East, measuring about three feet high when sitting, to which must be added another three feet or more for their extra lengthy tails, which are one of the first things to attract attention.

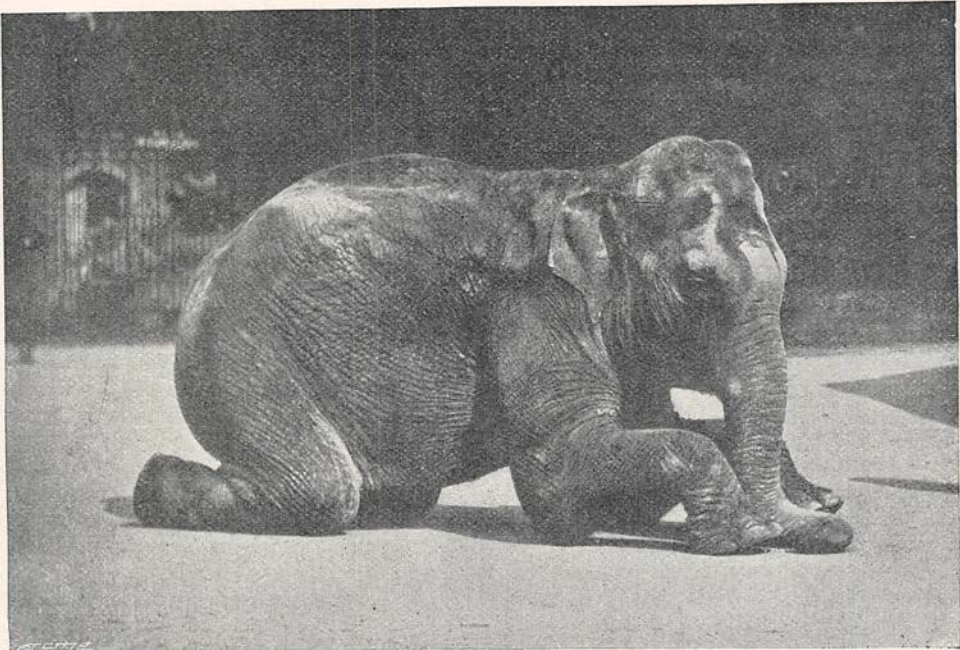
They vary in colour from a black gray to nearly white, whilst the face, hands, feet and ears are a dense black, and hanging from the forehead, cheeks and chin is a mass of gray hair, so that, as Mr. Sterndale has so

truly observed, "the *tout ensemble* of the langur is so peculiar that no one who has once been told of a long, loose-limbed, slender monkey, with a prodigious tail, black face, and overhanging brows of long, stiff, black hair, projecting like a pent-house, would fail to recognise the animal."

By the Hindus they are regarded as sacred, being consecrated to their god Hanúmán, and it is a comical sight to see several of these large monkeys round a grain or vegetable shop in a native city, for they cram all that they can hold into their mouths, and then seizing a handful or two as a reserve store, in case of attack from a stronger

years. An English sailor, Robert Knox—who was a prisoner in Ceylon for a very long time—gave a wonderfully good description of them as early as 1681, his words, "with great white beards round from ear to ear, which makes them show just like old men," very accurately describing the langur's appearance.

One blazingly hot afternoon in January we left our hotel in a carriage and pair, and after a drive right through the busiest parts of the city, at last reached the foot of the mountains, and here we found in readiness for us three elephants, kindly provided for our use by the Rajah of Jeypore, and



From a photo by]

AN ELEPHANT KNEELING FOR HOWDAH.

[Gambier Bolton.

comrade on the way, they leap off in huge bounds to the roofs of the houses or walls of the city. The owner of the shop looks on with despair written on his face, but beyond a few inaudible "swear words" and the sensation in the palm of his hands of a great longing for a good big stick, he does nothing, although, when no one is looking, he will not hesitate to step up to the robbers and drive them away with his hands and feet, for, as in the case of many, his religion has to go to the wall when it touches his pocket or purse.

As mentioned by Mr. Lydekker, they have been known to scientists for a great many

a very charming picture they made, their *howdahs* and gorgeous trappings, the markings artistically worked on their cheeks and foreheads, with the bright dresses of their attendants seen in the full blaze of the Indian sunlight, being quite beyond description. Each one at the word of command knelt to receive its human load, a short ladder being placed from the ground to the *howdah* to enable the ladies of our party to get to their seats, and on the word being given, they drew their huge front legs under them, sending everyone nearly backwards out of the *howdah*, and then drawing in their hind legs, we experienced for a moment the

opposite sensation of being nearly pitched over their heads to the ground. In a moment we were steady once more, and with a long and quite inaudible stride, accompanied by a heavy roll, like that of a herring boat in a swell, we set off up the narrow path leading towards the mountain heights. We had taken note of two things whilst watching the elephants prepare to start: the position in which they kneel or lie down—this, as will be seen, being quite different to that assumed by other animals, as they stretch out both front and hind legs—and had also time to carefully test the old hunter's saying of "once round an elephant's foot gives half its height," and in all three cases found this wonderfully correct, for one of the animals was a monster standing nearly ten feet at the shoulder.

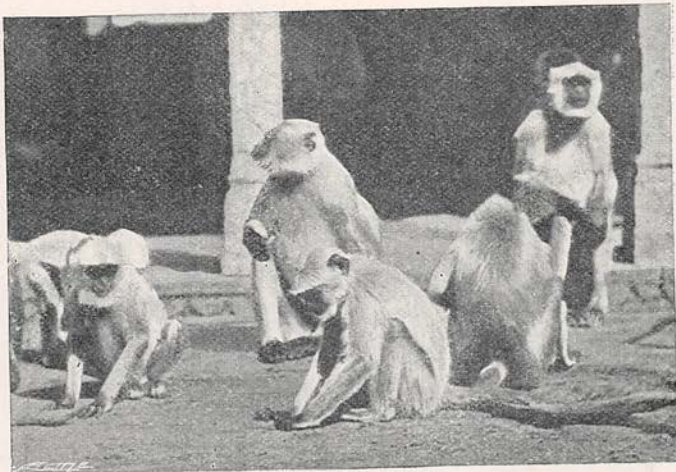
After half an hour uphill work we suddenly came to a steep decline, and if the way in which the elephants picked out the best places for their feet as we ascended had astonished us, directly the downhill "tilt" began they seemed to be doubly cautious, not only picking out the smoothest parts of the path, but where it appeared unsound, actually feeling before they placed their feet down, and shifting the foot if it did not seem to be able to bear them.

We had scarcely gone half a mile downhill before we heard the loud rather musical call of the hanúmáns, well described as a sort of "whoop," and there, on the tumble-down wall, made thousands of years ago to protect the inhabitants from stepping over into a precipice, and from the sides of the mountains above us, or sitting gravely in the trees, we saw dozens of the "long, loose-limbed, slender monkeys," and as we got nearer they sighted some very suspicious looking bags which our attendants carried over their shoulders, and hastening down to a tolerably flat piece of road, they awaited our arrival in solemn silence.

The writer has, in different parts of the world, been in certain spots surrounded by living creatures—and naturally very busy with his camera—amidst herds and flocks of seals, deer, antelopes, penguins, etc., but

here was a regular *embarras de richesse*, or rather *une pléthore de singes*, for the hanúmáns were all over the place, and the difficulty was not to find specimens to photograph, but to select them in small enough groups to render photography possible.

Our attendants now walked down to the meeting place and proceeded to sprinkle grain and sugar for the monkeys, informing us that this was done for them so many times a week all the year round at this particular spot, a wealthy Hindu having left a sum of money at his death to enable the custom to be kept up. As we moved farther down the valley towards the ruined temple at Gulta, our interpreter told us many strange facts about the habits and customs of the langurs, and certainly, so far as the writer

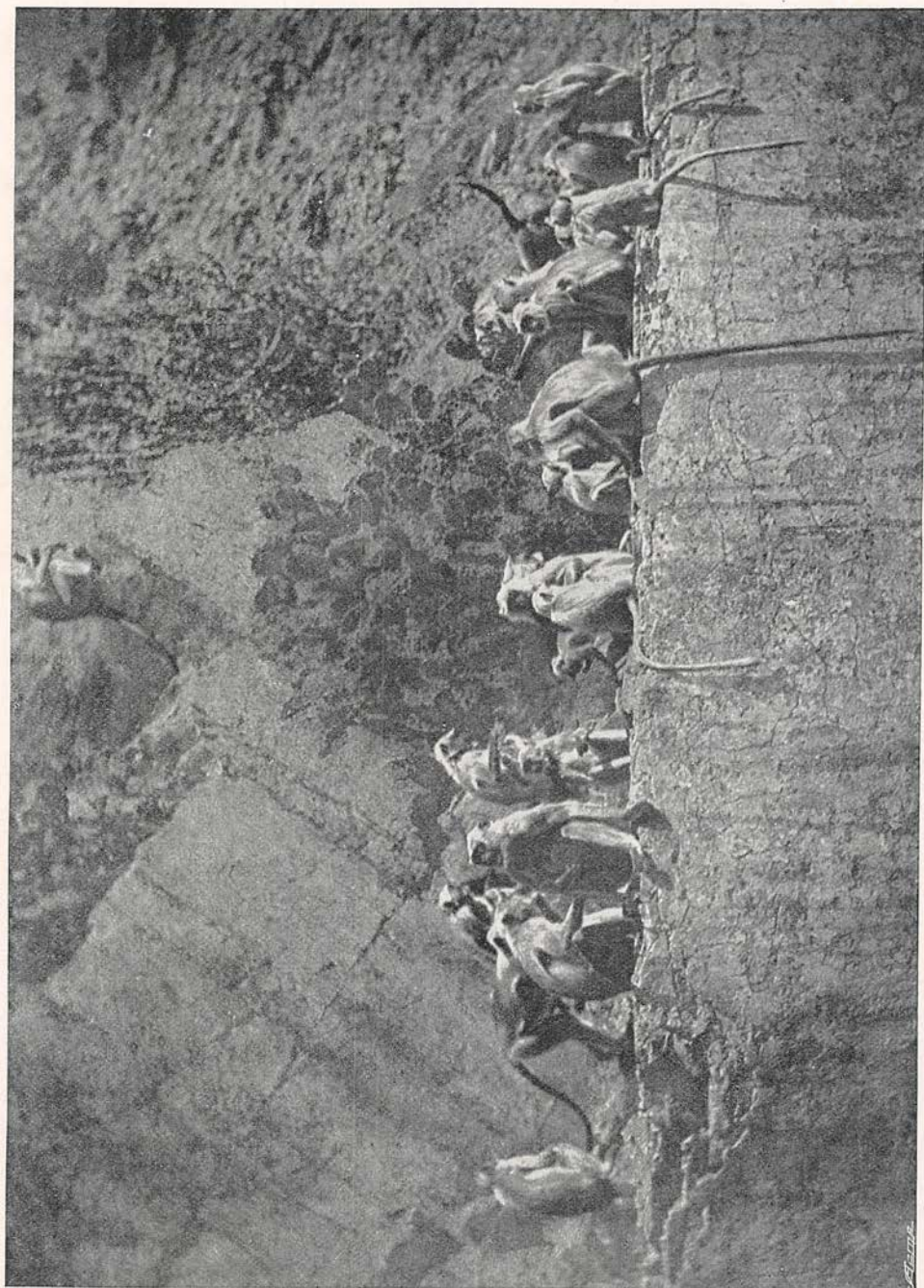


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HANÚMÁNS AT GULTA.

was able to corroborate them on a second visit, they were wonderfully correct. Meeting a solitary young male sitting high up above the road, and looking with longing eyes at the feast going on below, we were told that the old males are in the habit of cruelly destroying the male baby monkeys born in their herd, for one male will have quite a large number of wives, and the very idea of another of his sex appearing on the scene so rouses his jealousy that he quickly slaughters his own off-spring in a very barbarous manner. After this has happened once or twice the mothers appear to become aware of the fact, and seizing the baby they rush far off into the jungle or high up amongst the mountains, and here they will hide until the young male is able to look after himself, when the mother duly returns to her lord and



From a photo by

WILD HANÚMÁN MONKEYS, WITH SENTRY ON GUARD.

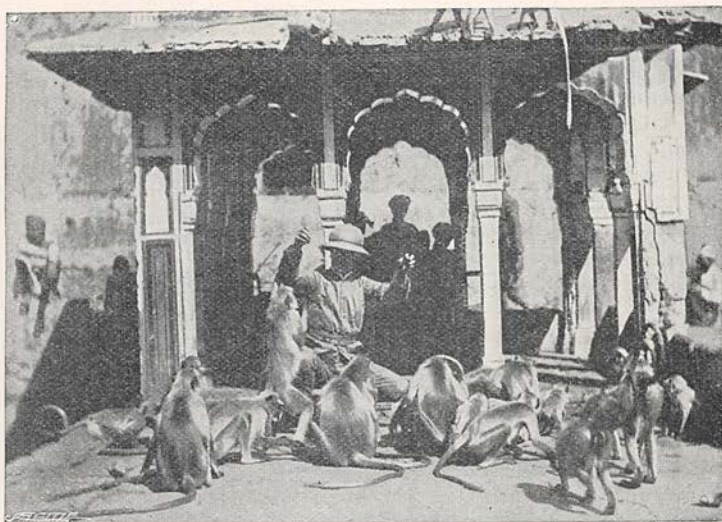
[Gambier Bolton.]

master, whilst the young one, until he feels himself strong enough to tackle the old gentleman, has to hang about on the outskirts of the troop biding his time. But at last the day arrives when he boldly faces the now rather old "head of the harem," and one of the fights that quickly ensue has been graphically described by Mr. T. H. Hughes, who watched it from start to finish in 1882 at the village of Singpur, in the Sohagpur district of the Rewa state. In most instances the old male is badly wounded, often killed on the spot, if only the young one has not ventured to dispute his rights before he is well grown, for in that case he would have little or no chance against his formidable antagonist.

That they actually place sentries is shown in one of the photographs very plainly, and sitting up at a great height either on a rock or tall tree, she is able to give immediate warning at the approach of danger. The harsh sound that is made under these circumstances is often gladly welcomed by the *shikari* when following up a wounded tiger or leopard, for, as so well said by Mr. Blandford, "safely ensconced in a lofty tree, or jumping from one tree to another as the

tiger moves, the monkey by gesture and cry points out the position of his deadly enemy in the bushes or grass beneath, and swears at him heartily."

Following the narrow mountain path for



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MR. GAMBIER BOLTON FEEDING HANUMAN MONKEYS.

another mile we came upon the picturesque ruins of the Gulta temple, with a native village nestling at the foot of a very steep declivity below. Adjoining the temple was a deep pool of water, its dark blue colour making the white rocks, out of which it was hewn, fairly glisten in the sunlight, the glare soon becoming wearisome to the eyes. Not a monkey was to be seen; but directly one of the villagers knew of our wish to see

them he stood up on a rock, and uttering a strange weird cry, not unlike the howl of the wolf or jackal, in a few moments we could see them leaping over the rocks and scrambling down the sides of the mountain in their haste to get their portion of the dead Hindu's bequest. By sitting back in the shade of one of the ruins the langurs were soon induced to approach within range of the camera, and after a good feed it was a pretty sight to see them walk off gravely to the pool and bending down take a long drink before going back to the mountains



[From a photo by]

[Gambier Bolton.

FEEDING SACRED MONKEYS.

once more. By coaxing some of the tamer ones with sugar and cake—the remnants of our impromptu tea—I was at last able to go and sit amongst them; indeed they became so familiar towards the end of my visit that one daring hanúmán actually reached down from the ruin and promptly knocked off my helmet!

But although we had obtained several photographs of the smaller and tamer monkeys we had not yet succeeded with the old male and most of the mothers, who sat on a ledge some distance away, and next day the writer returned, bringing a bag full of sugar from the bazaar, which was scattered on different ledges on the mountain side. Then, all being in readiness, the help of the villager was once more invoked, and whilst the younger ones fed near the ruin the writer set off to try to stalk the old ones with their infants as they fed on the ledges, carefully watched over by the sentry. It was a blazingly hot morning, the full heat of the Indian sun being experienced, making photography, and even life itself under those conditions, almost unbearable; but by creeping round rocks, wriggling serpent-like amongst boulders and moving noiselessly, the photographs were at last taken, showing the monkeys genuinely “at home,” and quite unconscious that the camera fiend was amongst them.

When at last the sentry saw the visitor she uttered her hoarse guttural cry, and in

an instant all were off at full speed, the babies clinging to their mothers' chests, their little arms round the old one's neck, whilst their feet clutched hold of the hair growing on her sides; and the way in which, even although thus encumbered, they sprang from rock to rock with immense leaps would have to be seen to be believed. The “head of the harem” will be noticed sitting almost

immediately under the sentry, his tail being simply stupendous in its length and nearly double the measurement of his body.

On our return to the city we visited the rajah's collection of animals, and recognised in one of the African lions an old friend born and reared at Clifton, near Bristol. Some of the tigers were enormous, far exceeding in size any of those in captivity out of India, one striped giant having only been captured in the neighbourhood a few days before our visit.

But the animal that attracted most of our attention was the large Arabian baboon, whose portrait we give, as he had a peculiar trick, common to many of

his species when in captivity, of continually yawning, as if to emphasise the fact that he was worn out with *ennui*, and that life was decidedly wearisome to him; and as he was said to repeat the performance about every two minutes during the hours of daylight, it is not surprising to find that he had successfully cultivated a wonderful stretch of jaw.



From a photo by]

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THE YAWNING BABOON.