

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

No. I. Death of Forest Trees and Animals Through Drought.

During a jungle tour in the plains of Monthon Bisnuloke in the last dry weather, the writer saw in certain localities trees such as mai yang (*Dipterocarpus alatus*) and some other hygrophilous species that had died in unusual numbers, the mortality being in some cases as high as seventy or eighty per cent of the original stock. Except in rare instances no sign of disease was evident, and the dead trees were confined to the more elevated ground. These circumstances led the writer to conclude that the death of the trees had been brought about through shortage of water supply, and enquiries among local inhabitants as to the climatic condition of the past few years confirmed this conclusion.

The fact is that 1930 was a year of excessive drought, the rain of the year being very late and meagre, while that of the previous year was very scarce. As a consequence, most of the "nawngs" and "bungas" and streams and other water courses dried up unusually early, the underground water-table sank to a very low level, and water was to be had practically nowhere except in the distant rivers and deep wells. An extensive marsh which, previous to the period of drought in question, used to contain all the year round deep water and many big crocodiles, had become, at the time visited by the writer, a complete *terra firma*, and of course no more crocodiles were to be seen. It may also be mentioned that the two following years, 1931 and 1932, were also marked for their scarcity of rain, to the detriment of agricultural crops.

As water is absolutely essential to life, plant as well as animal, this series of drought wrought disaster not only to the forest trees and moisture-loving cultivated plants such as banana, betel, and coconut, but also to wild animals. In the exceptionally dry year of 1930 these animals are said to have died of thirst or been killed by the callous-hearted hunters in great numbers. A Chinese trader of a village informed the writer that in that year alone he bought from the villagers as many as about 700 skins of deer and the like. Sad stories were told by village people of how the poor animals came and licked the wet soil at the mouths of wells or drank water from the troughs provided by the compassionate as well as by tricky people; of how the more desperately thirsty ones would not be scared away by man and were even so fearless as to snatch drinks from the buckets of passing water-carriers; and of how some of them overdrank and fell dead on the spot. An incident was also observed by a wood-oil tapper of a bird swooping down to the base of a yang tree and without the least hesitation swallowing some of the viscous wood-oil contained in a hole on the tree, and soon getting choked to death.

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