
**The Natural History Department of the Crystal Palace
Described ...**

Latham Robert Gordon

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Author: Latham Robert Gordon

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THE

NATURAL HISTORY DEPARTMENT

OF THE

CRYSTAL PALACE DESCRIBED.

ETHNOLOGY.

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ZOOLOGY AND BOTANY.

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BRADBURY & EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET, LONDON.
1854.



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PREFACE.

THE Natural History, which forms the subject of this Handbook, is of a somewhat more comprehensive kind than the current meaning of the words would suggest.

It comprises not only Botany and Zoology proper, but also ETHNOLOGY, or, the Science of Human Races.

Ethnology, from the greater novelty of the subject and its comparative importance, occupies the first and larger part of this little volume. The second part is, however, absolutely necessary to the full illustration of the first; and in order that each may reflect due light upon the other, the reader will do well, after going through the notice of each Ethnological group, to refer to the corresponding description in the Botanical and Zoological portion.

In the heading of each group is indicated the page for reference.

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THE
NATURAL HISTORY COURT.

PART I.
ETHNOLOGY.

Ethnology is compounded of two Greek words, the latter of which scarcely requires explanation, because it already forms part of a numerous class of compounds with which the learned reader is well acquainted. The general reader, too, is perhaps equally familiar with them. We have them in such words as *Geo-logy*, *Astro-logy*, *Physio-logy*, and a long list besides. The Greek form of these would be *Geo-logia*, *Astro-logia*, &c. The basis of the term is the substantive *logos*, meaning a *word*. In its modified form, however, and in its application as the element of a compound word, it means the *principles*, or *science*, of the department (whatever it may be) that is denoted by the root which precedes it. In the word before us it means the *principles* of that department of human knowledge which is denoted by the form *Ethno*.

Ethnology means the science, not exactly of the different *nations of the world*, but of the different *varieties of the human species*.

It is not thought necessary to enlarge upon this further, since, it is hoped, that the groups to which the visitor is directed will sufficiently tell their own tale. The extent to which they differ from each other is manifest. Still more do they differ from such groups of Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, and other Europeans as may collect around them.

As a general rule the varieties that are especially illustrated are foreign to Europe; it being supposed that the character of most

European populations is sufficiently understand. Hence, the Ethnology is that of Asia, Africa, and the New World. Of these, the most remarkable varieties are found under the extremes of heat and cold; under the tropics, and within the arctic circle. The intermediate and more temperate parts of the different continents, though by no means deficient in interesting and important varieties, supply fewer.

Of the populations within the arctic circle, it is only those of America that are illustrated (viz., in the Greenland group). The character, however, of the tribes thus far north, is pretty similar in all three continents—in Asia and Europe for the new, in America for the old, world.

The science of ethnology is, to a great extent, a new one, and this has been our excuse for enlarging upon the meaning, and entering into the origin of the word. Even ethnological museums are rare. The plan, however, of the groups under notice, is different from that of ordinary museums, and, at the same time, one which is, now, for the first time attempted. The trees, plants, animals, and human occupants of the different portions of the earth's surface are grouped together—so that the allied sciences of botany, zoology, and ethnology illustrate each other. Hence, the arrangement is *geographical*.

The arrangement is so far geographical that, to a certain extent, the visitor is enabled to place himself in respect to the objects before him in the same relation as he would be to a map of the world. Here, the North lies in front of him, the East to his right, the West to his left. In like manner, the groups on his right belong to Europe, Asia, and Africa; those on his left to America. In other words—the Old World is on one side, the New on the other. The relations of North and South, however, are given with less nicety. As a general rule, however, the Southern parts of the two worlds (the old and new), are the parts nearest the entrance—and the Northern parts lie beyond them.

In the Indian Islands the plan of giving the exact botany of the country under notice has been departed from—owing to the difficulties of detail in the case of an inter-tropical vegetation, of which but few specimens are found in European collections.

GROUP I.

TIBETANS. (FOR ZOOLOGY, &c. See p. 82.)

THE figures here are Tibetans. The variety to which both belong is usually called the *Mongolian*; by which it is meant that the most remarkable examples of it are to be found in the Chinese province of Mongolia—to the west of the Great Wall. Here it is where the cheek-bones attain a greater breadth than is the case with even the figures before us, where the nose is more flattened, and where the distance between the eyes is greater. Here it is where one of the great conquerors of the world arose, Jinjiz-Khan, in the thirteenth century; under whom, and under whose successors, nearly half the world trembled at the terrible name of *Mongol*. However, at present, their character is a very different one. The Mongolians of the nineteenth century are quiet, peaceable men, subject to China and Russia—chiefly, however, to China.

Thus much has been said concerning the Mongolians, in order to explain the meaning of the term. It has two powers. It is used in a general and in a limited sense. When *limited*, it means the inhabitant of *Mongolia*; when *general*, it denotes any one of the numerous allied populations—allied in respect to their physical organisation.

Of all the Mongol populations, the Chinese are the most civilised; unless we make an exception in favour of the equally Mongolian Japanese.

The Tibetans are subject to the Chinese, similar to a great extent in form, similar to a great extent in creed, but dissimilar in habits.

The Tibetans are a *pastoral*, the Chinese an eminently *agricultural* population.

As the southern frontier of the Tibetan family comes in contact with the northern provinces of India—as some portion of the Tibetan area is absolutely under either the British or some other Indian government—we may expect to find the Mongolians on *both* sides of the Himalayan Mountains—in India, as well as in Chinese Tartary.

This prepares us for—

GROUP II.

EAST INDIANS. (*See p. 82.*)

THE Tibetan (the figure on the left) we have seen before. He differs from those of Group I. only in belonging to the southern side of the Himalayas ;—to the parts drained by the Sutlej ; to the water-system of the Indus.

In India Proper the languages fall into two divisions : those akin to the Tamul, spoken in the Dekhan, or Southern India, and those akin to the Hindûi, spoken along the northern bank of the Ganges ; in Oude, &c.

There are also in India Proper two types of physical form ; in one the colour is dark, or even black, the skin coarse, the face flattened, the lips thick ; in the other the colour is brunette, the nose aquiline, the eyebrows arched, regular, and delicate, the lips of moderate thickness, the face oval, the features intelligent. Each is represented in the present group, though neither in the extreme form.

As a general, but by no means as an invariable, rule, the darker complexions preponderate over the lighter ones as we go southwards, except in the mountains, where the skin becomes fairer.

It is not considered necessary to enlarge upon what is called the system of *caste* in India. It means that the son follows the business of the father, so that the descendants of (say) a blacksmith will be blacksmiths, and so on. It also means that between individuals of different *castes* there are certain prejudices ; certain points whereon there is a reluctance to intermix. Hence, individuals of a higher, refuse to intermarry with those of a lower *caste*. They refuse also to take their meals with them.

Now, as a general, but by no means as an invariable, rule, the higher the *caste* the greater the predominance of the second type of form, *i.e.*, the finer the features, the clearer the complexion.

India and China, we must remember, are countries that have long been civilised—civilised after their own peculiar fashion. More than this, they are countries from which a civilisation has been diffused over districts more or less barbarous. On the other hand, the Mahometan creed has diffused, and is diffusing itself,

over India, at the expense of the original (so-called) Braminical and Buddhist religions.

The extent to which Indian civilisation has (after first spreading itself abroad) been modified by a subsequent diffusion of Mahometanism, will be seen when we move from India to the Islands of the Indian Archipelago—Sumatra, Java, Borneo, &c.

Here the division of the human species to which the populations belong is the *Malay*—just as that to which the Chinese and Tibetans were referred was the Mongolian.

Just, too, as the word *Mongolian* had a *wider* and a *narrower* signification, so has the term *Malay*. A true and proper Malay is a Mahometan, from either certain parts of Sumatra, or certain parts of the Malayan Peninsula—from Sincapore, from Malacca, from Penang, from Bencoolen, &c. On the other hand, a member of the Malay family, in the wider sense of the word, may be a Pagan in religion, an Indian in doctrine, or a native of Java or Borneo, in respect to his locality.

The Malays, in the wider sense of the word, whatever may be the minor differences between them, have the same general physiognomy; being short rather than tall, darker than the generality of Mongolians, though lighter than the southern Indians, and broad-faced, though less so than the more extreme Mongolians. When in contact with the sea, they exhibit decided maritime habits. Many other of their customs in detail deserve notice.

Bodily disfigurements under the idea of ornament.—The Malay dress is becoming; but the habit of permanently disfiguring parts of the body under the idea of ornament, is of sufficient prominence to take place amongst the characteristics of the branch.

a. Tattooing.—This is sometimes limited, sometimes general: sometimes over the whole body, sometimes confined to the arms only. In Africa the patterns vary with the tribe. In certain Malay districts, an approach to the distinction may be found; for instance, we hear in Borneo of some tribes that always tattoo, of others that partially tattoo, of others that do not tattoo at all. Nay more; the habit of tattooing seems in some cases to go along with certain other habits—by no means naturally connected with it. Thus certain of the Borneo non-tattooed tribes never use the *Sumpitan*, or blow-pipe; whilst others are tattooed, and use it.

So at least Sir J. Brooke was informed; although I think the careful peruser of his journal will find that the coincidence is not always complete.

b. Depilation.—Depilation is effected either by quick-lime or tweezers. Generally, I believe, the parts of the body which are meant to be kept smooth are rubbed with quick-lime ; and the isolated hairs that afterwards appear, are plucked out carefully by tweezers in detail.

c. Filing the teeth, dyeing the teeth. This is a Malay habit, and there are not less than three varieties of this operation.

1. Sometimes the enamel, and no more, is filed off. This enables the tooth to receive and retain its appropriate dye.

2. Sometimes the teeth are merely pointed.

3. Sometimes they are filed down to the gums.

Dyeing may follow filing, or not, as the case may be.

In Sumatra, where a jetty blackness is aimed at, the empyreumatic oil of the cocoa-nut is used. Even, however, if no dyeing follow, the teeth will become black from the simple filing, if the chewing of the betel-nut be habitual.

d. Distension of the ears.—Many of the tribes that file their teeth, also distend their ears. Both are Malay habits. In some parts of Sumatra, when the child is young, the ear is bored, and rings are put in. In other parts, however, the rings are weighted, so as to pull down the lobe ; or ornaments, gradually increased in diameter, are inserted ; so that the perforation becomes enlarged.

Simple perforation may extend to a mere multiplication of the holes of the ear. In Borneo, the Sakarran tribes wear more earrings than one, and are distinguished accordingly ; “when you meet a man with many rings distrust him” being one of their cautions. Mr. Brooke met a Sakarran with twelve rings in his ear.

e. Growth of the nails.—In parts of Borneo, the right thumb-nail is encouraged to grow to a great length. So it is in parts of the Philippines.

Running-a-muck.—A Malay is capable of so far working himself into fury, or so far yielding to some spontaneous impulse, or of so far exciting himself by stimulants, as to become totally regardless of what danger he exposes himself to. Hence, he rushes forth as an infuriated animal, and attacks all who fall in his way, until having expended his morbid fury he falls down exhausted. This is called *running-a-muck*.

Gambling.—This habit, or rather passion, is shared by the Malays, the Indians, the Chinese, and the Indo-Chinese ; quail-fighting and cock-fighting being the forms in which it shows itself.