

Several stalwarts have contributed towards building the edifice of the BNHS. Many have sustained its growth and brought to it recognition as one of the foremost research and conservation organizations in the Indian region. Not least among them are those who served as editors of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (JBNHS). Two such outstanding members of the Society were R.A. Sterndale and W.S. Millard.

"Even the wildest of the Gonds are keen sportsmen; it is a part of their natural training derived from their habits of life.

Where they cultivate, they cut down the trees on the hill-sides, and letting them dry for a while set to them; they turn up the soil loosely, and in the ashes of their huge bonfires they sow their scanty crops of millet and maize."

... Robert Armitage Sterndale –
DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES



R.A. Sterndale Editor & Writer



When *JBNHS* appeared in 1886, it became a platform for new discoveries and discussions on the natural history of the Indian subcontinent. One of the earliest authors who contributed in this way was Robert Armitage Sterndale, who later went on to edit the *JBNHS* for the Society. Sterndale was a naturalist, artist, writer, statesman, and an eminent member of the Zoological Society of London.

Born in 1839, Sterndale moved to India at the age of 17 to work for the East India Company. He began in the finance department, and was the assistant settlement officer for

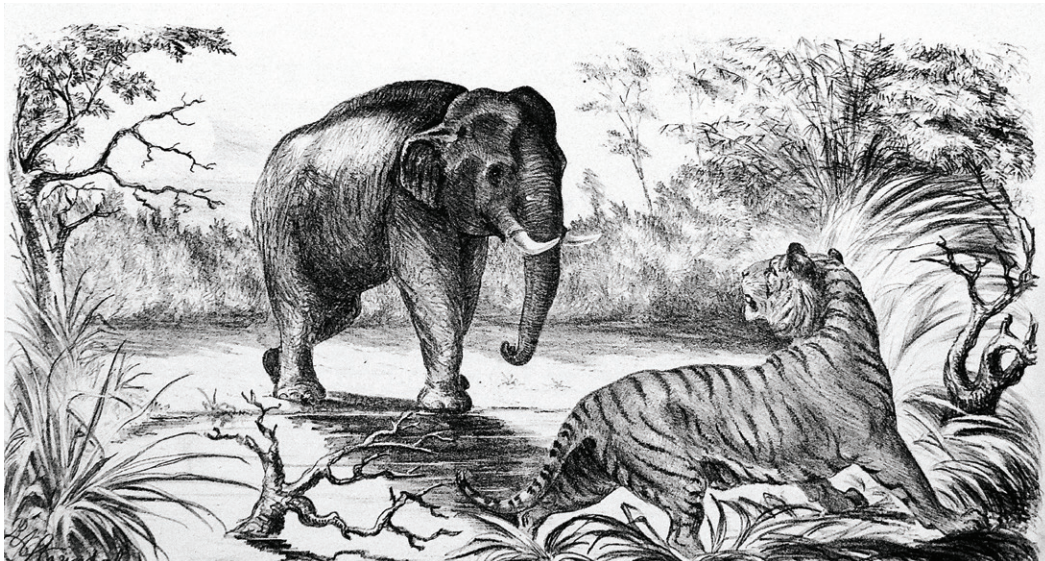
the finance departments of Nagpur, Calcutta, and Punjab. Sterndale later rose to be the Accountant General of Bombay in 1884 and Madras in 1887. Apart from finance, he had a keen interest in natural history, geography, and other scientific studies. Sterndale joined the Society the year it was formed in 1883. The idea of starting a journal, in fact, originated with him and "proved practicable only because of the way in which his ready pen and pencil solved all difficulties", according to a memoir on him in





"Not so fast asleep as he looks! This is a little game that our spotted friend often tries, though I doubt his success with the wary Monkeys" ... Robert Armitage Sterndale –

DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES



"I daresay that, if a young Elephant Calf strayed away from the protection of its mother, a Tiger would have but little hesitation in appropriating it, but the adults are not even on bowing terms"

... Robert Armitage Sterndale – DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES

JBNHS (Vol. 14). As one of the first editors from 1886 to 1895 (the others being Aitken and Phipson), Sterndale brought in his expertise in natural history to provide the *JBNHS* a strong foundation. He wrote prolifically, sometimes nearly five articles in one volume [for example, Vol. 1(2)]!

He published several books based on his experiences and

observations of wildlife in India. Some of his publications include *A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE MAMMALIA OF INDIA AND CEYLON* (1884), *SEONEE OR CAMP LIFE ON THE SATPURA RANGE* (1887), *DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES* (1886), and *THE AFGHAN KNIFE* (1879). As an illustrator, he contributed pen and ink sketches, water colours, and oil paintings pertaining to natural history, and illustrated two books by

E.H. Aitken. His artistic works became an inspiration for Rudyard Kipling's *THE JUNGLE BOOK*. He contributed a few sketches to *LAYS OF IND.* by Aliph Cheem, besides his own books.

Sterndale died in 1902 in Westminster, while on leave from St. Helena, where he served as the Governor General. His contributions to BNHS and the field of natural sciences will be cherished forever. ■