

In 1884, a young man of 20 came from England to Bombay to assist entrepreneur H.M. Phipson in his wine business. Soon he was drawn to his employer's other interest – natural history. That was Walter Samuel Millard, the man who eventually became the Honorary Secretary of BNHS and with his vision and enterprise, took the Society to new heights. Millard's stint with *JBNHS* began in 1893, when he became the assistant editor; in 1906 he assumed Phipson's place as editor of the *JBNHS*. It was during his tenure that BNHS started publishing books, beginning with E.C. Stuart Baker's *THE INDIAN DUCKS AND THEIR ALLIES* (1908), which had appeared earlier as a series in *JBNHS*. The book was a great success, running out of print sooner than expected. It heralded a new journey for BNHS in book publishing, enabling it to contribute significantly to the scholarship on natural history in India. The *JBNHS* itself grew to become the most important publication on natural history in Asia, bringing in a new wave of scientific writing and research. A significant contribution by Millard to the *Journal* was his article "The Founders of the Bombay Natural History Society", published in *JBNHS*, Vol. 35 (1 & 2). That was the very first time the founders were documented in the Society's annals.

Millard is best remembered for triggering Sálim Ali's interest in birds. In his autobiography *THE FALL OF A SPARROW*, the celebrated 'Birdman of India' acknowledges how, when he ventured into BNHS as a young schoolboy seeking identification of a bird he had shot, Millard had not only identified it as the Yellow-throated Sparrow but also shown him around the Society's formidable natural history collection. "It was

W.S. Millard Entrepreneur & Naturalist



largely the fatherly encouragement I received from him at that time, and continually thereafter; that set me off on a lifetime of enjoyable and rewarding bird study," writes Sálim Ali in his piece on Millard in *JBNHS*, Vol. 50. Sálim Ali and Millard's other students held him in high esteem for his initiatives and contributions

to the field of ornithology and to the Society as a whole.

Millard was the driving force behind the Society's historic Mammal Survey of India, Burma and Ceylon (1911–23). He devoted much time to the survey and to the establishment of the Mammal Survey Fund. However, this was just one of the many initiatives that he was associated with. Millard was instrumental in influencing amendments to the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act that came into existence in 1912. The Act covered birds like bustards, ducks, floricans, junglefowl, peafowl, pheasants, quails, sandgrouse, Painted Snipe, Spurfowl, and Eurasian Woodcock. He pushed for the inclusion of herons and kingfishers (which were in enormous demand for their feathers) to the list of protected species. He also helped establish a "closed season" for certain birds so they would get a reprieve from hunters, while other species were given additional protection.

Though Millard took an interest in natural history, he thoroughly loved the craft of gardening, especially the



Hornbill House is named after the Great Pied Hornbill, William, that lived behind Millard's chair for 26 years



Illustrations of Variegated Bauhinia (L) and Burmese Pink Cassia (R) by Sr. Mary Chiona, from SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES by E. Blatter and W.S. Millard

cultivation of flowering trees. The credit of introducing the Burmese Pink Cassia *Cassia renigera*, Padauk *Pterocarpus indicus*, and Madre de Cacao *Gliricidia maculata* (= *G. sepium*) in the city of Bombay goes to him. When he shifted to a bungalow in Malabar Hill, Bombay, Millard developed a unique garden with a variety of trees and shrubs, and a large fernery with orchids and other tropical flowers. It became one of the most resplendent private gardens in Bombay; guests staying at the Government House were frequently sent to this garden to inspect its treasures. Millard also beautified the city by planting several flowering trees in different localities. Upon his suggestion, Fr Ethelbert Blatter, SJ, Principal and Professor

of Botany at St. Xavier's College in Bombay, wrote the series 'The Palms of India' for the *Journal*. Blatter and Millard together wrote the 20 part series SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES, which appeared in the *JBNHS* before being published as a book. This remains a valuable document of some of the indigenous and exotic flowering trees seen in India. To support the effort, Millard collected a series of paintings of flowering trees and studied the best way to propagate them.

Hornbill House, the headquarters of BNHS, gets its name from a Great Indian Hornbill (now called Great Pied Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*), William, which lived on the premises from 1894–1920. Popularly referred to as the office canary, he lived

behind Millard's chair in a cage for 26 years. William's untimely death, accidentally caused by swallowing a piece of wire, pushed Millard into depression and extreme sadness.

During his tenure, Millard not only contributed immensely to the Bombay Natural History Society but also to the field of natural history at large. After he retired and left India in 1920, he continued to manage the business of the Society from London. In the *JBNHS* [Vol. 35(1 & 2): 197], a note of gratitude to him reads thus: "Mr. Millard is a link with the old founders. He has ... continued to be an active official of the Society and as our London representative has lessened the labours of and earned the gratitude of the Editors." ■

