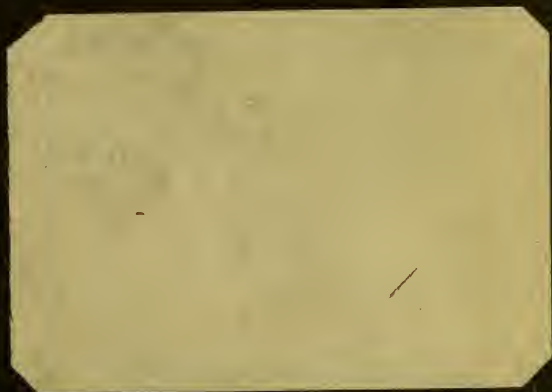


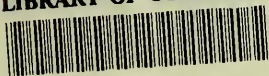
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SANICHAR

THE
WOLF-BOY
OF
INDIA





SANICHAR

THE WOLF-BOY OF INDIA

THE TRUE STORY OF HIS
LIFE IN THE SECUNDR
ORPHANAGE, AT AGRA, INDIA

George C. Ferris,

ILLUSTRATED

PUBLISHED BY G. C. FERRIS
451 W. 24TH ST., NEW YORK CITY

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PREFACE.

Though the every day events of the world, through the medium of our daily papers, are made known to us almost as soon as they occur — so fast is civilization advancing by abolishing distances and surmounting difficulties by means of new inventions, thus bringing the uttermost parts of the earth within, one might be tempted to say, talking distance—yet there are a great many events, of minor importance mayhap, that occur daily and are never recorded. And in spite of civilization's advance there are still countries yet unvisited by the aggressive white man.

While one might look to a spot like that for something unusual to occur, one would hardly look to a practically modern country for the same thing.

There are at the present time localities in India never visited by the European, where a white face is still a curiosity. So it is not

strange that the discovery of a wolf-boy in that country has not become more generally known to the world.

Nevertheless, there was just such a boy, and his life-story, told in the following pages, is a strange one.

The home of Sanichar, after his capture, where he passed the greater part of his life, was the Secundra Orphanage, in Agra, India. It was founded in 1838 by the Rev. J. J. Moore, and is situated in one of those numerous and unnamed tombs near that of the celebrated Emperor, Akbar Shah. Its object is to take care of the native orphans, of whom there are many in the densely populated districts of India.

The writer of this sketch was animated by the thought that the story might prove attractive and would serve the purpose of recording the fact that there was actually a wolf-boy, and he is indebted for the greater part of his information to the Secundra Orphanage paper, published in behalf of the orphanage by the Rev. C. S. Valentine, LL.D, F.R.C.S.E.

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SANICCHAR, THE WOLF-BOY

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Among the prettiest tales and traditions which we have in our possession, perhaps those telling of the friendships of children and animals attract us the most. Somehow, there seems to be an added fascination to a story in which human beings and animals are associated and bound together with what might almost be called family ties. It is not an uncommon thing for people to get so attached to their pets that they are treated and looked after as members of the family. Why, then,

should it be strange that an animal in whom the mother love is pregnant, should not, too, adopt the young of another animal, or even a human being, to take the place of its own lost brood, in order that it may have that on which it can lavish its love. But when creatures of entirely different temperament and disposition voluntarily come together and live in peace, yes, even manifesting affection for each other, it is so much out of the ordinary that we cannot help but be attracted by it. And, though we may sometimes doubt the truth of the tales, yet as we liked to listen to them in our childhood days, so we in turn like to repeat them to our children, and thus preserve them from being lost. The story of Romulus and Remus, the founders of that once

powerful city of Rome, being rescued from starvation and nursed through their babyhood by a she-wolf, is merely such a tale, probably with no foundation on fact, yet it has been preserved for hundreds of years by that peculiar fascination which hangs around such stories. As an example of this, and one which proves beyond doubt the truth of the assertion, we have only to mention the "Tales of the Jungle," by Rudyard Kipling, which describes the life of the wolf-boy Mowgli. What enthusiasm they did create when first they came to the notice of the reading public! People did not question their truth; they were interested in the story, and only asked for more.

Kipling has woven such a web of romance around the life of the wolf-

boy, Mowgli, in his famous tales of the jungle, that it seems a pity to destroy any part of it. The finding by the wolf mother of the baby in the cave, the discussion as to what should be done with it, and finally the decision to adopt and bring it up as one of its own, touches a responsive cord in us all. The wonderful way in which the baby grew up among its savage playmates into a boy, and from a boy into a man, living in communion with Nature and reveling in the friendships of all animals, recognized master from the power of his human eyes, yet loved by his friends and feared by his enemies, interests us greatly. No writer has ever given the world so realistic a picture, nor so true, of the jungle life in India, as has Kipling. As the story pro-

gresses, Mowgli's savage friends at last perceive that the man nature in him is asserting itself, and that a day would surely come when he would realize the fact that he should have to leave the jungle and live as other men do. This they communicate sadly to Mowgli, but he strongly denies any such feeling: rather any day life among the jungle people, who had so long befriended him, than among his kin, who had more than once turned their backs on him. Then at last the return to that life that had been a stranger to him, how his loyalty to his old friends remained to the end, is a word picture rarely equaled.

This, then, is the story that we have read and enjoyed. But there were a few people who were not only interested, but had their curiosity aroused

by the reading, and would have liked to know if there ever had been a real wolf-boy. We have heard so much of them in story that the truth would be very interesting, and it is for these few that the following facts have been gathered.

As has already been said, it seems a pity that fact cannot bear out these pretty tales in all their details, for the story of the wolf-boy is not merely a tradition which the master hand has drawn upon for his picture, but it is a fact—a fact, too, which corroborates in many particulars the story with which we are familiar. At the same time there is as great a dissimilarity as could be possible under the circumstances. In order that this may be plain, let us familiarize ourselves with the story of the real wolf-boy.

CHAPTER II.

THE DISCOVERY.

And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would
growl

And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like
men,

Worse then the wolves.

“Idyls of the King.”—*Tennyson*.

A great part of India is covered with almost impenetrable jungles, which afford refuge for all manner of wild beasts, reptiles and poisonous insects, that wage a constant war against man at every opportunity and occasion. A

look at the yearly death list of India impresses one at first with its great length, and a further perusal of the figures of those whose deaths have been caused by the bites of poisonous snakes and wild animals is appalling. One is frightened by the possibilities of sudden death when one first sees and hears of it, but after one has been in the country and has become acclimatized (which, by the way, is one of the dangers one has to pass through, and keep on undergoing, it seems, during the length of one's stay), the figures do not appal so much, and the fear one first entertained subsides, though it leaves one cautious at all times.

India is so densely populated that if it was not for the large death list, helped along some years by the famine

and plague, people would have no place to live, and the productive area would be cut down and leave the country in worse straits than ever before.

However, the economic question is not the subject of this article, and it must be left to other heads to solve.

The government of India, however, recognizes that in the interest of humanity a check must be put to the ravages of the wild animals, and it offers a bounty of between five to fifty rupees for the head of every man-killing animal.

Away up in the northwest provinces of India the jungles are extraordinarily thick and wild, teeming with life of every kind, and it is the custom of the native hunters, or shikaris, to go hunting in large bands, greater safety

being one of the considerations, and ability to beat successfully, being another.

According to this custom, early in the year 1867 a large band of shikaris from Bulandshahr organized themselves into a hunting party and started away into the jungle for several weeks' hunt. Fortune had not favored them, and the bag was not at all satisfactory. One day, however, the party, having formed in a line, commenced to beat towards a clearing, the location of which they were cognizant, hoping to drive something before them into it and then shoot it. The line was not well kept, and the only thing they drove before them was a lone gray wolf, which, surprised by the sudden appearance of the party, immediately took to

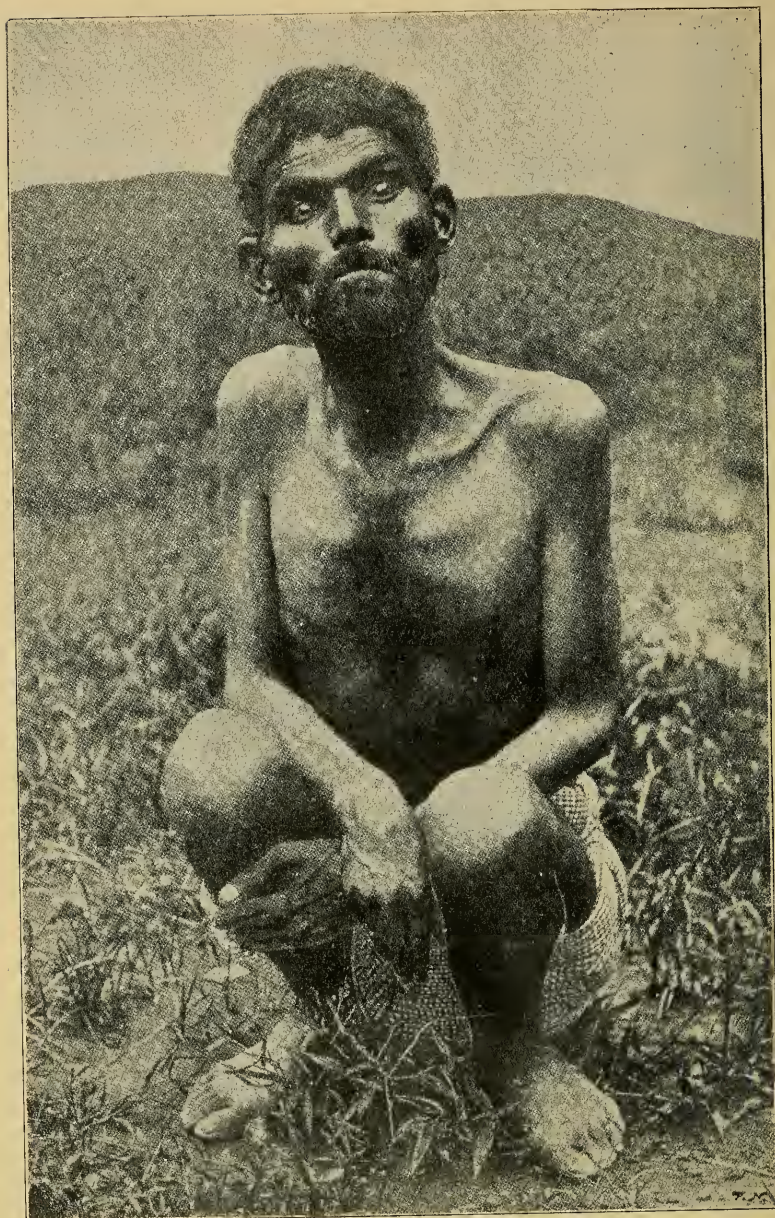
flight up a rocky, rising piece of brush, followed hotly by the entire party. Having reached the top, the wolf rushed around a huge boulder lying on the very summit of the hillock, and uttering a wailing cry, disappeared a short distance away in a cave. This curious action of the beast directed the party's attention to the boulder, and then to a most odd looking animal seated atop of it. At the plaintive cry of the wolf it arose on its hind legs, when, seeing the people rushing toward itself, it dropped back on all fours, scrambled off the rock, and hurried after the wolf into the inmost recesses of the cave. At the mouth of it a consultation was held among the puzzled natives as to the character of the strange *thing* and as to their mode of

procedure. Some, who in leading the chase had caught a good glimpse of it, declared that it was a man; but others argued that it was only a strange animal; some, evidently frightened, under cover of religious zeal counseled leaving it alone, for fear of offending their gods; others, more courageous, argued to the contrary, and soon the natives had worked themselves up to such a pitch of superstitious fear that none of them dared to solve the mystery. At last they resolved to give up the hunting tour long enough to get back to town and report their find to the authorities. In this manner it came to the ears of the magistrate of Bulandshahr, a sensible and practical old man, who advised them to go back and capture the strange *thing* and ascertain what it

was, man or beast, instructing them to start a smudge fire at the mouth of the cave, and thus smoke out the creature, and capture it as it attempted to escape.

Following these instructions, a large party was organized, which proceeded to the place where the *thing* was last seen. When they had satisfied themselves that it was in the cave, a fire was kindled and the smoke allowed to penetrate to the inmost recesses. Stationed all around the entrance were the men, each intent on helping to capture the *thing* when it was forced out of the cave, yet secretly afraid of this encounter with the unknown animal, for the natives of India are an intensely superstitious people. Suddenly out rushed the wolf, and following imme-

diately behind came the *thing*. The wolf was allowed to get away, but the whole party threw themselves on the latter. A terrible struggle ensued, during which several natives were severely bitten and scratched. Whatever the creature was, it was putting up a terrible fight. Yet there could be but one outcome to such an unequal struggle, and soon the *thing* lay captured; not an animal, but a man; no, not a man, but a mere boy, foaming and furious, snarling and snapping at its captors like a beast at bay. His captors were astounded. Was this little hairy thing, that had required the united strength of a dozen men to capture, only a child?



CHAPTER III.

DESCRIPTION.

The Rev. C. S. Valentine, LL.D., of the Agra Medical Missionary Training Institute, who has made quite a study of the boy, speaks in wonder of the discovery as follows:

“Wonderful, was it not? Here in an unfrequented jungle, running on all fours, covered with filth and vermin, his face partially hidden by long matted hair, and having no companion save the wolf, and no home save the wolf’s den, was a boy, who could not, at the time, have been more than seven or eight years of age. It was the story of the infant days of Romulus and Remus stripped of the fabulous and

converted into fact. How the boy was brought into this state of things and his life preserved among wild, man-eating animals, are questions which it would probably be futile to discuss; but, with such facts before us, the position occupied by those who accept the assertions of Professor Huxley and others regarding the impossibility of the preservation of Daniel in the den of lions must be looked upon as utterly untenable. For could not the same God who saved this boy's life in the wolf's den, and preserved him during his early years, when he had only wild animals as companions, save and preserve the life of Daniel as described in the volume of the Book?"

The return of the hunting party was like a triumphal march. Everybody

wanted to see the boy who had lived among wolves; commented on his fierce and wild appearance, tried to feed him, but he sullenly would have nothing to do with them—in fact, tried to bite the hands which feed him. The shikaris came in for a great share of praise for their bravery, which, were it not that the boy needed constant attention to keep him from escaping or harming some one, might have turned their heads. So it was that they came once more before the same magistrate, upon whose advice the natives took the boy to the Secundra Orphanage at Agra and turned him over to the care of the missionaries. The orphanage is situated in one of those numerous tombs which abound in India, and is located near that of the famous Emperor Akbar

Shah, the Taj Mahal, that beautiful example of Indian architecture which is one of the sights of the world.

The missionaries gladly accepted the new charge, with the hope that they would be able to educate him to a prominent place in the world. One of the first duties which they felt called upon to pay him after his arrival was that of giving him a suitable name. After much discussion it was finally decided that, as he was brought into the orphanage on Saturday, February 4th, to call him after that day, Sanichar, the vernacular for Saturday. No doubt they had in mind the story of Robinson Crusoe when doing this.

The pathetic side of the life of Sanichar began at this time. Life among the wolves had almost destroyed his

sense of hearing ; his mind had remained undeveloped so long that, coupled with deafness, it made him practically an idiot. He had none of those gentler characteristics ascribed to Kipling's Mowgli, and it was a long time before he became accustomed to his new mode of life. When the missionaries first attempted to put clothes on the boy he raged like a wild animal, ripped them off, tore them to shreds, and scattered them all over the building ; food placed before him at meal times he gobbled up, and meat and bones he would gnaw and worry at with his teeth like a carnivorous animal. But under the enforced discipline used, and as kindly pressure was brought to bear on him, he grew docile and became partially accustomed to the new order of things.

When he first arrived, he walked on all fours like an animal. This was perfectly natural, having up to this time spent all his life among four-footed companions. But the curious feature of it was, that he did not walk on hands and knees, as children do before they learn to walk, but on his elbows and knees, and this accounts for his peculiarly distorted arms and humped-up shoulders.

Probably in running with the wolves he found he could be surer-footed with his forearm flat on the ground than on his wrists, which were probably rather weak. So his first accomplishment on entering his new life was to learn to walk as do other men. One thing, however, he never mastered—the art of eating with fork and knife. He could

not be induced to eat in any but the native fashion—with hands and fingers.

Sanichar is very vividly and accurately described by Dr. Valentine. "At the present time," he says, "Sanichar must be about thirty-two years of age, though he looks older. His head is small, his brow uncommonly low and contracted, while his eyes, in proportion to his head and face, are large and of a grayish color, restless and squinting. He has a small, thin, wrinkled face on which are one or two large cicatrices—marks, no doubt, of what have been severe bites. These are also found on other parts of his body, and are evident signs of the rough treatment to which he was, involuntarily, subjected when living in the cave with his unamiable companions. His height,

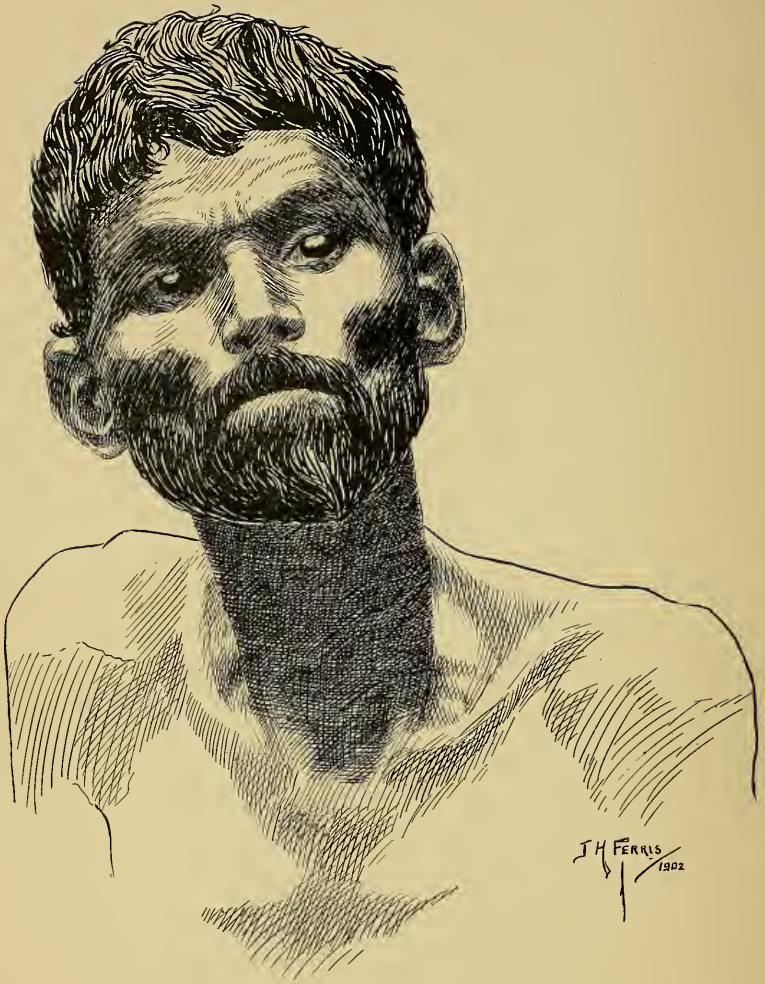
when he stands erect, is 5 feet and 2 inches. In walking, he lifts his feet like one wading through wet grass, and when he moves along the whole muscles of his body seem to be undergoing a series of jerks, while his arms are thrown about in such a manner as to convey the impression that they materially assist him in his progress. His head is also continually in motion, turning from side to side with great rapidity, while his eyes, which have at all times a hungry appearance, glare, as if he expected an attack from some unseen enemy. When viewed from behind as he walks, or when he stands in front of you with his head inclined to one side, rolling his large gray eyes, beating upon his stomach to show that he is hungry, or imitating the smoking

of a cigar, of which he is extremely fond, grinning and uttering inarticulate and nonunderstandable sounds, he certainly does present a strange appearance. Still, I think, visitors are at first disappointed with him, having expected to find him bearing a greater resemblance to the lower creation than he really does. In fact, people who visit him for the first time expect to see a *wolf* who has spent his early years among boys, rather than a *boy* whose infancy was spent among wolves."

His apparent idiocy at the time of his capture was a great bar to his education. His deafness made him practically dumb, for they had no advanced methods in the orphanage for teaching speech to the deaf as we have in use in this country. Notwithstanding this,

L. of C.

he was intelligent, paradoxical as it may seem, for Dr. Valentine was able to make him understand almost anything by the use of sign language; make him "sit, stand, walk, run, and (what is often a difficult matter among those who have been cradled and trained in fairly good society) get him to keep *perfectly still* in front of a camera."



CHAPTER IV.

HIS LIFE AND DEATH.

Held back by his infirmity, he was never able to make many friends, though those for whom he took a liking were much affected by his attentions, and never regretted his friendship.

An ungovernable temper made him a terror among the boys and men, and many of them still bear evidences of wild fights with him. His early savage life held its influence over him, and the wild animal desire to strike back to kill was inoculated into his blood. As he grew older he naturally became more and more like his fellow men, but never lost all of his natural animal instincts.

Unable to go out into the world to earn his living, the kind missionaries gave him a welcome home in the orphanage, where he stayed through his lifetime.

Though Sanichar's life was so devoid of the usual number of interesting incidents which go to fill up every man's life, there was at least one which showed in a most beautiful manner that the years of patient labor spent by the missionaries had not been altogether in vain. One of the boys in the orphanage to whom Sanichar had taken a strange liking, one day was taken sick and after a short illness died. When Sanichar, who had watched faithfully at his friend's bedside, understood that the spirit of his playmate had gone forever, he pointed his finger first at

himself, then at the dead body, and then toward the sky, as if to say that when he died he too would go to heaven and meet his friend there once more. The missionaries were very much touched at this evident understanding of their years of teaching of Christian truth and felt amply rewarded for having thus spent them. It was not long after this that Sanichar fell sick, from general physical debility, and soon followed his friend on the long, unknown journey.

When we compare the life of the real wolf-boy with that of Mowgli, the actual seems to suffer by the comparison. Only in the one incident just related does the real show any of the higher human characteristics found in the latter, which is a beautiful romance from

the beginning to the end. Thus does fact rudely shatter the beautiful picture which we have so associated with the story of the wolf-boy. This uncouth and ugly man suffers greatly when compared with the one we are accustomed to think of. Instead of the intelligent mind there was only the idiot's, dumb except for inarticulate utterances, ungainly and squint-eyed, and in fact a man with whom no one would willingly associate as a companion, unless it were for the purpose of making a scientific study into his condition, or from a Christian, charitable standpoint, as did the missionaries. Yet the story of Sanichar does not lose any of its attractiveness from the fact of his lacking those gentler features attributed to the fictitious.

We feel sorry for the babe which, if it had had the same opportunity as others, might have proved himself a leader among his fellow men: or on the contrary, living in obscurity, might never have been heard of, but, condemned by the strange hand of Providence to live out of the ordained path of nature, has put him before the eyes of many. As an ordinary man he would have done his duty unknown and unnoticed, but Providence had some object, no doubt, in doing this. What it teaches is difficult to conjecture, but it brings home to us the truth of the poet's lines:

“ Nothing useless here below,
Each thing in its place is best,
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest.”

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