

TO THE  
SOUTH



**SAMBUR AT HOME (in the Siwaliks).**

*(Frontispiece.)*

# RIFLE, ROD, AND SPEAR IN THE EAST

BEING SPORTING REMINISCENCES

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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## PREFACE

CONVINCED as I am that a love of sport lies deep in every British heart, I am emboldened to revive a few fading impressions of happy hours long past, and to present them to the public, in the hope that this old-world record may interest or amuse sportsmen of a later day.

Sport never dies—and though weapons have been perfected, means of communication improved, whereby wider fields and greater opportunities have been opened up, whilst sport itself in its many branches has become more organised, yet the rules of the game remain fundamentally the same, even in these days of cordite and arms of low trajectory and deadly precision.

If this be so, it is possible that a hint may be gleaned here and there, from a glance at the following pages, that may prove to be of service at a pinch.

Some amongst us might yet be found ready to listen to a yarn from the lips of Assur-bani-pal, could that old Assyrian be brought back to tell us the story of his right and left at lions on the

Babylonian plain, to boast of the speed of his horses, and bear witness to the pluck of the charioteer who played up to him.

Although willing enough to leave a record of his feat in the literary medium of his day, the monarch might well have hesitated before opening lip or page to challenge public criticism in these censorious times, if only from the same disinclination to make use of the ever-recurrent personal pronoun that oppresses lowlier men—whereby, indeed, we are robbed of many a good record.

Youth, with its wondrous inheritance of swift intuition, and correct appreciation of its unquestionable superiority over Age, is yet ever quick to extend a kindly measure of indulgence to any old haverer—any *laudator temporis acti*, who will talk sport whilst it reclines on the softest sofa in the smoking-room beneath a cloud that veils alike the genial smile of appreciation, the cynical glance of indifference, and the critical silence that implies reserve in the acceptance of stated fact.

Relying on the easy sufferance tendered by my sons (to whom, as my original victims, I dedicate this volume), and hoping that a similar indulgence may be granted by the sons of others, I refuse to be defeated by dread of the recurrent “I”—yet, even so, I will ask them to consider each anecdote as told by a different individual, or, better still, that any recorded incident happened to themselves, and

is merely an account of their own personal achievement or failure—when the capital “I” will sink into insignificance, and the writer stand acquitted of the criminal charge of egoism.

The book makes no claim to be considered as a work of art, no pretence of posing as a sporting classic; its object being but to tell the simple story of happy days passed in the jungle, as memory—picking up her many-coloured beads at random—strings her necklace on a thread of thanksgiving.



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# RIFLE, ROD, AND SPEAR IN THE EAST

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS AND VOYAGE TO INDIA

WITHOUT wishing to appear vainglorious, I may perhaps say that nature had been at some pains to procure me distinction even from my childhood, for I stood confessed the fool of the family. Hence, no doubt, my desire to enter Her Majesty's Service was very lightly opposed, as the era of examinations and consequent cramming had dawned, whilst I had no will to subject myself to any ordeal that could be avoided, and Authority no doubt accepted my views for reasons of its own.

After the usual course at Sandhurst, where the only crime laid to my charge was that of wearing a chin-strap in the wrong place, I was passed on to the depot of my regiment, then at Belfast, to acquire proficiency in the goose step and imbibe the rudiments of discipline.

The tedium of this garrison duty was tempered,

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however, by cheery companionship, by supper parties during which oysters were consumed in nowadays undreamed-of quantities, and visits to the theatre, from whence indeed—having accompanied a brother officer to the officer's box, dressed as a girl—I had to make a bolt, and was only saved from public justice by the readiness of a jarvie and an Irish jaunting car.

I had not managed my skirts cleverly enough when stepping over a bench, and was given away by some jeering roughs in the pit—thus was the outraged theatrical proprietor set on my track.

I was, however, shortly after under orders to join my regiment, then at Poonah, in company with a brother officer who was considerably my senior, and we sailed—literally sailed—from London in a converted man-of-war that had belonged to the lately disbanded Indian navy.

Though she now sailed under the White Ensign, she still retained her tall fighting spars, and remained as smart as it was possible for a very smart captain to keep her, undermanned as she really was.

Passing round the Cape, we made Bombay harbour in 75 days, which was considered to be a record passage. The voyage was, however, tedious enough, as we had few shipmates; yet we made the best of it, amusing ourselves in many ways.

When all our revolver ammunition had been

expended, harmlessly enough as a rule, on the sea-gulls that floated around in our wake, we took to the rigging; and I shall never forget the bad half-minute that I passed beneath the main truck, caught by the breast of my Norfolk jacket in the bight of the ropes, being swung out over the sea with the roll of the vessel, until, holding by one hand, I managed with the other to snatch and tear the cloth, when I was free, and able to climb the last few feet, to spike and twist my pocket-handkerchief round the iron point of the truck, and leave it there to prove that I had won my bet—a dozen of champagne.

The captain had laughingly laid this bet, which was scarcely a fair offer of odds to a land-lubber, and the climb was a perilous performance for him to sanction. He, no doubt, thought that the attempt would not be made, for when I sat down on the crosstrees, honestly funking, he went below satisfied.

Nor shall I forget the hurricane that broke over us when labouring in a heavy sea through repeated buffets of storm, under a single double-reefed top-sail—the crack like a pistol shot when the clewed-up canvas was whipped away, to be tossed, helplessly whirling, into the black heart of heaven—seemingly but a lady's pocket-handkerchief—instantly lost to view, whilst a sheet of hissing foam raced level with the bulwarks, and the

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captain, holding on to a stay for dear life, yelled orders through a trumpet to God knows whom—for no man was visible. His face was white as the foam itself when he turned to me at last, with the words: "One minute more, and we should all have gone down."

So, playing what monkey-tricks we could to pass the time, we wandered on, delighted at our first view of flying-fish, watching the porpoises at play around our bows, standing on the chains beneath the bowsprit with line and what spoon bait we could muster, only to have them all snapped light-heartedly by albacore, as we rose and fell with the plunging spar—catching albatross, whose wing-bones were turned into pipe-stems, and who, poor things, were dreadfully seasick when hauled on deck—or again, when becalmed, as we were for three days, hooking and killing sharks—a lump of pork on a huge hook at the end of a rope being the unsavoury lure that tempted them to their death.

One of these, a big fellow, was found to be suffering from liver complaint, no doubt from over-indulgence—a like Nemesis for like want of self-control is said to pursue the sons of men.

Then, for I think the space of three days on end, we passed through a continuous stream of sea-snakes, which reptiles, of various sizes and colours, would seem to inhabit a particular zone in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

Then a whiff of the land—the “odours of the East,” never to be forgotten, were wafted over the ocean, and before long we came in sight of Bombay. Here I paid my first visit to the Arab stables, where, sipping rather nasty coffee from tiny cups, I accepted the hospitality of the dealers : a pleasant experience to be repeated many times in after years. Often have I sat for many hours discussing the points of freshly landed Arab ponies, and by degrees have imbibed a fair knowledge of the framework that would be most likely to fill out into the most perfect form.

In those early days, steamers had not yet been requisitioned to transport Arabs from Busreh, and the unhappy ponies were often landed very much the worse for the long sea-voyage, the proverbial bag of bones in fact—mere hide-bound skeletons, after a stormy passage.

From Bombay we went to Poonah and joined the regiment. My friend’s penchant being for theatricals and my own for sport, we drifted apart ; and ere long he returned to England.

I found myself at once in the midst of a very sporting community. The horses of Colonel Graves, Mr Mansfield, Agha Khan, and many others were trained on the racecourse, whilst gym-khanas, pony races, etc., etc., were weekly occurrences ; and when not on parade, the early hours always found me on the course watching the gallops.



Lord Napier was then Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay army, and when preparing for the Abyssinian campaign a year later, was kind enough to promise me an appointment on the cavalry staff. Cruel circumstances prevented my acceptance of this first chance of service, and I never had another—several other men had volunteered, and my colonel, an old Guardsman, could not afford to lose a number of officers, but promised me the adjutancy if I would remain on. My fate was otherwise decided, however, and after taking leave of the regiment I joined the 12th Bengal Cavalry at Umballah, and a year or two later was appointed A.D.C. and private secretary to my father when he took up the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Punjab.

Lord Napier was one of the kindest and simplest-hearted soldiers and gentlemen that ever lived. I shall never forget his sending for me and offering to place his purse at my disposal, should I be straitened in the matter of horses or uniforms—an act of kindness towards a young subaltern of which few men would have dreamed.

In Sir Bartle Frere, also, I found a good friend—courteous and kindly beyond his fellows, he was even in consequence accused of indecision and want of backbone, a charge supremely belied by his fearless conduct in after days, when he fell a sacrifice to official incompetence in high places.

But this is a digression from the path I set myself to follow in these pages.

I should like to make mention, however, of the first amongst a great number of native friends that I made during my residence in the East—a Mahratta boy who took service with me in Poonah as a sais or groom. He accompanied me on my trips, and soon learned to load, when he became invaluable, as my second gun was always ready when quail or snipe shooting. I had only muzzle-loaders to begin with, my first breech-loader being obtained in '68 from a brother officer, in which weapon I made use of small gun-cotton rolls instead of black powder, but soon found that these were unreliable, as they were affected by exposure to heat or damp.

The boy was very ready and very plucky. He stood quietly by me when a panther charged across us on the hillside, though only armed with a shot-gun, which he held in reserve should the beast come home. Many a time have we returned laden with from forty to sixty couple of quail, or half that number of snipe and duck, after our day's tramp; and when riding, my second spear that he carried was never far behind me. I said good-bye to him and Poonah with deep regret. From there I journeyed to Calcutta, thence to Umballah, Simla, and the Punjab.

After my father's death, which was the result of a cruel, and seemingly avoidable, accident, my life

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became a roving one, and that led me through Central India and Rajputana, to post after post on the frontiers of the Empire—hence I saw a variety of sport in many places, on which I touch as may suit my purpose, ignoring any further sequence of events.

## CHAPTER II

### POONAH AND PIGSTICKING

IN addition to the small-game shooting near Poonah, for which one often had to ride or drive twenty miles away from cantonments, there was a certain amount of shooting to be had in the ghâts, and I still retain a scar on my right hand in memory of the day, when out after deer, I sat with two villagers on the edge of a broad ravine watching; I caught sight of a barking deer across it and fired a long shot—killing. The two men with me had not seen the deer, for a wonder—as natives' eyes are usually quicker than those of the "sahib" to "pick up" game in a country they know—and refused to believe that I had hit anything, until the fallen beast showed a white leg as he kicked, when they dashed away round the head of the valley leaving me alone.

Presently a slight sound caused me turn my head, to find a barking deer not fifty yards off, looking intently at me. To swing the rifle barrel round and fire was all I could do, and luckily I hit

him in the chest, then running up I tried to knife him as I held him by the horn, whilst he retaliated by putting his long eye-tooth through my knife hand ; and plunging violently, mad with pain and terror, he punished me considerably before I could get free to drive the weapon home. This was the first and last time I used the knife, for I experienced so strong a feeling of repugnance and regret after this butcher's work that I would never again—unless in self-defence—have done a like deed : an illogical and irrational conclusion no doubt to arrive at, when bullet and spear deal death with as murderous certainty ; yet the fact remains that in using these weapons your bloodguiltiness loses the stigma of brutality and appears less repulsive.

In riding and spearing a boar, you play the game more or less on equal terms—it becomes a fair fight, and the kill in place of nausea or revulsion leaves you with a feeling of pride in your horse and respect for the gallant adversary you have slain, and shall I add for your own prowess ? Whilst, as to deer and other non-pugnacious quarry, you are, I think, legitimately allured by a thousand difficulties that stand between you and the trophies you covet ; yet for years I refrained from drawing a bead on any but a really good head, unless food were needed for the camp-followers.

In the days I speak of, the Poonah hunt held regular meets to ride pig in the surrounding country ;

the banks of the Bhima were a noted stronghold, and my first boar fell there, being killed off a hireling nicknamed after his master the "Sporting Munshi." He was a big-boned iron-mouthed Arab, with gummy fetlocks and somewhat underbred, that would have been called a "Kadís" by an Arab dealer. He had his own ideas as to pace and all else, in fact he had a will of his own—but—he loved the game. He nearly fell back with me in attempting to follow this pig up the perpendicular side of a nullah when I had been hustling him through the tamarisk jungle of the river-bed, whilst the old hands at the game who knew better than to do this themselves, awaited results on the bank above.

When we did find a possible path up, the chase was far away, and I watched it with keen disappointment until I realised that the boar had turned and was heading for some jungle on the bank ahead of me. Trotting forward with new hope, I stood the gallant Munshi in an open space, listened, watched, and was soon rewarded by the sight of the boar blundering on towards us. One single moment of hesitation as he saw us in his path to the river, then he cocked his ears and came straight in. The Munshi stood like a rock, but as the boar came home, he rose six feet into the air, whilst my spear, passing through behind the assailant's heart, shivered in my hand, the spear-

head portion that had gone right through his body fell to the ground on the reverse side after he had rushed on a few yards, whilst he himself fell dead fifty yards further in the jungle he had so fiercely fought to reach.

That portion of the strong-made bamboo shaft that I still held had splintered into a hundred shreds, and looked like a small broom.

The "Sporting Munshi" knew what the charge of a big boar meant, and had saved himself and me. A slightly sprained wrist for myself, and a scratch on the near-fore fetlock of my mount was a small price to pay for the lesson, which I took to heart; for never again did I take a charge at a stand, nor have I ever since that day had a horse touched in fair fight.

I can only hope that the gallant Munshi did not eventually come to grief in the hands of some less lucky subaltern, learning the game—as I—at his expense.

Since that happy day I have killed many a good boar, both with the long and the short spear, using either according to the custom obtaining in any particular locality—yet I own to a preference for the long spear for all-round work, as it can always be carried safely, and sometimes can be used where the shorter weapon would fail you. One valid objection I have often heard made against it, is that a charging boar will jerk the point aside with

a quick stroke of his tush, as he closes. He may, indeed, often attempt to play this trick, but it is easy to keep your point moving or to lower it only at the critical moment, and a duffer alone will be caught by this manœuvre.

Pigs are as cunning as they are courageous, but their very pluck is often their undoing, and their self-confidence may be taken advantage of. I have ridden a great deal alone, and have on many occasions killed, after hustling my boar, by taking a pull and riding dead behind him. If you do this he will often slacken his speed at the same moment as you do, and turn his head a little right and left to watch you ; then as he thinks you are not gaining on him he becomes less careful, when a touch of the spur will take you up to him with a rush before he has got into his stride again, and you have your chance.

I recall one instance when I betrayed a good boar in Central India who thought he had escaped. Some of the 3rd Hussars were out that day, and Blundell and myself had been racing him along a hillside for some time before luck gave me the chance, when my spear head, entering his ribs too far back and being badly set into the haft, was caught and held. I could not recover it, nor could the boar get free, so he endeavoured to charge in several times, whilst the bamboo bent and straightened again repeatedly. Finally he swung



away down the slope, wrenching the spear out of my hand, and took refuge in a thicket of prickly pear with the shaft trailing from his flank. We surrounded the patch of cover and tried to make him break out. He would not stir, however, until the other spears, tired of waiting, went off to find fresh game.

Having seen a fox steal away from covert when hounds were gone and all was quiet, more than once, I sat still on my horse at a corner of the cactus, and watched, until presently I saw the boar, who no doubt was galled by the spear whenever he moved, trot sulkily out into the open field of black cotton soil, with the bamboo shaft trailing behind him. I let him get well away, and then riding between him and the covert he had left, yelled at him. That was invitation enough—he turned and came straight in, and we met at a great pace. The boar turned literally head-over-heels, my spear remaining in him, whilst the shock split my riding breeches from between my braces behind to my waistcoat in front, and I was in two halves!—with a wrenched wrist into the bargain. When I rode back I found him lying—perhaps only stunned, as the spear point had entered his mouth and was embedded in the skull beyond the angle of the jaws, yet he never moved again after the first shock, even when another man who had heard my halloa came up and buried his spear in his heart as he lay.

A boar will often, like any other wild animal, lie close and watch his opportunity to attack. I was once nearly caught by a big fellow who played me this trick in Rajputana.

He had escaped after a sharp gallop into a patch of young palm trees a few feet high. I was riding the very dear companion of my young days, "Honesty"—an Australian horse—and was carelessly trotting about seeking him, as I had no thought that a boar could conceal himself in such low cover, when there came a "hough" from behind, and he was on us. He had, however, misjudged his enemy. The good horse, though taken unawares, was perfectly collected, and lashing out with both legs got home on the boar's skull and turned him over, when I killed him before he had recovered his fighting wits.

Pigs, like most wild animals—lion, tiger, and deer of many sorts—are spotted, and striped also when quite young. Once, when waiting on a villager's platform of sticks and grass for a tiger to be driven up to me along the bank of a rush-grown watercourse, a sounder of pig passed beneath, and jumping down I succeeded in catching one of the old lady's litter—perhaps her Benjamin—his coat being of many colours, prettily striped and spotted. I wrapped him in a blanket in which he lay philosophically quiet until the beat was over, when I took him home and he became a great pet. On

reaching years of discretion, he would go off at his own pleasure to the soldiers' quarters, where he was made much of, and at last found a happy home in the Zoological Gardens at Calcutta. After a year's absence I visited the Gardens, saw and called to him, when he ran to the bars, and stood up to greet me with little grunts of recognition and pleasure.

I think that a boar, in spite of his cunning and brains, for he really is a most intelligent animal, is the bravest inhabitant of the jungle : even the tiger and the elephant acknowledge his personality and treat him with respect. He will break a line of tuskers like a rope or straw, as indeed will his little cousin the porcupine, whom I have seen charge time and again the line of elephants standing three deep, with a clash of his quills, making determined rushes until he forced them to open out and give him passage—no doubt giving them a sly prick as he passed.

The boar is no bully, is never wantonly aggressive, but he is never afraid. I have met him in a narrow path in the Chirkâri preserves face to face, and have stood till he made his decision for peace or war. A quick scrutiny in his eyes, he faced me ready to charge, until he had made up his mind that I meant no harm ; when he winked—deliberately winked—intentionally or otherwise—then quietly turned and walked away—no threatening in his advance, and no hurry in his retreat.

R Yet once a boar has determined to fight, it is to the death, without flinching. No adversary will daunt him, no wound weaken his resolution. I have seen him with two leaded spears swaying from his flanks, charge horse after horse to their rider's discomfiture until he received his death-stroke—to sink without a sob. It is only, I think, a half-bred boar (probably some cross with a village pig in his family pedigree) that squeals at the last.

I once saw a large sounder of eight or ten boar together in the Herat valley, ridden after by spearmen, take the water to charge half a regiment of mounted and dismounted soldiers on the farther bank, whilst the water, rising in an arch from their tusches at every stroke as they swam across, gave them the appearance of a fleet of toy steamboats. The charge was successful: they broke the enemy, leaving one warrior only dead on the field.

Perhaps the biggest boar I have ever had the luck to encounter was one that I met in Central Asia. I was riding with my Pathan orderly, Safdar Khân, behind our small column on the march one morning, by the side of a reed-grown watercourse, and came upon some of the cavalry boys, who had dismounted and were hunting pig in the reeds with their sabres, whilst up the sand-dunes on the left, pursued by sowars and mounted Turcoman, a huge boar was making way at a lazy trot. We watched

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the game as interested spectators, and laughed to see him turn on reaching the crest and come down on his pursuers like a loosened boulder. The labouring horsemen turned and scattered like a covey of partridges at the stoop of a hawk, and the boar trotted back victorious over the dunes.

To get hold of my orderly's cavalry lance, pass him my '360 rifle, and tell him to follow, was the work of a moment, and we rode diagonally to cut the boar off on the other side of the hills. I was riding an underbred Arab some 13·2 hands high, and got sight of him on the flat beyond the first range of sand-hills. He was quite as ready to make acquaintance as I was—more ready than my pony, which, as we were almost closing, propped and funked, in spite of my vicious use of the spur. I had only time then to wrench him round and gallop for it, which I did, with both spurs buried in his flanks, and the boar at his tail for fifty yards bent on blood! When I at last got clear, he turned and trotted at his leisure across the open for the next range of sand-hills, and my orderly galloped up. Then I took a mean advantage. Dismounting, I seized my small rifle from Safdar Khân, and gave the boar a smack in his huge hindquarters with the '360, which brought him sharply round. He stood undecided and watched me as I mounted my orderly's horse, only turning away as I went for him, in cunning endeavour to gain the vantage-ground



“WITH TWO LEADED SPEARS SWAYING.”

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and charge downhill at me. This I would not allow, refusing his repeated offers, and not until I had passed him, and could wheel and meet him on equal terms, would I close. We did so at racing speed, the wound in his hindquarters seeming to make no difference to his pace. For the thousandth part of a second I thought that the lance had failed to bite, though it bent in my hand; then a slight crackling as the bone gave, and the strong bamboo sprang from my grip, like a loosened bow as I rode over the boar. When I returned he was lying dead with the bayonet blade bedded home in his skull. Safdar and another orderly who had come over the sand-hills to see the battle, dismounted, and tried to withdraw the spear, pulling both together, till at last it came out with a jerk that upset them, whilst a fountain of blood spurted out in a continuous arch three feet from the ground. I left them to extract his tusks, which they were unable to do; and I still regret the loss of the trophy, as they were a very fine pair.

I have killed many boar in every part of India and Persia, but never anywhere met so huge a champion, who, as I rode at him on my Arab, seemed to stand higher than the pony's withers. He had evidently enjoyed life to the full—even up to his last gallant charge of which he did not feel the failure, he must have had things his own way. *Requiescat in pace!* He had lived the pace



undoubtedly! If immortality consists, as Junot once asserted, alone in living in the memory of others, this boar has partially attained to it. To be "on the tail of the leading dog" throughout a good run is a great sensation, given to few, and only once or twice perhaps in a lifetime; but to ride and kill a lusty boar, alone and unaided, is open to all, and many a glorious run of this description has fallen to my lot. May every reader of mine have the same luck and learn the pleasure of it!

With the Calcutta Tent Club I enjoyed many a good gallop—Lord Mayo, then Viceroy, that great-hearted and kindly prince of sportsmen, often asked me to accompany him when going by river or train to a meet. I can remember his cheery shout—"Ride! ride!"—when I, having got away with a boar in front of him and the other spears by chance, was taking a pull. He was not a man to be "nursed" in sport, nor alas, if he could avoid it, in other ways! He had been good enough to ask me out with him to a shooting-party at Dhâmi, not far from Simla, before his last return to Calcutta, and when saying "good-bye" I took the liberty of begging him to take some precautions (as Judge Norman had been lately murdered). He thanked me in his kindly manner, but said: "If any man chooses to pit his life against yours, precautions are of no avail." Within a few months the sad news of his death reached me, and I

do not remember ever realising a much keener sorrow.

Always in training then, I rode a stone under my "fighting" weight, and when going hard used to ride well forward on the withers, as horses, so eased, raced after a boar more freely than when you sat down in the saddle; but Lord Mayo always rebuked this style of riding over bad ground, and no doubt you took risks in thus leaning forward. A man of his splendid physique could scarcely have ventured to ride in such a manner.

A solitary boar, found in the early morning in an unknown and wild country—with a good horse under you whom you can trust—affords better sport than any you may kill amongst more civilised surroundings. Here, indeed, you get good fellowship, but a more stereotyped form of sport—excellent in its way, but never quite so earnest a business as when you are playing the game alone and unaided in the wilds.

In Jeypore, where of all places sport is ensured and the going perfect, from the sandy nature of the open ground in which the pig lie out when the surrounding hills have been kept alive with bonfires during the night, it is easy work to kill; but even there the game is worth playing, for even there, as Lindsay Gordon has it, "danger can find its way." I was fairly caught once from careless

riding over this open ground, when watching a lot of spears pressing a boar.

Being gloriously mounted, and merely a looker-on, intent on getting sport for a party of guests, I was watching the chase sweep round a patch of sugar-cane on my right, when my horse rose at a railway embankment then freshly thrown up across the plain. As he landed on the top and took off again without checking pace, we were met in mid-air by the boar, who was no doubt jumping up at the same moment, and who was tossed off my horse's shoulder, leaving a fleck of white foam in front of my knee. I did not see him until we were both in the air, nor do I know that his leap at me was intentioned—though he may have seen my helmet over the bank—but no harm was done, the pace and weight of the horse being sufficient to carry us through without even a peck on landing, while the boar, after taking a bad toss, scrambled over the embankment, and was eventually speared.

In this open, sandy plain, with nothing to interfere with a quick horse's movements, it is possible to ride and stun a pig with a cudgel, and this is often done, the nose being a most vulnerable point with a pig; but I have never seen a really "mighty" boar in this district.

I recall one other contretemps that occurred in the same field.

A—— had asked me to give him a confidential

mount, as though he professed to be quite a modest performer, yet he had lately had few opportunities of pigsticking. I understood, as I knew his antecedents, and mounted him on a placid piebald that would titup complacently until you crammed in the spurs. I had killed pig off him, however, and knew him to be staunch.

We started a boar, which was speared, and resenting it turned upon the piebald, who attempted to jump over him, but came down, his rider's leg being caught underneath him as he rolled, when the pig made a scramble to get over him and attack his fallen foe. This L——, a young dragoon, saw, and spearing somewhat wildly at the cloud of dust the combatants had raised, unfortunately put his point through the horse's jaws. The boar was, however, immediately speared and the trouble ended. Not so the triumph, for my friend claimed the trophy as his own, and for many long years Falstaffian tales were no doubt told of this boar in buckram whose head embellished the wall above a west-end side-board. At any rate the sportsman had gained an experience the remembrance of which, enhanced by imagination, afforded him pleasure for life. I bound up the horse's jaws with handkerchiefs, and believe that he was saved, though having made him over to the Rajah's people at once to be cured by their surgeon, I never actually saw him afterwards.

## CHAPTER III

### A CHAT ABOUT HORSES

To return to the horses, from which I have wandered to talk pig—of necessity an allied subject—I may say that I have had a large number pass through my hands, from racers and hunters to polo ponies. Arabs I loved for their unfailing pluck at a pinch, docility, and endurance; with small round feet and cannon-bone of the consistence of ivory, they will stand a perpetual hammering over baked and stony ground that would soon disable an Australian or English horse. It is an object-lesson to note the comparative density of cannon-bone, when sawn through, of an Arab, English T.B., Country-bred, Waler (Australian), and an ordinary underbred horse. You go down the scale from ivory, through dense bone, to pumice, and sponge or bullock bone almost. However well-bred be your English or Australian horse, he requires acclimatisation, and if set to work during the first year after landing, is almost sure to develop, or at any rate lay the seeds of, laminitis.



“PUT HIS POINT THROUGH THE HORSE'S JAWS.”

[To face page 24.]



Arabs enter into any game you play *con amore*. I had one that would strike at pig or pariah dog with his forefoot at a gallop. Another whom I educated in the jumping line, though barely measuring 14 hands, flew the big double at Sialkote, when racing with 10 stone 7 up, without laying hoof on the four-foot central bank—thus clearing at least 24 feet, for the distance measured through from ditch to ditch bank was 22 feet.

Yet I have heard men say that Arabs cannot “throw a lep!” They are as sure as goats over the most iniquitous ground, and rarely make a mistake—even in black cotton soil, where other horses flounder—whilst I have seen a foreshoe, hurled in front of me, dance down a rocky hillside in the Deccan, my horse galloping on as if nothing had occurred.

In black cotton soil, the holes visible on the top of the ground are often but a mere indication of the cavern below. You can only ride over such ground at any pace in safety before the sun has caused the dew to evaporate. Until then, every hole is betrayed by the glittering of the spiders' webs that clothe them with silver (dew-drenched) gossamer, and your horse soon learns to take Nature's hint.

Arabs owe their pluck to their breeding, undoubtedly—a well-bred one will do or face anything with a rider he knows. Australians, also, if well-bred (but there is often the rub) will do the



same under like conditions. One thoroughbred waler mare, after landing over a big jump, carried me half across the sunbaked field on which we lit, with a broken fetlock, but refused to fall.

No Arab will own a "Kadís"—a low-bred animal. They will breed from an unsound well-bred sire or dam rather than make use of an animal, however good-looking, with a low-bred strain in his blood; but unsoundness is rare.

Never ride an unsound horse at real work, scrap him, give him away, do anything but ride him. I was foolish enough to buy one with a small bone spavin, as it did not seem to interfere with his freedom, and I rued the day.

Having put up my light-weight orderly on an Arab pony, to try him round a made course against the waler, I rode the latter. He hit one of the jumps and floundered on to his head, then recovered and went down again; and as this happened several times and I felt he could not pick himself up properly, though it had been easy to jump off sideways, I threw myself off by putting both hands on the pommel and endeavouring to turn a somersault on to my feet—a circus trick learned on the parallel bars in the gymnasium at Sandhurst. I did not realise that I had grown less athletic with age, and only succeeded in landing on my back with a squelch; my would-be theatrical "show off" being thus severely punished. Three days in a hot bath, with

my whole body from the ribs downwards in front turned black, and a cruel pain for years afterwards from, I believe, a cracked bone in my hip girdle, was the consequence. The brute was unable to pull himself together because of that very small bone spavin, and for no other reason, I conclude, as he was almost up several times, but could not quite get his hind legs under him.

I owed, however, a pleasant enough journey through Russia to being thus helplessly incapacitated, for the accident happened in Central Asia. Lessar, the Russian Commissioner with whom I had had friendly relations, who was returning by Merve to St Petersburg, played the part of the good Samaritan, and telegraphed for permission to take me with him. Crossing 20 miles of desert in my mule litter, I found him awaiting me in a flat-bottomed barge on the Oxus, and he revived me by pouring a bottle of wine into my fainting body. I then floated down the river with him for three days and nights, gaining strength to stand the shaking of the mules across the desert for another three or four days, when we came to the Russian Military Railway then in course of construction to Merve.

All the Russians I met, including Alikhanoff and other generals, and the Political Agent of Bokhara, who had been educated in Edinburgh and spoke English like an Englishman, were as pleasant and kindly as possible.

The general in charge gave me a carriage, and told off a young officer to attend me; thus I was able to reach the Caspian and Baku, and thence posting up the military road over the Vladikavkaz to take the rail to Moscow, and so to England.

Poor Lessar died, of a broken heart, it was said, during the Russo-Japanese War. He was Russia's Diplomatic Agent, and no doubt had found the Japanese a more difficult nut to crack than our British Foreign Office, round which he had apparently run rings. He had a great heart in a small body, that was kept in working order solely by frequent recourse to arsenic, immense determination, and a diplomatic ability beyond question. Peace to his memory!

He had also an unaffected leaning towards an English alliance; though he once had the assurance to tell me that Russia had only assented to the delimitation of a boundary to save British *amour propre* (after the Panjdeh affair), and that treaties were only made for peace time to amuse diplomacy. A plagiarism! for Napoleon had said this before. He had imbibed the principles of Bonaparte, and scraped things to the bone, though he was not usually so outspoken. Verily a stronger power than Britain put his hook into the nostrils of Gog, and led him as a bear by the nose across Asia; but to stir up the Japanese hornet's nest and retire with aching paws void of plunder to hibernate for a

season, probably cursing "Brer Rabbit," who had led him into the scrape, or at any rate carefully encouraged him.

But to return to our horses. Mine would always follow me like dogs, and when I was a boy in the cavalry my chargers would walk into the verandah and breakfast-room, hoping for dainties, bread, carrot, or apple. One of my English hunters alone broke this record of friendship, for he never heard my step in the stable without ramping round his box, and invariably came for me open-mouthed when I approached him. I suppose I had tried him a bit too high occasionally. The only horse, however, on which I could always rely in any and every tight place to keep cool and do the right thing, was my waler "Honesty," who as a colt began his career by sending me yards over his head. I have ridden him up a precipice where his shoes slipped at every step, and where once started it was impossible to turn; yet he continually found a crack to steady them without getting flurried. He was ever quietly confident when up to a charging pig. On one occasion, indeed, when caught unawares, he took the law into his own hoofs and cracked the pig's skull.

One of quite another sort was a beautifully bred black waler, sent up to me by a friend from Calcutta, with the information that he had missed the horse at auction, but that as he had been then

bought by a "b—— poet" who couldn't ride, he had secured him for me after all. I tried him. Three times in one morning the brute put me down. He bucked out of pure vice, and that so cleverly that he continued to rise and land with his head somewhere underneath him, turning in the air repeatedly as he did so, till he shot me off. After his third escapade, I felt that I could not make a reliable hunter out of him, so that very day advertised him for sale without more ado. Wisdom was justified of her poetical offspring undoubtedly! Neil of the C. I. Horse bought him, for we had not then made acquaintance, and he, alas, had the worry of him. They set squads of "sowars" to take turns at the brute in a shallow, sandy watercourse, where as one went down another mounted; and this game was kept up for weeks till he was passed as reliable, when Neil, in an evil moment, rode him on to parade. Directly they got out of a walk and the scabbard struck his flank, Neil was thrown, and picked up with a collar-bone and three ribs broken. He and I, years afterwards, tossed up to settle which of us should risk a ride on him in the officers' race at the Proclamation of Empire Durbar. Nothing could, of course, live with him for pace, but had a whip cracked on or even near him, he would have planted and bucked instantly. Luckily for me, who won the toss, the entries did not fill. Such a horse could never

have been ridden to pig, and was practically useless.

I have seen many buck-jumpers, but never one to compare with the above-mentioned. He was a gentleman gone wrong—thoroughbred, handsome, and powerful, his quality only lent assistance to his evil nature. I have seen a far less pretentious performer put a rough-rider of the 21st Hussars over his head, as the man still clung to the saddle, without breaking his girths. The horse succeeded in getting his elbows under the girth, grown slack from his bucking, and continuing his action, sent saddle and man sliding down his neck on to the ground.

By the bye, always choose a horse with loose elbows well away from his girth, and one whose girth reaches half down to his knees, if you can. Depth means lung and galloping power; loosened elbow-joints away from the flank, activity. Though I am aware that the stride of a common plater will smother the best Arab that ever looked through a bridle, yet the shape of the Arab is perfect—size alone is wanting; and I remember well seeing Bend Or as a stallion filled out, when his racing days were over, and thinking what a perfect Arab he was. He stood the best type of Arab, magnified—not glorified. To sum up, my advice is, when looking for a horse for all-round hard work, choose a blood Arab, unless you are a heavy-weight,

and have constantly to ride against others. They are always game, will do more hard work whilst keeping their condition than horses of any other breed, and their pluck is beyond question.

Horses, as a rule, when not the constant companions of man, are nervous and stupid under trying circumstances.

I do not allude to mere excitability, which often afflicts the best and keenest, whether horse or man. It is common knowledge that you have but to shout in the box of a well-bred horse to raise his pulse several beats. I have seen some of the best pigstickers I have known tremble from forehead to fetlock, shivering as if with ague whilst the beat came on. Others cannot stand still, and will rear and fret, much as some hunters will do at a covert side, whilst even a man's heart plays tricks; and I confess to a time when, on getting up to ride, my boots have rattled in my stirrups, like castanets, till the flag went down. But what I mean is that a horse, unless accustomed to think for himself by a course of schooling and training, is a very fool, and loses his head. Anyone could probably bring forward a hundred instances in proof of this. I give one below; but meanwhile must say that even an untrustworthy horse will sometimes rise to the occasion, and save you from a scrape.

I had caught sight of the camp-fire beacon one dark night when finishing a march in Persia, and

had turned my horse's head straight for it and set him going, as the ground appeared level. On nearing camp he made a series of bounds—I thought over irrigation puddles, as I caught the reflection of stars under my stirrup as I looked down to see why he was jumping so big. Luckily I did not care, and let him jump as he pleased, being only rather astonished at his freshness after the long ride. Next day I knew the reason, and a goose walked over my grave—I had set him at a gallop over the group of unguarded village wells, which were thirty or forty feet deep and all in a cluster. Had I checked him, we should have come to grief. I need scarcely say that I did not imitate the huntsman, whose horse, taking a well by mistake, kicked down a brick or two on landing, when his master turned him at it a second time, merely remarking, "Theatrical beggar, I'll teach you to jump clean."

I never liked Persian horses, however. They are desperate fighters amongst themselves, and their pluck does not equal that of the Arab. They give in with overwork, either sulk or get slow; though they are not such curs as the Afghan horse who, when distressed, hangs like lead on your hand, and makes no attempt to recover if he blunders, but goes down like a log. The strain of Arab blood probably saves the Persian from such degraded habits.

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One of the former chiefs of the **Kashkaï**, **Ali Kooli Khan**, **Il Begi**, owned a stable of six hundred Arab mares; but he became too powerful, was ruined by the Shah's orders in consequence, and his stud confiscated or dispersed, whilst his sons had to become robbers, *rah zan*, to gain a livelihood. I passed a day in their camp, not robbed, but most hospitably welcomed.

But to return to the point of stupidity in horses. I have seen one, when caught in a quicksand, plunge and fight madly for a mere moment or two, then lay his head down and give in; had he not been roped and pulled out by the neck, he would have sunk without making further effort.

Not so would an elephant behave. Though they dread the quicksands that are so commonly met with when crossing large dry river-beds. In such places they tap the treacherous surface of the sand with their trunks to make sure of their ground and rarely sink in, unless hastily urged on before they have thoroughly sounded the terrain. Such haste is often due to the mahout himself losing his head when the sand waves and trembles all round and under his mount.

I saved one, a first-rate howdah elephant, that went down when crossing quite a small ravine. Even when sinking he allowed men to remain on his back for a little while to remove the howdah, and then, as the mahouts gathered on the bank

encouraging him, he continued to do his best to extricate himself. This, though deeply bogged, he at last succeeded in doing, for I luckily bethought me that the pads off the beating elephants would give him a better foothold than the tree boughs that the men were tossing to him. The elephants were stripped one by one, and I think he had rolled and passed some eight or ten pads under his feet, and had trampled them down, before he had secured the necessary support for his huge bulk. We had to stay in camp next day to make new "guddees."

This was a very staunch "Shikar" elephant. I saw him stand one day without flinching, whilst a tigress buried fangs and claws in his forehead. She had got home with a bound out of heavy grass before my friend in the howdah had realised her charge. Very few elephants would have stood such punishment without moving; nor did this contretemps spoil him for future work, which might well have been the case.

One elephant Kâla Nâg, the "black cobra," that I rode as a boy, would charge any tiger alive or dead at sight, and was unsteady and unreliable in consequence, though full of courage! This was in consequence of his having been previously mauled.

This elephant belonged to the Rajah of Kotah, whose capital lies near the banks of the Chumbul ;

and I recall one hunt in that vicinity, when our party floated down the river in the rajah's boat, whilst the banks were being beaten for tiger—a form of “sport made easy,” to do honour to any influential guest, that here obtained. Two tigers were put up, one of which we eventually murdered; but not before he had shown at his best, by charging a group of swordsmen who had taken post on a rock. Both man and beast behaved admirably, the tiger being defeated by the flashing swords that we could hear grate on the rock as they struck at him, who only fell back to charge a second time; yet he could never get a fair foothold, and was compelled to give up the attempt and go forward to his death.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPORT IN THE HIMALAYA AND NORTHERN INDIA

A VISIT on leave to Simla gave me my earliest experience of "the hills"—that wonderful "necklace of pearls"—the Himalayas—and some idea of the sport they will yield.

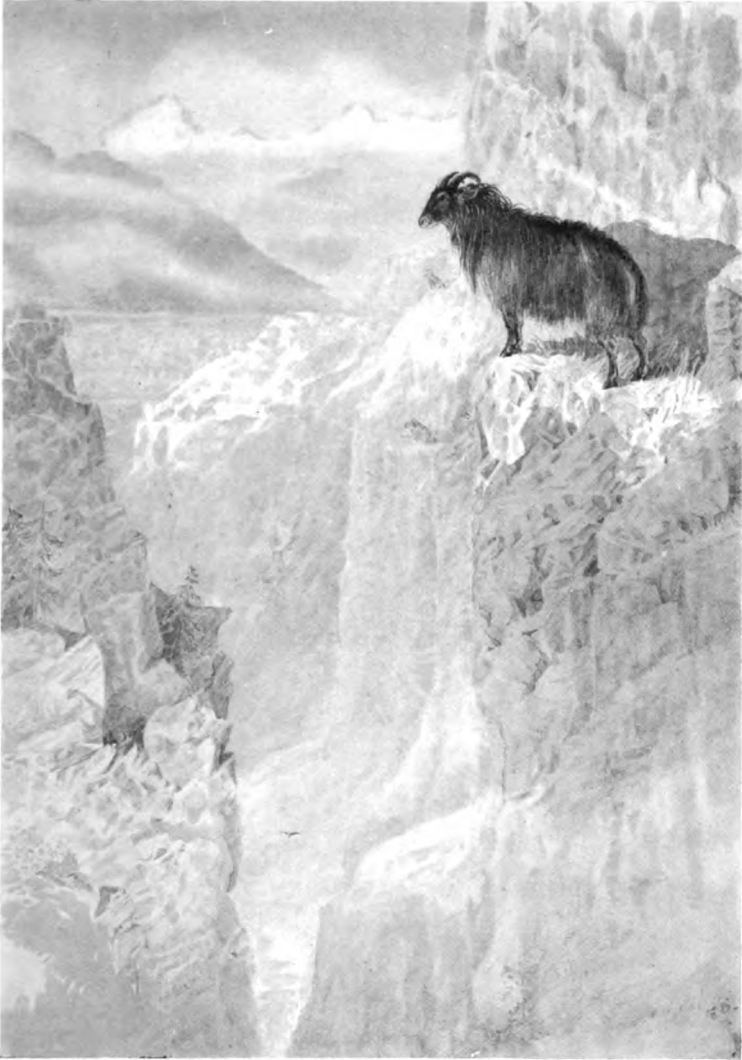
My first trip with Colonel George Napier was not very productive. We had walked seven or eight miles on our way to explore the Shâlch Peaks, (whose pointed cones can be seen from Simla, rising to a height of perhaps 10,000 feet), and my boots having blistered my feet, I threw them aside and tramped the rest of the way some thousands of feet down into the valley, and thence up to the top of the mountain, barefooted.

We arrived late, but before our servants, though one or two hillmen had come up with part of a light tent which we drew over a rock, and after drinking a bottle of champagne, cooled in snow that we found in a crevice, went to sleep. In the morning my feet and legs were swollen and useless, so for a week or more I could only join in the beats by

being carried in a hill-woman's litter to some post ahead. Moral—never be impatient nor lose your temper, it does not pay. If I remember aright, our bag only produced some gooral, musk deer, and pheasant, though I ought to have bagged a serow—this is the largest of the hill goats and is found on the middle ranges of the Himalaya, from 10,000 to 14,000 feet, I believe.

Mine—as he should have been—came galloping down a steep gully through forest and over rock, swerving right and left, and I missed him with my first barrel, hitting him about the stifle-joint with my second; yet as I stood in his path to the jungle below he never altered his course but came straight at me, and I had to move aside as quickly as convenient. We never got him.

Some little time after N—— B—— and I started for a trip to the sources of the Ganges, where we hoped to kill burhel. B——, who was A.D.C. to the commander-in-chief, was unfortunately recalled to Simla; but N—— and I went on, and having outdistanced our guides, servants, and supplies, had to sleep in the granaries of villagers, whilst our food consisted of what rice they could afford to give us and of milk that they supplied under pressure. This we boiled in borrowed "lotahs," and with the help of some chocolate scraped in as the pot simmered, we endeavoured to allay the pangs of our boyish appetites. I think we



**TAHR AT HOME IN THE HIMALAYA.**

*[To face page 88.]*



were wandering beggars—"yōgis" or "fakirs"—for a solid week or ten days before our servants found us. Even then food was scarce, and had it not been for a lucky stalk at burhel we should have starved indeed. This was brought off by N——, who having proved the wind and taken his bearings after a long and careful approach, raised his head above the rock he had selected, as being within easy shot of his victim. He had triumphed, but the burhel merely lifted a friendly countenance and said ba-a. It was a sheep that had been left behind when the flocks were driven down in the autumn, and how he had lived through the winter heaven knows; but he had made the very best use of his opportunities, and provided us with the most delicious dinners and breakfasts for days. I have never tasted more perfect mutton, and never may again; whilst the ready grasp of the situation that caused his translation from hill-slope to larder was beyond praise.

We had indeed a most enjoyable outing in the glorious hills; shot at if we did not kill gooral, thar, burhel, and failed to get some snow leopards who passed round us during a beat; but being hurried back to our immense regret as Government could not do without our services! the shooting trip as such was more or less a failure. I am unable to remember the actual bag.

Whilst on the subject of hill game, I must



mention the markhor of Sheikhbudin, the straight-horned trans-Indus variety of the animal, of which we have no good specimens in England — not even in the Natural History Museum — where good skins and heads would no doubt be appreciated.

I was on the march down the northern frontier of India as A.D.C. to my father, and had taken a day off duty with a borrowed rifle in hope of sport. All day from early morning till evening, a shikari who knew the ground and myself had toiled over the mountain, and one solitary doe was all that we had seen. Weary and disappointed, we had reached the last descent that was to land us near the waiting horses in the plain, when the shikari turned and crouched, beckoning me to do the same. He then said, "We have them—they are all in the valley among the korindah bushes." I think korindah— at any rate they were all feeding in a straight gully, from which there was no exit, and I followed my man. We turned the rocks and entered, and had hardly done so when there was a sound of stamped feet and a rattle of stones, the markhor no doubt having got our wind, and we ran forward as fast as we could, scrambling over rock and boulder through the brushwood. Then I saw what I suppose no man has ever seen again, a procession of bearded patriarchs, bringing up the rear of a flock that was already safe above, marching

diagonally in single file up the face of a perpendicular cliff, so steep and unbroken of surface that they were compelled to walk, and pick each step they took in solemn perplexity.

Reader, I was young then, blown and exhausted from running, and badly armed; shaking with excitement as I was, I could scarcely take my eyes off the markhor to shove home fresh cartridges, and so fired shot after shot, one wilder than the other. Thus a situation that, had it occurred a few years later would have placed each head at my mercy, was terribly misused.

One lucky shot alone went home in the right place, and one markhor bounded into the air from off the dizzy height to smash himself on the stones 300 feet below. No other could have been touched, I think, as any shock however slight must have caused loss of foothold on a smooth wall where no crack or seam was visible, and where a lizard could scarcely have found clinging room, where indeed the poor beasts dared not flinch or alter their pace at the crack of the rifle.

How the markhor performed the feat is an unexplained marvel to me even now, when I have experience of what apparently impossible precipices a hill goat can pass over in safety.

From Umballah, with the loan of a regimental camel and my own horses, I managed to get a fair amount of sport in a small way. Three days'

leave, with an added Saturday and Sunday, gave time to cover a lot of ground.

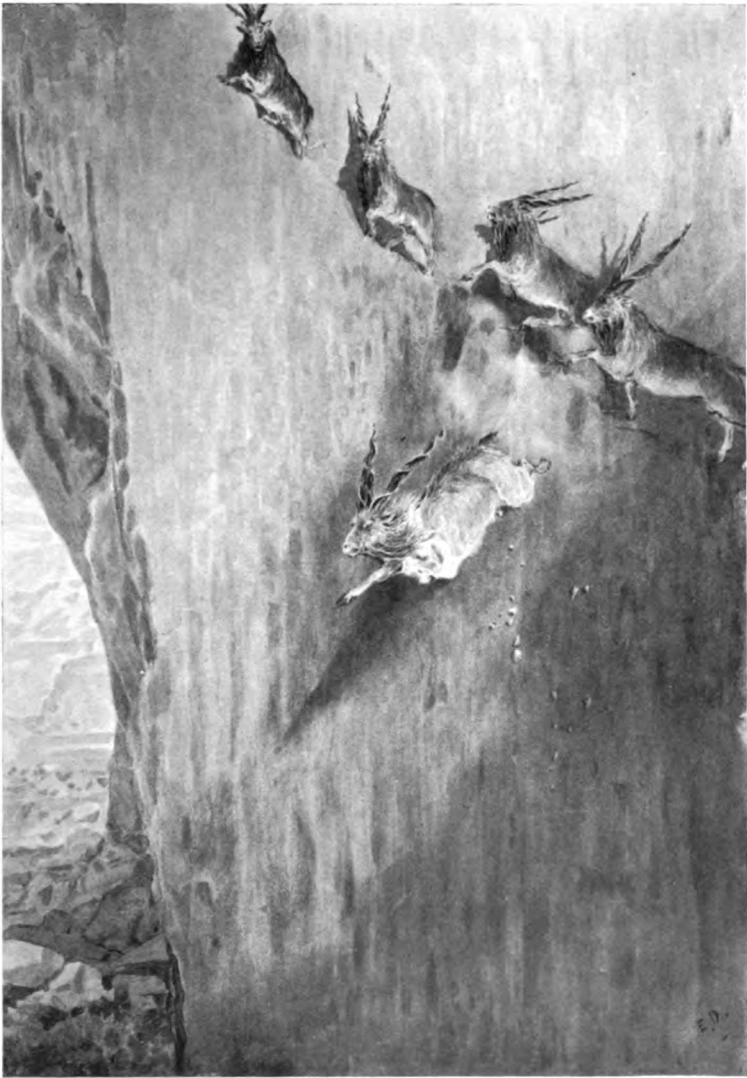
A few survey maps supplied all the necessary information as to "jheels" and the country generally, and of these I made good use.

Neilghai were to be found, as well as black buck, pig, and any number of geese, duck, and snipe.

The neilghai, or blue bull, that is considered almost as a sacred animal in some parts of India, where he is comparatively tame—and in any case not worth shooting I consider—is the largest of the Indian antelopes.

He will give you an excellent gallop—one such ridden in or beyond the cavalry grass preserves in the Umballah district gave me a bad time. I had been looking for black buck and was carrying a small rifle in place of the more usual spear, when I sighted and rode him. The ground was bad and the going blind, as the grass was tall and rank. We blundered over dead trees and boulders as we raced along, and I had just got on terms with my bull, who was somewhat heavy and showed signs of distress, when we topped a slope that unfortunately for me led down to a buffalo swamp.

Any large depression in the ground gathers water and becomes a "jheel" during the rains, in which the herds of village buffalo wade about up to their bellies and roll to escape the attack of



**"ONE MARKHOR BOUNDED INTO THE AIR."**

*[To face page 42.]*



mosquitoes and other insect nuisances, whilst as they walk about in the mud and water they form a very network of deep paths. When the rains cease and the sun gradually dries the land, they do not desert the "jheel" until the grass is all eaten down on the tussocks left standing between these cattle-runs, as water-holes are still to be found in the deepest part of the fast drying up swamp for pleasurable wallowing.

Such was the valley into which we raced. I on an excited Arab who fought for his head, with a rifle on full cock in my right hand, and the bull blundering and beaten a few strides ahead of me.

There was no chance of taking a pull—any interference on my part would have meant an immediate cropper, so perforce I took the risks with a loose rein, sitting back and holding the rifle well up to fling away in case of a fall, to find myself at last after a desperate series of pecks and plunges safe on the further bank, but with a blown horse and the bull half a mile in front now. He had made play, being no longer hustled beyond his pace, cantering safely in, out, and over the tussocks of the swamp through which we had floundered, to emerge reeking with sweat—when further pursuit was hopeless.

I remember another defeat on a plain in the Deccan, where I had started and ridden a Chinkara buck to a standstill, but at the expense of my horse

who was so blown that I could no longer get a turn out of him; and the small deer, whenever I did manage to get him on my spearhand, trotted across a yard or two in front, dead beat truly and with his tongue out, yet with always just enough left in him to elude my blundering mount, till a lucky nullah gave him his chance of a scramble down its precipitous side to safety.

I was not sorry on thinking it over afterwards that he had got free. Spearing deer is not pleasant work. I have had to do it at times, and can recall to this day the pathetic appeal in the eyes of a wounded black buck that had got away and galloped for at least a couple of miles with a broken thigh.

As I came up to him, and he saw that he could not escape, he lay down and looked up at me; but it had to be done, he could not have survived, and the thrust became an act of mercy.

My very first black buck, shot with one of the antediluvian rifles of my early days, gave me a feeling of triumph beyond my deserts. I had seen the big fellow from a distance enter a field of sugar cane, and being young thought I could stalk him in it. Of course the cane was higher than myself, but I waded gently on till the buck, disturbed, made a grand leap high above the green blades, and my snap shot instantly taken put the bullet through his heart in mid-air—a lucky fluke.

I have several times got up to these buck when they were engaged in combat to win the good graces of some bright-eyed companion. On such occasions they are so pugnacious and intent on success that—forgetful of the old adage, “business is business and kissing’s kissing”—they lay aside caution. As a rule men make use of a bullock cart to circle round and obtain a shot in open plains, but you can sometimes drive them past a concealed gun. I have seen them taken also by hunting-leopards. This is a curious form of sport, and should be witnessed once if possible.

C—— of the 21st Hussars, who had just passed me as proficient in cavalry drill, and had taught me to wield a lance till I could do the St George at a gallop, was riding one unlucky day the same excitable little fiend who followed the blue bull, after pig. He was some lengths ahead of me as we neared a long pool or nullah, wherein was over thirty feet of water to clear ; but the horse took charge, and a cruel roll on the far side that they could not quite reach was the result. Had I known what I afterwards found out, that a Mahratta snaffle replacing the bridoon in a horse’s mouth will enable you to hold anything on four legs with a touch of your finger, we should both have had pleasanter rides. I made use of this form of snaffle with an ordinary bit for a T. B. black waler that Lucifer himself could not have held



otherwise, and he went like a lady's hack ever after. We killed many a good boar together when he had realised the folly of attempting to pull "against the pricks." I recommend a trial of this most persuasive instrument to any man cursed with an iron-mouthed headstrong conveyance, for I can vouch for its efficacy. Further, it never hurts a horse's mouth, for no horse will pull against it, as he will against a curb.

Talking of swamps or "jheels" brings to mind a curious little experience. When beating a rush-grown swamp, wherein a tigress and cubs had been located, we found that the going was too deep for the elephants; yet not liking to leave the tigress, sending my wife and another gun to guard the end of the cover, I encouraged the line to wallow through, standing my own howdah elephant as near as I could safely trust him. The poor beaters rolled on as best they could, above their girths in the slush, out of which their legs came with an audible suck, as they half lay on either side alternately. We were thus only making a few yards of headway a minute, and I was on the point of ordering them to solid ground, when a miniature tiger, about the size of a small cat, came out from the rushes with a lump of flesh in its mouth, deliberately eyed my big elephant, and then sat down in front of us with a baby's confidence, and began its

breakfast. The impudence of the little beast was amazing: it seemed to be perfectly at home, and no doubt relying on the proximity of its mother, it favoured us with an occasional growl. My mahout wanted to jump down and capture it; but the reeds were too close within which the tigress might have been lurking, and I would not allow him, as I could not be certain of killing her as she charged. The elephant might have moved without the mahout on her neck, or the tigress might have reached him in one bound. It was too risky, so the little imp got up when he chose and trotted back. We failed in the attempt to beat out the swamp, and mother and cubs may be alive to-day, doddering old folk.

## CHAPTER V

### TIGERS AND HUNTING IN NEPAL

WITH regard to the risk that my mahout might have run from the last-mentioned tigress, some tigers either cannot or will not attack with a leap suddenly—some warning is usually given—nor as a rule will they risk a clear jump; yet I saw one that we had “ringed” make a dash at the farthest point from our howdah elephant, and break out with a pretty on and off over one of the pad elephants without attempting to hurt the mahout. We ringed him again by wheeling and running parallel with him till he was headed by the faster elephants, and he fell at last in a gallant home charge at my mount, on which Lady C——, who had hit him with her little rifle, was also seated.

I have heard of a foreign potentate who had to leave his howdah hurriedly on one side, as the tiger scrambled in on the other, but I did not see the incident.

That they can reach easily, without jumping, to a height of fourteen feet or more is proved by

the scoring noticeable in many places on the soft fleshy bark of the semul, or cotton trees, upon which they polish or clean their claws, stretching up to get a good purchase.

One day when I had placed the guns, all on elephants, under the high bank of a broad sandy nullah that the tiger had to cross, I heard him going down the line close behind and above me, growling gently. He had got my wind, undoubtedly, and I dared not turn to look lest he should go back through the beat or jump into the howdah!

These risks, if such they be, must of course be taken sometimes; but unless wounded or ringed no tiger would, without provocation, leap on to an elephant—I think. However, you can be certain of nothing—I have heard of quite wanton assaults. This one passed above the next gun also, without being heard or noticed, then strolled out on to the sand in front of a gun fresh from England, to whom I had been asked to show sport, passing at a walk within twenty yards of him in the open. He had never seen a tiger, and I suppose suffered from “stag” fever, for he loosed off six harmless barrels before the tiger reached the opposite bank and safety!

A curious misadventure occurred to this same sportsman which gave him considerable annoyance. His rifle had been allowed to project in front of

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his howdah bars, and most unfortunately a tree bough snapped and passed into the muzzle, when before he could stop his mount, the barrels of his rifle were bent by the pressure and the rifle itself of course temporarily ruined.

When hunting with a limited number of elephants, you cannot afford to miss. But if you have thirty or forty well-trained ones, you can ring a tiger once he is on foot, by running parallel on either side till you head him, when he usually stops and endeavours to hide. With a line of three to four hundred, which are available when the Maharajah of Nepal sweeps a forest, no tiger can hope to escape. Our best day with the Maharajah's host accounted for six, of which my wife got two if not three; but though this is very fine work, and the parade and discipline quite worth seeing, it is not sport in the real sense of the word. The tiger has no chance at all, and is often cowed. Oddly enough, or is it naturally enough, the ladies are the most determined fighters when hemmed in, and often charge fiercely, whilst the males are not at all so anxious to face the music.

This method of hunting with a line was first instituted by Jung Bahadur, the man who seized power and practically founded a dynasty in Nepal—for the king is a puppet. He fulfils, to a nicety, the Radical's conception of the position

that should be assigned to his office. He has no power of independent action, no influence over events. (The Prime Minister alone is all-powerful, and practically a dictator.) There is not even the necessity to grease his reins for him, as he has no race to ride—he is a cipher. I allude to a trick once perpetrated on a young hand at steeple-chasing, sporting silk in his first race, when a gang of unprincipled welshers and bookmakers got at his “stable,” and started the boy—on his death-ride for all they knew or cared—with greased reins and a carefully frayed girth. The disreputable scheme succeeded, and the contemptible crew collared the stakes and pocketed the plunder!

The whole history of Jung Bahadur, if ever accurately furnished, would prove amazing reading; but this will never be given to the world, whilst it is not within the scope of this play-book to retail any political scandals. He was, apparently, a determined man, a miniature Eastern Napoleon in his methods, who attached no value to human life when he desired to attain his object, yet with balance enough to keep straight at a crisis when to have gone crooked and aspired too high would have spelt ruin to him and his state as certainly as it did to Bonaparte. It is said that he had retained a heart that was still subject to a kindly influence, that profited him in the day of trial. He

is reported to have been killed by a tiger when hunting somewhere near the Kosi—at any rate that was the official account of his death—and may possibly be correct. He rose as did Napoleon from nothing (being according to native account a Court jester) by his own indomitable character, for, like him, he knew no compunction in carrying out his schemes—and he won a kingdom. Making prisoners of his king and queen, whom he held as hostages, he usurped power and became the “Constitution” (King, Lords and Commons in one), for, unless local history is altogether fallacious, he wiped out the Upper House (the chiefs who had some principle left, and who objected to his policy) by the simple expedient of betraying them into a conference with closed doors, and shooting them all down, disarmed.

These methods are very effective, but scarcely conform to modern ideas, for like results may be obtained without immediate bloodshed.

His sons who were to succeed to power after his brother's death, who succeeded him, were all shot down in their turn, save one who escaped up a watercourse by night, and took refuge in the British Residency, when the present rulers seized the State.

It is to be hoped that under the able rule of Chandar Shamshir murder and revolution will cease, whilst gentler and equally efficacious methods

of ensuring the succession to his heirs may continue customary—for Jung Bahadur's nephew, with his pluck, education, and resourceful knowledge of the world, should raise Nepal into a powerful principality, in spite of the clerical incubus that stifles progress, with which he must reckon.

But let us imagine a Nepalese line, as I have often seen it, sweeping through the forests of sál trees and miles of timber-dotted jungle and plain, with military precision, under the guidance of one man, at whose bidding the buglers ring their note of command that sways centre, right or left wing, according to the nature of the ground and the direction to be adhered to. Without noise or confusion the stately pageant swings along until a tiger is sighted, when fast-running elephants take up the chase, and keeping parallel with the tiger's course gradually forge ahead and round him up.

Once he, or they if there are several together, are headed, their doom is sealed, for the line bends inwards in response to the bugle calls, and a ring results, which ring is gradually drawn closer until the elephants stand shoulder to shoulder. It then contracts still more, to narrow the circle, the elephants swaying backwards and forwards and trampling down the grass and undergrowth. Finally they often stand three deep when all have



closed up. By the time the howdah elephants arrive, the circle has usually a diameter of about a hundred yards, the circumference being marked by an inner path where all is beaten flat to afford a view of the centre, where the tigers are lying concealed. Then one or two pad elephants are sent in to stir the game, and these are frequently attacked. They move in, often in some trepidation, knowing quite well what is expected of them, and it is ludicrous to watch an old tusker who knows the game lift a bough, or brush his trunk over a thick bush, and fall back with a little squeal, till when the tiger comes he turns and bolts. I have seen a cool old Nepalese colonel on such an occasion, when the tiger charged home, merely move his coat-tails as the beast took a mouthful of straw out of the "guddee" on which he was seated, before dropping back to the ground; when, indeed, I overheard a mortified remark of one mahout to another, "Oho! What a sweet punishment it would have been!" The colonel was, evidently, not in their good graces.

When the tigers are once roused, they sometimes romp round the ring in front of the elephants, sometimes—and to their credit, be it said—charge at once; but the ladies are usually the first to do this, as the male tigers often dash across the centre to look here and there for an outlet, or ramp round in front of the line with like

intention, whilst the ladies take the business more to heart.

It is a really pretty sight to watch a party of several tigers engaged in these performances, when sometimes they will make up their minds suddenly, and charge straight at a howdah elephant, instinctively perceiving whence danger threatens, perhaps from the greater size of the howdah carriers. Then you get as pretty a charge as you can desire, occasionally with luck more than one, and you go back to dinner and your evening camp-fire with content in your heart, to prattle of the day's sport, and recall each pleasurable incident before turning in for the night.

Very pleasant is the evening camp-fire, whose cheery blaze beckons everyone from the tents, and where song or story puts a last seal on the pleasure of the day's outing.

For building the stack, an elephant is usually employed to bring in dead logs from the forest, and pile them up in the evening. Occasionally there is trouble. I have heard of snakes being brought in hollow logs, and I was myself witness to a terrible drama, when a log began squeaking in an unusual manner, and presently seven unhappy rats, with every hair singed from their bodies, leapt out one after the other to die in the heart of the flames.

Whilst on the subject of game in Nepal, I may

say that the hill country that stretches for some six hundred miles along the Himalaya has never been explored. The time is no doubt at hand when the short-sighted Chinese cunning of the policy of closing the country to European travellers will be exchanged for sounder procedure—when fear shall give place to far-sighted confidence in British friendship, and the country take the lead in the development of the vast resources of India, to the infinite advantage of rulers and subjects alike. No one has had the opportunity of exploring to locate the gold that lies hidden somewhere in the hills above, nor—which is more to the immediate point under notice—of collecting knowledge of the fauna and flora of this remarkable region.

Below the Himalaya, in the vast stretches of sál forest that clothe a great part of the area presented to Jung Bahadur for his mutiny services, elephant, tiger, rhinoceros, buffalo, and every species of game roam freely in their appropriate haunts.

The rhinoceros has indeed grown scarce, as the jungle belt that presumably stretched from Assam to the Indus has been broken into in the course of centuries. Alexander himself could not now kill one near Attock, for the last northern stronghold of the race lies in a small jungle valley below Khatmandu.

I never went after these, as they are preserved

with care, and only disturbed on great occasions. Buffalo I never saw, as I did not shoot the southern and eastern jungles beyond the Kosi, where they live at home in vast swamps and reed stretches.

My only view of those fine animals was during a pigsticking expedition down the river from Calcutta, when we put up a herd headed by a bull with immense horns. B——, who was on Lord Mayo's staff, and I—borrowing rifles—ran forward and lay down on what appeared to be their line of advance; but they turned off another way, and we could get no chance at them.

I have given some account of the other lowland game, but very happy days are undoubtedly in store for the first sportsman to whom the freedom of the mountains above is presented, and to him will fall the pleasure of describing an unknown region and its wild inhabitants.

A native once brought me a huge specimen of a flower, probably some species of edelweiss; and no doubt much of interest to the scientific world will be disclosed as civilised man enters this hitherto jealously closed area.

To my regret, I never was afforded an opportunity of seeing an elephant hunt, as previously conducted in Nepal by Jung Bahadur. Probably the herds that used to roam up the foot of the Himalaya from Assam have diminished in number,

or the stretch of jungle has been broken into by large tracts of cultivation, and their visits are less frequent. One or two huge fighting elephants, with warning bells round their necks, invariably marched with the Maharajah's camp, indeed, but I never witnessed their prowess in a jungle encounter.

Elephants, when of mature age, go "must" (mad) at certain seasons, and have to be watched. I saw a Pachwa boy do a brave thing when one of our beating elephants, without giving any warning, took it into his head to go wrong in the jungle, and, shaking off his mahout, charge the others, who scattered in all directions. The boy ran after him, caught a trailing rope, and climbing on to his quarters and back like a monkey, threw his coat over the beast's eyes. He thus brought him up standing, when two other large elephants ranged up on either side and shepherded him away.

When they get to a river on a hot day, they are as likely as not to give their riders a shower-bath, for they fill their trunks with water, and splash their head and sides with it. In one instance, when fording the Ganges, one of the howdah elephants, ridden by my brother, missed the ford, purposely or not, and amused himself swimming and sinking in a deep pool till nothing but the tip of his trunk was visible, in spite of every effort made by his terrified mahout to restrain him. His rider had

meanwhile to stand as best he could on the back seat of the howdah, leaning forward to save his rifles—no enviable position. When the truant had enjoyed himself to his heart's content in the whirlpool, and only then, did he come up to get the hammering that he richly deserved.

Once only have I seen an elephant pulled down by a tiger. This one reared up and caught him over the eye and top of the ear, whilst his rider, an Afghan, was too slow or too shaken to use his rifle. The elephant was forced down on to his side by the pain, but not quite pulled over, and a shot set him free.

At another time, and in very early days, I enjoyed a game of romps with a tiger that got home on the elephant I was riding.

A kill having been reported by my shikaris, I rode out to the place, and sent an invitation to another man who was engaged on a Government survey near by, to join me. My own elephants had not arrived, and he brought a small "survey" elephant into the field, on which in a "chârjâmeh" we enjoyed an exquisitely uncomfortable and yet most laughable ride, for we were shaken about in the little tray like beans on a sieve as the elephant ran and kicked.

I had given first choice of position during the beat to his owner, and a tiger had passed unobserved along the bank beneath; but as he rose the hill at

right angles to the gun, I saw him and fired a long shot across the valley, my express bullet splashing on the bare ground close behind him. Some fragments of lead must have hit him, I think, as he turned with a bound and clawed at the dust raised by the bullet, then went back into the nullah again, passing in above the same gun, to whom I went across, and we came together on to the tiger's track.

Then going up to the crest of the nullah down which he had turned, I chose a tree. The gun with me, though he had already had his chance, demurred at my choice, saying that it was the best place, so I consented to relinquish it, merely putting up my native to guard the pass with a spare rifle. We had scarcely reached our places higher up the nullah when my shikari's gun was heard, and almost immediately afterwards a beater was caught and shaken by the tiger, who had been hit or frightened by the shot. We went down, found the wounded man, then the small elephant in charge of a young boy mahout, and climbing into the "chârjâmeh," followed up the tiger, who charged at once. I was kneeling in front, and let him have my express in the face within a yard or two, hitting, turning him off—though the bullet must have glanced from his raised head—and giving him the second barrel as he passed. Then he got in at the elephant's legs from behind, in spite of the two shots fired



ALMOST PULLED DOWN.

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ABSTRACT

by my companion ; and we were tossed about as if in a boat at sea, till the tiger got clear again, and, forging ahead, was chased by our mount, now become uncontrollable. The tiger stopped some twenty or thirty yards ahead, and crouched on the hillside to make his leap as the elephant blundered straight on after him. I leant over as we came level, and fairly flattened him against the slope of the hill with two shells from a twelve-bore rifle, fired within a foot or so of his head. Then again he got in from behind, and our running fight was renewed, till the maddened elephant got clear and ran away downhill. When we pulled up at the bottom, we found that the boy had lost his pugaree and ankus or iron driving-rod, and that we had only half a dozen rounds with which to renew the battle should we again climb the hill, so decided to pick up the tiger next day, as it was not conceivable that he should live through the night.

Next morning, my own shooting elephants had arrived ; but I was compelled to hasten off to a meeting of state officials, who were becoming impatient, having been kept waiting for many days, and my companion promised to find the tiger and send me on the skin. Instead of doing this, he sent me a note to say that he had come upon the tiger still alive in the morning, and claimed the skin in consequence.

Seventeen years afterwards, I met the same mahout as a grown man, in charge of the same elephant, now also arrived at years of discretion, and heard his account of the finding of that tiger. I received my twelve-bore shells with the note above mentioned. One had flattened out, the other had blown out fore and aft, neither had exploded! This failure was due, I presume, to their having struck the tiger's neck (one on each side of the head) at such close quarters. The shells were always filled with sulphate of antimony and chlorate of potash, and this was the only time they had ever failed me. They required to be loaded carefully, the chemicals mixed with a bone paper-knife in the shade, and the mixture pressed home into the shell with a wooden point, as it was a dangerous compound. A number two shot was then forced into the opening of the bullet's cone, and the lead scraped over the point to make all safe. My "bearer" boy on one occasion blew himself head over heels when getting some of this powder ready for me, though he had often before assisted me and had been most carefully warned against mixing in the heat of the sun, which instruction he had disobeyed, owing to a stupid itch of posing before an admiring public with which he was afflicted. He passed two months in hospital as a consequence, and became more attentive to orders ever after.

I recall one other time when I was personally conducted on tour by a first-class shikar elephant that I continually rode, whose only fault lay in her jealous dislike of a lady companion. Being aware of this little weakness, I asked the mahouts if they considered it quite safe for them all to leave their charges several yards away, whilst they gathered in the stream-bed to drink, as they were then doing.

Before the assurance that all was well had left their lips, my mount turned on her rival, who screamed and bolted. The bump that she got behind from my elephant's head as she rose the bank of the stream-bed added to her terror, and away we went, pursuer and pursued, pitching about in most dangerous ground. Vainly I spoke endearing words to my mount, and broke two rifle-stocks hammering her head. All I could gain was a slight slackening of speed and the time to think, as I should have done at first, that the guj, or driving-iron, must be hanging by its hook in a ring below the howdah ; so, getting out and on to the elephant's neck, I found the iron and belaboured her till she stopped ; but it was an unpleasant ride, and my rifle-butts had to be spliced with string to make them serviceable. The mahouts appeared penitent—*et pour cause*—a little afterwards, but I am afraid there was some, chastened indeed, yet profane laughter round their camp-fire that evening.

Talking of rifles, when I began to shoot I did so with a pinfire twelve-bore, and another rifle of smaller calibre that went up so slowly that I have fired at a black buck facing me, and hit him near the hip-joint : he had had time to turn between the pressing of the trigger and the arrival of the bullet. The pinfire rifle, too, was a bad weapon, and nearly cost me my life from the pins bending down when it was vital to replace cartridges quickly ; but as soon as I was able to arm myself properly, with Henry rifles, all became easy. They were wonderfully accurate, and I "never used any others." A ·577 reduced ·500 "Henry" I found to be most deadly ; no tiger ever showed fight after being fairly hit by the bullet it carried. I remember a right and left in which one tiger was galloping across at the same moment that her companion was coming downhill at me, and I chose the crossing shot first, hitting her a foot or more too far back in my haste. I then changed on to the other with my second barrel and killed him close as he crouched, whilst the first lay rolling on the hillside making no attempt at a charge, being paralysed by the shock.

As to accuracy, I could give a hundred instances, but may say that one day when shooting with Colonel V—— of the Gurkhas, I dropped and bagged three out of four peacock, flying, whilst the fourth left several long tail-feathers floating behind him as he crossed, at about eighty yards, going fast. His

statement of the above fact was met, I am assured, with somewhat indecent levity in the Agra Club.

It is worth remembering, that should you beat out a jungle blank, you can often bring a lot of peafowl and jungle cock that have been running in front of you over the guns if you order your elephants to form line away from the cover, and beat it back to where you take your stand.

Sir Walter Corbet and I had some very pretty shooting by carrying out this manœuvre during one of our pleasant day's shooting in Nepal. The memory, of those days, shared with one of the happiest-natured and most open-hearted of sportsmen, will ever be dear to me.

My wife, who was with us during that trip, ran the camp in all our expeditions, and was an excellent commissariat officer. She had her own elephant and rifle, and without neglecting the above-mentioned more serious duties, was always to the fore out shooting; but once she went through a most unpleasant experience when I was absent from camp, sitting up for tiger. A rogue elephant, perhaps the one I stumbled across on the hill, about which I speak further on, roamed round the camp in spite of torches and bonfires, set all the tame elephants trumpeting, and frightened the natives out of their senses. Had he blundered over the tent ropes, there might have been trouble, so picking up an encumbrance of a baby, she chose

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her time, fled across the open in the moonlight, and took refuge in a small brick building used by the forest guards and travellers, where she passed a feverish night.

Ladies, take warning, and leave Indian snakes, elephants, tigers, and mosquitoes to feed on your lawful prey, man, rather than risk like adventures yourselves.

## CHAPTER VI

### SHOOTING IN RAJPUTANA AND THE DEHRA DOON BY DAY AND BY NIGHT

IN Kerowlee, a small state under the Jeypore agency, nets were freely used by the natives, who would beat a ravine down and spear any game that got mixed up in the meshes. A big boar often blundered through, to their disgust and loss, and I have seen a panther do the same, tearing his way out, when standing with Colonel Talbot and my wife on a hillock close by the nets, to watch their sport. The panther was, not unnaturally, annoyed, and came for our innocent party on the mound; but as we were armed, though he did his best, he was easily stopped before he could reach us.

Panthers, or leopards—to be more correct, I think—are extremely vicious, though as a rule they do little harm to anything but dogs, unless disturbed or wounded. For a meal off dog, they will dare anything. I have had a pet terrier taken off the bed on which I was lying asleep in the open, a hundred yards from my camp, during the hot



weather—when I found it cooler to lie away from the tents. The only notice I had was a sudden weight on the bed, and a yelp; and though I called and roused men to search, there was no trace of dog or panther to be found. Perhaps this was really luck, as my poor pet had been bitten by a mad pariah a day or two before, and he might have died a more lingering and painful death. A dear little fox-terrier, "Paddy," belonging to my wife, we lost in the same manner in Mussoorie. He was never allowed out after dark; but one night he suddenly rushed past the servant into the verandah during dinner, and almost instantly a yelp told us what had happened. Search was, of course, useless, and next morning we found the panther's tracks and his hiding-place amongst the dahlias within a yard or two of our verandah.

There would seem to be no pain attaching to death from seizure by a wild beast. Nature may be more kindly than cruel in reality, however red in tooth and claw she seems to us. I have cared for men several times after they had been caught and mauled by tigers, but in no instance was there any complaint of actual pain. Lord D—— told me that all he was conscious of, when caught by a lion who was biting his ankle, was the inconvenience occasioned by the brute's weight as it lay on him; whilst Captain J——, a lightweight Bombay cavalry man, who had wounded a tiger, was

picked up by one leg and carried at a gallop down a steep hillside, being shaken and dropped almost unhurt when the level was reached. He assured me that the strain on his leg was the only inconvenience he felt, and that he had thrown his arm over the tiger's back to ease the discomfort of his position. That tiger must have missed his vocation as a light-mouthed retriever, and the captain his as an accomplished circus rider !

Wounds are a different matter : these may be severe, and cause pain as they heal. I always carried carbolic acid and oil when alone on a shooting trip after big game, and twice I have had to doctor men wounded by tigers. I washed the wounds first with carbolic and water thoroughly, sewed them up with hair pulled from my horse's tail steeped in carbolic and oil, then sent the patients in to the nearest hospital. One recovered, one died from shock to his system—not from blood-poisoning, though however quickly you dress these wounds they seldom heal at the "first intention."

I have seen others caught by wild beasts, but, save from disobedience of orders, this never happened to them when working for me, as the beaters I employed were warned to climb trees or get clear the moment a shot was fired.

Perhaps I may interpolate a hint with regard to beaters. Though the little weaknesses of our Aryan brethren must be allowed for, as "dustoorie"

—the custom of the country, a “commission” the wise it call—is too frequently levied by the red-coated innocent who serves you so devotedly, some precautions are incumbent on the “sahib” who desires to maintain his reputation with the natives for fair dealing.

Hence I found it a useful check on petty plundering to carry a box of gun wads, one of which was handed to every beater who took part in the day’s work, and the same was redeemed at a stipulated price under my own eyes in the evening.

Concede half a chance, and the fertile brain of a “chuprassie,” or indeed any jack-in-office, can conjure coin out of the pockets or waistbands of the common folk.

I recollect a typical instance of this clever practice, when the Viceroy’s camp was expected to march through a certain district, and orders had been issued in advance to the civilian in charge to collect the requisite carriage on a certain date. His native staff were at once informed, and their zeal became conspicuous. For six weeks every bullock cart that entered the town or cantonments was impounded, temporarily or otherwise, and rupees poured into the pockets of the local police. Any recalcitrant cart-owners who would not propitiate the “tehsildar,” or constables, was held up, none

being permitted to escape till he had paid the uttermost farthing; and it was not until the scandal became too notorious for concealment that the authorities got wind of the paralysing extortion. But the native staff could point to their orders, deny all accusation of blackmail, and appeal to past record in proof of the blameless innocence of their character and service.

Again, I knew a "munshi," head of a native office, who conducted a most artful correspondence with a rajah after he had gathered information that the chief's salute was to be increased by several guns. Men are ruled with baubles—as Napoleon asserted—and the number of guns officially sanctioned for the salute to which a chief is entitled enhances his importance. Orders and medals are child's play in comparison with the grant of an increased salute, and the chiefs were most jealous and eager to obtain such augmented distinction. The "munshi," standing on velvet by reason of inner knowledge, promised that he would influence the "sahib," and that when a payment of several lakhs of rupees had been made him, the chief might rely upon the affair going through. The munshi was eventually found out, but had meanwhile grown fat; and as he was wise in his generation, he may be commended for his astuteness. It was a smart piece of work!

To return to the subject of panthers, I have said that they are vicious ; but animals, like men, vary in character, and you can never count upon the behaviour of any individual beast.

One that had been seen, though unwounded, charged savagely from sheer temper. He had been put up in open country and I was looking for him, and had just reached the bank of a steep nullah, where, as I straddled over a creeper-covered break in the ground to look down into it, he forced his head through the tangle, almost between my legs, and I had barely time to drop the muzzle of my rifle and blow his brains out. He would certainly have caught me had the creepers not held him.

Yet, I have had one turned away from his rush at myself, when I was on my hands and knees forcing my way into thick cover in search of him, by a mere poke in his ribs given as he passed the man with my spare rifle, who was astride a tree trunk. On the other hand again, one day, hearing that a tiger had mauled nine men and women who were scratching the opium pods in a Malwa poppy-field, I seized a rifle and ran to the place. The field, however, appeared to be empty, and I stood alone on the containing bank for some ten minutes on guard watching. When my elephant came up I mounted him, rode in to see if I could find any trace of the tiger, and

had not gone thirty yards before a big panther charged, grunting savagely. I fired as the elephant whipped round, and the brute was clawing at our heels until we stumbled up the bank. When the mahout managed to bring the elephant round, we went back, to find the panther dead and crumpled up against the side of the embankment. He might easily have sneaked away, but preferred charging viciously though unwounded.

Another instance of the same readiness to attack was shown when I was searching for an elusive tigress, and one of the bheels with me declared that he had seen her head appear above the rocky crest that overhung our valley, watching us. We made a long detour, came down from above on to the marked spot, crept up and peeped over, to be instantly charged by an unwounded panther, who sprang up a sheer slope of polished rock straight at us. I hit him within the last few yards as he bounded up, and he went curling and slithering down the smooth slope till he touched level, when he instantly, like Antæus, got a foothold, and with a grunt of rage, came up again, but to repeat his descending antics. After his third rush only did he collapse at the bottom of the slope—three home charges in as many minutes, and the first quite unprovoked!

Panthers must often escape notice from the ease with which they can climb trees and lie

crouched on a branch where few sportsmen dream of looking for them during a beat. I have several times shot them out of trees; and once in the Dehra Doon, when searching the scattered clumps of grass that had remained unburned, to put up hog-deer or cheetul stags, I saw a large panther standing across the naked boughs of a dāk some twenty feet from the ground, watching my elephant's approach, without any thought of concealment. I picked him out, and as he fell there was a commotion in the grass below where hog-deer and cheetul had been harbouring.

I always hoped for a chance of spearing one in the open, and had even dreamt of finding a tiger in the same way, but never got a chance at either. Once only have I seen a tiger on a perfectly bare burnt plain; but being on an elephant, could never overtake the brute, who trotted whenever my well-goaded elephant had shortened the distance between us, and disappeared eventually in thick grass jungle.

This burning of the jungle is done of set purpose by herdsmen in the autumn, as soon as the grass is dry enough to take fire, as a fresh growth of grass soon appears that affords good pasturage.

The coarse, reedy grass is of little alimentary value. I may note that the burnt stems are sufficiently stout to deflect the bullet of a light express, and I have seen this happen several times.



“ I PICKED HIM OUT ”

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TO THE  
ABBOTTS

These fires are, I am assured, not so frequent now as they were in the past, for the Government of India has taken in immense areas during the last thirty years or more, as forest preserves, where in old days the villager roamed undisturbed, lighting fires when and where he pleased ; naturally to the destruction of seedling timber.

I have on more than one occasion been put in some peril by a line of flame roaring down wind behind my line of elephants, which is very upsetting to the nerves of man and beast. Great flecks of flame, the long leaves of the reed, are carried forward by the wind, and the line of fire twenty feet high advances far faster than any elephant can travel. The only chance is to fire the jungle yourself at once, so as to burn a strip in front of you, on which you can take refuge, whilst the fire sweeps on right and left of the burnt safety ground.

It is amusing to watch the birds of various kinds that collect, swirling about in the smoke to feast on the insects turned out of their happy homes by the advancing fire, when you are comfortably enough situated to do so. Of course the jungle folk are alive to what is going on, and they are able to escape. I have never seen any signs of such being caught from being unable to flee ; for most of them the breeding season is well over and the young half-grown.

Small panthers or leopards do not make good

pets. They are usually cross, and even when fairly complacent are pigheaded to perfection. Whilst small bears, on the other hand, are really pleasant companions. I have kept them to play with my fox-terriers, and they never dreamt of using tooth or claw against their friends; though one in particular would hide under the table and clutch at the servants' feet for fun, a practical joke that the more dignified amongst them resented.

Two small cubs that I took, after killing their mother in Central India at the mouth of her den, I presented to the then rajah of Rutlam, a small boy of twelve years old. When I revisited him some six months afterwards, he called for the bears to show me how civilised they had become, and they entered the durbar hand in hand with their keeper, a gorgeously attired Râjput. He sat down solemnly with a small bear on each side of him, and lighting his hubble-bubble pipe, smoked a few whiffs and passed it from one to the other of his debauched charges, who were so eager for their turn that whilst one smoked the other whined and grumbled, and had to be prevented from interfering with his brother.

In that same year, indeed, I entered into my real novitiate as a big-game hunter, for I succeeded in bagging nine tigers and several bears and panthers to my own gun, besides helping to kill thirteen. During that and the following year I learned a good

deal of jungle craft, as I was young and never weary of sport—had I even to ride twenty or thirty miles to a kill, which occasionally happened—for having been supplied with a small guard of Central India Horse, all trained to the game of shikar, I made use of their services to scout the country round, instead of keeping them hanging about camp. They rode off happily in pairs, one remaining on the ground to watch when they had news of a kill, or had discovered fresh tracks, whilst the other posted in to show me the way out.

The jungles of the Aravalli and Vindhya ranges were full of game in those days; the chiefs were unselfish; and sport was obtainable if you worked for it, disregarded distances, and could endure the heat, which was the only drawback. Often I fell into a weasel sleep, overcome by heat and fatigue, but had got so accustomed to do this during a beat that, as a rule, a mere rustle would find me wide awake on my perch, whether it were rock or tree. Once, only, can I recall having missed a chance, when a pair of tigers actually succeeded in slipping by me. I remembered afterwards having heard a rustling that I could not locate in the long rush-grass of the hillside, before I foolishly dozed off again. There is no doubt that they must have passed stealthily above or below me through the grass and reed.

As a rule I carried a knife which contained a

greenwood saw, so that I could noiselessly remove any branch that might impede my view when taking post in a tree. Passing a rope from bough to bough to form a seat, I would hang a stirrup-leather on either side, and, with a small cushion or leather pad on the network of crossed ropes, would remain comfortably astride for hours if need be, whilst it was easy to turn in this convenient saddle and shoot in any direction. This was always far more pleasant than having, as was sometimes the case, to lie on a rock in the sun, when your rifle became so hot that, without gloves on, you could scarcely shoot with it. Such seeming trifles often make the difference between success and failure. I have seen a man stir on his perch, no doubt from being uncomfortably seated, have caught the glint of his rifle-barrel and seen that the tiger, at which I did not fire as he was heading straight, had instantly done the same, for he stopped, looked up, and turned away at right angles from the path he was taking that would have led him directly to the gun that had moved. As a rule, a tiger that is being beaten out slinks along with his head held low, yet his eyes and ears are at their keenest.

You can direct a tiger to a nicety towards any given gun if you know your ground, by stationing a man here and there in a tree on either side of the beat with orders to tap gently once or twice on a bough if he is heading wrong.

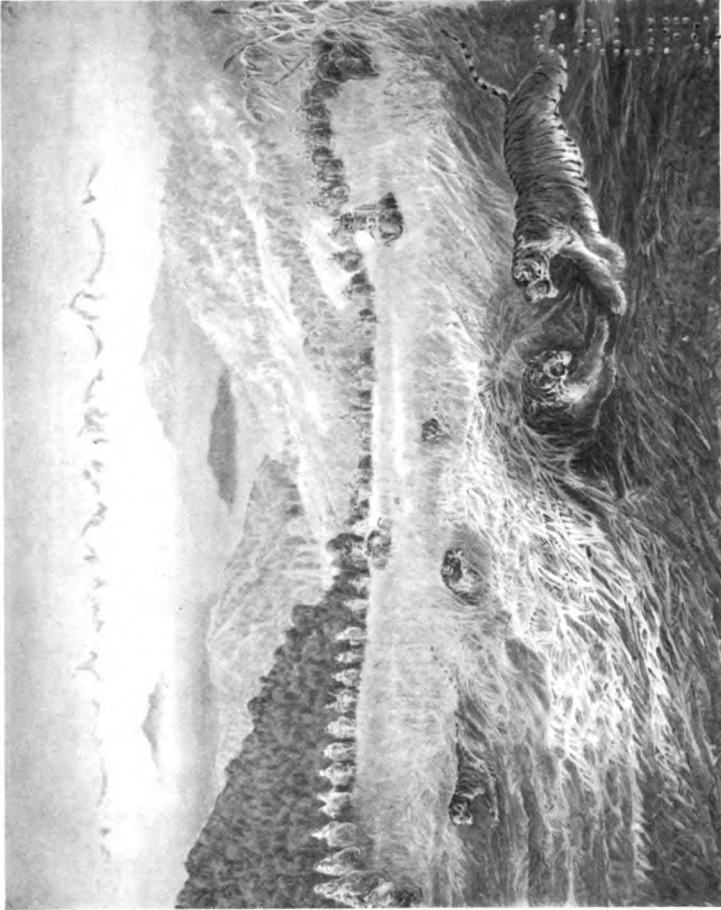
Their sense of smell also is marvellous, and the network of delicate lace in the bones of the nostril shows that this must be the case. It was said by a Central India horseman who had been in at the death of some two hundred tigers, that he had seen one stoop his head, stop, and sniff at a slab of rock whereon another had been shot by himself ten days earlier. There may possibly have been a blood-stain to attract his attention, but it is at any rate curious, and witnesses to the faith the narrator himself had in a tiger's wonderful powers of smell. That scent does hold, even under a burning Eastern sun, is undeniable. I have myself seen a sambar stag, with head erect and antlers thrown back, stalking through the jungle on a hillside where I had passed a good two hours earlier in the hottest weather—yet as he crossed my track his nose came down, he started as if shot, and was back through the line of beaters in a moment, in spite of their yells and the fire of advancing rifles.

It is not usual to have any firing in the line of beaters, whose noisy cries are supplemented by the banging of tomtoms or native drums, but I made use of it on that particular occasion to encourage the men, who had to bring up a very thick and dangerous ravine.

On another occasion, however, many years afterwards, I utilised the blank fire of a whole regiment with great effect, turning five tigers out of a

swamp into the open, where they were all surrounded, and fell within a ring of elephants as a royal sacrifice to the Duke of Clarence. Whilst on another yet, hearing a cheetul bark in a heavy reed patch, I got into a tree with my rifle, and sent the three elephants I had with me to the other side, giving orders to my men to fire a charge or two from a shot-gun as they came towards me. This again had the desired effect, and brought the tiger out.

All wild animals move noiselessly, or nearly so, and all seem instinctively to be conscious of, and keenly alive to, any movement near them. The man or the elephant that moves when a beast is on foot and on the *qui vive*, loses his or his rider's chance invariably, and sends the game to another gun. This is a rule that knows no exception: whilst in still hunting, sitting up at night, and so on, any movement is fatal. I lost a tiger one night from sheer anxiety to look at him as he stood a few yards beneath me, ready to kill a young buffalo that was tethered in the moonlit river-bed ten yards off. Foolishly leaning forward, I caused the "machân" on which I was seated to creak ever so little; but slight as was the noise, two heavy bounds behind me let me know the result and the penalty I had paid for my mistimed curiosity. The tiger never showed that night, though I waited patiently till dawn, watching in moonlight that turned the sand of the river-bed to silver.



“ WITHIN A RING OF ELEPHANTS.”

[To face page 80.]



TO VIND  
ABSORBIAO

Absolute immobility is the golden rule, and I had another more satisfactory proof of this when sitting up for a well-known tiger that used to come down from the hills every night at Kans Rao in the Dehra Doon, by one or other of the many roads he knew so well. I had chosen a tree below a high bank under the hillside, whence a nullah broadened into the valley; had tied my "machân" before sundown, and amused myself by watching deer and flights of paroquets as they homed, till the hush of the evening fell, as it falls suddenly and unmistakably like the closing of a lid, at, as it were, a given signal over the jungle—an emphasis of silence. From that moment I stirred neither hand nor foot, but sat with every sense alert. An hour passed, two hours perhaps, and the full moon rose behind the hill, leaving me in shadow, but lighting one-half of the nullah sand to silver brilliance. Then I heard the slight click of a pebble on the bank above me—so slight indeed the tinkle that I doubted my own ears, yet listened intently for any further sound to confirm their truth. None came; a good quarter of an hour must have gone by, and then of a sudden, not thirty yards from me, I saw the tiger I had waited for scratching the sand like a cat in front of me. He had come down stealthily by some deer track from the bank above, but had watched, as I had watched, no doubt from the time I heard the click of the pebble, until

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convinced that the coast was clear and the dominion of the night his own. Twice I raised my rifle slowly, but each time I lost sight of him—though the bead I used was but a tiny ivory dot—for he was standing on the near side of the nullah that still remained in shadow, and thus reduced to his true proportion for the distance, and himself casting no shadow, he looked like a small cardboard toy in the luminous shade, and it was only by leaning back and aligning his form between some cross twigs that I could feel certain of hitting him. This course I took, and touched the trigger, when, after the flash, which dazzled me for a moment, I saw him lying as though gazing at me with his head on his paws. I waited for the charge. None came, and his immobility began to get on my nerves. I coughed—still no motion. Then I spoke—but he never moved. Then I did, and shook the boughs, but he gave no sign, and I knew that he was dead. So, lighting a pipe, I went to sleep, and in the morning found that my express bullet had caught him in the neck, when death must have been instantaneous.

Immobility, I repeat, is the one great secret of success in still hunting—yet not the immobility that comes from sleepiness, and want of attention. I put up a friend once to watch in my place, as a great favour, I considered, and he allowed the tiger to pass underneath him in broad moonlight, and

was astonished when I pointed out the big pad marks in the dust on going to bring him into camp the next morning.

I may, perhaps, mention that the most comfortable “machân” you can use, and one that is noiseless should you move, is a small native bed placed feet upwards across the boughs. These beds are made of string, and you can pass a rope round the legs and put your blankets beside you in case of cold. They will not creak at the joints if you oil them, should you need to stir during your vigil; and when you have had your shot or have become tired of watching, you can go to sleep safely and in comfort. When young at the game, or making an impromptu “machân,” which I did sometimes, it was always necessary to pass a rope round my body, for fear of being surprised by sleep and tumbling down.

During a beat, as a rule, wild things do not look up, yet the least motion catches the eye of an animal who may be quietly watching, ere making up his mind to go forward, though his presence is not even suspected. Peacock alone will find you, however well concealed and motionless you may be; their sight never fails, and though they will pass quietly without giving you away if you do not stir, yet their eyes have met yours, and you know it.

Another good instance of the value of sitting still may be worth mentioning. When returning

through a half-burnt jungle at Christmas-time in the Dehra Doon, with three elephants, one early afternoon, we left a stretch of grass to cross a hundred yards or more of black, fire-licked ground, and on nearing the tree-studded grass beyond, there was a rush in front and a tiger's head appeared over the edge watching us. I raised my rifle and fired, a little too quickly, no doubt, for on reaching the place there was no tiger visible, but some thirty yards beyond we came upon the freshly killed body of a pig. Whilst examining the kill, we heard the tiger scolding us, and set the elephants going in the direction whence he had spoken, in the hope of getting a sight of him. When we stopped, having beaten the horse-shoe of standing grass jungle round to our original starting-place fruitlessly, the tiger spoke again from the vicinity of the kill. I then and there crossed the burnt strip a second time, again to be scolded from a distance; so climbed from off my elephant into a tree that was close to the dead pig, and sat astride a bough with my back against the trunk, ordering the elephants to return again across the burnt ground. They took up their position whence we had come, and again the tiger scolded them, so I motioned them away. They had scarcely moved a few hundred yards, when the tiger trotted out of the jungle at the spot whence we had twice crossed, and came along our tracks after turning

her head and growling again at the elephants in the open. She then stopped under a semul tree, and purred like a cat, rubbing herself—for it was a young tigress—with arching back against the trunk. Then, standing not forty yards from me, she deliberately, as it seemed, looked me up and down, whilst I half-closed my eyes and sat like a statue leaning against the tree. Being satisfied, apparently, that there was no danger, her head went down and she trotted up to my tree, when I could feel her rub against the bole; after which she leisurely walked out, heading for the kill, and never felt the shot which caught her in the back of the neck and stretched her motionless, with her tongue clipped in her teeth, beside her quarry. I have never known another instance of a tiger deliberately ordering elephants away: she must have been very hungry and very fearless.

A well-grown and very beautiful tigress, with an almost golden, cold-weather pelt, was a trophy worth sitting still to secure.

Though never was such voluntary assistance offered again, yet I remember another chance presented by a tiger who spent a winter night calling in vain for his mate. We had many elephants in camp—twenty or more—but they would have been useless at night. As the jungle was very heavy and close to the hills, and as it would have been selfish to risk a moonlight

adventure by moving quietly on the voice with one elephant—which, had I been alone in camp would have been my obvious course—I waited for the morning, and then stationed three guns to guard the most likely spots on a sandy stream-bed, which the tiger would of necessity cross to gain the hills and safety. After doing this, I took the elephants noiselessly round him in single file for a couple of miles; then formed line and brought up the beat. So lucky was the direction taken towards his serenade ground that, when nearing it, the tall grass moved, and the tiger came with a lover's eager rush towards my own elephant; and, when he stopped, I saw his eye looking up within a few yards of me. The grass being some ten to twelve feet high I could see nothing more, so my only chance was to fire at this eye, which I instantly did. I must have grazed his head somewhere, for he spoke loudly and dashed across in front and to the right of my mount, blundering through the dry wood of some fallen trees, which he smashed continuously in his course. In vain I shouted and waved the elephants on the right forward to cut him off. The men on that flank were Mahometans, not my own trained lot of Nepalese, and they stood foolish or funking. The tiger was never seen again. A doctor man whom I had stationed to guard one of the crossing places had left his post vacant and sought another "on his

own," that he imagined would give him a better chance. So the tiger passed his unguarded station in the open and was lost in the heavy forest beyond. It was an unpardonable sin against jungle etiquette, and the man richly deserved to lose what must have been a fine trophy; for the waves of grass that followed the tiger's headlong rush after I had fired might have been caused by a buffalo.

Though seldom betrayed by themselves, the other jungle folk do not love the tiger, and his many enemies are only too ready to give him away. Monkeys will scold as he passes, and even follow, shaking the boughs and chattering torrents of bad language where they can safely do so. Birds of many kinds scold, precede, or follow him as he moves. Twice I have had warning of his approach by the low flight of an eagle along the cliffs in the Vindhya range. The spotted deer bark at him, and I have more than once been helped to a shot by this habit of theirs.

The siah, a jackal, erroneously supposed to be the tiger's *fidus achates*, utters a peculiarly weird note in the night when he walks abroad; but I fancy that this particular cry is common to all jackal, and is not the special prerogative of one individual-elect, told off by nature to attend his majesty, as the natives assert. A jackal will—as will a monkey or a bird—no doubt scold at any



form of cat or other animal whom he fears or dislikes.

It is amusing to watch these clever folk at work over a tiger kill. This they will not approach until satisfied that the rightful owner is nowhere near, and when they do so, there is always one or more told off on guard, trotting up and down sniffing and listening. They play the game amongst themselves fairly enough, relieving the sentries constantly—I have watched them for hours doing this. No doubt many smaller animals get some of the crumbs of the repast also. I have myself seen a big lizard grunting and worrying at a fairly fresh kill, taking his chance of becoming a *hors-d'œuvre*, no doubt; for a tiger will not disdain even a fat frog occasionally, though he probably eats them more in playful mood than from any hope of staying his hunger in grave earnest with such trifling delicacies.

The tiger, as I have said, has few friends among the jungle folk—oddly enough, man alone, who is often unwilling to mention him by name, either from fear or superstition, and who prefers in some places to allude to his lordship as a “jackal”—is ever ready to shield him and even to deny his presence. There are many reasons for this—in some cases even there is a curious affection manifested for a well-known and popular animal. I have heard of a small boy-herdsman who cried at

the death of one such with whom he had quite a bowing acquaintance from having frequently thrown stones at him when bringing the cows home in the evening; and who, he said, had never done anyone any harm.

I have also in my young days, before my men had gained confidence in me, found it very difficult to get reliable information when I well knew tiger to be present; and I have even heard one charge amongst buffalo, when out on an elephant walking the jungle quietly—always a fascinating form of sport to me—and on going up to the two herdsmen who had seated themselves safely in the branches of a fallen tree, and asking whether they had seen the tiger, was told that they had neither seen nor heard of any. On walking my elephant in and out of the korindah bushes between where they sat and their buffaloes, I saw a very fine one crossing my front, his eyes fixed on my elephant's legs. He went up some six feet from the ground in answer to my shot, and lay where he fell.

It is a curious fact that a beast shot through the heart, when travelling at any pace, will keep on for some distance as if untouched, whilst, taken at a stand, he will usually give a tremendous bound upwards to fall stone dead. Talking of this reminds me that I have actually seen a dead tiger fall in the position often depicted in native drawings, at which I had, in my ignorance, made

merry; that is, on his back with all four legs pointing to the sky!

I was dozing, as usual, one day in Central India when the beat was coming on, but aroused by some slight sound, I glanced at the slope of the hill above me. There I saw a tigress on the jungle path standing sideways, motionless, but with her eyes fixed on me. Slowly I turned, and, moving my rifle-barrel round, fired at her heart, when she rose high and straight into the air, coming down dead to lie as she fell, exactly in the attitude above mentioned, with four white legs pointing upwards.

And, talking of white legs, I lost a chance, lost it through a double carelessness, one day in Nepal.

We had had a kill, and my wife, my constant shooting companion, and a friend, had beaten the jungle for the tiger in the morning, and drawn blank—probably just missing the one spot where he had lain up—and having gone further afield, returned by the kill towards evening, on chance, feeling sure that we had walked over him. Seeing that the kill had not been touched, I determined to sit up for an hour or so; and telling a mahout on one of the pad elephants to wait half a mile away until he heard a shot, or until it became pitch dark, for there was no moon, I took my seat in a tree about forty yards from the kill that lay in the open.

With the fall of night I recognised mistake number one. I should have had the carcase dragged closer to me, for it soon became indistinguishable from the grass around, and finally all grew black. As I was doubting whether or no to fire a signal shot, I heard a sound and saw the white thighs of the bullock tossed into the air again and again. I aimed slightly above them, and fired—mistake number two: had I fired low and behind them, I might have scored, for a tiger dines off the buttocks. The elephant came up, but no tiger was to be found.

When shooting at night, it is well to be warmly wrapped, as the cold experienced, in Northern India at any rate, is often severe; and even in Central India and Rajputana the temperature falls considerably, making it necessary to provide against a chill and consequent fever.

I have made my perch of rope, taken a blanket from the howdah, and sat all night dinnerless, when I have come across a nullah riddled with tiger pugs, on the off-chance of a shot—to wake in the morning before sunrise and find every hair of my impromptu covering standing stiff and white with hoar frost.

Further, I always carried a blanket in my howdah as a protection against bees, that are apt to annoy anyone who disturbs their clusters: these jungle pests building close to the ground

in some places, when, should your elephant brush against root or tree to annoy them, they swarm out to the attack, and pursue with savage energy and determination. One old gentleman whom I knew of, in vain endeavoured to protect himself on such an occasion by seizing his mahawat's blanket, who held on to it for his life, shouting repeatedly, "kabhi nahin!" "never, never!" when his irate master ordered him to surrender it. The scene must have been amusing.

## CHAPTER VII

### BEES, BEARS, AND MAN-EATERS

ONCE my camp was disorganised and routed for half a day by bees in Central India. I had noticed that the tamarind trees beneath which the tents had been pitched were draped with many hanging bunches, and on riding up warned my people not to light a fire beneath them. Yet I had scarcely "tubbed" before a tumult in the camp let me know that something was wrong, and my "bearer," pursued by flights of stinging assailants, sought shelter behind the "chicks" of my tent door, whilst the rest of the camp passed in headlong and profane flight. My horses, badly stung, snapping halter and heel ropes, or drawing their pegs, stampeded, and were not recovered till the evening, having galloped away to the nearest water. The rout was complete, and I passed the morning a prisoner behind the "chicks" of my tent, breakfastless.

In the beautiful marble rocks that rise a glistening wall on either side of the translucent

green of the Nerbudda, bees home in countless hordes, and woe betide the wretch who dare fire a shot in their vicinity.

Cool and lovely the polished bastions rise, sheer from out the unfathomed depths that race in their straitened channel below, to furnish an added splendour to the blue skies of day, or to emphasise the dreamy repose of the purple night.

Kipling, in one of his beautiful fairy tales of the jungle, may well have drawn inspiration from this wondrous place.

Legend asserts that many lives have here been lost by arousing the fury of the swarming myriads. Two British officers are said to have gone down battling for their lives, whilst swimming and diving in vain endeavour to elude the pertinacity of these spiteful myrmidons of death. An empty boat swept down by the current alone bore witness to the cruel fate that overtook the doomed men beneath these fair marble walls that held out no hope of refuge, and smiled but to mock their agony.

I have noted somewhere that every beast, like every man, has his own individual character. Some tigers will never revisit a kill; some will insist upon lying near it; some will come to it by day boldly; some by night cunningly and cautiously. I recall having been followed for a long way one bright moonlight night in Central India by a tiger

whose kill I had become tired of watching. I was out with a young native, a petty chief, and we had agreed to sit up together, which we did till the full moon—the “camphor shedding” glory of Eastern poetry that bathes the world in silver—turned the night into day. I was weary and sleepy, and thinking there remained no chance of the tiger’s return till dawn, I bade my friend good-night and set off on foot for camp, some mile and a half away. Striking an open road within a few hundred yards of the kill, I walked briskly towards the tents, but several times, hearing a rustle behind me, turned involuntarily and stood facing the jungle. I saw nothing, however, and until the next day when my friend came into camp had no idea that I had been followed. He then told me that a tiger had come round towards the kill, but on passing my track had taken it up and trotted away after me. He had not dared to fire. Perhaps it was better so, though a shot in the air would have put me on my guard. This was almost done for me, however, by that instinct of danger that attends both man and beast, apparently, in the jungle; for even when there is nothing appreciable to the senses, a form of subliminal consciousness beyond the ken of our philosophy, would seem to be on guard to warn or direct when occasion arises.

Yet an unseen presence is not always detected. A bheel with whom I was friendly once vol-



unteered to show me a tiger at home. He took me to a flat rock below which was evidently a cave, for when he threw a big stone into a hole beside us, a tiger went out a few yards beneath our feet with a "houff" and a bound that carried him out of shot in the bush below, before I could get on to him. I was young then, and had not understood the immediate proximity of the brute. My friend laughed, and said: "Come another time; he will not come back for a few days now!" Evidently they were on visiting terms!

Near that same ground, along the line of hills which in those days held many tigers and much other game, I had ridden up to a village on the cliff where the sheer and slippery rock made riding difficult, to turn a horse impossible—and had interviewed the head-man, who with all his friends solemnly asserted that there was not a tiger in the district—yet on rejoining my camp-followers on the march I noticed vultures wheeling about a mile off, over the first low range from which I had just descended. Dismounting, I climbed it again on foot, and made out with my glasses beneath the circling birds something that looked very like a kill; so men were sent back to turn out the village and to organise a small beat, whilst I went ahead and took up my position astride of a tree bough. As the beat came up, tigers were seen on the move. One had passed through heavy jungle, where I

could not see him to get a shot, and another had already nearly done the same to the right of me when I heard her. Screwing round as best I could I risked a shot, only to see her leap forward apparently unharmed. When my tracker and elephants came up, I went to examine the place for the splash of the bullet on the open ground, and whilst so doing the tracker called out that she was hit. I went up to find him examining the marks where she had scored the ground with her claws in acknowledgment of the shot, and as we followed her up we were charged almost at once. She must have had cubs, and was probably anxious to rejoin them, for, though wounded, she never came right home, which she could have done, for when I pulled the trigger my rifle did not answer. Thus for the second time was I caught by the slipping of a safety bolt. In two bounds she was away again, and having discovered my blunder I followed and killed her; but we could not find the well-grown cubs. I say well-grown, as they had been seen.

Accompanying my camp on their march were several Rajput thakoors—gentlemen who had been told off by the chief to look after me. They rode along the plain beneath whilst I hunted the hill-side next day.

A bheel or two were with me, one of whom carried a spare rifle, and as we were moving quietly

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along a jungle path a sambur stag sprang up close in front of us and galloped away. I raked him from behind, and ran forward to a turn in the track so as to put in the second barrel; when with a "houff" a tiger appeared on the path, coming straight at me. I looked round to see my gun-bearer in full retreat, then knelt and waited. There was a dip in the ground a few yards from me, and I meant firing my only shot when the tiger rose the declivity. Seconds passed, and I stood up, just too late—he was disappearing down the shallow depression of a dry watercourse. No doubt I had disturbed his stalk at the sambur—else the latter would scarcely have let me kick him up as it were—but his heart had failed him in the charge when he saw that I awaited him. The thakurs after this made it very uncomfortable for the bheels who had bolted, for they had watched the whole incident as they rode parallel to me under the hill.

I saw another curious sight or two whilst hunting this range. One morning as I was expecting a tiger to come forward, a barking deer trotted up the open in front of me, but kept halting and looking back. Then he made a sudden bound, still with averted head, struck the top of a burnt tree-stump, and took a toss head over heels. This lost me my shot, for as he fell a tiger's head appeared for an instant over a bank on my left,

and disappeared as instantly. No doubt he changed his course on seeing the deer roll over.

Another unusual display was given me by a colony of kites and vultures, who had made their nests on the ledges of a cliff that stood up sheer on my left front as I lay on a rock in the sun hoping for a shot at big game. These were being worried out of their senses by the young of a troop of langoor monkeys, who, hunting in pairs, were endeavouring to rob the vultures' nests of eggs or young. The elders of the flock were seated above, sanctimoniously searching for fleas or examining the landscape, apparently regardless of the pranks of their unregenerate offspring below. These were occasionally well buffeted by a lucky wing-stroke, but in spite of punishment the game proceeded. One young one would put his head up the shelf on one side of the kite, and another on the opposite side, reaching out alternately a furtive paw and making grabs when they saw a chance. I did not see any nest actually plundered, but I did see several small monkeys looking very disconsolate for a time after getting a sound box on the ear; and I had to move on without witnessing the end of the play. Had I fired a shot and disturbed the vultures, the baby monkeys would no doubt have had a better chance.

Nature is chary of practical jokes, though her children have a grim sense of humour occasionally.

She would, however, seem desirous of holding up one family to ridicule, as if to reflect on man's self-appreciation—and she plays it particularly low down on the gorgeous imperial-nosed mandril—else her humour tends to show more in the form of grim cruelty than in grotesqueness.

Bears were plentiful in the days I speak of. I have seen three march in single file up a path by the tree on which I was posted, when I amused myself by causing them to halt and face about together, as if by word of command, which they did continually on my scraping my foot lightly against a bough. Sloth bears are very fond of the flowers of the mhowa, and these trees were plentiful in the district. They are not ferocious, and seldom do harm, though a she-bear will fight for her cubs, or attack when wantonly disturbed and frightened. I had, indeed, one man injured by a bear during a beat, but it was, as usual, from disobeying the order to climb tree or rock when a shot was fired. A friend with me had fired on this occasion, and a vainglorious native, desiring to show off, had pursued bruin armed with a hatchet—but when the bear turned on him he forgot his courage and dropped his arm instead of striking—he then got a proper mauling, and he had not stolen it.

I have killed them in many places, but have seen far more than I have killed, as you would

never fire at one unless there were no hope of better game. At Murree in the Punjab, I have hunted them with dogs, and once brought a big fellow to bay in a cavern under the rocks. Being only a boy then, I kept up with the pack pretty well, and mounted the flat rock under which the bear had sheltered. The dogs drew him once, and I pulled the trigger at his big head as he stood up a yard or two below me. I had forgotten that the safety bolts were forward, and pulled in vain. The bear saw me and went back, and nothing would draw him a second time. Being young and excitable, I wanted to crawl in after him; but a brother officer who had come up, not only refused to join in, but insisted that I should not risk such a foolhardy performance in the dark, and so we never got him out.

On another occasion, however, I drew one from a cave when looking for a wounded tiger, that continued to give us the slip, though my gun-bearer, a splendid "bheelala," who feared nothing and had the quick ears and eyes of a jungle beast, ran with me to every holloa from our scattered bheels, who were perched on trees here and there in the jungle. At a call from the hill above, we went up to the beater who, from his perch on a cliff that overhung the cavern, pointed out a tiger's "pug" leading into the smaller of two entrances, and said that there had been much noise inside. I knelt

down with my rifle-barrel on a rock that covered this entrance, and bade him stir up the cavern mouth with his long bamboo spear. This he did, climbing down the face of the rock, and holding on to a stout creeper. Presently he drew my attention with a shout of "sahib," and looking round I saw a she-bear standing upright in front of the larger entrance, ready to charge ; so I turned my rifle on the horse-shoe under her throat, and she pitched forward, to roll head over heels like a rabbit down the steep hillside until she pulled up with a squelch against a big rock on which three natives were dancing with terror. After that we stirred the cave well, but no tiger appeared, and hearing young voices complaining within, we entered the opening : I covering my man whilst he drew out the two cubs. These were they that I presented to the little Rajah, and who were taught some of the vices of civilisation as already related.

The tigress, for such it proved to be, I killed ten days afterwards, a good twenty miles away. Perhaps the story is worth telling from the beginning. I had to beat a very bad place, and the villagers, who knew that there were several tigers there, refused to face it without elephants or guns to protect them. These I had not with me at the time, so bethought me of making use of a Parsee political officer, who had been furnished with a guard from the men of the Mhairwarra

Battalion to protect his camp and minister to his importance. With the guile of the serpent I sent him a honeyed note, desiring the pleasure of his acquaintance and company, offering to show him sport, and suggesting at the same time that his men might bring their rifles and assist in controlling the beaters. He answered politely that he would be glad to come and visit me, but demurred at the proposed expenditure of Government ammunition, for any waste of which he was liable to be called to account; and said, moreover, that he was not interested in sport.

His visit, however, decided all that, and allayed his qualms.

I accepted the grave responsibility of wasting ammunition, and having removed the ball from their cartridges ordered the men to advance in line with the beat, firing occasionally.

Then the little political tripped along with me in his patent leather shoes and loose white breeches.

I took him safely by the hill-crest clear of the jungle for a mile or two, and conducting him down the slope chose him a safe perch, into which indeed I had to assist him, as his efforts to climb up the tree-trunk were unavailing, partly from nervous apprehension, and partly by reason of his slippery shoes; then going back I chose a tree for myself some fifty yards above him, with an open space of



light grass in front, and so slept. Presently a shot or two fired somewhat close roused me to attention, when before long a delicate frou-frou like the sweep of a silk dress caught my ear. Search where I would, however, nothing was to be seen until I looked downwards—there stood two tigers within ten yards of my feet, one sideways with head turned towards my Parsee friend, and one directly facing me. I took the right and left instantly, and the first tiger never moved again, whilst the second, plunging and fighting the air, went over the fall of the hill towards my well-dressed companion. I shouted to him to fire, but there was neither shot nor answer to my repeated calls. So getting down, I went to his tree, and asked where the tiger was. He declared he had never seen one, and was evidently really frightened. I glanced at the jungle path that wound up from his tree to where the tigers had appeared in front of my own, and there, obvious enough, lay the double marks of their pads in the dust. To these I pointed, when he was obliged to confess that he had seen *them*, but said in excuse, “I did not fire, because I was afraid they would be angry!” He then told me that he was very tired and wished to go home, so I escorted him safely up the hill, and sent him back in charge of his army; then began the long and useless pursuit of tiger number two, that had turned somersaults over the hill; and though she was viewed several times, I could never

get to the place in time for a shot. The delay at the bear's cave, of which I have spoken above, brought us to the dusk of evening, and I gave her up for that night, and spent the following day conducting an equally vain search. Not even a tiger, however, can see "beyond the Gods and Fate," and she was destined to fall to my rifle ten days later. I was then encamped at the Mokundurrah Pass, or near it, and being tired after a day's marching and shooting, was drinking tea by my tent door, when a goatherd came up to say that a tiger had just killed one of his goats. Being young, I flouted him—told him that tigers did not kill goats, and that I would not move to go after a panther. He assured me that it was a real tiger, and accepted my offer of ten rupees if it were, and a licking if he had deceived me! Such is youth!

He took me to a strip of very light jungle that lay along the bank of a watercourse, studded here and there with pollarded trees, and assured me that the tiger had only just killed, and was lying up in the thicket. So I got on to my pad elephant, and keeping well away from the cover for some half-mile or so, re-entered the jungle, put my leather cushion on one of the stumpy trees, and sent the elephant back to bring up the small bunch of beaters that had been hurriedly collected. The noise had scarce begun when I saw a tigress going across the open, outside the jungle, and I fired. In

answer to the shot, she began throwing herself about and turning somersaults, and I foolishly let off my second barrel as she was thus engaged. This might have been a fatal mistake, for she pulled herself together and came straight down on the smoke. I had stupidly picked up a twelve-bore pinfire rifle instead of my small express, and as I tried hurriedly to withdraw the empty cases, the pins bent down and I found myself disarmed and helpless. It was a matter of seconds. I felt that if she saw me all was up, so sat still with the rifle across my knees, letting her pass at a gallop almost under my feet. The shikari shouted to me again and again, but I would neither move nor call, and he eventually came up with the elephant, on to which I thankfully climbed, replaced my cartridges, and set him going on the line of the tigress. We found her stone dead, not twenty yards from my perch, with her teeth buried in a detached tree-root, and so powerfully clenched were they that we had to prise her jaws open with the rifle-barrel. When skinning her, my men called my attention to a pink mark at the base of her throat about the size of a crown-piece, which on examination proved to be a lately healed wound; and a further search produced the base of an express bullet bedded in the muscles against the big bone of the shoulder-joint, whilst splashes of copper and fragments of lead were taken out as



"PASSED AT A GALLOP ALMOST UNDER MY FEET."

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far down as her wrist. It was undoubtedly the tigress that I had wounded when facing me ten days previously. Her rudimentary collar-bones adorned my writing-table for years, in memory of her. These bones are curious little survivals from some far-distant progenitor, I suppose, as the race has discarded the collar-bone, it being now presumably an unfashionable or useless encumbrance.

I have only heard of one other escape under equally awkward circumstances, where an officer of the Central India Horse, being installed on a leather cushion that he had spread on the top of a korindah bush, was surprised by the growling of a wounded tiger that had crept from behind him into the hollow of the shrub beneath, happily without seeing or scenting him, and there died almost between his legs, whilst he sat still, devoutly praying to be rescued.

The Central India Horse were all sportsmen in the days of which I speak, and the names of Buller, Gerard, and Neil are all dear to me. We shared many happy hours and much sport from time to time.

I recall one day especially, when I had joined Neil to hunt up a tiger that had been killing men freely. Neil had posted the guns, a shot had been fired some little way from me, and I had waited till I saw him on an elephant, halted and talking to

a group of beaters on a mound in the open, across the light scrub in the valley. Then I got down and went over to him, and a man was at once caught and shaken in the light bush through which I had just passed. I found that Neil had gone forward to guard the beaters, and to look out for the tiger that had been missed by one of the guns above me in the beat. There was nothing in the light scrub to hide a mouse apparently, and we searched every bush and every hole, but never found the cunning brute. The natives, of course, said that he was one of Shiva's horses, that he was therefore bullet-proof, and that no one could ever kill him. I have no doubt he met his fate eventually, but not for some time afterwards, or I should have heard of it.

A tiger's powers of concealment are quite remarkable: when crouching, the head alone is visible, if you are on a level with him, and I have known one creep into a hole not much larger than a good-sized rabbit-burrow.

I had laid myself out to kill this wary animal, who infested a group of villages in Central India, where the country was singularly free from jungle. He had been located in a broad, dry stream-bed, and I was lying with my bheelala gun-bearer on a ledge of rock which commanded the bed, watching. My man nudged me gently as the beat came near, but I could see nothing in the light bush that

moved—then he whispered: “Look! there is his head, fire!” Still I could not see him, but as I turned mine slightly in the direction indicated, a flash of yellow went through the scrub about fifty yards off, and he was back with a roar through the beat. Curiously enough, he knocked over two small boys with his tail in passing, but did no further harm to anyone, and some of the beaters followed him up the low bank, and saw him enter a hole in the open ground, where there was no blade of cover, and that was not large enough—apparently—to permit the passage of a tiger’s head, yet that he was inside and that they had seen him enter was indubitable. I knelt down and fired two twelve-bore shells into this hole, keeping a second rifle handy in case he showed, but there was no response, not even a growl. Then I made the villagers bring a large stone, which I forced into the entrance, hammering others into the ground to prevent its dislodgment, thus “stopping” the earth, as I thought, most effectually; and sent a horseman in to the Central India Horse mess, some thirty miles off, to say how matters stood, and invite a friend to join me and bring some squibs with him. I waited all the next day, the beast still safely prisoned, but on receiving a letter telling me that my friend was away, I went alone the following morning to see what I could do. I found that a passage had been forced from the inside, during



the second night of his imprisonment, the stones partially displaced and loosened being smeared with blood and hair, but the tiger had squeezed out somehow. We were unable to trace him, and though I remained for some days in the neighbourhood, I could get no further news of him. I fancy that he must have been wounded and have shifted his quarters—for a time at any rate. He had killed several people, and was the terror of the whole district, but was evidently a cowardly brute, or he would have charged out when I fired shells into his hiding-place.

Another not far off behaved very differently, for I fired at him as he was crossing fifty yards to my left, waddling rather than walking away from the tomtoms behind him. He was very fat and heavy, and I shot too far forward, carrying away his nostrils as I afterwards ascertained. He went round with a "whoof," but saw me move to watch him as he headed back, I am certain. I knew that the beaters would go up trees, so waited quietly, and very shortly saw him coming straight on with his head slightly raised, peering from side to side, evidently seeking me. I sat motionless till he was quite close, and he saw me too late, at the moment my rifle went up : but he had meant to find me.

I can give another instance of being "wanted," when, having placed a native as a stop above me on the hillside, I saw a tiger going directly to him,

stand, and crouch—the man had fallen asleep in his tree and was probably snoring. It was a long shot, and with underwood in the way, but the man was near the ground and I had to fire quickly. I cannot say whether I touched or missed, but the tiger seemed to come down that steep hillside in three or four wild bounds, passing within a few yards of me, my second barrel missing clean. Had I been on foot, no shooting could have saved me. It was a revelation of power, activity, and fury that I had had no conception of till that day, nor have I ever seen any such charge since. I could not find him again, and think that he must have travelled far.

This, in the hot weather, a tiger hates to do, for the soft pads of his paw become heated and blistered even to blood-letting when he has to cross the burning ground and hot stones; and he resents being driven from cool cover.

One very fat, cunning old tiger gave me the slip by passing through the outskirts of a village in broad daylight when beaten out. I ascertained the path he had taken, and on hearing that my friend Gerard was to beat over the same district shortly, I wrote and told him how the tiger eluded the guns. It was not for the first time that he had played this trick.

Gerard took his own station on the roof of a small house or tower covering the path he had taken,

and killed him. Apparently he had learnt the game, and merely passed through the village outskirts and regained the jungle in rear of the beaters, whom he probably considered a nuisance as disturbers of the peace, who had indeed to be humoured at stated intervals, but avoided quietly with as little travelling in the heat as was compatible with the circumstances.

I think that the tiger's natural birthplace must have been in temperate northern lands, and that he must have spread southwards, driven down by climatic changes, want of food, etc. He is a far larger and finer animal in Manchuria, North China, Central Asia, etc., than he is in India, and I think he grows smaller the further he goes south—but that is a mere theory.

I have elsewhere insisted that a law—the necessity of silent movement—on the observance of which the safety of all the jungle folk depends, has been inculcated by nature; and will give an instance of self-betrayal brought about by an unintentional departure from this rule.

The beaters had driven a hill nullah almost to its entrance into the mhowa-covered plain, on a day when my shikari, for once against my usual custom, had been allowed to remain beside me on a tree, as there was no other safe position for him to occupy. (A native, even when trained

not to move, will often be unable to suppress a cough, from excitement. Hence it is better to be alone.) He whispered that the tiger was moving down, but I could not see him, and he passed under shelter of the jungle growth towards the tree-dotted plain ahead. I told my man to mark his direction, and when the three elephants that were with the beat came up, we hunted his line. Travelling fifty yards apart, we moved along for about a mile, when I heard away to our left rear the crack of a dry stick. Instantly signalling to my men, I wheeled the line of elephants, and beat slowly back towards where I had located the sound, and my elephant stopped short as my mahout whispered, "There he stands." I could see nothing, and he whispered again, "Look over the black tree." There, over the top of a burnt stump, I saw the tiger's head as he stood with his eyes fixed upon us, no doubt preparing to charge. The big head disappeared to my shot, and we found him dead in his tracks. On examination we ascertained that he was lame from an old wound in the hock, whence we extracted a small misshapen bullet, probably from the gun of a native shikari. The wound, though healed, had left him with the stiff joint which no doubt proved the cause of his undoing.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MANIPÛR AND PERSIAN EXPERIENCES

THE two or three years of sport that I had in Rajputana and Central India were, perhaps, the most enjoyable of my life: for eagerness, health, and youth were then mine to the full—no ride was too long to reach a hunting-ground; no fatigue or heat mattered when “shikar” was to be had; when a cool night’s sleep awaited you at the end of the day; and when every day offered sport or pleasure in some fresh form. But such years could not last for ever, and my next remove took me to Manipûr, a small state to the north-west of Upper Burmah, which afterwards signalised itself by spearing a deputation sent from Calcutta, luckily after I had left.

A custom had ever obtained in this state that the king should be crowned on a stone situated above a hole in the ground, said to be the residence of a python, or snake god, from whence smoke and oracles were believed to issue; and as my particular king had not been crowned in this

orthodox manner, a prophecy was current that evil would befall both him and his kingdom—which vaticination was unfortunately fulfilled. He was a fat and cheery old gentleman, who used to play polo in the brown garment with which Nature had provided him, supplemented by a pair of red leather greaves, shaped as those depicted on ancient vases as the leg protection used by Grecian warriors, whilst two trumpeters stood by to sound a fanfare when he hit a goal. This his courtiers naturally arranged that he should do as often as convenient.

Manipûr was the birthplace of polo, as we understand the game (though it has doubtless been played in Persia and Central Asia from time immemorial). The "town" was divided into four polo quarters, and the game was played with gusto. I was elected a member of one of these divisions—a great honour!

From Manipûr, indeed, the game was introduced into Calcutta—thence to England.

I can remember the time when a picked native team came down to play the Calcutta Club with ponies under twelve hands, which indeed was the limit of height as then fixed by authority. Manipûr produced and trained these little animals, which commanded a comparatively high price. One pretty feature of the Manipûr game was never copied by English players, and it might

be dangerous to attempt its reproduction now with fifteen-hand racehorses on the move. When a ball was hit out of bounds, the nearest bystander picked it up, and, waiting a few moments for the players to settle down, threw it high in the air towards them. Whoever caught it was allowed a free hit, which he took, dropping his reins, kicking his pony into a gallop, throwing up the ball as he started, and swinging his polo club with both hands. A good shot would thus drive the ball half across the ground. Some of the play was very fast even in those days, and the ball was scarcely ever missed. A Manipŭri seemed able to hit on either side of him with equal ease as, and when, he chose to strike ; whilst they could all gallop over a dead ball, and making it rise with a sharp tap, get in a slinging hit before it fell. The game was not, however, scientifically played : it was each for himself, and degenerated into a real tussle occasionally, for there was no idea of offside, nor were there any apparent rules to be observed.

As for sport proper in Manipŭr, the duck and snipe shooting was superb ; the hills around held gaur, I believe, though I never went after these, and tigers were frequent visitors in the valley. The Manipŭris had a curious custom, and one that must have been somewhat of a tax on the village communities, of calling out the cultivators

to surround any tiger whose whereabouts had been noted by the king's shikaris. In spite of the fires lit by the villagers, and the swarming of men at a threatened point when the tiger endeavoured to break out of the cordon drawn around him, accidents of course happened, but eventually the beast was securely hemmed in and a small temporary palisade of bamboos put up to prevent his escape. Gradually this was constricted, until at last heavy bamboos were substituted for the lighter canes and he was surrounded by a stockade. Platforms were then erected and the king came out, accompanied by many ladies in gala costume, who were privileged to witness his prowess. Spearmen were next ordered inside the ring to rouse the tiger, and the fun began—for the king. When I attended one of these exhibitions, I refused to allow men to be sent in, so the tiger was bolted with fireworks, and ramped round the palisade in approved fashion, seeking an exit, and scolding the crowd of sightseers. He fell eventually, I think to my own shot, which I was courtier enough to withhold for some time, until the fat king had emptied his armoury.

Some of the ladies in Manipûr are very pretty, and their dress, a simple sheet of light material that sets off their graceful figures, is very becoming. They are fairer than the Burmese, and the pink flush in their cheeks adds to a beauty made more



piquant perhaps by the slight obliquity of the eyes. They are very pleasant-mannered, and will bring dainty offerings of fruit and flowers as tokens of goodwill. I have even heard that on occasions they can propose to you themselves, if they like you—but this may be pure scandal. At any rate, they are good to look at, and they know just the right flower to put in their hair and just the right place to put it. Tangal Major, the official who looked after my comfort and arranged for my morning milk supply, had a very pretty daughter who was, I have heard, a primary cause of much trouble after I had left the valley; whilst he himself, in spite of his high rank (for he wore the local Order of the Garter, a square patch of the serpent-god's coat), was, I understand, eventually hanged as one of the leaders of the attack on the Residency.

Elephants were not much used in Manipûr for sporting purposes, though I had one from off whose back I killed some tiger. I have seen a large herd in the valley, half-tame only, I think. I watched them one day as the babies were playing about amongst the old ones, and noted a poor tusker who was not allowed to put his foot down for some minutes, because a baby had got underneath him and was rubbing against the other hind leg.

The Manipûris, when I was there, were still practically independent, as they made war without asking permission. I remember seeing a small

force which had been raiding in Upper Burmah, returning in triumph with several Burmese heads on their spear-points.

They worked and found iron for their weapons by primitive methods, seeking their supply by probing the swampy ground with a pointed wand. When the rod bent and rasped against the iron nodules, which were apparently found in layers, it grated in their hand, and by this inexpensive mining operation the needed metal was located.

The swamps round the Logtak Lake were the home of the "eld" that is also found in Burmah, a species of swamp deer, whose brow tine forms a continuous sweep with the beam. These were difficult to stalk, as they lived in the open swamp, where it was impossible to go unattended, for fear of sinking in the matted reeds on which you were obliged to walk, whilst the whole surface shook under your feet. We went in a small party of three, so as to extricate each other when in difficulties. I, however, managed to secure one or two good heads after several failures. The feet of these deer were formed like skates, from never being worn down by solid ground—a natural provision that enabled them to support their burden in the quaking morass. Perhaps this peculiar spread and elongation of the horn is only found here: an adaptation of use in this particular locality.

Nepal, too, produces the swamp deer proper in

some localities. On one occasion, when shooting with a friend, we put up two fine stags together, when working parallel on each side of a narrow, reed-grown depression, so that we could command the whole with our rifles—an excellent plan theoretically, in practice more doubtful, for my friend's right and left at one of those deer, taken hastily, disclosed its weak point. His bullets, glancing off the surface of some water-hole, sang across the swamp and ripped the reeds down beneath and beyond my elephant's belly.

By the bye, I once saw an elephant plastered by an express bullet fired in haste at a tiger that was charging it from behind, in a swamp where it was more or less bogged, and the men on the pad consequently in great danger : but I often wondered that such a contretemps did not happen more frequently, as when I joined the Maharajah of Nepal, Bir Shamshir, during some of his early shooting expeditions, it was customary for the Court party to make use of solid bullets in their express rifles. I need hardly say that this was a risky procedure when shooting at tigers enclosed in a ring of elephants, and it was soon abandoned.

Serpents were said to be abundant in the Manipúr swamps, but all that I came across were two or three large pythons. These are very lethargic as a rule, and on one occasion I made a spearman drive his weapon through a big one that we

found, apparently asleep, as he refused to get out of my elephant's way. Even that rough procedure scarcely sufficed to rouse him ; he did not attempt to attack, but merely raised his neck, and writhed his cumbrous coils, so I put a bullet through his head. He was over eighteen feet long, but I have killed them up to twenty-four feet in length. I saw one very beautiful snake on the road up to Manipûr from Assam, about five feet long, sky blue on the back and bright yellow below, but I foolishly did not preserve him.

Before taking leave of Manipûr experiences, I must mention the Logtak Lake once more. I spent many happy days on its waters in a "dugout," paddled by fisher folk, wandering about after duck and geese. These were in such numbers that the water was black with them in the cold weather, and when a gun went off the thunder of their wings was startling, whilst the whirling clouds that swept round actually eclipsed the sun and shadowed the waterscape.

Shooting from such a primitive and crank conveyance, for it is no more than a hollowed-out tree-trunk, requires some balance, and at first I found it safer to kneel on a cushion in the bow, lest I, or my fox-terrier, who would get excited, should upset the "boat"; but after some practice I found that I could shoot better, and was fairly safe, when standing upright.

I left Manipûr with regret, when I had just begun to learn something of the language, the people, and the country : and was moved to Persia to gain experience of the manners and customs of quite other folk and fauna.

There I found myself in a climate which, as the Arabs assert, is so hot that the fish jump out of the water to cool themselves, and where a lizard cannot, according to a classic authority, attempt to cross the road at mid-day without being dried up before he can make his point. The only sport we enjoyed at Bushire was in coursing the goitered gazelle, which we did with Arab, Persian, and half-bred greyhounds of sorts. But after a month or so, I obtained permission to start on a tour through, and send in a report on, lower Persia, so I took the road to Shiraz, from whence as a starting-point I travelled to survey the country. The heat was terrific at Bushire, and on the lower ranges of hills between the Gulf and Shiraz—104° in the shade of the mud buildings was the usual temperature—but after the first few days of hard riding on villainous mule tracks, misnamed roads, we struck running water, and when nearing the level of Shiraz itself, the barren land became a paradise by comparison, the stream-beds glowed with oleander blossom, and we heard the first nightingales breaking their little hearts for the roses that they are supposed to long for. These latter grow luxuriantly in every Persian

garden, and their scent in the cool evening air is delightful.

The then governor was Firhad Mirza, an uncle of the Shah, and a bigoted old Mohammedan; so virtuously indeed did he keep the fast of Remazán, that during its continuance he would never even gulp down his spittle—so said his admirers! He had, however, the instinct for rule, and a capacity for keeping his province in order, which is unusual in a Persian. As an instance: when famine had swept the land, and the dealers were making a fabulous fortune from their hoarded grain, a notice was found put up on the Government pillar one morning that bread was to be sold, and sold at a fixed price; any trader refusing to obey would have to state his objections in Durbar, where, if these were not found valid, he would be immersed in a big iron cauldron, which had been placed on the plain beyond the walls and was kept continually boiling. The price of bread became at once normal!

Here, I think, we may detect the naked germ of the commendable policy of the Free Breakfast-table—the bid of *Panis et Circenses*—the robbing of Peter to please Paul—that State interference with private property that has of late caused the ruin of so many in England—a policy that appears altruistic and righteous, in spite of the fact that it ensures popularity and commands votes. Yet the

governor by injustice saved many lives. He ate the shewbread.

Talking of famine, a grateful Persian who had been kept alive with all his family and thousands more through the fierce drought by English gold and English grain, when half Persia had to feed on acorns and roots to preserve life, requited this small service by a pleasant speech. "Now I see what I had never understood before, the reason why a merciful Allah permits you Kafirs (un-believers) to live—You have your uses!"

When I rode into the palace yard to pay my first visit to Firhad Mirza, I was met by a swaggering officer, who said that I must remove my riding-boots before entering the Presence. I sent him back to the governor with the message that I did not remove my boots before my Queen, and if he did not care to receive me I should not visit him. On going in, I found the old gentleman in the centre of his Court, seated; and stood back to make him rise to receive me. This he perforce did, but in a half-hearted way, holding out his hand tentatively! when, his chair slipping on the polished floor, he would have fallen backwards if I had not seized and held it, upon which I remarked: "I have taken your Honour's hand this time, I look to you to give me yours in future." He smiled grimly, but we were friends thenceforward. He supplied several men from his own guard to

accompany me on tour, and made me a present of a book which he had written, that purported to be a Persian-English dictionary, and that I still retain as a remembrance.

Like all other Persian governors, he was under the necessity of "farming" his province to satisfy the Shah's cupidity and to provide for his own requirements. Hence men had to disgorge when occasion arose. He was reported to have quite a humorous method of dealing with recalcitrant taxpayers, to whom he would offer a choice of evils. "Which would you rather, then—pay me one thousand tomâns, eat a hundred onions, or eat a hundred sticks?" (bastinado). Invariably the foolish chose onions; and fine specimens being selected, the feast began, to end in nausea with a full habit, long before the half had been consumed: when the miserable man would acknowledge his mistake, and yet ask for stick in preference to paying up—then before his feet had been reduced to pulp, he would scream for mercy and promise the tomâns. When cast loose he would be addressed by the smiling governor, who would point out how that he had had everything as asked for, and that now he was begging the acceptance, as a favour, of the small sum that he had been so mean as to withhold originally.

He had, however, not freed himself entirely from the tortuous methods of Eastern diplomacy;



and though he gave me a sealed form of authorisation under which I was at liberty to excavate and explore at Persepolis or elsewhere; as soon as I had collected labour and broken ground, a second missive was handed in to me by couriers from Shirâz, which, whilst confirming the terms of the original document, forbade the employment of Persian labour! Thus was my opportunity lost. I heard in after years that through the supineness or indifference of our own Government, that of the French had obtained for the paltry sum of £30,000 the sole *droit de fouillage* in Persian territory.

Whilst on the subject of Persepolis and ancient monuments, I may perhaps note that the work of destruction, due to a woman's whim and a man's weakness, that began when the great Alexander in his cups fired the palaces of Persia to please a courtesan, whilst Thais laughed, has been continued through the centuries. The flames, indeed, had left what they could not destroy, and the platform still stands a monument of ruined grandeur, with its stately propylon and tapering columns, above the staircase that allows the passage of eight horses abreast; but save a few sparse inscriptions hidden by kindly sand at the base of the ruined temple or palace of Artaxerxes, and a few carved figures, little remains upon it. The work of desecration is now perhaps completed. Even in my day, some thirty-five years ago, the Persians freely mutilated

what splendid sculptured figures time had spared, and the mighty winged genii that guarded the propylon of Darius and Cyrus had become targets for the contempt of a wanton quasi-religious barbarism that considered them, as they did the Government telegraph posts, to be but fitting marks on which to try the accuracy and penetration of matchlock slug or rifle bullet. I passed a week or more in the rock-hewn tombs of the kings, situated in the hill above the platform, laid up with ice on my head, to recover from a stroke of the sun received when crossing the Bund-i-Amir stream, where I lost my hat whilst galloping in the sun—the “Bendameer” stream of Tom Moore, by which the nightingales sing all the day long in a bower of roses. They do not, as a matter of fact, though you may hear them in the rose-gardens about Shiraz in the spring-time to your heart’s content. The song, however, is not so sustained as it is in Europe, and I fancy the bird itself must be different.

On leaving Persepolis, I passed by the two curious scarped hills that stand like sentinels in the plain. These were probably the fortified outposts that gave Alexander trouble—one is called the Hill of Job, as the patriarch is supposed to have there made free use of his potsherd, and the faithful will show you millions of little white stones shaped like maggots, to substantiate the truth of the legend. Thence I wandered into the country of the Kashkai,

and on to the fringe of the Bakhtiâri domain, being ever welcomed, and taking as my shikari a fine specimen of a hawk-nosed, eagle-eyed Lâr robber, on whose head a price had been officially fixed for "striking the road." He was known to the vulgar as the "cat with the cut ears," and became a most devoted servant. He disavowed this cognomen, but designated himself "Ailchi-i-doulat"—"State Ambassador!" We passed many happy days and weeks on the hills together: he relieved from the officious interference of authority whilst in my service, and I safeguarded by his vigilance.

I recall one occasion on which I had gone to sleep in the afternoon on a hillside, and was awakened by the report of a rifle close to my ear, when on looking up I saw two men with guns racing downhill for their lives, whilst the bullet of the second barrel splashed on the rock behind them. In answer to my expostulation, my friend said quietly: "Your honour, if I had not fired at them they would have fired at you. I watched them stalking up the rocks till they were within shot of us."

I can see him now, standing as he stood one day that found us starving on the hill, skewering layers of ibex fat and meat in alternate chunks on to his iron ramrod, which then served as a spit, being gently turned until our meal was cooked, over a

fire of fragrant mountain herbs and dry roots that he had built and kindled. In spite of the stained hands of the man who prepared this impromptu repast after gralloching the game, I have seldom enjoyed a more appetising dinner.

He was my companion also in the tightest corner in which I have ever realised myself to be caught. We had started before daybreak to ascend the Rûnj-i-Gambîl, a tremendous peak that rises up to the eastward of Pâh Dénâ. On leaving tents, being deceived by the clear atmosphere into misjudgment of the distance, I had thought that a few hours would have seen us at the summit, but it was well on in the afternoon when we reached the last one hundred yards or so of sheer ascent. Here we found the peak like a gigantic tooth, curved, and polished on its northern and eastern face by the melting of the snows of a hundred thousand years, whilst on the south and west the cliff fell a sheer wall that made you giddy to look at. There was only room for one on the knife-blade of the peak, and my Lûr, taking off his shoes, trod the polished slope whilst he held my hand, as I walked the edge upwards. We found one yard or less of fairly flat stone at the topmost point, on which I could just fix my compass-stand with half-opened legs, which he, lying stretched on the slope, held firmly, as a strong wind shook the instrument. I took my angles to different points, and notably to

a white-capped hill some six hundred miles to the north of our position, that I believe must have been Demavend, as it was midsummer, and that mountain alone could have been in snow at that season. Then we started for camp, and having descended the knife edge in safety, and made some little way down the cone itself, my Lār suggested our trying a short cut, as we should scarcely reach our horses before dusk if we went down by the way we had ascended. He knew of an ibex track down the face of the scarp that would shorten the distance considerably, and would enable us to reach camp by nightfall, and advised trying it. I agreed, and we went by very narrow, broken, and disjointed ways down and down, further and further, along the wall of rock until we came upon a gap in the ibex path, only two or three yards wide, it is true, yet below us was an eternity of empty space. There was no chance of retracing our steps, for we should have been frozen on the summit in the dark ; and as we reviewed the situation, he looked blankly at me and I at him. Then he said : " We must jump for it, there is nothing left. I will go first." It was no time for hesitation—with skirts tucked into his waist, he took the leap, put his back against the rock, caught my rifle, then my compass-stand, and put them beyond him against the walls—and I took a run and jumped. His hand was on my shoulder to steady me as I landed, and we were safe. For

the remainder of the descent the ibex track was more or less unbroken, and we reached our horses and made camp by nightfall.

The Persian ibex is, in a scientific sense, a wild goat and not an ibex proper, but for all practical purposes he counts as such. I have seen great herds together, perhaps some hundred animals in one drove, but as a rule they travel in smaller bands, and the big bucks are often solitary. I noticed one such standing on a cliff in the Pâh Dénâ hills, whose horns were of unusual length, but it was too late to try for him, especially from below, as he must have seen us.

Once, only, have I caught them napping—literally so. On the snake-infested limestone range of the Koh-i-Izdihâ, the Hill of the Dragon, or the Biting Snake—"Izd-i-hâk"—the Astyages of the ancient Median dynasty, who fell before the Persian conqueror.

I was shooting in indiarubber-soled shoes, and on looking over a rock saw three ibex asleep a few yards below me, all bucks, lying apart from each other. So close were they that I was as startled as they, when they caught sight of me a moment afterwards. The rush of the three, who seemed to spring to life and scatter in an instant, no doubt disconcerted me, and but one fell, the second getting away wounded.

The Persians warned me that I must be careful on this hill, as it was infested by snakes. Whether the ancient name gave its bad reputation to the hill, or whether the snakes were in truth its godfathers, I know not.

I found bear and wild sheep in plenty on the upper slopes of the Pâh Dénâ, a mountain that rises some 18,000 to 20,000<sup>1</sup> feet above the level of the Persian Gulf—a mountain fragrant with the scent of a thousand herbs, and in whose lower valleys the nestling villages, concealed by groups of walnut trees and willows, are refreshed by sparkling waters that pour down from summits never entirely denuded of their winter mantle of snow.

On these imperial heights, half-way to heaven, in the proud scarp that rears its rugged front to welcome the first kisses of the dawn, a cavern opens to which no foot of man, no wandering beast may win a trespass-way ; in whose dim aisles surrounded by slumbering warriors and protected by angel hosts, takes his long rest the hero of Persia, the mighty Kâi Khusrô. A fitting sepulchre indeed for the great prince, who, disdaining the softer splendours of the tomb at Pasarghird, chose rather the rugged grandeur of the mountain crest to find the peace denied to him on earth ; and there he lies,

<sup>1</sup> The needle of my aneroid that was supposed to register up to 22,000 feet passed beyond this figure, but aneroids play tricks in inexperienced hands.

held close to the loving breast of heaven—his tomb in the birthplace of thunder.

He is not dead, but sleeps, awaiting the dawn of that near day when he must rise again to restore the splendour of Persia and reconquer a rebellious world.

So runs the legend, or prophecy, which you will—and dare you doubt the tale, you have but to make a pilgrimage to the mountain shrine to be convinced of the truth.

It is but the story of Barbarossa and of our own Arthur asleep in Avillon—it is that of all men too mighty to bow before the tyranny of Death. It is a nation's testimony to heaven—the profession of a people's faith in immortality—a thank-offering for the gift of a hero.

I would recommend this country to any sportsman who desired a very pleasant trip. The hills have never been fairly hunted, if ever indeed trodden by the sportsman; and though probably nothing larger than bear or panther will be met with, these, ibex, wild sheep, and other game will certainly be found. Possibly a lion might yet be encountered. They were not quite unheard of in Persia in my day, and I have tracked them in the swamps near the Karûn River, that lies towards Mesopotamia on the east. The higher cliffs are the home of the *kauk-i-derreh*,<sup>1</sup> the royal partridge, which fly in

<sup>1</sup> *Kabak-i-Derreh*.



small packs—giving tongue, I had almost said—but chiming together as they round the cliffs. They feed on the shoots of some plant or mountain herb, and supplement their larder from the droppings of the ibex and wild sheep—perhaps, to be prosaic and truthful, they may regale on ticks also, with which the wild goat is said to be infested, and which he shakes off on his sleeping-ground.

I lost a shot at a very fine ibex through the want of readiness of one of my Persian grooms, when walking in a dry watercourse with my horse led behind me.

Seeing a flock of ibex galloping downhill to cross our front, I beckoned him up, as he carried my rifle, but until I shouted he would not understand. The ibex had meanwhile made their point, and the two bucks bringing up the rear were ascending a perpendicular bank, when, half-way up, the big one turned and endeavoured to butt the smaller one off the cliff. This happened twice before I could handle my rifle, and the wretch escaped. I had only just time to drop the smaller buck as he reached the crest, which was hard on him, as it was the other's fault entirely, and I would far rather have shot the big bully.

Again, I lost a chance at a very fine oorial, or wild sheep, on the heights of Dénâ. We had very foolishly that day allowed some Persian villagers to accompany us with food and drink, as the son

of a Bakhtiari chief was a guest in my camp, and he had accompanied me shooting. There must have been at least fifty head in the flock, and we placed the Persians under a crest of stone that ran the whole way up the valley in which they were feeding, with the strictest orders not to move until a shot was fired. When nearing the rocks from which we expected to reach our game, we heard a great stampede, and running hard were only in time to put in some shots at two hundred yards. One fairly good head balanced for an instant on a point of rock, and paid the penalty of looking back—the rest escaped, I hope untouched, as they had to escape. The rascally Persians, who had complained of fatigue and lain down, saying they were sick from the smell of the scented herbs (though they had fed themselves on dried buttermilk cakes to prevent nausea), were well enough to disobey orders, show their silly heads above the ridge below us, and ruin my stalk.

Verily the fewer followers a man allows himself, the better: and this is a golden rule to observe in all sport. You can depend on yourself, and rely perhaps upon one man whom you train, but never can you make sure of success if you go about with a crowd.

I was not sorry to leave Persia, as I had seen more in six months' travel than most men would see in a residence of many years. My friend, the

Lār, was—I think—really grieved at parting. So was I; but I gave him the best gun I could buy for him, presented him with a small purse full of tománs, and bade him guard his own head. I have no doubt he did this, and little that he followed in the footsteps of Nâdir Shah, as of many other sons of the stirrup, and took to the road again. I hope that he did not encounter any such cruel fate as that which was reported to have befallen a robber chief at the hands of one of the rulers of Shiraz. This man had for years taken toll in true mediæval fashion of all caravans that passed near his impregnable stronghold, whilst politely declining all invitations to wait on successive governors of the province, who were anxious to make his acquaintance. But one evil day a deputation of well-dressed officers appeared before him, bearing a letter from the governor couched in the most flattering and affectionate terms, who presented a dress of honour and a fine charger for his acceptance, when his perspicacity gave place to vanity, and he accepted the gift of the Greek. Even among these sharp-witted Asiatics, who have been brought up to the game of intrigue from their childhood, and know each other thoroughly, the confidence trick is played with success. He was received warmly in Durbar, plied with iced wines and delicacies, and the governor talked pleasantly until he was quite at his ease. Then, still smiling, the governor asked

if he had brought his accounts with him, as they had not yet been satisfactorily settled, and there were a few business points to discuss before the leave-taking. Then the esoteric meaning of the invitation dawned on him—the bitterness of death came over the unhappy guest—and he knew! Vainly did he lavish persuasions and promises of fealty: the governor, still smiling, remained implacable. As a last effort, the miserable chief said:—

“At any rate, you will permit me to write to my wife and tell her that I have been detained.” But the governor’s answer came after a moment’s apparent kindly consideration: “Well, I cannot quite do that; yet we have passed a pleasant hour together, have we not? and I feel quite well disposed towards you—I will shorten the business.” And, turning to his executioner, who stood behind the chief, he uttered the one word “Bismillah” (in the name of God)—when the wretched man’s head was jerked back, and his throat was cut on the governor’s carpet—the tender mercy of the wicked!

## CHAPTER IX

### DEHRA DOON AND NEPAL SHOOTING—WILD ELEPHANT, FISH, AND SNAKES

I LEFT Persia, as may the reader, feeling that I had had enough of it for the moment, after a go of something very like cholera; and on my return from England to India, spent some months in Jeypore and Kerowlee, amongst the Rajputs; whence to the Dehra Doon, which yielded years of sport, before I took up the post of resident in Nepal, another happy hunting-ground. Many of the incidents recorded happened in these localities, for there, also, I learned much by experience of the ways of the wild jungle folk, though now sport was obtainable under more luxurious conditions than I could command in my younger days. It was sport, and often most enjoyable, even exciting, sport; yet it was henceforth made comparatively tame, for it lacked the sting of personal exertion and risk that had supplied an added zest in earlier years, when every little triumph had been well merited.

Now, indeed, year after year on going down

from the hills we pitched a standing camp as our headquarters for the glorious cold-weather months, beneath the shade of a grove of mango trees that adorned the bank of the Ganges at Raiwallah. Here a cliff rising sheer out of the green waters for some hundred feet afforded a beautiful view of river, jungle, and hills, that stretched away to the Pâtli Dûn.

Thence as the spirit moved us, we sent out flying camps, and travelled between the Jumna and Ganges in search of sport.

Cheetul stags were plentiful, sambur had their home in the Siwaliks and wandered through the forest land around their base, where I have seen as many as five good stags browsing on the korindah bushes amongst a herd of cattle. Bear, tiger, panther, were fairly numerous, whilst hog-deer abounded and afforded admirable training in snap rifle-shooting as they rushed headlong out of the patches of grass across the open. We have many times come home after a good day in the burnt jungle with fourteen to twenty stags on the pad elephants, every ounce of whose flesh was dried to make pemmican for the families of the Afghans and camp-followers, so that nothing was wasted.

Small game, duck, floricane, black partridge, jungle fowl, etc., were found here and there to add diversity to the bag — and besides all these, elephants were occasionally met with. These

were, however, under the protection of the law, a fine of £50 being the penalty for killing one.

I found myself on one occasion in the middle of a browsing herd before I had realised their presence. The grass had, as yet, only been burnt in patches, and the forest trees were all around me, amongst which I was wandering alone on an elephant. Right, left, and in front of me the herd was feeding peacefully, mostly cows and young; for I looked about as we moved amongst them, but could see no tusker. Then a cheetah stag sprang out of a patch of grass through which we were wading, and I rolled him over. The herd of elephants seemed to melt away in all directions, and so noiselessly, that I felt as if I had but awakened from a day dream.

I was to meet a tusker, however, before long, when quite unprepared to do so, and got out of a scrape solely by the coolness of my mahout. As ill-luck would have it, I had sauntered out from camp on my elephant, leaving my heavy rifle behind, as I had no intention of shooting, partly because it was on a Sunday, and partly that I had given up deer-slaying unless food were wanted for the camp-followers, or unless tempted by an exceptional head. Armed only with a .360 rifle and shot-gun, and carrying my sketching tools, we passed along a slope of the Siwaliks in light grass and tree jungle towards Kans Rao. Below on our



**HOG-DEER.**

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left lay a re-entering valley, thickly clothed with bamboo clumps, amongst which several woodcutters had been chased and killed by a rogue elephant during the preceding rainy season, according to report. As we picked our way along the tree-dotted slope, I fell asleep in the howdah, whilst my mahawat was equally well employed on the elephant's neck. A slight sound ahead, however, roused my attention, and I looked up drowsily, to see in front of me and not thirty yards off, what I took to be a cloud of black smoke rising from the jungle grass, and for an instant some thought of the genii of the lamp crossed my brain. Then, as I became fully conscious, the black cloud resolved itself into the head of an elephant with long white tusks, who had lazily reared himself on his haunches into the position of the Vatican dog; and I dropped my hand on to my mahout's head and woke him, whispering, "jungli hathi" (wild elephant). He whispered back, quite unmoved, "hân, sahib" (yes, sir), "mâro" (shoot). I said: "I cannot; have only a light rifle." Then he realised the situation, and said: "Climb into the tree behind and shoot." I answered: "What will happen to you, then? I cannot knock him down." Then he understood, and said: "Keep your gun ready, and shoot to frighten him if he rises, and I will back slowly."

All this time the brute was sitting with his big

ears pricked forward, his fierce little eyes fixed on us, and so close that I could count every black bristle on his head. Yet he never offered to rise, as we slowly backed, step by step, until hidden from sight behind the trees. So, turning, we made off down the hillside and passed wide of him towards our camp, thanking our stars that we had not blundered on blindly a yard or two farther. As it was, a word spoken out loud or a shot fired would assuredly have been answered by a charge, and we should have been helpless.

In that same beautiful camp above the river have we stood many a night peering across the water in hopes of being able to watch the herd of trumpeting and splashing sybarites that came frequently from surrounding jungles to enjoy a bath in green waters after the heat of the day; yet even with glasses we could never get a clear view, as they avoided coming when the moon was bright on the sands. Possibly our white tents were at such times over-conspicuous.

Most wondrous nights! Fulfilled of dreamy splendour, peaceful, still, beneath a star-decked heaven, where planets, as globes of golden light, hung clear from out the purple velvet of infinity. Yet when the "camphor dripping" moon arose to dim their glory, as she poured her silver radiance over earth and sky, flooding the forest-covered hills with light, till every leaf gave back an answering

smile—the night became as day, the very shade grew luminous around, and the bright current of the river that caught an added beauty from her glistening beams, gurgled with pleasure as she swept the giant boulders that held the bank below.

On such a night, still, dreamy, hushed, the jungle sleeps. Alone a fitful murmur from the river that laps against the cliffs, disturbs, but to emphasise, the abundant calm; else is there nought to fan your ear but the rustle of unseen wings, as silence hovering holds her breath. Peace reigns—and then—from some far distance comes a muffled sound that overrides the music of the waters, and wrings an answer from the steeps above—a moan, a protest of rebellion from the lips of the great god, Pan—may be but an echo of Râma's own voice that throbs in the heart of the night—a cry of unsatisfied longing, of imperious desire, as the god asserts his sway—to break the spell of silence. In truth, the fierce call of the forest king that woos his mate.

Again a hush—for terror's self pants in the wake of that resounding cry that startles many a slumberer from his dreams, to cause him crouch more lightly in his lair, and prove each dubious whisper of the woods as he cowers, with eye alert and nostril strained, to catch the veriest whiff a warning breath of air may waft along

the dew-drenched rushes that shiver in sympathy with the trembling grass.

Then peace awhile; and then a wailing yell, a harmony of discord, shatters the silence, as those night urchins of the jackal pack, protesting their starvation, join in unholy chorus round the tents. Again and again, at stated intervals throughout the night, the slumber-scaring crew vociferate, complain of want of victuals, and invade the camp, though the vexed native, seizing a burning brand, endeavours repeatedly to disperse this congregation of nightingales—lest their blasphemy disturb the sahib's repose.

Yet I rejoiced in the music most unmusical of these Moody and Sankey folk, and would dearly love to hearken once again to their irreverent voices, mocking the night with hymns.

Nearer and nearer yet at times you may list the unearthly scream of the siâh, who, according to legend, is the tiger's aide-de-camp—a post of honour may be, yet scarcely a sinecure, one would think, unless he were guaranteed his skin, or held, by favour of Shiva, a charmed life.

Of such glorious nights we passed many, encamped above the green depths of the Ganges. Below us the river bore out from the cliff, and formed a big pool some hundred yards away, which was the home of monster mahaseer, the "great tiger" fish, the sporting carp, so famed

and so dear to all who have cast a fly or slung a bait in Eastern waters. From thence at feeding time they sought the head or tail of the rapids, or the broken water in the current, and from their schools I took an almost daily toll; for on returning after the day's hunting I invariably fished from the sunset hour onwards, and could almost certainly be sure of a "run" soon after the priest of the small temple had blown his evening shell-trumpet—his call to prayer, which the fish may have taken for their dinner-gong—grace before meat—who knows?

I think that my attention was first directed to this finny sanctuary one Sunday morning, when a servant reported the presence of a large snake near the said temple, that overhung the river above this pool. I picked up a small .360 rifle and followed my man, who, pointing down the bank to a scaffolding of bamboo and timber, built as a support to safeguard the foundations of the shrine, showed me where a python lay basking in the sun, his coils wreathed in and out of the wooden stays. I put a bullet through the fattest curl of his painted hide, and he writhed about until he dropped a sheer fifty feet into the green pool—where he was instantly attacked by the mahaseer, who went at him like minnows at a worm. All these could be clearly seen through the translucent water, darting at him as he swayed,

holding his head erect above the surface, until, whirled away by the sweep of the current, he passed out of sight pursued by the relentless foes, who had him at their mercy.

Although the mahaseer is a carp, yet in spite of his blubber lips the teeth in his powerful jaws are large, and he can crumple a spoon-bait like paper. The rush of a very big fish is furious, and the line going out, if touched, would cut your finger to the bone. I caught one at the junction of the Arson with the Jumna, that rushed out nearly 150 yards of line before my sarnai-men could kick the skin raft on which I sat into the middle current. He towed me so fiercely down stream, that three times the point of my rod was jerked under water though the line was going out all the time from a singing reel, and it was a fair three-quarters of a mile from where I struck to the bank below, where I succeeded in killing him.

He broke the grain-dealer's scales, in which I tried to weigh him, at eighty pounds; the two landed before him that afternoon weighed forty and sixty pounds odd respectively.

Mr Hercules Ross, I believe, held the record with a fish of one hundred and twenty pounds.

It is almost needless to say that you want a treble wire trace for this sort of heavy fishing. I used to pass mine through the smoke given off by burning sulphur, to take the glitter from the steel.

The rod rings should contain a second revolving ring. Those I first used were made of ivory, but I soon found that the continual casting in heavy water with a leaded bait cut through the ivory, so I took to inner revolving rings of polished steel ; after which no line frayed. The best form of lead is not a bullet, but a tapered tube, which should be fastened to your line by a silk strand passing through it, a yard from your bait, when, should it be caught in the stones at the bottom, the silk breaks and you are not hung up. This is a necessary precaution, as, when casting fifty to seventy yards of line—and this is not record-casting, but continual ; you can cast a hundred yards with heavy bait—you have to take your chance of the bait being swirled anywhere by the current. With a powerful springy rod and leaded line, it is easy enough to cover that extent of water, though at first it is real back-breaking work from a sarnai. This is merely a native string bed, on which you sit to make your cast, placed upon two inflated bullock skins, which are very buoyant ; a man at either end of your sarnai lies across another bullock skin, holding the end of your bed and paddling sideways with his feet. In this way, they are able to move out quickly from the bank towards the current when you make your cast ; and as speedily to paddle in again whilst you coil your line, on a waterproof sheet between your outstretched legs. They remain in



still water until your bait returns and you are ready to cast afresh, or until you hook a fish, when, should he be a big one and run out most of your line, you make them kick out into the current, and follow him down.

I used to engage a group of these sarnai-men during the cold weather, with their skins and beds, for a trifling monthly wage, who always remained in camp ready to be called out morning or evening.

Thus, indeed, was an insidious temptation placed one unfortunate day in the path of my wife and a lady friend, when both fell from the ways of righteousness. I have heard it asserted that a residence in the East has a tendency to relax the moral fibre of the individual, and this may account for the failure of my timely exhortation, as both ladies abandoned themselves to disrespectful words and determined on breaking the Sabbath.

So the sarnais were ordered out, and we started on our picnic to Hurdwâr, the pilgrim city that adorns the bank of the sacred Gunga. Half-way to Hurdwâr the river had divided into two channels, and whilst we debated over our choice of routes, Gungajee decided the question; our sarnais were swept apart, and the one on which I sat with my wife chose a tossing current, in the midst of which we struck a stone and were instantly wrecked, the sarnai being whirled away in the tumbled

waters, and one of the men shot off his bullock skin.

I landed on my head and hands as if taking a voluntary dive, and was able to right myself and to retrieve my drowning companion, whom I caught round the waist and held up, for my feet had luckily become jammed between boulders that afforded me a good purchase. And there we stood in the middle of an icy cold torrent with the waves beating on us, splashing up to our chins, and with no chance of moving until the sarnais could be recaptured.

It was a curious experience to be obliged to stand motionless in the turbulent water-race with no one in sight, for nearly half an hour, trusting to our men to recover their sarnais, carry them up-stream again, and return to the rescue. To my companion, whose lips turned blue with cold, the delay must have been a severe trial of pluck and endurance.

When the men attempted this rescue they, or I, failed more than once to get a hold, as the skin bed swept past, and when at last we steadied the sarnai and made the shore, we were glad enough to mount into the dogcart that had been recalled from Hurdwâr, and to get back to camp as fast as possible, where hot grog and bed staved off any evil effects of the lady's ducking.

Whilst a delicate allusion to this episode proved

occasionally of value to myself when sternly called to account for some Sunday peccadillo—so all was for the best.

But to leave the subject of sarnais and revert to the fishing.

I had fished the Arson stream one day, down to its junction with the Jumna, using a light trout rod, and whilst waiting for my big rods to be brought up, bent a salmon fly on to the cast and threw it in the Jumna to pass the time. Being then just at the end of the rainy season, when a fish would almost take your helmet if offered, I was instantly seized. The big fish sailed away across the current quite unconcerned at no great speed, taking out seventy yards of line, and though I lowered my point in the vain hope that the jerk on the reel might turn or stop him and give me grace to recover a few yards, the trick was useless. Luckily the gut gave, and the line itself was recovered.

During the rainy season mahaseer follow up the lesser streams to spawn, and I have seen a little jungle dog of a Gurkha kill a fish that must have weighed from fourteen to twenty pounds on a light-bending green bamboo (ringal), on which he had fixed a couple of wire loops, whilst his reel consisted of a ball of string wound round a bit of wood, that he held loose in his left hand, letting it out—as a boy would pay out his kite line—when necessary.

In the hills, again, I have seen several poaching devices, weighted lines being laid across a stream-bed, with nooses attached, such as the natives elsewhere employ for catching snipe or even musk-deer; which latter they manage to circumvent by building a very light fence down a hillside, leaving openings at intervals in which they hang their springes.

Of course the old trick of partially turning the stream is often resorted to.

Mahaseer are omnivorous, but the natives assert that they are particularly fond of a fleshy leaved plant that flowers in dry stream-beds during the cold weather, whilst they will take fly, bait, spoon, and even, I have heard, a swallow, should they get the chance.

I never tried a pike fly over the much-fished pools, and regret not having done so, as mahaseer are wary fish, and after you have taken one or two from any given pool, you may see them rise, examine, and turn away from fly or other bait offered. They probably do the same in heavy water that has been much fished, with one form of bait, as they must get accustomed to a perpetually offered spinner—which might account for the coincidence of their taking when the shell sounded, or soon afterwards, as this was always blown at dusk, when your line would scarcely be visible.

The smaller fish in the streams of the Dehra

Doon give good sport with fly or the miniature fly-spoon — “Ladies can catch them,” being the ungallant remark of a dear friend, when we were fishing a particular pool.

My wife resented this slighting reflection on the skill of the ruling powers, as she had landed a seven-pound fish in heavy water on a small “Hardy” rod that scarcely weighed an equal number of ounces, reel and all, and with a trout cast, a short time previously. Such imputations are really painful, and should be discountenanced!

I may perhaps, as I have been mentioning snakes and fish together, tell what happened to me close to the Dâk Bungalow, or rest house, near the military road that leads to Chukrâta.

I had taken some six or eight small fish with fly from under the bridge, and had thrown them on the grass behind me, when, on turning round to add another, I noticed that the heap had diminished, so glanced back once or twice afterwards to make sure that no prowling native imps were about. Presently as I did so, I saw a large cobra wriggling off with a fish in his mouth, and before I could put down my rod and overtake him, he had dropped his burden and found refuge between the stones of a rough breakwater of rock and timber that had been built up to retain the stream in its channel. Yet he put out his head again, and drew the fish in, as I stood in front of his hiding-place.

All through, this was a cool piece of impudence ; he must have taken fish after fish, before he was found out, from underneath the flick of my fly rod as the line played over him.

I did not attempt to catch his disappearing tail, being mindful of a story told me by a conservative canvasser, who assured me that a friend of his tried to eject a tenant in this way, whose refuge was an old wall, but that the cobra, considering that his house was his castle, put his business end out of a crevice above and struck the hand that held his inoffensive tail. The man recovered, but was ever after afflicted with locomotor ataxia, and kicked you on the shins when he shook hands with you—so that he was useful at both ends, like the Babu's horse—"The horse is a noble animal : he kicks you at one end, and bites you at the other."

The cobra is not aggressive. I think that he, like the "mild Hindu"—who appears nevertheless to be changing his habits—is affected to indolent and good-natured fatalism by the climate of his native land. He seems to have a weakness for human companionship, of which many instances are on record. I give one. When a sais who had taken up his quarters in my stables at Dehra, being in charge of racehorses, went to sleep on the ground near his charges, he woke feeling a weight on his chest, which weight he pushed off, and saw

that it was a cobra that went away hissing at being disturbed. The man went to sleep again, and again woke with his friend on his bosom. It was only after this had happened thrice that the native took the trouble to move his bedding—but the snake, though somewhat importunate, had no wish to harm him.

I once saw some gardeners in Bombay make a small funeral pyre and burn a big cobra that I had infuriated, and had finally killed, whilst he was endeavouring to attack me as I stood on the top of a flight of steps pelting him with stones. They muttered over the pyre—but whether they were saying prayers or uttering spells I have no idea—I had only just landed, and did not know a word of Hindustani. Natives, however, do seem to have some superstitious reverence for snakes, whose worship is apparently ingrained in man's heart—perchance founded on some idea of propitiation, for all fear them—and the worship of demons obtains to the present day.

Russell's viper is a very beautiful and deadly snake. I recall saving a spaniel friend that belonged to General Sir John Watson, at Indore. The dog was barking furiously, and the coiled adder watching his opportunity to strike, so I crept up on hands and knees and brought a knobbed Malacca cane I carried down on his head and coils, when he, half-stunned, swished back into the grass

instead of attacking. He was a big specimen, and I was glad at his departure.

Luckily, snakes avoid man, if possible, and though you naturally meet a few in the course of years in the jungle, it is not often that they annoy you in the house. I discovered one at Mount Abû, in Rajputana, by his hissing at me from behind a box in my room. Another, also a cobra, at Indore, where, one morning on looking aside when in my bath, I saw the snake half coiled up with the two legs of a big frog sticking out of his jaws, eyeing me.

I can only recall having had one real "squeak" that might indeed have been a serious business. The incident happened when I was out to show sport to H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence, in Nepal. We were not far from the Sardah, and in consequence of the district having been shot over the year before, or simply from bad luck, tigers were scarce; and I had become anxious lest our hunting-ground should fail to yield the expected amusement, so had asked the Maharajah, who was in camp, to put a regiment or two in skirmishing order through a big swamp that I knew of, which could not support the weight of the elephants, with instructions to practise independent firing as they advanced. The elephants were to be placed ready to close in from either flank behind any game that might be driven out by the troops, and they drew up as directed,



in single file, closing behind the men as ordered.

Meanwhile we ate lunch, and mounting our small riding elephants when the firing ceased, rode up to the line. Sir Edward Bradford, who was the pleasantest and cheeriest of sportsmen, always sat in my howdah, and he and I drew up on opposite sides of the big elephant to take our places, when, as I was stepping into my seat, I saw my own orderly, who was assisting Sir Edward to mount, spring forward and brush a snake off the front bar of the howdah with his naked hand, just as I was about to lay hold of it. My orderly's ready act of devotion saved me at no small risk to himself. The kerite had no doubt been shaken off the reeds or minosa trees on to the howdah as the big elephant passed through them, and had coiled himself comfortably and unnoticed round the bar above the mahout's head. As the snake fell upon him on its way downward, he started, and almost left his seat on the elephant's neck!

I may note that we killed five tigers in one "ring" as a result of our strategy in the swamp, so the reputation of Nepal as a sporting-ground was upheld, and the situation saved. The prince had also four full-grown tigers in the ring, that fell mostly to his rifle, on another occasion.

But for real sport, perhaps that day took the palm on which a big wounded tiger, quitting the

cover, crouched in light grass on an open plain prepared to fight—and I have no doubt that H.R.H. would have held that opinion.

He remained quietly standing, whilst I placed the photographer's elephant so that his artist rider could take an instantaneous picture of the scene should the beast be bold to attack, and on my rejoining him, he advanced to encounter an honest home charge, the tiger, who meant business, falling dead almost under his elephant's trunk.

The luckless photographer, however, proved unequal to the occasion, and missed an opportunity that was unique for many reasons. He either snapped at the wrong moment, or his elephant's unsteadiness, as he averred, ruined his chance, for the print, when developed, produced but a small blur in the jungle grass that imagination was left to construe into a charging tiger.

Sir Edward Bradford, than whom a kindlier friend and keener sportsman would be hard to find, had been a Central India horseman, and was a trained "shikari."

The remembrance of these weeks passed together in Nepal, and of the time when I served under him previously, will remain a pleasure until memory fails.

He lost an arm playing the game in his young days, when, having wounded a tigress, the brute charged up the sloping tree on which he was

seated. He pulled the trigger but the cap missed fire from a twig intervening between it and the hammer—for this was in muzzle-loading days. He brushed the twig, recocked, and would have fired again, but some of the sappy bark had remained on cap or hammer, and again his rifle missed fire. There was nothing left but to jump down into the water below, which he did, but the tigress followed and fought him in the pool, crunching his arm. A cruel accident, and an instance of undeserved bad luck where coolness and pluck alike were unavailing.

I have, however, digressed from the subject of fish and snakes, and must recount an incident that happened to a native friend, whose elephant, passing too close to a python, the brute wrapped its coils round his hind legs and held him screaming with terror. That is the Rajah's version of the occurrence, and I can quite believe it, as I have seen an elephant go mad and bolt for a long way when I endeavoured to put a twenty-foot python on the pad.

We had spent half an hour trying in one way or other to load up, as I wished to keep the skin, but as the beast objected so persistently to accept his burden, jumping up when the snake got near him, we had pulled the python up over a tree bough with ropes, and standing the elephant underneath, had lowered the coiled and bound monster on to

his back. Unfortunately, the natives carelessly loosened the rope when tying him on, and the long tail slipping down flapped against the elephant's side, when he screamed, shed natives and snake in a bunch together off his "guddee," and made tracks for all he was worth, complaining bitterly as he went.

The elephant is by nature a timid animal, and requires training much as any other recruit to make him master of himself. I have seen one scream and run away from three little white owlets who hissed at him from their nest in the grass, and few will stand the theatrical clash of the porcupine's quills when he makes him ready to battle: whilst a boar's charge will disconcert the staunchest tusker for the moment. Yet when trained and ridden by a man in whom they have placed their trust, they will walk up to a wounded tiger with cool confidence, giving little taps on the ground and rumbling quietly as they near him—and will stand his charge without flinching.

Verily each animal has his own individual character, as I said before.

I was witness at another time to a very fortunate escape. When in Persia, marching at night on account of the intense heat, having dismounted to ease our horses, I and my companion of the moment were stepping downhill along a broken mule track by moonlight. As he jumped

from one block of stone to another that lay in the shadow below, he alighted on to something soft, which turned out to be, by good luck, the head—which he crushed—and not the tail, of a big hammer-headed viper.

Snakes of various kinds are said to swarm in the Persian hills, but I was no naturalist in those days, and was not looking for trouble. A snake by the river's brim was to me a snake, and it was nothing more—yet a nuisance to be avoided if possible. The one I have spoken of had a big hammer head, and was not unlike the type of reptile we came across in Central Asia, where the brutes had a double set of striking fangs. One of our men who was there bitten, we kept moving between two of his fellows all through the night, stupefied with poison and drunk with brandy as he was, and thus saved his life, but he had to be invalided and returned to his home in India, whence he wrote that his wound broke out afresh on the anniversary of his accident, and gave him trouble again—(a year afterwards!)

I, however, did not come across very many snakes in Persia, though I remember being warned out of a cavern on a hillside that I intended exploring, by seeing a large one in the entrance, who retired, hissing, and I did not press the acquaintance.

I killed a big one on the platform at Persepolis,

of this hammer-head variety, and also saw one of a different species in the act of shaking off his old skin on the bank of the Bundamir, that I failed to kill, as he slid into the water when my stick missed him.

## CHAPTER X

### MONKEYS, WOLVES, ETC.

It is said that monkeys have a great antipathy to snakes, and this is very natural, but I have never seen them meet in the jungle.

A curious incident happened in the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, in my presence, however. A friend had a very finely rendered snake's head in silver as a handle to his cane. This he showed to several of the smaller species of monkeys, who either were too foolish to recognise a likeness, or too wise to be taken in. Not so the chimpanzees, however, who all retired into the far corner of their house in terror: yet after a time, smitten with curiosity, a young female edged nearer and nearer to make sure, but when she had approached over close for safety in her friend's estimation, he gallantly came to the rescue, threw his arms round her, and carried her back by force into the corner! None of these monkeys could ever have seen a snake, yet they knew their enemy by instinct. Womanly curiosity alone overpowered the sense of

danger, and man stepped in, for once, before she could eat the apple.

Monkeys are well worth watching, and are very useful in the jungle: they will always scold any of the felidæ that are on the move near them in the day-time, and have often given me a timely warning to be on the alert.

Again, should you notice monkeys on the trees in grass-covered land, it is wise to pass that way, as deer may often be found underneath or close by the busy troop. The idea is that that they do not choose their company for the sake of the simian *beaux yeux*, nor even in the hope of being warned of any approaching danger, but from greed alone; for the monkeys shake the boughs, and dislodge berries, fruit, or in some cases, luscious flowers, that make a feast for the gourmands below.

Monkeys near the habitations of man soon become bold and independent, and are in some places a pest. When accustomed to man's presence, they clothe themselves with impudence as with a garment.

Near the sacred shrine of Pushupati,<sup>1</sup> in Nepal, built above the holy spot where the sacred lotus appeared, whose roots' were at Simbhunath, another Nepalese temple—oddly enough, Buddhist—I was pursued by a big troop, headed by a monster with grinning fangs whom I could barely persuade,

<sup>1</sup> The lord of animals—Shiva.



with the help of a big stick, to keep his distance, which he measured accurately by the length of the said cudgel. I held a small girl, my daughter, by the hand, and was more than glad when we had passed safely from the temple platform, and could get assistance to disperse our enemies. Had the child been alone, she would have been torn to pieces.

Once again, I saw a young friend following some brown monkeys along a wall by the roadside, throwing stones or sticks at them for fun, and was amused to see a big fellow stealing along a yard or so behind him on the other side of the wall, and looking over to make a grab at his head, which he was offering to do. I had to shout a warning, and was just in time to bring them both face to face within a foot of each other, when both sprang back equally startled.

Near the same place, I caught a very young one that his mother had dropped in her fright as my elephant surprised the romping crew on a jungle roadway, and petting the little beast, I set him on my knee, and finally, as we entered the jungle, on the seat beside me. As ill-luck would have it, I lost his confidence and affection soon after by firing at something; when our acquaintance terminated, as my small playmate took one affrighted bound, clearing the howdah bars, and, landing safely, lopped away for his life.

When rebuking a native clerk one day for throwing stones at some monkeys, he answered in an aggrieved voice, "Please, sir, he threatening me!" Several big fellows had come close up and were grimacing at him, which had proved over-trying for his nerves, and he had been compelled to take his own part, as he edged his way down to me for protection, with the monkeys grinning and pursuing him.

Once I inadvertently became partaker in a cruelty the remembrance of which haunted me for a long time, and even now I do not care to think of it.

We had been beating a light tree jungle that drew to a point on the banks of the Kosi. The trees near the end of the strip, though fairly tall, were slight, and a big troop of monkeys had kept in front of the line of elephants till these were reached. No game being put out, the elephants gathered round the edge of the cover, and our mischievous Nepalese "pachwa" boys made them shake the trees till the monkeys began to drop out like fruit, and to scurry away as they fell. Several small ones were captured to become camp pets and ride on the elephants besides their owners, but one unhappy matron, perhaps unwilling to leave her baby, was seized by two "pachwa" boys, who, holding her hands on either side at the full stretch of her arms, began a ludicrous dance with

her in spite of her chattering rage, mincing their steps and prancing down the white sand that sloped to the river.

Amused by the fantastic foolery of the scene, and not realising the boys' intention, I watched them until they reached the brink of the river, when they suddenly swung her, once, twice, and the third time as they let go, she was slung out into the stream, where she disappeared with a splash, only to rise and battle helplessly for her life, whirled round by the current, apparently unable to swim the few strokes that would have carried her into smooth water—if, indeed, monkeys *can* swim. In vain I scolded the boys, and bade them run along the bank to save her if they could; but the poor human-looking head bobbed away downstream at a great pace, to be lost in the sunny distance, when the only hope left was that some kindly eddy should drift her inshore. Yet a fresh danger would there, also, be lying in wait, as the still pools under the banks are the homes of many muggers.

The whole episode that passed so quickly was gruesome in the extreme. The horrible mockery of this dance of death enforced on their struggling victim with wanton levity by the cruel-hearted little savages, was revolting beyond words, and I blamed myself bitterly for not having understood in time to save. Even they were, I believe,

saddened and ashamed as they talked it over on the way home.

I spoke of the muggers, or crocodiles, so called by the unknowing. Curiously enough, though I have waded and fished in mugger-infested jheels and rivers, I have never been frightened or annoyed by them. In jheels, the frequent reports of a gun are probably warning enough to the brutes, and except at the edge of a current no man would be likely to enter the water of a big river. Yet I have seen them in Central India and Rajputana suck down duck after duck as they lay dead on the surface of the jheels.

I think that the otters also must know where to fish for prey without incurring risk from these flesh-eating monsters; and when not on business, I fancy that they lie up in safe places on the banks and in the surrounding jungles. I have often watched them playing on the sand of the opposite banks of the Ganges from my camp at Raiwallah; and once I shared in a romp with a party of four or five young ones who had left their chaperons at home and were out on a spree.

I had ridden up-stream to meet my sarnai men, who had preceded me in the morning, and had floated down, fishing the likely places, when we came to a shallow rapid where the river had formed several channels, each taking a share of the water. My men asked me to walk down

a few hundred yards whilst they drew their sarnai skins round to where the currents joined; and carrying my precious rod, I did so.

I found that, as is indeed often the case in the upper reaches of the river when it shrinks after the rains are over, the receding waters had left a sheer bank some twelve or fifteen feet high of mingled stone and sand, and as I walked on the top of this, not far from the edge, I heard some chirping sound that rose from the river beneath. Looking quietly over, I saw a small group of otters at play in a deep green pool under the perpendicular bank; so passing my rod-point in front, I let my silver bait, a small fish, gently down into the water. They all made a dash for it, and I kept raising or lowering the lure so that they could not reach it to touch the hooks. I played with them for quite a minute or two, lowering and raising the point of my rod, before one keener eyed than the rest saw the glint of the gut trace and followed the line up, when a little squeak of alarm told of his discovery, and they all vanished instantly.

Otters become tame and engaging pets. I recollect one that lived in or out of a tub in the verandah of General M——, that would play with a rupee quite prettily, balancing it on his nose and treating it as a toy to be tossed about and recovered at pleasure.

I never fired at one, as they do no harm in these wild waters, teeming with their rightful prey. Nor indeed, except for a pleasant day's outing, have I ever enjoyed otter-hunting in England, which always gave me the feeling that I was joining in a glorified rat-hunt.

I saw my keeper kill one on the bank of a trout pool, before I knew what he was at, kneeling down with uplifted cudgel. He had noticed an otter's chain coming towards him, and was waiting for the wretched little animal, which he struck as it raised its head—a cowardly murder perpetrated with the best intentions, but orders were strict thenceforward that no otter was to be interfered with, and we raised several happy families, yet could never find the young ones at play. We always knew where to find a litter of foxes at the mouth of their earth, but the home of the otter was better concealed.

Presumably they are more nocturnal in their habits in England than they are in the East, where I often saw them on the sands after the heat of the day, and sometimes in the early afternoon, chasing each other—yet an otter was frequently to be found lying on a plank that crossed a small backwater near the above-mentioned lake in the early morning.

Many of the smaller animals in the jungle would well repay the careful observation of the

sportsman, but I grieve to say that I never made opportunities to this end, though I have shot them or left them alone in accordance with the curiosity or whim of the moment.

Jungle dogs, jackal, hare, armadillo, yellow-throated, purple-backed martens, cats, wire-haired little creatures resembling rabbits, and other small fry may frequently be found.

I would here offer advice to all young sportsmen. Sketch whenever you can, take notes always wherever you go: carry sketch- and note-books, you will reap your great reward when the "evil days come, and you have no pleasure in them"—"when age has weakened manhood's power, and every nerve unbraced," as the old hunting song has it. When a depleted purse, moreover, may compel to inactivity, and a man however young at heart must live in the past—on his memories—as a friend of mine put it.

Whom the gods love!—yet that must have been said by an old and weary man. I would rather remind you of a better couplet. *Dum loquimur* :

"E'en while we speak time's slipping fast away ;  
Trust not the morrow, grasp the fleeting day."

And if you do it righteously and whole-heartedly, you may burnish the rusty scythe of the old curmudgeon Time, and enjoy the scent of new-mown hay to the last in spite of him.

Small game is almost everywhere abundant during the cold weather in India, Persia, and Central Asia, and all kinds afford sport in that season. Bustard may be stalked in the plains of Rajputana and Central India, but are difficult to approach, as their long necks allow them a far horizon. I have seen some very big ones in Mesopotamia, that appeared taller than any I had noticed elsewhere. We killed several near Merve, in Central Asia, as also woodcock, snipe, and pheasants in large numbers. I recall one afternoon's sport shared with Colonel Yate, when the thermometer was far below zero, and the blue air itself glistened with myriads of frozen particles that danced in the sunlight. We rode off accompanied by two orderlies, to a reed-grown river-bed, and, stationing ourselves, sent our men armed with a box of matches to set fire to the reeds a mile or so up wind. The crackling, as the fire laid hold of their dry canes, was continuous, and pheasants began to stream over us affording pretty shots almost from the first flicker of the flames. I cannot be certain of the count, but memory points the numbers of the bag somewhere between seventy and ninety.<sup>1</sup> Not bad for a wild afternoon shoot, and as

<sup>1</sup> I have checked these figures from Captain Yate's book, *Northern Afghanistan*. He places the figure at fifty the first day, and seventy-two the second afternoon—but notes that we lost many wounded birds. "The reeds are so thick, and the birds, especially the old cocks, are so strong that it is very hard to bag one's bird even after



to enjoyment incomparably beyond that of a hot corner at home, which you have not worked for—though I have been grateful enough at heart to the many friends who have given me such comfortable stands. The warmest that I remember was one at Acton Reynold, Sir Walter Corbet's beautiful home, where the pick-up behind me rose to a hundred and six head, mostly cocks. My then valet was a first-class loader, and the gun-barrels had become too hot to hold before the cover was beaten out.

I have the same feeling that I expressed about other hunting, as to the sport being comparatively tame, with regard to deer in Scotland. Whilst recognising that it is far more difficult to stalk and kill a good stag there than it often is in wild ground abroad, yet the surroundings are different, the element of surprise and chance is comparatively eliminated, and worst of all, you are under the tutelage of a local gillie, who often puts you wrong when you do get up to game; in fact, the sporting horizon is literally and metaphorically limited. This does not apply to grouse and partridge driving, which seem to me to be the best form of sport that Britain offers to her sons—yet even here it becomes a question more of mechanical skill

it is shot; even if killed dead it is very hard to find, and if a spark of life remains it will invariably manage to creep off and hide somewhere."

than an expression of the higher qualities of the soul of sport.

Fox-hunting, again, interfered with as it now is, must fall from its pride of place. Huge fields, coffee-housing, and barbed-wire entanglements are a handicap that cannot fail to alter conditions and to reduce the noble sport to the level of a mere social function. No more will men be able to take an honest pride in being alone "on the tail of the leading dog," through a long run; no more shall my Irish friend be able to boast after swimming a river, "there was I by meeself, and himself," when he and another had the flying pack to themselves. Instead you will have your M.F.H. compelled to peril his future bliss by the use of profane words as he vainly endeavours to keep a mob of road-riders from galloping over hounds at a check, whilst a bagged fox is sneaking about, where he may, in unfamiliar hedgerows. I remember a good story told of a well-known M.F.H. who had views of his own, and was taking the pack home at an unusually early hour. He was accosted by a stranger gentleman, the professor of a divergent religious faith from his own, to all appearance—whose speech, moreover, carried an implied censure.

"In my country, hounds do not go home at three o'clock." The master looked him up and down, and then—

"*Your* country? In your country you would

be hunting wolves and jackals round the walls of Jerusalem.”

But I have wandered from the subject of small game to wolves and jackals. As to the former, you do not meet them very often. They are almost as elusive as jungle dogs. Yet I was held up by a pack of seven that I had rounded up by getting between them and their point, a low line of hills, after a gallop in Central India.

I was riding a young horse that became afterwards my staunchest friend, but who on this occasion left me in the lurch, for as I dismounted to fire and raised my rifle sharply, he threw up his head and spoilt my shot, then broke away kicking, whilst I stood with the seven devils grinning at me from a hillock, and only one shot at my disposal, for the spare cartridges were in my holster—for the last time. As we faced each other and the situation, I made up my mind that a prompt attack was my best policy, so picking out the biggest, I let him have my light express bullet in the shoulder—but too low—when he went down, and the others started to move away, very slowly indeed, after their limping companion, though I shouted to hasten their retreat. They slouched away, however, but continually looking back, so that I could not myself move to regain my horse for some little time. When I did coax him to come to me, it was too late to go in pursuit of the pack, as I had lost sight

of them. They probably stopped to breakfast with their wounded leader somewhere in the plain.

When acting as A.D.C. to General Sir A. Becher, who was in command of the Umballah district, I accompanied him on tour through the Sikh states of Pattiala, Jheend, Nabha, etc., whose chiefs, all well-bred, courteous, and dignified gentlemen and soldiers of the old school, were most hospitable, and endeavoured to show sport in the General's honour.

When beating a plain, I think in Jheend territory, with a line of cavalry extended, a wolf was put up who deliberately ran the gauntlet in front of and down the line, carrying a lamb in his mouth, which he would not relinquish until the lances on the left, riding hard, had almost cut him off and headed him.

Then only did he drop his prey, and after giving us this demonstration of cool audacity, he snarled and lopped away—

“ In that long gallop that can tire  
The hounds' fierce hate, the hunters' fire ”—

and soon left his pursuers at a standstill on their sobbing horses.

Jackals usually work in troops, and sing in chorus to entertain the jungle folk at night, but I have seen one coursing a hare in and out of korindah bushes at mid-day. He was running in view, not

by scent, and the hare, who could probably have escaped easily in the open, was at a disadvantage threading her way through the bushes. I did not see the end of the hunt, as I was on an elephant, and could only watch the chase for a short distance.

In Central Asia I witnessed a pretty course, when a hare three times on a bare sandy plain in full view of us avoided the swoop of an eagle who was forced to rise high after each ineffectual stoop and so lost time, which the hare put to her credit. All my sympathy was with the quarry, who, I think, succeeded in gaining the shelter of the bush for which she was striving.

The plains of Central Asia and Persia are very bare when denuded of their mantle of thistles, but the vast stretches of country we traversed presented ever-changing features of hill and plain. In the hills near Herat, which in some districts are covered with pistachios, we found *assafetida* and several very beautiful-flowering plants of an allied species; and the whole range, wrongly, I believe, called the Paropamissus, was ablaze in the spring with flowers of many hues.

Sir Peter Lumsden organised a big drive in these mountains beyond Herat, to the very summit of which I rode a waler, yet which were for years supposed to be an insuperable bar to the advance of an army from the North.



“CARRYING A LAMB IN HIS MOUTH.”

[To face page 278.]

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AUGUST 1900

I lent my rifle to a friend, and passed the day sketching the ground where the guns were posted on the crest of a mighty amphitheatre of mountain. If I remember aright, the total bag only amounted to some fourteen or sixteen head, mostly oorial, though twenty or thirty miles of country had been driven in by large numbers of mounted men. Much of the game had broken back before the Afghan and tribal horsemen had converged on the appointed spot, of which they had killed a few head, and much passed the scattered guns without running the gauntlet of their fire. Nevertheless it was an interesting experience.

When travelling in Persia, the Il Khani of the Kashkai organised a beat of the same description, to show me sport, scouring an enormous stretch of country with several hundred horsemen—but the result was much the same, a large proportion of the driven herds broke back, paying toll, however, for the Persians' fire when galloping, and we killed some thirty head, gazelle and oorial chiefly, though a few ibex also fell.

I witnessed a very pretty kill that day, when one of the tribesmen rose a hill in front of us in hot pursuit of a deer, and racing down the boulder-strewn slope, dropped his reins, rose in his stirrups, and fired, when the deer pitched forward and turned a somersault in answer to the shot—this

M



on ground which would turn many a man's hair grey to ride over.

No horse cares to face the punishment he receives when asked to do more than pick his way through the sheets of standing prickles which frequently deck the plains of Central Asia and Persia, in which the wild boar, however, is quite at home. When these thistle crops are withered and swept away into nullahs or valleys by the autumn winds, they again become of use to him as a winter residence.

Of the splendid pheasant shooting to be had in the river- or stream-beds to the north of Herat, I have spoken elsewhere.

These reed-beds afford shelter to the pig and to the few tigers that inhabit the wastes, whose numbers are presumably limited by the scarcity of game or other food. Colonel Yate, M.P., when engaged on Government work, killed the only one seen by us in the flesh in those districts. The tiger had been drawn by some Turcoman's dogs, when Captain Yate took a carbine from one of his men, and on looking over the bank of a small canal in which the angry beast was held at bay, was charged at once. He writes: "The tiger was a full-grown male, quite as big as an Indian tiger, but much dingier in colour. The skin was more of a dirty brown, with very little black about it at all. Just a few stripes on the back were black, but the

majority were simply of a darker shade of brown than the rest of the skin." His skull was, however, large; the beast must have been a fine specimen, and the slaying of him in this impromptu manner with a chance arm was a lucky and plucky performance.

I scarcely think that Colonel Yate attached the importance it deserved to this Central Asian specimen. The skull was, I believe, exhibited at a meeting of the Zoological Society, in Hanover Square, where as an unusually fine head it attracted much notice.

I tracked one for several hours, whose pugs I came upon whilst after pheasants, but we never managed to get a view, and these two are the only ones whose presence can be recorded.

Wild asses are the spoilt children of these deserts. They seem to find a living where to all appearance nature produces little but stones and sand for provender, and they retain their freedom.

The vast stretches of country over which they roam—whether hill or plain predominate would seem to make little difference—no doubt partly account for the speed of these animals, who are always in condition for a gallop.

They are very fast, and no single horseman can hope to ride them down, though occasionally the Turcoman drive them, and by a careful heading of the herd towards the heavy going produced by

melting snow on a salt pan, or marsh land, succeed in killing or capturing a young one occasionally. I have known a troop come down at night and attack our baggage ponies and mules, but as a rule all you see of them is the cloud of dust they raise as they gallop.

I once saw two together heading for an opening in the hills in front of us, and put up a friend, who was a mere featherweight, on to my best Arab, in hope of cutting them off. He had a rifle in his hand and meant shooting, but he never had a chance with them. They gained the hills far ahead of him, covering the longer distance they had to traverse at a speed that made the blood Arab's pace appear ridiculous. They are a living proof that a straight shoulder does not militate against speed, any more than it does against "throwing a big lep"—witness also the black buck—but neither has to carry weight beyond his own.

Speaking of the Turcoman, who are now by degrees being brought under the Russian yoke, they are a fine race, and will supply splendid military material for the benefit of their conquerors. Scobeleff understood that kid-glove rule was not suited to savage requirements, and though it would be hard to advance a justification for his war methods as applied to the Merve Turcoman—where he not only wiped out the garrison, but slaughtered some 30,000 fugitive women and

children at the same time, according to the accounts published—no man in Central Asia has dared to raise a hand since that day against Russian dominance, and raiding and bloodshed has become a thing of the past—that one awful lesson was sufficient.

The Turcoman is a horseman in his way. He will cover immense distances; in his raids into Persia with a led horse or two to aid him, a hundred to two hundred miles of country lay at his mercy.

I knew one of those old raiders, Koki Sirdar, who was quite a good fellow and pleasant to talk to; he had made some fifty or more raids into Persia, and looked upon the Persian as his natural god-granted prey.

Yet they are not good horsemen, as we understand the term. There are no obstacles in the desert wastes, and when we made a small course with jumps, and offered prizes for competition, several of them were injured by being thrown forward on to the high pommel of their own saddles. They sit on padded saddles, a foot at least above their horses' backs, with their legs tucked up. I asked one of their crack riders to take my waler down to water one day after a long march, and he could not sit in the smooth saddle when the horse whose head he interfered with began dancing, but left a fine mould of his figure in the sand almost at once.

Nevertheless they can ride in their own way most recklessly, and the "búzgala bâzi" ("goat neck game") is almost a national pastime.

A goat (scandal asserts alive, occasionally, but dead when we witnessed the game) is placed near an umpire, and the riders race to get hold of it. Whoever succeeds then gallops off, pursued by his friends, who use every means fair or foul to recover it from his hold.

Whips are freely used both on horse and man, the jostling at racing pace is desperate, and falls are frequent in the cloud of dust raised by the galloping crew. Whoever manages at last to get clear of the *melée* and to drop the goat at the feet of the umpire, is rewarded with the dragged carcass, on which he and his friends regale themselves in the evening. It is a game, like polo, for the manufacture of horsemen, and is really worth seeing.

In the spring, the sandy wastes, which are the home of the *jerboa*, and for that reason enjoin a caution that you cannot take when after pig, are carpeted with tulips, whilst *heliotrope* grows freely in the dry stream-beds; and some of the sheltered valleys and lower hills near Herat afford splendid pasture, and are a veritable paradise for the botanist.

Further north, if indeed not in the valley of the Hari Rud itself, the winter is severe: the glass often



**BÜZGALA BÂZI, OR GOAT GAME.**

[To face page 182.]

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stands at twenty degrees below zero for weeks, and the ground is deep in snow. When spring returns, which it usually does with a sudden leap, the aspect of nature changes instantly : the barren wastes are clothed with light grasses, the flocks find pasture and grow sleek, whilst earth and sky are peopled by thousands of migrating birds.

An incident that happened to me in Turkestan may be worth mentioning. We had thought that winter was over, had struck our standing camp, and were moving with light eighty-pound tents, in one of which I was living, when an untimely return snap of winter surprised the land. A heavy fall of snow came down in a blizzard from the north, and the whole country lay shrouded in white for several bitter days. We had no firewood, and all that my servants could give me to warm the tent was an earthen pan, filled with some grubbed-up roots of plants, which they kindled. Reports came in that the steppes were so deep in snow that we could not move, that the land was dotted for miles around us with dead birds, whilst all the lambs had perished. As if to confirm the story, whilst I was engaged in writing a letter home, the flap of my small tent being open for the sake of light, seven swallows flew in seeking warmth and shelter, and settling on my head fought for places. Of these, five managed to secure the necessary room, whilst of the two who were crowded out one leant against



my hand and prevented me from writing, whilst the other sat close to my ear on a cord of the tent wall. The root-fire that smouldered in a pan under the table furnished warmth for an hour or two, and they did not even disturb themselves when my servant came in with a cup of hot cocoa. When thoroughly rested and warmed, at last they roused themselves, flew round my head once or twice, chirping to say good-bye, perhaps "thank you," and then away they went, out into the cold, but no doubt strengthened for a flight that should carry them to warmer regions.

Birds, and beasts even, when they are a prey to any stress of circumstance, will put their trust in man. I have passed within a yard or so of two jackals who had taken refuge in my verandah during a tremendous hail-storm in the hills, without their moving or showing any signs of want of confidence. They felt that it was up to me to play them fair and be hospitable, and I recognised the obligation. Some of the hailstones that fell that day measured  $2\frac{1}{2}$  or more inches across, and went through the corrugated iron of the roof as cleanly as any bullet could have done.

I might give abundant instances in proof that our British birds, more particularly perhaps in the nesting season, will—albeit they resent any ill-bred overtures of familiarity—place reliance on the presence and protection of man.

For instance, a flycatcher built, and sat, four feet from the ground, over a knob on the trunk of a big chestnut tree, where my children had their swing passing within a yard or two of the nest, round which they played all the day long.

A hen pheasant brought out her brood successfully in the small boy's private garden (which, *passim*, does not say much for the gardener's industry). A chaffinch nested in a camelia bush in the conservatory that opened off the drawing-room, and a robin made it his business to sit on the back of a chair by the piano when my girls were practising, and of scolding them when they played a wrong note—so they said!

Year in year out, we had a covey of partridges hatched in the gorse bushes beyond our tennis lawn, and a nest of long-tailed titmice in a tall bush in the brambles, which were always crowded with other birds' nests, in the same small patch of cover on the lawn. Another pet robin constantly put in an appearance whenever he heard my axe at work, and this must have been for companionship only, as I disturbed no ground to discover food for him.

But my desultory wandering thoughts have led my reader far from the game-birds of Asia, and I revert to the subject, going back to the bustard, which I have already mentioned. The houbara, so called, belongs to this tribe, and the bird was

constantly hawked by the officers of the "Guides"—one of the grandest native regiments in India, whose home is on the northern frontier. I enjoyed several good gallops by their courtesy many years ago, and can vouch for it that a good horse under you is a necessity, for the flight is low and very fast, as must be your ride, if you mean to see the game out.

In those days Cavagnari was preparing for his death-ride to Cabul, and we had, I remember, a first-rate gallop together with the pack of fox-hounds then kept at Bunnoo. Poor fellow, he started on a cruel errand with every confidence in the success of his mission, to surrender one of the many good lives that has been squandered in upholding a policy deliberately adopted and sanctioned for a hundred years, but that has lately been given away to a flourish of press trumpets by a stroke of the pen of subservient diplomacy.

The far-reaching effects of this belauded treaty will ere long be in evidence, but until that day, the wisdom or the folly of an all-round surrender of British interests will remain a matter of dispute. Humble pie has, however, become the national diet, and must be stomached with grace.

We have no reason to rejoice over any of our previous concessions to the predatory powers of Europe, but this may prove an exceptionally triumphant vindication of our lately adopted

estimate of political values. Pecksniffian tenets as applied to diplomacy may, however, be excused on a common-sense ground, for it is obvious that diplomacy unbacked by arms is powerless to preserve a decadent and misguided nation from easily accepted humiliations.

Even our armaments are now being ruined, and the last hope of salvation—our Navy—being emasculated, at the dictation of foreign powers, and by the connivance of our own “statesmen”!

But my thoughts should not have wandered from predatory birds.

It was customary in old days to keep up a hawking establishment at the native courts, which habit may still obtain, each species of hawk being trained to strike a particular quarry.

I have seen vultures hawked on several occasions, the powerful birds rising straight up in spirals against the sky, hoping to catch some streak of wind above that would give their big sails an advantage over the hawk's more delicate but death-dealing pinions, and have seen them thus elude stoop after stoop, only to be struck at last high in heaven, whence they would fall to the ground like stones beneath their tiny assailant, without making further effort—a mere cowardly bundle of feathers.

A very small hawk is flown at partridge and quail in a curious manner, being held in the hand and flung like a stone at the rising game, when for

an appreciable instant he is not able to spread his wings, though he gains an initial impetus no doubt from being hurled at his quarry that would not be his were he merely cast loose from the fist—and with the quick dash and low flight of partridge or quail for the nearest cover at sight of a hawk this initial velocity makes all the difference.

Others are, I know, used for gazelle hunting, but I cannot recall having actually seen a deer killed in this way.

Whilst on the subject of hawks and vultures, the “adjutant” may be mentioned. I never appreciated how thoroughly descriptive the name until I witnessed the descent of a number of these birds that had been drawn together to feast on some tiger and leopard carcasses thrown out near one of our camps in Central India—the big stork-vultures came down from an infinite distance in the blue, sailing in spirals on outstretched steady wings, with their long white thighs and legs held stiff and straight like a soldier’s on parade, as they wheeled, thus giving them quite an old-fashioned military appearance!

These birds frequent Calcutta in great numbers, and are there fairly tame. They were the victims of a practical joke on one occasion, when, lumps of ice being thrown to them by some sailors, they swallowed the gift greedily, whole, to dance about with unusual levity of deportment for some time

after, inadvertently forced to share the feelings of the young lady who liked champagne as it made her so unreserved.

Again have I wandered, as the migratory birds of whom I was speaking. The floricans, large or small, are excellent eating, and it was rather interesting to watch a grass-covered plain during the rainy season, the time of year when the lesser florican comes in, for the sharp rise of the bird when, presumably insect-catching, he flutters up for a few yards. You can then locate and walk him up. Epicures declare that the flesh is rendered specially palatable from his habit of catching the food he is so fond of—Spanish fly.

Hill game is in some places plentiful. To watch a monal with his plumage of purple, green, and gold glistening in the sun, float out above you from a cliff in the Himalaya is worth a climb; whilst kalege and other birds come down a "khud" at a pace that requires the gunner to be "all there."

I have seen woodcock in the hills floating about in the dusk of evening, but never shot them there.

The chicore or red-legged hill partridge is very plentiful in some of the lower ranges, both in India and Persia. They are rather difficult to flush, however, as they use their red legs in preference to their wings—a double line of beaters

working to meet each other assures your obtaining shots. The natives stalk up to these birds, holding a spotted handkerchief pulled over crossed sticks in front of them as a shield, when a whole covey will often run together to chatter at what they suppose to be a panther, and thus afford a family pot shot to the crafty village poacher. But all this small fry that furnishes amusement and replenishes the larder is too insignificant to need much notice.

Jungle cock, snipe, quail, and duck shooting, though they have yielded me many pleasant days' recreation, are scarcely worthy of mention. I have killed over two hundred couple of duck in one day in the Nepalese jungle—almost equalling this bag two days later in the same place, the birds being driven from either side of me by natives paddling their "dugouts." I had waded out to a small island in the centre of the water, and there sat half-hidden by the rushes, when I was kept busy at intervals throughout the day, as the duck were put up wherever they settled for a mile or two on either side. Many different kinds also continually came in from other jheels to seek shelter, and the bag held an assortment of some ten or twelve varieties at least.

Dholepore, too, which is more easily reached than Nepal, can offer very good duck shooting. I can remember being one of a party of guns standing near a small red sandstone temple on a strip of

land between the lakes, and firing till the gun barrels were too hot to be pleasant holding. You may often see a duck, when hit, struck and carried off by a hawk before it reaches the surface of the water wherein friend mugger lies in wait for the wounded in many places.

Talking of predatory birds : I once saw a white-headed fish-hawk, or eagle, for it was of larger size I think than the white-headed rufous-bodied hawk—though possessing to all appearance the same plumage—leave the naked branch of a tree on which he was sitting, and swoop at a cormorant, or snake-bird, that was flying down-stream above the centre of the current with a fish in his bill. The attack was so sudden that I saw him strike, and his stricken victim fall, ere I realised why he had quitted his perch. The snake-bird splashed into the river with a broken wing, whilst the robber without slackening his stoop buried his talons in the relinquished prey before it could reach the water, and sailed away triumphant with the plunder.

It is well, however, when duck and snipe shooting in wild country to have a couple of bullets at hand to replace your shot cartridges. Gerard of the Central India Horse saved himself from a mauling by being ready with a ball cartridge, when charged out of sheer devilry by a panther. Not that an ounce of shot at the same distance



might not have proved as effectual a stopper, for the brute fell dead within a yard of him. The real value of keeping a bullet handy is that a chance of some bigger game, whether deer or cat, may be offered you at any moment, and it is well to be prepared.

The sand-grouse is a sporting bird, and worthy of mention. You may find him everywhere during the cold weather, from the plains of the Deccan to the steppes of Central Asia, from the large pintail to the small yellow grouse. I fancy that there are at least four varieties of the bird; but to my shame be it said, I was never a scientific observer, sport being more appreciated in my young days than natural history research, and I took no notes.

They are somewhat difficult birds to approach on coverless plains, but they "stoop" as do all game birds, and you may walk them up by circling round and closing on them in the open—with luck—whilst if you can find the water-hole where they drink—and they come very regularly evening and morning from many miles out of the deserts around, when water is scarce, to a favourite pool—you will have as pretty a half-hour's shoot at fighting birds as you may desire, for they come very fast, their pace almost equalling that of driven grouse. For the acme of pace, however, I commend the flight of paroquets coming down

out of heaven to home in their pet roosting-places.

Yet perhaps I am wrong there, as anyone who has stood on the face of a precipice in the Himalaya, and has felt the wind of the wings of a stooping condor as the giant plunges from some infinite height in the blue to be lost in the abyss below, may say that Lucifer falling from heaven could scarce have surpassed his lightning speed. A hum, and you look up at a speck in the blue—a scream of protest from the outraged air as a hurtling shadow that your eye fails to follow, passes your ken, and the condor is gone.

Those hills! I have seen neither the Rockies nor the Andes, which may possibly be compared with them for grandeur, but I have seen the Caucasus, and can remember the wrath of my Russian and French companions who were pointing out the peak of Ararat, and its magnificence, when I answered: "Yes, very pretty hills, but you should see the Himalaya mountains." I had no intention of hurting their feelings by my thoughtless remark, which was, however, a *gaucherie*.

I have stood at a height of 12,000 feet in the early morning to watch the sun rise over the line of stupendous peaks silhouetted against the sky for a thousand miles in one long chain—have heard the first faint twitter of birds rise from the ilex forests thousands of feet below, as dusk gave

N

way before the earliest glimmer of a dawn in the upper sky, that extinguished the light of the stars one by one—have watched the darkness giving place to pearl as the heavens opened, whilst the mighty ramparts that guarded the gates of day put on a royal purple.

Then as light quickened, shafts of opal preceded the rising sun, the purple faded, and the bastions of snow stood out brick-red against the sky. Till as the daystar sailed over the sleeping glaciers to bathe the world in light, the peaks were edged with silver, their shadowed scarps accepted violet hues, and wreaths of glittering mist that had shrouded the bosom of earth floated upwards to melt away beneath the glances of the god.

For as yet the sleeping earth had lain, close curtained in her canopied repose, beneath a tideless ocean of mist that spread sheets of silver gauze upon her breast to shield her form and veil her every feature from the prying stars—but now to stir, and waking, cast aside her coverings of the night, as the life-giving spirit of fire flamed on the face of the waters.

From every steaming chasm, from every dew-drenched, sodden, slope and wooded dell, incense arose as the awakened earth put on her splendour, and adorned as a bride with her necklace of pearl, swung her censer and worshipped, as she came forth to meet the bridegroom.

And it was day—heaven and earth had met together in one long kiss, the voice of song re-echoed in the woods, and Nature, smiling, blushed as she registered once again the eternal sacrament, to which I bore witness.

Yes, rise at four in the morning, when the lampman is going his rounds and putting out the stars one by one, and you, too, may be present at the love scenes of the gods, if you climb half-way to heaven and watch—it is worth while.

Even after the sunrise, should you be no enthusiast about early hours, it is still, in spite of beating heart and straining sinew, worth a climb. The beauty of morning in the Himalayas has a charm that clings—the mountains glow with a thousand colours that shift and vary with every movement of the passing clouds; the distances soft, mysterious, endless, take on every conceivable tint of delicate purple, blue, and violet. The mist wreaths that hang blue-grey below the glacier chains, cause every silhouetted spray of rhododendron blossom to burn crimson in the sunlight, and the ground plan of colour—the olive of the ilex, the lighter green of the lower forests, and the darker glories of the pine—blends all into a panorama of unapproachable beauty and majesty.—Go and see!



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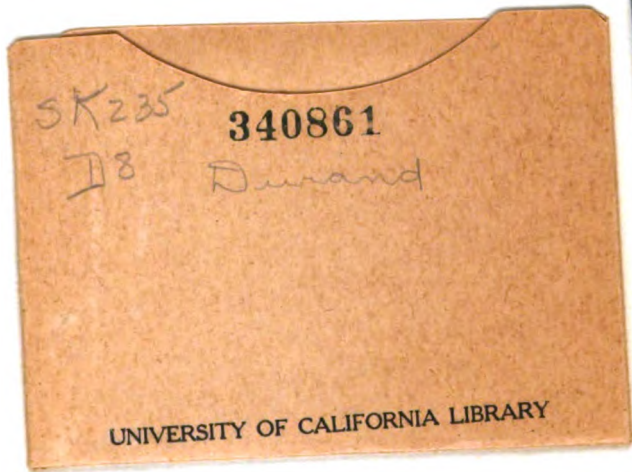
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