

Rifleman
(Drill Order).

Gurkha Officer
(Active Service Kit).

Gurkha Officer
(Review Order).

N.C.O.
(Active Service Kit).

Bugler
(Guard Order).

TYPES 1ST BATT, 8TH GURKHA RIFLES.

Sport and Service in Assam and Elsewhere

By **LT.-COL. ALBAN WILSON, D.S.O.** ::

(Late 1st Batt. 8th Gurkha Rifles)

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WITH 20 ILLUSTRATIONS

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“ Thus all alone by the wood and wold
I yield myself once again
To the memories old that, like tales fresh told,
Come flitting across the brain.

“ No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.

“ There’s danger even where fish are caught
To those who a wetting fear ;
For what’s worth having must aye be bought,
And sport’s like life and life’s like sport—
‘ It ain’t all skittles and beer.’ ”

—“ Ye Wearie Wayfarer,” ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

FOREWORD

SPORTSMEN with rod and gun and the general reader—that most important patron of authors—will find much to interest them in my friend Colonel Alban Wilson's book. It gives me much pleasure to write a few words about it because he asked me to do so, although it is quite unnecessary. The reader who begins the first chapter will finish the book—not all at once, because one must do other things beside read in the twenty-four hours; but I can vividly imagine the pleasure with which the reader, after filling his pipe, or lighting her cigarette, will resume the perusal of this charming chronicle of sport and service of a British officer of our wonderful Indian Army, one might say in most parts of India. All my life nearly I have enjoyed the stories of life in our Indian Services which have made "Blackwood" so famous. Occasionally I have asked my friend Mr. James Blackwood if some extra steep story was true. All he will say is, "That *was* a good one, wasn't it!" Although so interesting and varied, one feels all the time in reading these "Service Recollections" of life in India that it is a true tale; also that the author modestly never magnifies his own part. Here is a delightful fishing story which exemplifies this.

Colonel Wilson was fishing a fine river, the Dhansiri, near Nichuguard. He says :

" Whilst I was fishing, a native came and spun me various yarns about the enormous fish a sahib had caught there the previous year, one of which was so large the narrator had to take his clothes off to help to land it. From further inquiries I elicited particulars which showed that this angler could be no other than myself, and as on this occasion

I had killed nothing over 6 lbs., I suggested that this 18-pounder would have grown to 80 lbs. by the time the next sahib came along."

When reading these "Recollections" as they appeared week by week in my paper, the *Fishing Gazette*, it seemed hardly possible that these experiences of almost a lifetime should have taken place after the writer's first communication to it, which must be nearly thirty years ago, and I suppose I must have had something from his pen nearly every year. Although some wished there was more about fishing, it has been delightful to find how many of my readers have expressed the pleasure with which they have read these "Recollections." Without ornamentation, the style is pleasantly clear and straightforward; in reading, I seemed again to be sitting enjoying a smoke after lunch on the bank of a lovely Yorkshire trout and grayling stream while listening to my friend's account of life and sport in India—and in this country.

In one respect it was pleasanter after dinner, and after seeing some of my host's bewildering collection of trophies of all kinds, because, while everything was perfect out there by the river, there was one big fly in the ointment: all the time when fishing (with a game knee which made even walking difficult) and when lounging on the bank watching the Colonel put his favourite and my favourite "honey-dun bumble" over inquisitive grayling—all the time I was conscious of the presence in that earthly paradise of the embodiment of all the worst bulls I have ever seen or imagined. Of course, after tigers, snakes, crocs., etc., the Colonel did not seem to mind bulls. "Yes," he had "*seen* one about." An hour or so later, when he was a mile away and I was in the bed of the little stream surrounded by high banks trying to get a dry fly over a good trout, there was a roar behind me, and on looking round, within fifteen yards there was the bull, bellowing, tearing the ground up, and doing everything a bull does when he is angry and giving you notice to quit. I "quot," as the

Yankees say, and got out of sight round the bend as soon as my game knee would permit. After that the place seemed infested with bulls. It takes the edge off the pleasure of trying for a rising trout when you feel that any moment you may get a rise yourself from a bull. Since then I have become a member of the Zoo—to study their habits. The Colonel—who was as hard as nails and could get over the ground like one of his beloved little Gurkhas, seemed to think my friend's action was more bluff than business ; but I was not surprised when I next met him to hear him say, " You remember your bull ? He chased me off the big meadow the other day." I said, " Thank God you had not got a game knee ! "

R. B. MARSTON.

PREFACE

I have been much complimented by the wish of Messrs Hutchinson and Co. to publish in book form these articles, some of which appear by permission of the *Fishing Gazette*, from whose editor, Mr. R. B. Marston, I have received much help and encouragement. Some others in slightly altered form saw daylight first in the Indian papers, particularly the *Pioneer*.

In writing these yarns, the happy days spent with my regiment and the cheerful company of my men, whom I shall never meet again in this life, have been vividly recalled to memory. Before I retired I had no idea that I should miss the men so much; they were constantly with me for the best part of thirty years, both in peace and war, and did all they could to help in my work and sport. There is not one, no matter how queer a character he may have been, of whom I do not retain some pleasant recollection.

Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit.

ALBAN WILSON.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Foreword - - - - -	v
Preface - - - - -	ix
List of Illustrations - - - - -	xv
CHAPTER I	
Early experiences—Fishing in the Muhl—Shillong—Score off the doctor - - - - -	17
CHAPTER II	
Gurkha officer, Hima Chand—Fishing in Sylhet—Leopards at Shillong—Gurkhas in India - - - - -	23
CHAPTER III	
Recruiting during the Great War—A quaint staff officer—March to Manipur—Deserted city of Dimapur—Sport in Manipur State—Practical joke on M.P. - - - - -	30
CHAPTER IV	
Manipur rebellion, '91—Looting—Trial of Manipuri notables—Their execution—Cholera - - - - -	38
CHAPTER V	
Sick leave—Sport in Germany—Language leave in Calcutta—Tank fishing—Examination - - - - -	42
CHAPTER VI	
Description of Shillong—Rainfall at Cherrapunji—Sylhet oranges—Fishing below Cherra—The Mahseer - - - - -	48
CHAPTER VII	
Monoliths in Khasia Hills—The Khasias—Legend of the snake—Woodcock—Fish-poisoning—Dynamite - - - - -	53
CHAPTER VIII	
Fishing round Shillong—A cute drummer—Poaching—Rhinoceros	59
CHAPTER IX	
Signalling class, Kasauli—Morni Tal—Patiala - - - - -	64

	PAGE
CHAPTER X	
Travelling in Assam—Crocodiles—River steamers—Education of Bengalis - - - - -	71
CHAPTER XI	
Duck-shooting and native fishing in marshes of Assam—Lakes in Manipur State - - - - -	80
CHAPTER XII	
Adventure with a Rogue elephant - - - - -	85
CHAPTER XIII	
Buffalo—Fishing in the Um Khen river - - - - -	93
CHAPTER XIV	
Abor expedition, 1894—Catapulting—Fishing in Abor country -	99
CHAPTER XV	
Abor expedition—Discomfort of the jungle - - - - -	104
CHAPTER XVI	
Gambling in Shillong—Fishing on the frontier—A planters' race meeting - - - - -	110
CHAPTER XVII	
Pigeon-shooting—Regimental manœuvres - - - - -	116
CHAPTER XVIII	
The march to Manipur—The Murrul—Snaring a crocodile -	121
CHAPTER XIX	
Manipur and its inhabitants—Polo as played there - - - - -	125
CHAPTER XX	
Manipuri hockey—A haunted house—Fishing in Shillong—Regimental durbar - - - - -	130
CHAPTER XXI	
Lushai expedition, '95-'96—The Lushais—A Lushai ghost—Fishing in Lushai - - - - -	136
CHAPTER XXII	
Useless interpreters—Journey from Lushai—My servant's matrimonial affairs—Remedy for jaundice—Charms - - - - -	142
CHAPTER XXIII	
A murder—My Abor boy—My servant's wife - - - - -	148

Contents

xiii

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXIV	
A Gurkha's love affairs and suicide - - - -	153
CHAPTER XXV	
Our household staff in Shillong - - - -	158
CHAPTER XXVI	
Cholera camp—Fishing in camp—A tame otter—Shooting in cholera camp - - - -	163
CHAPTER XXVII	
Life in cholera camp—Our sporting doctor—His methods with snakes - - - -	170
CHAPTER XXVIII	
Shooting in the Manipur State—The Manipuri deer - -	177
CHAPTER XXIX	
Tame bears—Leeches, etc.—Sambur shooting - - -	182
CHAPTER XXX	
Notes on Gurkhas - - - -	187
CHAPTER XXXI	
My batman—Gurkhas' methods of shooting - - -	193
CHAPTER XXXII	
Another batman—Campaign against the Nagas - - -	198
CHAPTER XXXIII	
Shooting experiences and disappointments—Rhinoceros—Kashmir stag, etc. - - - -	206
CHAPTER XXXIV	
Mysterious animals—Lions—Takin—Luminous snakes—Unicorn ram - - - -	212
CHAPTER XXXV	
Oriental peculiarities—A clerk's speculations, desertion and capture - - - -	219
CHAPTER XXXVI	
Garrison class, Ranikhet—Sport in that neighbourhood - -	226
CHAPTER XXXVII	
March to Kohima—Languages in the Indian army—The Naga tribes - - - -	231

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXXVIII	
Appointed to Staff—Journey to Naini Tal—Sport round Naini Tal	237
CHAPTER XXXIX	
My assistants—Riot in bazar—Serow shooting—Strange adventure with a leopard	242
CHAPTER XL	
Hawk-catching—Shooting in Oudh—The hispid hare	252
CHAPTER XLI	
Tiger-shoot in Nepal—Spoilt by an obstructive official	259
CHAPTER XLII	
A tiger in the Terai—Waziristan blockade, 1901-2—Peculiar officers	267
CHAPTER XLIII	
A day's fighting on the North-west Frontier	275
CHAPTER XLIV	
Markhor at Sheik Budin	281
CHAPTER XLV	
A military " policeman runs " amok "	288
CHAPTER XLVI	
A conjuring officer—Indian jugglers—Thought-reading	293
CHAPTER XLVII	
Mahsud prisoners—Jubbulpore—Fishing in the Nerbudda river—Bees—Fraudulent shikaries	298
CHAPTER XLVIII	
Pachmahri—Its caves and scenery—Wild dogs—A practical joker	305
CHAPTER XLIX	
Difficulties in getting leave—Return to Assam—A Bengali cricketer	311
CHAPTER L	
Shillong—Last days with woodcock	316

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Types 1st Batt. 8th Gurkha Rifles	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
					<i>Facing page</i>
Pillars at Dimapur	-	-	-	-	34
The Umiam River	-	-	-	-	50
The Woodcock's Haunt	-	-	-	-	50
Khasia Memorial Stones	-	-	-	-	54
A "Dug-out" Canoe	-	-	-	-	82
A 30lb. Mahseer	-	-	-	-	94
Gurkha with Buffalo Head	-	-	-	-	94
Pipes and Drums, 1st Batt. 8th Gurkhas	-	-	-	-	108
Abor Warriors	-	-	-	-	108
River Scenery, Lushai	-	-	-	-	136
A Lushai Village	-	-	-	-	138
The Sonai River, Lushai	-	-	-	-	142
A Manipur Snipe Bog	-	-	-	-	178
Gurkha Women and Children	-	-	-	-	188
A Naga Fort	-	-	-	-	202
Naga Doorway	-	-	-	-	236
A Naga House	-	-	-	-	236
Cliffs at Pachmarhi	-	-	-	-	306
A Halt for Water	-	-	-	-	318

Sport and Service in Assam and Elsewhere

CHAPTER I

EARLY EXPERIENCES—FISHING IN THE MAHL—SHILLONG— SCORE OFF THE DOCTOR

NEARLY thirty-five years ago, when serving with a British regiment in the Punjab hills, I was asked if I would like to be appointed to a Gurkha regiment, stationed in Assam. My "skipper" was a shrewd and somewhat ferocious individual, commonly called "Mac," so I went off to see him, and, finding him in a fairly good temper, asked his advice about accepting the billet.

He replied: "Assam is a first-rate place for all kinds of sport, the planters are first-class fellows, as a rule, and there is generally an expedition of some sort going on, but I believe most fellows there have had D.T., or else are sickening for it, so you'll have to be careful! Still, as you are thinking of the Indian Army and are fond of sport, you could do far worse than go there, especially as Gurkhas are excellent fellows to soldier with." So my application went in without further delay.

Mac was a great character, and we subalterns all stood in great awe of him. He was an enormous man, a strict disciplinarian and good at his job, though at times he was very crusty. His type has long since disappeared from the Service. He could put away a dozen or more whisky pegs during the day, with a glass or two of Madeira after lunch and a bottle of

port after dinner without seeming any the worse for it, but we used to observe with great interest during the hot weather how, as soon as he had swallowed a peg, it seemed to reappear in pearls of perspiration on the top of his bald pate. This, he assured us, was a very healthy sign. He sometimes suffered from asthma, and generally had an attack after a difference of opinion with the mess sergeant, a not infrequent event, as he was perpetually president of the mess committee, being a great authority on all matters connected with food and drink.

One night, being seedy, he did not come to mess, but turned up at orderly room next morning, followed by a very nice little fox-terrier, which no one had seen before. Mac hated dogs, or said he did, so he was asked where he got it from. "God knows, my dear fellow!" was the reply. "I had a fearful go of asthma last night, couldn't sleep, so had to lie in a long chair, sweating like a pig. This nice little thing came up to me, so I patted it on the head, don't you know, and then it got up on to the chair, and licked my face, and hasn't left me since."

Someone remarked that it was a wise beast, for it evidently knew where it could get whisky-and-soda for nothing, at which Mac got so annoyed and coughed and spluttered so much that we thought he was going off in a fit of apoplexy.

He was a blunt diplomatist, too. A regiment was coming into the station that never made honorary members of its mess. Our colonel said it was very awkward, as he was certain they would want to be honorary members of ours for a few days till they settled down, and would be sure not to return the civility in any way.

"Don't you worry about that, sir," said Mac. "You leave them to me. Someone will soon come round and ask, and, as mess president, I know how to fix him."

Mac was ensconced firmly in the ante-room when an officer of the expected regiment walked in and, after some conversation, suggested it would be a convenience if they might use our mess for a few days. Old Mac said he had no doubt it

would, but his regiment put on frills a bit, too, and never made honorary members of any regiment that did not return the compliment, which he understood they never did. The visitor said this was quite a mistake. Of course, if we made them honorary members, they would do the same to us.

Mac said, "That is a bargain, so I'll give you the card now to save trouble."

He did so, the officers fed with us for a day or two, and we received a similar invitation from them written on a sheet of notepaper, which rather went to prove it was a circumstance not provided for, as is usual, by a printed card. I have never heard of that corps ever making others honorary members, unless they wore the same coloured uniform as themselves. The colonel afterwards told Mac he ought to have been in the diplomatic service.

From Murree, where we were stationed, I made my first trip after mahseer. A fair-sized river, named the Mahl, flowed into the Jhelum, about 20 miles off, which could easily be reached in a day. It was a beautiful, rapid stream with a rocky bottom, flowing through forest-clad hills. Near the mouth, close to an old ruined fort, was quite a comfortable bungalow, built by the Rajah for the accommodation of anglers. The pools were named after those on the Tweed; for instance, Sprouston Dub, which was close above the bungalow. This was a convenience for noting where one had one's sport, in the book provided for the purpose—but the river bore little resemblance to the Tweed. The water was clear and held good fish, which would take almost any artificial bait, but the natural frog was considered the most killing of anything. Personally I had most luck on the spoon, which I had never used at home. In a week I had only one blank day, and caught altogether 22 mahseer, of which five were over 10 lb., one being 21 lb. I lost a good many through their sulking and cutting the line on the sharp ledges with which the bottoms of the pools were covered, but learnt what a fine fighting fish the mahseer is.

In the junction pool were enormous fellows up to 40 lb. and 50 lb., which would look at nothing with a line attached, though quite ready to swallow bananas, lumps of dough, or frogs as fast as one threw them in. Whilst watching these fish the coolie in attendance recounted a yarn of some sahib who had played a monster here for the best part of a day before it broke him, and, strangely enough, shortly afterwards this coolie found the identical spoon jammed amongst the rocks, an enormous thing about 5 in. long and evidently home-made.

A few weeks later I proceeded to Assam and joined the headquarters of my new corps at Shillong, a delightful little place lying amongst pine-forests at an altitude of about 5,000 feet. In those days it was the fashion for the local battalions to be split up into detachments all over the province, and we had something like seven or eight in different places, consequently of ours, the colonel, the adjutant, the doctor and myself were the only officers at headquarters. My duties at first consisted almost entirely of sitting on the range, of which I had what is vulgarly termed "a bellyful," for there was no one else available for musketry. This had its good points, however, for it gave me a great interest in rifle shooting, and I learnt a lot about the men and their language. The Snider, with which we were armed, was not much use for accurate target shooting, but its chief merits were that it was almost impossible to smash it, and if its bullet did hit a man, it stopped him there and then.

Every day going to my work I had to pass the doctor's house. He was an Indian and married to one of his own kind. One morning as I was passing there was an extraordinary mass of rugs and skins piled up on his tennis court within a few yards of the road, and it was moving slightly. Heaving a clod into this to clear up the situation, I was amazed to see a dark female face shoot out, which glared balefully at me, whereupon I apologised and moved on. On the way back from the range I met the C.O., who looked at me in rather a queer manner and said: "The doctor has been to orderly room and reported

you for stoning his wife. What the deuce do you mean by such behaviour ? ”

I answered : “ I didn’t stone her, sir. There was a great heap of rugs on his tennis court heaving up and down, so I just put a bit of earth into it to see what it was, and evidently disturbed his wife, who was under it.”

“ Well,” said the colonel, “ don’t do it again, and I’ll tell the doctor that I don’t think it at all fitting for an officer’s wife to lie about in the open so near a public road.”

Our medico had evidently tried to score off me, and before long an opportunity occurred of getting one off him. One evening it appeared in orders that a board would assemble at the Hospital, 44th Gurkhas, at 8.30 a.m. next morning, composed as under, for the purpose of reporting on the condition of two screens, verandah and one mat, door, as is the official way of describing such articles). President, one officer, 43rd Gurkhas, one officer (myself) and the medical officer, 44th Gurkhas.

The president and I were there in time, but the medical officer was not, so we came to the conclusion, after examination, that the verandah screens and doormat were unserviceable through fair wear and tear and should be replaced by the State, made out the proceedings of the board and signed them. The president then went off to his breakfast, so I wrote out a new set of proceedings, setting forth that the board were of opinion that the state of the articles examined was due to the culpable neglect of Surgeon A. B. 44th, that his not attending at the time appointed was practically an admission of the same, therefore his reasons should be given in the space provided below, and sent this off by an orderly. Whilst waiting for an answer I began to read the volume of medical regulations lying on the office table, and there, to my intense delight, found it laid down that, at that time of year, the medical officer should attend hospital at 7.30 a.m., so felt I had a trump card up my sleeve in case my Aryan brother saw through the proceedings sent him and thought of logging me again.

After a while he arrived, and with him the doctor of the 43rd, both with swords on, which were not usually worn by the Indian Medical Service for ordinary duty.

The latter said at once, "A. B. isn't responsible for replacing this stuff." A nudge and a wink were no good, for he continued, "I'll show you the proper regulations for condemning hospital furniture "

"I don't care a blow about that," I answered, "A. B. has broken all sorts of regulations by not being here at 7.30."

"There is no regulation about that," said the 43rd man, who was new to the country.

"Isn't there?" said I. "Read that, then," pointing out the paragraph just discovered.

A. B. read it and murmured, with much anxiety, "What *shall* I do? What *shall* I do? "

"Sign this," I suggested, pulling out the real proceedings, "and don't come late to a board again, or you may be entangled in great trouble."

On this the other man laughed and said he knew it was a joke all along, on which I remarked I was sure he did, and had put on his sword and walked nearly a mile to tell me so. Our man was much relieved at having got off so easily.

CHAPTER II**GURKHA OFFICER, HIMA CHAND—FISHING ON SYLHET—
LEOPARDS AT SHILLONG—GURKHAS IN INDIA**

AT first a total ignorance of the Gurkha language was a very great handicap, and it was considered most important that probationers for the Indian Army should pass in Hindustani before they had been eighteen months with a native regiment. The Gurkha knows very little Hindustani, the language of Assam is Assamese, and the clerks in the Government offices were Bengalis, who only spoke Bengali or English, so it was quite impossible to get a teacher locally; and as I did not see my way to importing one from Calcutta at my sole expense, the adjutant suggested I would be wiser not to trouble about Hindustani till I could get leave to go and study it, but try and pick up as much Gurkhali as possible.

We had a very fine old subadar at that time named Hima Chand, who was quite a good shot with a rifle or scatter-gun, and also much interested in fishing though he thought a charge of dynamite or a net productive of better results than could be obtained with rod and line. In the winter time a great many woodcock and a good few snipe were to be found in the coverts or in the rice-fields round about Shillong, and as I could generally get away for an hour or two most afternoons, I used to take old Hima for a walk with me, and we seldom came back empty-handed.

Assam is noted for its rivers, so I was naturally anxious to try them. In the mess was a book called "Pollok's British Burma," and in it he mentioned a river where he had excellent sport some ten or fifteen years previously, but did not give its name. He said, however, it was so many days' march

from three different places ; therefore, taking a day's march as fifteen miles, with a map and a pair of compasses it was not difficult to locate it. The regiment had a detachment within twenty-five miles of this river ; the colonel gave me leave to inspect this post and seven days' leave at the end of the duty, so Hima, half a dozen men and myself set off to try the river, which was about 60 miles away. We arrived there on the fourth day from Shillong, visiting the detachment *en route*, and entered a village on the banks of a magnificent-looking river. Hima sent for the headman and addressed him vigorously in Assamese, of which conversation I could only understand one word, "Deputy-Commissioner." He then told me he had explained I was a friend of the Deputy-Commissioner of the district and required suitable accommodation for the night, as it was too late to pitch our tents. The headman suggested the school, which was also used as a chapel (for the villagers were mostly Christians), as the cleanest place, so Hima's and my kit were taken into it, while the men spread themselves out underneath, for the little house was built on piles.

The headman brought lemons, from which Hima proceeded to make lemonade, straining it through the end of his puggri (turban). This was not exactly appetising, but sooner than hurt the old man's feelings I drank it. After our kit was unpacked and my bed set up I had my dinner and turned in. A lantern was left hanging near the door, so that Hima could see, when he chose to come in.

In a short while I woke to see a white figure moving about in the room, and called out to know who it was. The figure replied, in English, "Sir, I am a Christian and come to smoke hubble-bubble." As this form of enjoying tobacco has a most disgusting smell, and sounds like a sick camel, I told the fellow to get out, and one of the sepoy's came up and saw that he went.

In about an hour there was a great commotion outside, and, on asking what was the matter, I was told a man had

brought a letter. This was brought in and contained the solitary sentence, "Sir, may I speak to you?" Two men came into the room, and one explained that the other was a missionary and didn't know why he had been ejected. I said he wanted to smoke "hubble-bubble" and I didn't like the smell. The other man said, "Oh no, sir, to-morrow is Sunday, and I said I had come to seek Holy Bible," so he was told to get it, and then depart, so soon all was peace again.

Next morning boats were ready, and we went downstream to troll in the big pool at the gorge where the river debouches into the plains of Sylhet. Hima hadn't got his line fairly out before the spoon was seized by a very large fish. As he had never hooked one on a rod before, I went to his assistance, and between us in about half an hour we managed to beach a mahseer of 49½ lb., which was not bad for his first rod-caught fish. We got about fifty other mahseer from three pounds to thirty in a four days' stay, and shot a good many snipe and green pigeon, as well as a few duck. One of the sepoys shot a leopard.

In this river were a great many garfish, which are rather like a pike in shape, with a beak about three inches long on a fish which is only 10 in. in length altogether. They were a great nuisance, for they would lay hold of a 3-in. spoon, when one had fifty yards of line out, and as one never felt them take, it was only to be seen from the rod-top ceasing to vibrate that the spoon was not working. Then the line had to be wound up and paid out again, which entailed missing a lot of good water. I have never seen these fish anywhere else to the same extent, except in the Tigris. They are quite good eating. The natives spear them as they lie poised near the top of the water, and kill large numbers.

Marching back to Shillong, we got a fair amount of small game, and at one place had a beat for a bear, but he did not give us a shot.

Shortly after this the Manipur row broke out, and poor old Hima was killed—shot through both legs whilst trying to

carry a wounded British officer under cover. It was just the death he wanted, for he said he knew he would either be killed in battle or by a wild animal. His widow afterwards gave me his medals in remembrance of him, the Indian Order of Merit for valour and the frontier medal with seven bars, and they form one of the most treasured mementos of the friends of my young days that I possess.

Of course, on first joining, one heard many stories of the "good old rasping days," most of which unhappily are quite unprintable; still, one of them may be quoted to show that the reputation of Assam, as given by my old captain, was not quite undeserved.

Some ten years previously, we had an officer somewhat addicted to drink ("unfortunately given to the intemperate use of spirituous liquors," as it was usually termed in official phraseology); he never was actually drunk on duty, for, when he felt the desire for an overdose of alcohol coming on, he used to get three days' station leave, shut himself up in his quarters and deny himself to everybody.

During one of these bouts a newly-arrived chaplain was going round to make the acquaintance of his flock, and, coming to this officer's house, asked if the Captain Sahib was in. The servant said he would find out, and when he asked his master if he would see the Padre Sahib, was told to say the sahib was just dead.

"Dear, dear!" said the padre, and toddled off home to get ready for the funeral, of which he thought he must have missed the notice, as such matters do not bear much delay in the tropics.

After a wait, still having received no notice of the death, he went back to the bungalow, where he met with the same answer as before.

"I must see the sahib," said the padre.

"The sahib gave orders that no one is to see him."

"But I have to bury him!" yelled the padre, forcing his way in.

“ Not just yet ! ” shouted the irate officer, springing from his bed with nothing on but an old vest, and, pushing the astonished parson outside, he slammed the door and bolted it.

Leopards were very plentiful round the station, and at night they used to come into it. One day I met the volunteer sergeant instructor and he told me he had just seen a leopard sunning itself on a tombstone in the cemetery, which seemed such a tall yarn I did not think it worth while going 200 yards to look for myself. A morning or so after, on my way to parade, I saw a leopard cross the road from the direction of the cemetery, and go into a patch of jungle about 800 yards long and 400 wide, which lay between our parade ground, the mess, and the native bazaar. This bit of forest had a good-sized road bounding it on all four sides.

I rode on, told the adjutant and asked for fifty men off parade to have a beat at once. He readily assented, saying it would be good skirmishing practice for them, so I got my shotgun and loaded it with two rounds of ball, taking three more in my pocket.

The men extended across the back of the mess garden, a Gurkha officer went down one road, and I down the other, towards the bazaar, each keeping about 100 yards in front of the skirmishing line. Nothing showed till I halted near a bridge, over the little stream which forms the bazaar boundary. The sepoy had just reached the ridge overlooking the bazaar, and a hundred yards from it, when some natives on the road began calling out, “ Bagh ! Bagh ! ” (tiger). A few seconds later a leopard came out on the path about 20 yards off, and, seeing me, turned for the jungle again. I let fly and heard the bullet tell. The men instantly began calling to one another, pulled out their kukries and came towards me, when out came the leopard again, and this time I laid him out dead. The men picked him up and took him to my bungalow, where skinning operations at once began under the eyes of an admiring crowd ; but there was only one bullet wound in the beast.

Before the skin was pegged out, a Khasia (an inhabitant of

those parts) appeared with a rusty old musket, and behind him were some others, bearing a leopard slung on a pole. We looked at it, and asked where he got it, and were told it was the one I had fired at first, which was hit and had crawled through the ferns into the bed of the stream. He had noticed this, and when we went away, fetched his gun and finished it off. He now brought me the beast in the hope of reward, which he speedily got. The first shot had smashed its hind leg and raked its belly, so it couldn't spring, or it undoubtedly would have attacked some of us, who must have been quite close to it when the men came up to the second one on the road.

The adjutant, who was my stable companion, was much surprised at the result of the beat. Poor fellow, a few weeks later he was killed when going with a small column to relieve some people who had been stuck up by the Lushais. The bullet which killed him first hit one of his orderlies, a particularly stupid man, on the head and glanced off; a few months later this man was hit again in exactly the same place, at Manipur; when he recovered from his second wound he got cholera, and survived that too! It was quite a usual thing to tell him, when he did anything particularly stupid, that if he hadn't had such an infernal thick head the adjutant would still have been alive, at which he used to grin sheepishly. What became of him in the end I don't know, for one year he went on furlough to Nepal, and did not return, so he probably deserted, he can scarcely have died; but it was almost impossible to find out anything of that sort in those days, for recruiting in Nepal had not the official sanction of that State, and recruits were brought out on the quiet by men who went in to persuade them, so it was always rather difficult to keep the regiments up to strength.

The Indian Government at that time did all possible to encourage the Gurkha recruit to bring his wife and breed Gurkhas in the regiments, also for years it tried to establish Gurkha colonies in the hills; then, when Nepal openly sanctioned our recruiting parties going in, this colony scheme went by the board.

The recruit up to a certain percentage is still allowed to bring his wife, but comparatively few of the boys, born and bred in barracks, are enlisted, nor are pensioners encouraged to settle in British India. Consequently in India, at any rate in Assam, there are thousands of civilian Gurkhas, who are not British subjects and they are not always found easy to manage by the civil authorities. Nevertheless, with all his drawbacks, real or imaginary, the barrack-bred Gurkha is a fine fighting man, and much more intelligent than his fellow-countryman enlisted direct from Nepal.

CHAPTER III

RECRUITING DURING THE GREAT WAR—A QUAINST STAFF OFFICER
—MARCH TO MANIPUR—DESERTED CITY OF DIMAPUR—
SPORT IN MANIPUR STATE—PRACTICAL JOKE ON M.P.

HOWEVER, when the great upheaval came in 1914, the Gurkha settler in Assam proved of some value to the nation, for I was able (at first without any official support) to get great numbers of them to enlist. It was amusing almost to see the way some officials looked on the needs of war. Hearing that some Gurkhas were working in a quarry some 80 miles away, I asked a man if he would tell one of his juniors to have a look at them in his private capacity, and, if they seemed likely to make good soldiers, a party would be sent to enlist them and bring them to headquarters. The reply received was quaint :

“ I doubt very much, even in time of war, if X. could be asked to do this, as recruiting forms no part of his official duties.”

Many a Gurkha gave up lucrative employment and came to join, and one man, whom I recognised as having been in the regimental rifle team twenty years previously, said he wanted to come back to his old corps. This showed good spirit as the Gurkha is not a British subject and our quarrel was not his.

Having received a letter from A.H.Q. asking if any of the local hillmen could be obtained for work in the Army Hospital Corps, and having heard at a State meeting several of the petty chiefs of the neighbourhood place themselves, their subjects, and their resources at the disposal of the State, I thought it would be a good opportunity to see what these offers were worth, so sent the letter to a magistrate and asked him to try and get some recruits. He replied that the pay and conditions of

service were not sufficiently attractive, so I suggested that the chiefs could be asked to make any increase they thought necessary out of their own pockets, but I thought that *some* effort should be made to get volunteers.

Meeting him some days later, I asked if he had done anything, and he said : " My dear fellow, it's no go ! I had a lot of men up, and considered it my duty to warn them that it was very difficult and dangerous work that they were required for, that they would have to go out between the firing lines, when bullets and shells were flying about, to bring in the wounded, and I doubted very much if any of those who went would ever come back."

I inquired how many had come forward after such an inducement, and he said one man had ; so I asked him why he didn't take him out to the back of the house and do him in quietly, for this man was evidently tired of life. However, in justice it must be admitted that later more rosy prospects were offered, and a good many bearers were obtained, who went to France and Mesopotamia, many of whom probably had never been out of their own hills before.

After we had enlisted a couple of hundred Gurkhas locally, Government sanctioned the expenses of a small recruiting establishment, and asked if I considered a man I had recommended for other employ would be suitable to manage it, and, if so, what pay did he want ? This gentleman was a retired Conservator of Forests, who in the course of some thirty-five years' service in Assam had come up against most of the Gurkha settlements, which, if not stopped, used to play merry havoc in his timber reserves. When told of the Government offer he said he would gladly accept, and if his travelling expenses were guaranteed did not care what pay he was given, but he would like to be given the temporary rank of captain. Government told me that he could not be given this rank, but he would be gazetted a second-lieutenant in my regiment, with allowances, etc., equivalent to a captain's pay. He accepted, and thus became junior to his two soldier sons, one of whom

was serving in the same battalion. From first to last this recruiting effort produced about 3,000 men, who served in the war. All this, however, is a digression.

After I had been about a year in the 44th we got a new commanding officer, who had been away for about ten years on the staff; consequently none of the officers present knew him. He was very fierce-looking and reserved, besides being very strict, so we all expected an awful time, but before long discovered what a really fine fellow he was.

We knew, of course, that he was an excellent soldier, for he had won the V.C. in the regiment, and had held several good staff billets. He made us all clearly understand that we were responsible to him for our work and behaviour, and that he would allow no outsider to interfere with us, except through him.

Soon after he said this, I happened to be on the range one holiday, practising with a rifle team, and just as I was screwing up the back sight of my rifle with a Vernier scale, the district staff officer, a dashing captain, rode up behind. We were all in plain clothes, for the sepoy is allowed to wear them, when not on duty, to save his uniform, which in those days he had to pay for himself. As soon as I saw him, I called the men to "Attention" and wished him good-morning. He said he wanted the range at once, as the volunteers were coming.

There were none of them in sight, so I said, "All right, we have only seven more shots to fire."

He answered, very stuffily, "I said I wanted the range *at once*." So the "Cease fire" and "Close" were sounded, and the party marched off—to meet the volunteers half a mile away.

Next morning the adjutant said the C.O. wanted to see me in the orderly room after parade. So when I toed the line the C.O. read out a letter from District Headquarters complaining that one of his officers was on duty on the range the day before, and had neglected to salute the staff officer, and he asked me what I had to say.

I told him exactly what had happened—that I was not on

duty ; that I had not seen the staff officer till he was almost on top of me, for I was lying down at the firing point ; that I had wished him good-morning, and called the men to attention ; and did not know what further salutation an officer in mufti was expected to make.

The C.O. said, " Just write that down exactly as you've said it." When he got the paper he rode over to the staff officer and asked him what he had expected me to do, and was told I ought to have taken off my hat.

" All right," said our C.O., " that's easily arranged, but you will have to take off your hat to all my officers who are senior to you, so as to show my youngsters what you expect of them." Needless to say the matter ended by his admitting he had made a mistake.

Years afterwards I met the same man elsewhere, the very day I had been appointed to a billet similar to that he then held, and when he congratulated me and asked, " What will you do now ? " I couldn't help saying, " Run all the little boys in, if they don't take off their hats to me, when they're in mufti, of course." And then we had a drink and a crack over old times.

In the spring of 1891 the Manipur disaster occurred, which was an excellent example of what may happen if civilians take a hand in military matters when fighting is actually imminent or in progress. All the Assam Regiments in those days kept their first line of transport animals with them, so could move quite quickly when required. We got the orders to mobilise one afternoon, moved the next morning, marched 63 miles to the Brahmaputra, embarked on the steamers the next day but one, and proceeded up the river to Nigrating, whence we had to march about 200 miles to the city of Manipur itself, now called Imphal.

The expedition was a tame affair as far as fighting went, but was interesting in many ways. At about a third of the distance from the river we passed a place called Dimapur, where there is a deserted city, the ruins of which lie buried in dense forest. All round about are numbers of great tanks of clear

water, the largest of which is at least half a mile long and quarter of a mile broad.

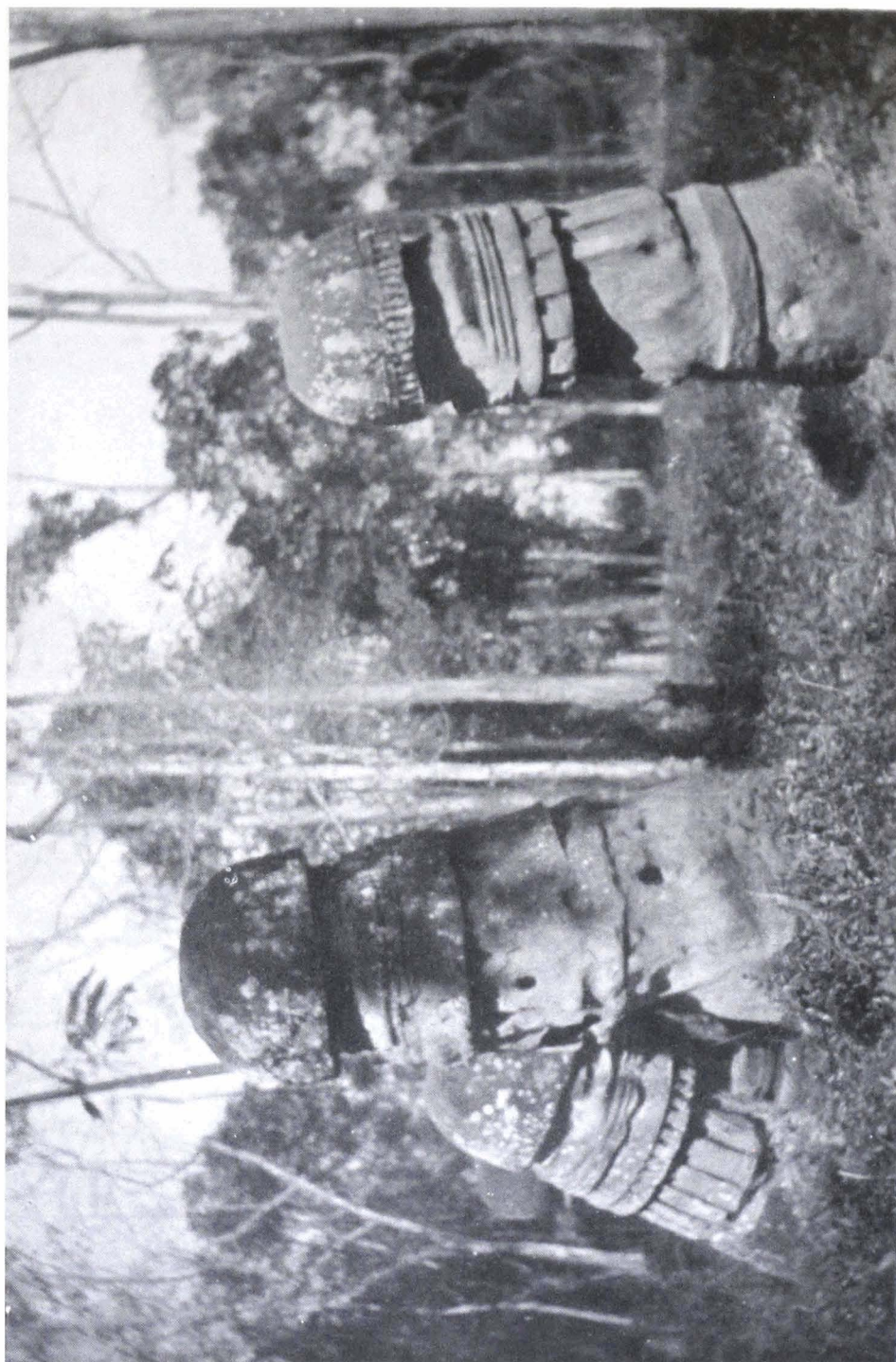
Many years ago, according to the legend, a ruler of this city, before he died, ordered that his body and all his jewels should be enclosed in a golden boat and sunk in the lake.

Occasionally, to such persons who by prayer and fasting have rendered themselves worthy of the vision, the boat will appear in all its glory for a few seconds and then slowly sink below the surface of the water. At first it was secured by a strong chain to the bank, which excited the cupidity of some of the inhabitants, who got half a dozen elephants and a crowd of men to try and pull the boat out. It came for a bit and then suddenly slipped back, dragging with it all the men and the elephants, who were drowned in the lake.

An old man, who told me this story, took me to the place where this tragedy occurred and pointed out what he said was the cable, but I possibly had not the eyes of a believer, so failed to see it.

Dimapur is said to have been wiped out by invading hordes in the middle of the sixteenth century, so it is quite possible that treasure was then hidden in this tank, for it is a favourite way in India of hiding valuables, and this may have given rise to the legend.

One of the old gateways of the city was still standing, though much damaged by trees growing out of it, and just inside were rows of curious pillars, both round and square. The round ones had mushroom-shaped tops, so the pillars could not have supported a roof, and most were intricately carved with lotus flowers, peacocks, tigers and elephants. Many had fallen down and others stood at all sorts of angles. They seemed to be made of some sort of soft stone or composition, so it was rather astonishing they had stood the elements so long, especially as it seemed as if some attempt had been made to destroy them with fire, by piling wood amongst those groups which were close together, for the inner surfaces of the pillars in groups looked as if cracked and damaged by heat, whilst the parts which would not get so much heat had not suffered. They



PILLARS AT DIMAPUR.

were from ten to twelve feet high and three to six feet in diameter. No one knows who made them or for what purpose they were intended. In many parts of Assam, in dense jungle and elsewhere, one often comes across the remains of fine buildings, of which the history is merely conjecture, and it is a great pity no effort has ever been made to explore them thoroughly.

When we got into the valley of Manipur, we crossed several fine streams, in one of which I saw dynamite used for the first time. There was a large pool close to camp in which a sapper officer exploded a few cartridges, which produced enough fish to feed every man in the column. So in the evening I was much surprised to see fish rising in this very place as if nothing had happened; I got out my rod and in a very short time caught 47 on the fly, running up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. All the streams we passed were full of small fish, but what they lacked in size they made up for in numbers.

There was one kind which our men called "potia," something like a perch in appearance only without the spikey back fin and not so rough, which was a very free riser; but he rose so quickly that unless one struck on chance the moment the fly touched the water he was seldom hooked. He was never over 3 oz. in weight, but was most excellent eating. The expedition started too late for one to get any shooting except snipe and a few pigeons. The black partridges were literally in thousands, and used to get up by the road-side as the troops marched along, and in the early morning and evening one heard the cricket-like call of the cock bird, which sounds like "Fix bayonets! Quick with it!", all round camp.

There was a very fine bird called the Imperial pigeon, which was double the size of an English wood-pigeon and as good eating, of which I used to get a good many for our mess and to present to other messes, often with satisfactory results when our beer supply was exhausted. Out of the crop of one of these birds I once took 13 wild olives, which are bigger than the ordinary olive one gets out of a bottle. This will give some idea of his capacity for gorging.

One day, after a bit of a skirmish, one of our N.C.O.'s, by name Brijman Rai, brought me a little fishing-rod which he had found in a village we had just turned the enemy out of. It had evidently belonged to an unfortunate officer who had been murdered by the Manipuris close to that spot, for some more of his kit was found there, too. I always used to try to memorise the men's names by the English translation of them, such as "glittering lion" for Amar Sing, the "hero of the army" for Dalbir, and so on, but Brijman beat me. On inquiry I learnt that it was the Indian corruption of "Frenchman" or "prisoner," the only other name of the kind we had in the regiment was Hetku, the owner of it having been called after an officer whose surname was Hesketh.

We were amused at that time to read in the telegrams from home of the questions asked in Parliament as to whether the campaign would be conducted with the same humanity as would be observed by the German Army. One wonders now what those legislators thought, if they were alive in 1914, of the humanity they quoted as a model. This reminds me that when we were on the Abor show in 1911 the same sort of silly questions were asked by a well-known crank. One day I had been sent out to erect a cairn to a white man, who had been murdered by those savages, so roped in a lot of the inhabitants of the village who were said to have murdered him, as being more suitable for doing the heavy work of lifting large stones than my own men. Whilst the building was going on we heard the "tok-tok" of axes on a tree-trunk and on sending to find out what it was, found that some of the Abors had slipped off to cut down a tree for themselves. They were promptly hunted on to their appointed task by the men, with sticks and opprobrium. On seeing this, the column staff-officer remarked:

"I wonder what Sir ——— would say if he heard of your treatment of his pets?"

I replied, "All right, old chap, he shall hear of it."

That night in our mess we composed the following effort to the anxious M.P. :

“ To the almighty Lord Sir So-and-So, Member of the British House of Parliament.

“ We poor wretched Abors, having heard your most unfortunate efforts of speech on our behalf, beg to inform you that the whole British Army has entered our country, and when we sent our best and bravest warriors to oppose them they bulleted five hundred of ditto. They have broken our stockades and booby-traps, which we made to protect ourselves against wild animals. How can turtle live without shell? They kill our pigs with sharp knife in most horribly manner, not as is proper by beating with thick stick; they take our fish from river and fowl from tree. How can we keep wolf from door? Also our women go to look at naughty soldier. What can do?

“ Trusting that your almighty lordship will take British Army away, and give large Government pensions to widows of fallen warriors, we remain—Your lordship’s most obedient and very hungry servants,

“ KAPOK, Chief of Kebong.

“ MADU, Chief of Riu.”

I took this over to the provost-marshal, and when he read it, he said, “ How did you get this? It ought to have gone to the general,” evidently thinking it was genuine. So I told him what it was, at which he was hugely delighted, and put it in the field post-office. When certain it was well away, I told the staff-officer and showed him a copy, when, instead of being amused, he got in a dreadful state of mind, and blustered out,

“ You’ll get into a fiendish row over this.”

I told him that if he gave me away I should say he had suggested it, for when told it would be done, he had said nothing, so he kept quiet.

The letter reached its destination all right, for we read in the paper the questions asked as to how many of the Abors had been slaughtered, etc., etc.; but, to our disappointment, no further notice was taken of it.

CHAPTER IV

MANIPUR REBELLION, '91—LOOTING—TRIAL OF MANIPURI
NOTABLES—THEIR EXECUTION—CHOLERA

A GERMAN officer accompanied our column to Manipur, who brought absolutely nothing in the way of provisions with him, for either himself or his servant. When asked how he managed for food when he was travelling in out-of-the-way parts, he told us he always depended on the country he passed through to supply his needs. In this instance he looked to any mess that was handy to feed him, which was rather hard on the officers, for one always manages with as little as possible on service, and supplies are often difficult to obtain.

I believe his career came to an end somewhat abruptly by his being eaten by cannibals in New Guinea. He was a great curiosity collector, and his methods were very like those of another man whom I met some years later. This latter worthy was in China during the Boxer row in 1900, and said he had come across a dhobi, or washerman, of a native regiment, who had picked up a gold shoe. He offered 50 rupees for this, which was not unnaturally refused, as it was a solid chunk of pure gold, worth at least twenty times as much. The collector, very much annoyed at not getting the bargain at his own price, reported the dhobi to his commanding officer for looting against orders, and, when the man's kit was searched to see if there was any other property in it, was much surprised to hear the gold shoe wasn't there, and the man said he had never heard of such a thing.

Another yarn, also connected with looting, was rather interesting. After the capture of Peking, Count Waldersee, who commanded the International forces, gave a reception in

the Summer Palace, which was full of the most valuable things. Knowing the propensities of some of his guests, he gave instructions that nothing in the palace was to be touched or moved, rather a quaint precaution for the man to take, who afterwards removed all the ancient astronomical instruments from the Peking observatory to Potsdam. A lady, who had been invited to the reception, spotted a beautiful little clock, stuck all over with all sorts of precious stones. This was too much for her, so she snatched it up, and later asked a foreign officer she caught sight of to hold it for her while she went to make her bow to the count. On coming out she went up to this man and requested the return of her clock. He bowed most politely and said,

“Madam, you are mistaken, you gave me no clock!”

She must have felt properly sold, for in the circumstances she could say nothing without giving herself away.

When we reached the city of Imphal we found it had been fired by the Manipuris themselves, which accounted for the explosions heard during the night before we marched in. Columns were then sent out to round up the originators of the trouble, and it was not long before the Maharajah was taken prisoner.

Whilst he was awaiting trial, he made himself a great nuisance, constantly sending for the doctor and complaining he was ill, when there was nothing at all the matter with him except funk.

One day a young Irish medico, who went to attend to him for a pain in the toe, prescribed a good dose of Epsom salts or a “number nine” pill, which the Maharajah refused to take, saying he was sure it was poison. On this the doctor gave him a cuff on the head and came away. It is not often a king gets his ears boxed for refusing to take a purgative.

When the ringleaders concerned in the murder of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and his officers were all roped in, orders came from Government that they were to be tried by Court Martial, and that every word said in court was to be written down for the information of Parliament,

Our C.O. was appointed a member of the court, and as the President chose to interpret these orders literally, the Cabinet must have had some very interesting reading. I saw a copy of the proceedings afterwards, and remember the examination of one witness very well. He seemed intimately acquainted with the interior arrangements of the Maharajah's palace, and accounted for his knowledge by saying he was an official of the royal household.

Question by the president : " What are the duties of your office ? "

Answer : " My duties are to clean the Maharajah's teeth and another part of his anatomy."

Remark by Major R. K., V.C. : " Not with the same brush, I hope." This looked rather weird in print.

The result of the trial was that the Senapati, who commanded the army, the Tongal General, the old ruffian whose job was to keep the surrounding hill tribes in order, and some of the princes were condemned to death for murder, but this sentence, except in the case of the Senapati and the Tongal, was commuted to transportation for life.

When the day of execution arrived, a guard of four hundred rifles surrounded the scaffold, as it was expected there might be an attempt at rescue. The Tongal pretended to be too ill to walk up to the gallows, and was carried up in a chair and placed beneath the noose, but the Senapati walked up and stood upright like a man.

A sergeant of gunners, who was executioner, adjusted the rope round the Senapati's neck, tapped the Tongal General on the shoulder and said, " Now then, old man, stand up or I can't hang you."

The Tongal gazed at him blankly, and then at the interpreter who translated the remark, on which the old fellow shook his head and roared with laughter.

The interpreter said, " Sir, the general states he will not rise."

The sergeant said, most persuasively, " Just tell the old

gentleman I'm not going to hurt him." This, too, was translated, but the Tongal would not budge. Then ensued a most ghastly pause, whilst a man climbed up to the top of the gallows to lengthen the rope, and when it was adjusted both criminals were loosed off.

The moment the drop fell, all the women in the crowd set up the most desolate wailing, which showed that the Senapati, was a great favourite with the fair sex, but no regret was expressed for the Tongal, who was notorious for his cruelty. His method of punishing a village was to surround it at night with his troops, set it on fire in the early morning, and then wipe out everything, man, woman, child or animal, driven out by the flames.

One day we captured a Manipuri officer, quite an elderly man, whose back had been cut to ribbons from his neck to his knees. He told us he had been flogged by order of the Tongal for running away in some fight. This was nothing unusual, for the only time they really fought well was when the force sent to oppose us had been told that any man who ran away would be flogged to death.

No one, who had seen the mutilated bodies of his countrymen, or the desecrated graves in the little cemetery, felt much sympathy for any of these people, though, as is customary, there was plenty of it expressed in England by those who sat at home in comfort.

After matters began to settle down a bit, the cholera broke out very badly, and we had to keep moving about to try and find a healthy place. About a hundred of our little men got the disease, and a great many died. I myself got enteric and had to be sent home for a year, which was not altogether an unmixed joy, for I had been looking forward to great possibilities of sport after the rains ceased.

CHAPTER V

SICK LEAVE—SPORT IN GERMANY—LANGUAGE LEAVE IN CALCUTTA—TANK FISHING—EXAMINATION

WHEN on sick leave, the doctors recommended me to take a course of German waters, which did me a lot of good, and while there I had some excellent grayling fishing, as well as a fair amount of shooting.

At that time the Germans never went in much for angling, except occasionally with the worm, so the river, a tributary of the Weser, was almost virgin water, and the grayling rose very much better in the winter time than I have ever known them do in England. A basket of 20 or 30, running up to a pound in weight, was nothing unusual.

The people, too, were most hospitable, and I was asked to every shoot that took place in the neighbourhood. The sport was quite good—partridges and hares in the fields, and a few pheasants, many hares, and an occasional woodcock, wild boar, or roebuck in the forest.

We often went badger digging, with dachshunds to find and corner the brock, but it was cold work and not exciting.

In covert shooting the Germans did one thing which is never done in this country, though very sound. In most places, when the guns were posted, they were warned only to take game to one side, say, the left, in which case everyone looked out to his front and left, and the right gun alone took stuff on both sides of him. In this way, two men shooting at the same thing, or not shooting at it at all through each thinking it was the other's bird, was entirely avoided.

Foxes were very numerous, so the scarcity of pheasants was not surprising. At one place the owner had put down a lot of

pheasants, and the first time he shot it only two old cocks were killed, but no less than fifteen foxes. However, as the fox is looked on as quite good game, this result was not considered so unsatisfactory as *we* should have thought it, though somewhat disappointing as regards the birds.

The first fox I shot was got in a very interesting manner. A man took me out to try and get a roebuck, and after wandering about in the forest for a long time without seeing one, he asked me if I would like to shoot a fox. I wasn't very keen, but said I would do so if he wanted it killed. He said there was an earth on the hill above, and told me to stand beside some bushes whilst he called the fox up. I did so, and he stood behind me and made a noise with his mouth, exactly like a hare caught in a wire. In a few seconds the fox came trotting down the path towards us, just like a dog that had been whistled for, and, when he was about 20 yards off, I laid him out. This was a very fine bit of woodcraft in my opinion.

This same man could always tell the sex of a hare when it was put up in the open. He said the jack always bounded off straight from his form, but the doe hesitated a little. One day, to prove this, we were walking over a bit of rough ground, where we killed about a dozen hares, and each time he called out the sex after one was shot, before it was picked up.

The German close season differs from ours, in that one can kill the cocks of capercaillie, black game, and pheasants up to the end of May, which seems reasonable, seeing these birds are polygamous. They are generally shot with a rifle, when displaying before the hens. The capercaillie in particular requires very early rising and very careful stalking, if one wants to get a crack at him.

One always had to carry one's game licence when one had one's gun, for any policeman or forester could ask to see it. I have seen a forester inspect all the licences at a shooting party, and once, before I learnt the rule, was turned back for not having brought mine, and was told if I hadn't been a foreigner I would have been hauled up. The same people are

entitled to ask to see one's card of permission, if one is fishing. This rule no doubt prevents a lot of poaching and game trespass, and might well be adopted by us, for one is practically never asked for one's game licence, and never for a fishing licence.

Once I dropped in for a very fine bit of sport in the Fatherland. I had been invited to dine at Court, and the lady I was to have taken in did not arrive till we had gone in to dinner. When she came, she was so upset at being late, she dropped her glove in her soup, which confused her still more, so I made some trifling remark. She seemed so thankful her partner could speak German, for she said she was so excited she had forgotten all the English she ever knew. After a bit she said she had often seen me fishing, and wondered if I ever caught anything, and seemed much interested to hear that I seldom came back without getting a few.

She told me her husband was a great sportsman, and was sure he would much like to see how it was done, so I fixed a day for them to come out. The husband, a retired captain of Uhlans, was greatly surprised that a rising fish could be stalked and caught, and he often accompanied me after that. One day he asked if I would pay him a visit and shoot partridges, and I said I would much like to if he wrote and asked me later on, as I was just going up to Scotland.

I never expected to hear any more about it, but the invitation came all right. I accordingly went over to his place, and have never seen so many partridges anywhere. The first day the two of us got 68 brace over dogs, and close on 300 brace and many various in less than three weeks, not shooting every day. He took me to see his uncle, who had a very fine deer-forest (a deer-forest in Germany is really a forest of trees). On seeing the magnificent collection of heads the old man had, I inquired why he did not send some to the Berlin Exhibition, which was shortly coming off, to which he replied :

“ Thank you ! If I sent my best heads, the Kaiser would

see them, invite himself to shoot, kill all my best stags, and then present me with an order, which I should never wear."

On returning to India I received orders to stay in Calcutta and study for the Hindustani examination before rejoining. This took the best part of three months, though I naturally worked as hard as possible, for while on "language leave," as it was called, a generous Government docked about a sixth of my pay. A reward, however, is granted for passing the Higher Standard, which about covers this deduction, but, of course, the candidate has to pay for his munshi, or tutor, out of his own pocket, so he is invariably out on the business.

I had a very nice old Mohammedan tutor, named Imdad Ali, to work with me about four hours daily, who was quite interesting to talk to. I remember his telling me that people of his religion had a prophecy that early in the following century there would be a great war amongst all the "topi-wallahs" (those who wear hats), and that later the king of England would become a Musulman. The first part has certainly been fulfilled, and I was reminded of the second part three years since by a Nawab asking if I thought there was any probability of it.

The old munshi said there were lots of big fish in all the tanks of Calcutta, and suggested my catching some. These tanks, or artificial ponds, are to be found all over the place, particularly near Fort William, and some of them are of great size. There was a very fine one at the back of the Asiatic Museum, quite close to where I lived, where I used to get quite good sport without much trouble. It seemed strange to fish in a place closely surrounded on all sides by buildings. The commonest fish in these tanks are rohu, or labeo, very tubby-shaped scaly fish, which attain a very great size, frequently running up to 50 lb., and occasionally to 80 lb. or 100 lb., but the largest I ever caught was 10 lb.

They only take on the bottom, and are by no means easy to catch, for they bite so gently they scarcely move the float, but just jiggle it about, and one has to strike quickly when the

quivering is rapid. In coloured water, during the rains, they do bite more boldly, I believe. When hooked, the rohu plays strongly, but makes no rapid rushes.

In Calcutta, the method of ground-baiting is unusual, but very effective. Several bamboos are procured about 2 ft. longer than the depth of the water where one intends to fish, and marked with the depth all the way up. A circular wooden stop is fixed about a foot from the thick end of each, and the straw cover from a wine or beer bottle is slid down on to the stop, and made fast at its narrow end. The interior of the straw is then packed with dough, and the other end of the straw tied up to keep it in.

A native swims out and drives these into the mud, so that they stand upright, the thin ends sticking out above the surface, at intervals along the sides of the tank. When the rohu smells this paste, which is often flavoured with asafoetida, he commences digging at the straw to try and get it out, and his efforts make the point of the cane quiver. The float is then adjusted, so that the hook bait rests on the ground, and is cast in near the bamboo, the fish thinks he has succeeded in knocking a bit of paste out of the straw, and, it is to be hoped, takes it, when, if he is a good one, a battle ensues. Platforms are often rigged up, jutting out about 9 ft., from the end of which one can command deep water immediately under one's rod-point, so that a quick strike can be made.

My old munshi often used to come in the evening to watch these operations, accompanied by a friend, and when I had any luck they got a fish or two to take home.

The day I went up for my examination—which consisted of an exercise, translation from a book, reading and conversing in the vernacular—I noticed a native in the room, whom I recognised as having sometimes come to watch the fishing. The examiner told me to converse with this man on any subject I liked, so it is not difficult to guess what I started on. After a bit the examiner called up the next candidate, and gave him similar instructions. This officer said he knew nothing

about fishing, so the examiner again told him to choose any subject he liked, on which he said he didn't know what to talk about.

“Put this into Hindustani, then,” was the next order : “The native cavalry soldier was riding across a bridge, his horse shied at an object by the wayside, the man lost his balance and fell off. He hit his head against the coping of the wall, and got concussion of the brain.”

The reply was, “I can't do it,” so the examiner suggested he should come up again at the next examination, which shows that it doesn't pay to waste the time of people of that sort with futile remarks.’

CHAPTER VI

DESCRIPTION OF SHILLONG—RAINFALL AT CHERRAPOONJI—
SYLHET ORANGES—FISHING BELOW CHERRA—THE MAHSEER

AFTER passing the language test I went up to Shillong, which is almost the only place in India, except Kashmir, that I ever felt the least keenness to get back to. Why, I cannot say, for it had no great attractions for me in the way of society beyond my regiment, and very little in the way of sport, except the woodcock, in its immediate vicinity. It is situated on a plateau, 4,900 ft. above sea level, with a wooded ridge on the south side running up to "the Peak" (Mount Shillong, as it is marked on the atlas), 6,500 ft., which is the highest point in the Khasia hills. The station lies on undulating downs, broken here and there by the valleys of some fair-sized streams, which were, till about eight years ago, when trout were introduced, so poached by netting and poisoning that there was scarcely a fish 2 in. long in any of them within three miles.

In the middle of the place, at the foot of the club garden, lies an artificial lake made in 1872 by Capt. Pollok, the author of "Sport in British Burma," about half a mile long, which holds a lot of small mahseer, but they are so shy it is almost impossible to catch them, except when the white ant is on the water, perhaps three days in the year. On one occasion the Khasias were allowed to have a fishing competition, for which prizes were given, and there were about fifty entries. Any sort of bait was allowed. The time was from 10 a.m. till 4 p.m., but only three fish were caught, the best half a pound.

Standing on our parade ground, and looking north across the native village, one sees beyond the golf-links and racecourse the pine-clad hill of Maopat, two miles away. To the north-west spreads the valley of Assam, intersected by the Brahmaputra river, on which, in clear weather, with a glass, one can

see the steamers, though they are 65 miles distant. Beyond the river the valley stretches for 30 or 40 miles up to the Aka and Daphla hills, covered with dense jungle, and behind them rise the snow-capped peaks of the Eastern Himalaya.

To the south-west and west, across the deep valley of the Umiam, a well-wooded plateau, with villages dotted here and there, slopes up to the hill of Dingiei, which is one of the highest peaks in these parts, and to its north is Sohpetbyneng, "the navel of the world," a grassy hill on which a good many bears are to be found. The Khasias believe that once upon a time, on the summit of Dingiei grew a tree of such vast size that its branches overshadowed the whole world, making it so dark that no crops would grow, so one day they started to fell it. When they returned next morning all trace of their labour had disappeared. After this occurred for a few times, they set a watch by night, and discovered that a tiger came to lick the axe wounds and made the trunk whole again. So next evening, when it got dusk, they fastened their axes and knives, with the edges outwards, into the cuts, so when the tiger came and licked he hurt his tongue and went away. Thenceforth the work went on without interruption till the tree came down, when every particle of it was destroyed by fire, so that no more of its kind should ever grow again. After this the world became fertile, as the sunshine and rain could fall upon the soil.

To the east of the parade ground lies the European part of the station and cricket ground, but few of the houses are visible on account of the trees. To the south are the rifle ranges, with the targets at the foot of the Peak ridge. It is said that from the top of the Peak one can see an area of country larger than Ireland.

Thirty miles south of Shillong is the village of Cherrapoonji, noted for its enormous rainfall, which averages 450 in. in the year, the highest amount recorded was 641 in. in 1899. All this fall takes place practically between the middle of June and the middle of October, and one would imagine that everything except the base rock would be washed away in such a

deluge, but grass, trees, and flowers grow there in profusion, and the leeches in the rains are innumerable—one cannot step off the path without getting covered with them. It seems hardly credible, but this spot was once selected as a sanatorium for the European pensioners of the East India Company's service. Needless to say, the poor old men did not last long. Till they were levelled to the ground by the earthquake of 1897, the ruins of the old barracks, covered with moss and vegetation, were a depressing sight. South of Cherra, the ground drops away very steeply, about 4,000 ft. in three miles. Some places on the path are just like a very uneven staircase, most trying to the knees.

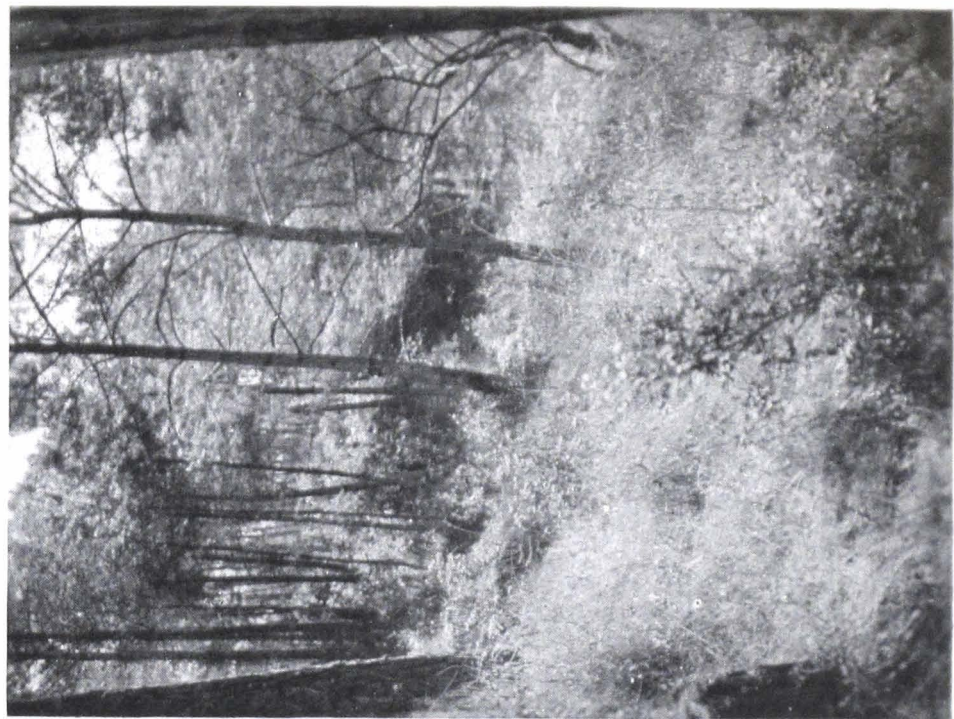
On the slopes at the foot of the cliff are many lime quarries and extensive orange groves. The oranges, which are very like Tangerines only larger and better flavoured, used to sell at about 400 for a shilling some 25 years ago. It is said that in early days oranges from Garwhal, Sikkim, and the Khasia hills were carried by Arab traders into Syria, whence the Crusaders helped to propagate them throughout Southern Europe, so it seems quite feasible to suppose that the Arabs themselves introduced them along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and therefore the Khasia, or, as it is now called, the Sylhet, orange may quite well be the progenitor of the Tangerine.

These groves and lime quarries were leased from their owners by a man of the name of Inglis, for himself and his family, "for so long as he remained above ground," and in order to ensure the continuation of the lease after his death his family had his coffin walled into a great tomb above the ground surface. I remember seeing it years ago just inside the tall gate pillars of his garden, but the house had fallen down, and the garden was a wilderness.

There was quite decent jungle fowl and green pigeon shooting round about these orange groves, and good fishing in the river there, till it was ruined by dynamite; mahseer of 20 lbs. was nothing out of the common. A fish which I never tried for, because it was a bottom feeder, called "kaski,"



THE UMIAM RIVER.



THE WOODCOCK'S HAUNT.

was so numerous that the bottom of some pools was absolutely black with them. It ran up to two or three pounds in weight, and was rather like a tench to look at. It was much liked as an article of diet by the local natives, who used to run a stick through it lengthways, smoke it a little, then keep it till it was soft and smelt to heaven, when it was said to be extremely tasty. I can well believe it.

I saw a man one day, who had caught about 20 of these on worm, which he had anchored in the stream to keep them alive by the simple but cruel expedient of pushing a string through their eyes with a bit of stick. I asked why he couldn't pass it through their gills, and he said if they were blind they didn't struggle. Some of the Arabs in Baghdad kept their fish alive in exactly the same way. All Orientals seem to be naturally cruel.

The Umiam river, nine miles from Shillong, also held a lot of fine fish till it, too, was ruined by dynamite. It was very jolly to ride down there with a pal on a Saturday afternoon, for one could always get quite good sport with the fly for an hour before and after dusk, dine and sleep at the little rest house, and return next day. There was a fair amount of rice cultivation round about, which held a few snipe, and there were black partridges and a quail or two in the grass on the edge of the rice-fields. We used to do our company training down there, and skirmishing practice on the hillside often produced a few birds, as a side issue to make matters slightly more interesting.

Most people think that "mahseer" is the Hindustani name for a particular species of fish, and that the word is derived from Maha=big, and seer=head. Personally, I have never met a native who would give, what we call a mahseer, this name unless he had learnt to do so from a sahib. "Matsya" is, I believe, the Sanscrit for "fish," and the name for fish in many hilly districts of India sounds very like it, so probably when the first sahib caught the first mahseer he asked a native what he called it, who, not knowing its proper name, replied "a fish," and so it has been called ever afterwards. Anyway, "mahseer" is a term very loosely applied.

Within the last few years I travelled with at least two men, keen anglers, who had probably caught far more fish than I have ever done, and when I asked them to give me a definite description of what they called mahseer they gave something which would apply to two or three different species, and, if asked, I couldn't do much better myself. Anyway, no one would start by saying he had a particularly big head, which, according to the usually accepted derivation of his name, ought to be his most salient feature. I believe the true mahseer is the fish which is greenish coloured on the back, golden or copper-coloured on the sides, with white belly and reddish-yellow fins. Also he is longer in proportion to his depth than most similar Indian fish, just as a salmon is longer and not so deep when compared with a trout.

In early days the mahseer was supposed to be peculiar to the Bengal Presidency, which in itself is enough to account for his name, for the Bengali word for fish is "mās," and the hill dialect for it is "mācha," which would easily be mistaken for "mahseer" by the average Englishman. This fish frequents rocky hill rivers; as a rule it is seldom found far from the base of the hills, and then only where there are rocks.

Now it is realised that *Barbus tor*, which is his scientific name, is found in all the big rivers of India, though those found in the Indus, the Jhelum, the Sutlej, the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Narbudda, or the Kaveri vary considerably in their appearance. The difference is easily seen, for a fish from the Ganges is illustrated on page 238 of Farlow's 1922 Catalogue and one from the Brahmaputra on page 194 of Cummins'. Just in the same way, the trout in the British Isles vary in colour and spots, when even in the same pool in the same stream one catches some trout with many spots on them and others with only a few, whilst some have pink flesh and others white. Why is this? Have those with many spots ever been considered a separate variety from those with few, and does the flesh vary in colour with the frequency of the spots, for in the same pool the feeding must be the same?

CHAPTER VII**MONOLITHS IN KHASIA HILLS—THE KHASIAS—LEGEND OF THE SNAKE—WOODCOCK—FISH-POISONING—DYNAMITE**

ONE of the first things one notices in the Khasia hills is the great number of ancient monoliths and table stones to be seen everywhere. These are literally cenotaphs or memorials, for the ashes of the dead are deposited in cairns. Some of these stones are of considerable size, sometimes projecting twenty feet or more above the ground. They are always placed in lines of odd numbers, usually five, seven, or nine, with the tallest one in the centre, and in front of them are the table stones, which are for women, the upright ones representing men. They are hewn out of solid bits of rock, and taper towards the top. They bear no inscriptions, for the Khasia language has no written character. Modern memorial pillars are usually built up of smaller stones, and often have an inscription on them in English lettering, after the style seen in our cemeteries.

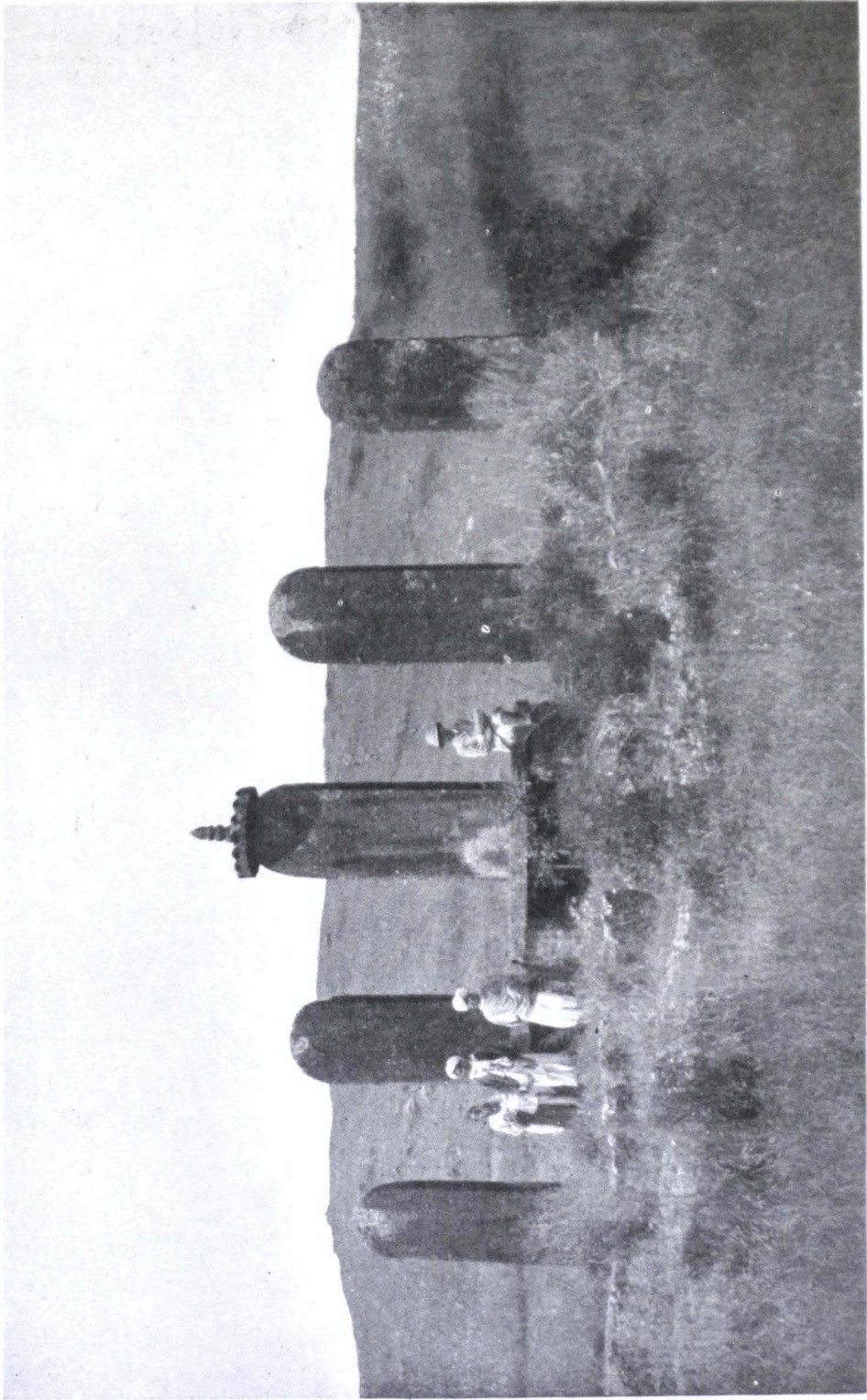
There is no personal history attached to any of the old ones, but it is said the flat ones were sometimes used for human sacrifices. They were brought from considerable distances, being dragged on rollers by cane ropes, but how they were raised upright is a matter of conjecture, for some weigh many tons. These memorials are found in the adjoining hills, and even in the plains, some distance from the hills, so it is probable that in ancient times the Khasias were a much more powerful people than they ever have been since the British had any connection with India, and their customs were enforced on, or copied by, neighbouring tribes. There is some reason for believing that they sent an embassy to China some time in the sixteenth century for it is on record that an embassy came to Peking from

Assam, headed by a man named U Ai, which is essentially a Khasia name, and, some 12 years ago, a small metal slab was obtained in Nowgong, the district which adjoins the north side of the Khasia hills, which is a Chinese credential of some sort. It is made of copper, thickly plated with gold, in the shape of a knife-board, about five inches long, two and a half wide, and one inch thick.

It evidently formed one of a pair, because an inscription had been engraved round the edges of the two placed together, and this cannot be read in the absence of the second slab, as every letter is cut in half. It seems likely that, after these slabs were prepared, the ambassador was given one, the other being retained in Peking, so that if later another ambassador came, bearing the credential give to the former man, the two could be placed together to prove he was a properly accredited person.

The Khasias are a very sturdy and cheerful, though extremely dirty race of distinctly Mongolian type. They are mainly prosperous cultivators, and think nothing of carrying in their produce 30 miles or more in a day to market, in loads of 80 pounds, on their backs. The days of the week are named after the different places where markets are held. They are heavy drinkers, and drink is the curse of the place, for there were, and probably are yet, about a hundred private distilleries within a radius of five miles of our barracks. The liquor is potent, cheap, and must be good, for a man might be paralytic overnight and be on parade next morning with no sign of his debauch on him, except the aroma of drink. Drink, gambling, and women were the most frequent causes for a man being "put on the mat," for all are great weaknesses of the Gurkha.

There is a superstition amongst the Khasias regarding a snake, called "U Thlen," which requires a human sacrifice to appease it, and murders take place occasionally, even in these days, for that purpose, so that the natives are afraid to go out alone after dark.



KHASIA MEMORIAL STONES.

Very little is known about this creature, for the people are extremely unwilling to discuss it, but its possession is said to bring them riches so long as it is contented. The snake is said to have the power of making itself quite small, like a bit of horse-hair, or distending to the size of a large cobra, when it chooses.

When it requires human blood, sickness or poverty comes to its owner, and then he must murder someone, and take some of his victim's hair, nails, and blood from the nostrils to feed it, or it will kill him.

If he wants to get rid of the snake, he must forsake or throw away all his property, which no one, except a chief, will take over for fear of the creature following it. A chief and his family are believed to be immune from any risk or responsibility regarding the Thlen.

Once I was going shooting, very early one morning, and saw a Khasia lying face downwards in the water-cut near our barracks, and thinking he was drunk took hold of his foot to pull him out, when I saw he was dead. We turned him over, and, seeing blood on his face, found his head broken and the partition between his nostrils cut away, and then I heard of the superstition for the first time. The case was reported to the police, but nothing was ever discovered.

There is very little game of any sort in the immediate vicinity of Shillong, except a few ruddy-necked partridge and Kalij pheasants, but a certain number of snipe and a good many woodcock come in, in the winter. These are all trapped most assiduously by the Khasias. A few quail used also to come, but I have never seen one in those parts for over 25 years.

I used to keep all sorts of records of the woodcocks, their weight, colour, haunts, etc., and one season carried a pedometer to see how far I walked for my sport. The result panned out to about five miles for every one killed and a little over three for each one seen. That season I bagged 94, and saw 145, some of which no doubt were counted twice over, so they represented a good deal of foot-slogging. My best season produced 189 birds, but the general run was from 60 to 90,

and the best morning's bag was eight, rather different from what I get now—the chance of shooting perhaps two in a season.

One finds the 'cock amongst the brackens and brambles, in the damp bushy dingles, and in the pine-woods all round the station. I have now and then got one in my garden, where there was a little marshy patch surrounded by daphne bushes, and have seen their borings close beside the parade ground. Wandering through the forest with a gun and a good dog, on a frosty, sunny morning, was one of the most fascinating forms of sport I have ever enjoyed.

I never troubled to learn the Khasia language more than was needed for sporting purposes but for anyone with the gift of tongues Assam is a perfect silver mine, as Government gives a reward of one thousand rupees for each test in a local language passed by a civil official, and half that amount to a soldier officer.

Taking the different languages spoken, in the province and on its borders, from west to east along the right bank of the Brahmaputra, and then back along the left or south bank, one could learn Bengali, Assamese, Bhutia, Tibetan, Aka, Daphla, Abor, Mishmi, Chinese, Khamti, Singpho, Naga, Manipuri, Cachari, Lushai, Khasia, and Garo, not counting certain recognised dialects of some of these, or Hindustani and Gurkhal, which are compulsory for all British officers of Gurkha regiments.

The Khasias are great adepts at poisoning fish, for which they use the bark of a certain tree and the juice of creepers and cactus, so all the little streams haven't much of a chance. Some years ago, when the Umiam river was very low, a party went down from Shillong to poison it, and, when this diversion was over, they had a rare old jollification, set the grass on fire by accident, and some, who were too drunk to escape, were burnt to death, so the river for once played up to its name, which means "the water of weeping."

Thirty years ago this was quite a useful stream to fish, for, unless it was unusually low, it was too big to poison. One could

stand on the bridge, where the high road crosses, and see shoals of big mahseer in the pool below, but dynamite soon did away with these, there and elsewhere. I once went down there snipe-shooting with my colonel, and, hearing the well-known thump of a dynamite cartridge in water, went and looked over the bridge, to find his batman, another of our men, and several Khasias in the water throwing out the fish, whilst a policeman in uniform was standing on the bank directing operations. Our men, of course, were punished, and the others reported to the civil authorities, who let them off with a warning.

On this, I observed one day to a high authority that I couldn't understand why the anarchists were such fools as to risk blowing themselves up by making bombs when they could buy them ready made anywhere in Assam for about eightpence apiece. For some time he wouldn't believe me, and then, when I explained, he asked me how many I thought could be bought. I told him just as many as he liked to pay for, so he suggested that I should arrange to get some, and the names of the people who sold them should be noted. To show how easy it was, I asked him to breakfast next morning, and then took him down to barracks, where I called up a Gurkha officer, who was passing, gave him three rupees, and told him to go and get six dynamite cartridges, complete with fuse and detonators, as I wanted to blow up an old tree stump near the parade ground.

He exclaimed: "Why should I take your money, sahib? I can get the stuff from one of the Public Works clerks for nothing."

I told him he would not perhaps be able to find a man at once who had some, so he had better take the money and go and buy it in the bazaar. He went, and returned in about ten minutes with the cartridges all ready for firing, three of them having the vendor's name neatly stamped on them.

The civilian cried out: "This is dreadful; the sale of dynamite and possession of explosives without a licence are absolutely illegal."

I remarked that I had shown him how well the law was obeyed, and, if he really did want to find out who dealt in the stuff, I would get him names, on the distinct understanding the culprits were really punished and not let off with a warning. He agreed, so in about ten days a hundred cartridges, dozens of detonators, and yards of fuse were obtained, and, with the names of the vendors and witnesses of the sales, were sent to him.

The contractors and quarrymen concerned received exemplary punishment, and, what was better, blasting powder instead of dynamite was ordered to be used entirely on the roads and in the quarries.

This man afterwards told me he couldn't understand my taking so much trouble in this matter, as the anarchists weren't likely to go for me, and seemed quite hurt to hear I had done it in order to improve the rivers. Had I made this the plea there would have been long odds against any steps being taken to stop this illicit traffic.

Any contractor on the roads or in the quarries could get a licence to buy as much high explosive as he liked, but no inquiry was ever made as to how much was legitimately used, or any check made on the quantity; consequently a very great deal more went into the rivers than ever was used on the rocks.

The administration seemed to consider it quite sufficient to issue orders that it was illegal to kill fish in this way, but when it was realised that nothing was ever done to enforce the orders, the people naturally took no notice of them, so it was far simpler to prohibit the use of dynamite altogether than hunt the people who sold or used it illegally. All over Assam the fish are taken in every conceivable way, in and out of season, so they are much better off with dynamite out of the way.

CHAPTER VIII**FISHING ROUND SHILLONG—A CUTE DRUMMER—POACHING—
RHINOCEROS**

THE station of Shillong is entirely surrounded by small streams, which in most places would hold quite decent fish. These all have their sources in the well-wooded Peak ridge. The two largest are named the Um Kra and the Um Shirpi ("um" means water). The former comes down from the east end of the ridge, flows north-east to north for about three miles, and then west for about four more, when it joins the Um Shirpi. This stream rises about a mile west of the other, flows west for two miles, and then north-west to north for three. They join in a deep chasm at the back of the regimental lines.

The Shirpi is the more rapid of the two, and in the last mile of its course there are three splendid waterfalls, one of which is an almost clear drop of 400 ft. The Um Kra, just before the junction, has two big falls, of which the total drop is 350 ft. In the rains, all these falls are a magnificent sight. One would expect to find enormous pools at the base of the cliff, but there are none. I have never known anyone who managed to get down to the actual junction, because the rocks are so precipitous.

Under a fall close to the lines is a fine pool about 70 yards long and 30 yards wide, but as it has steep, overhanging rocks on both banks, and is very deep, it can only be fished from the tail end, and even this is very difficult of approach. It holds a good many fair-sized mahseer, for, from its situation and size, it is impossible to poison or net it. I tried it once or twice, when young and active, but the results were never worth the trouble of getting down and up some 150 ft. of rugged cliff.

On one occasion I had an adventure there, which gave me food for thought for some days. I was climbing up, and had neared the top, when I saw on the path above, about twenty yards off, our big drummer carrying a bottle, slung by its neck on a bit of string, in one hand, and an umbrella in the other. I felt sure he was taking drink into barracks, which was strictly forbidden, so called to him to wait a moment. I climbed laboriously up, and then asked him what was in the bottle.

He replied, "What bottle?"

"The bottle you were carrying just now."

"I have no bottle," he said, which was quite true.

I looked at his clothes. He certainly hadn't it in his pocket, for it would have stuck out. It wasn't in his umbrella, nor was there any bush or hole in the ground where he could have hidden it without moving, and he stood in the same place all the time I was coming up the bank, so I remarked:

"You've done me this time. Go on!" So he went on his way, grinning.

Some days after, when at pipe practice, I had a brain wave, and said to him, "Duttia, tell me where you put that bottle."

He laughed, and replied, "No, sahib; if I had had a bottle, wouldn't you have found it?"

I said, "I'm not going to run you in, so will you tell me if I am right when I tell you what I think you did with it?"

He agreed, so I told him he had thrown it over my head into the pool as I was climbing up the steep bank and looking at the ground.

He seemed awfully surprised, but admitted this was the case, and asked how I had found out; so I told him that was the only way he could have got rid of it so quickly without moving, for I would never have heard it splash amidst the noise of the water.

This fellow tumbled off an elephant in Burma and broke both his wrists, but made a most wonderful recovery, for he was one of the finest big-drummers I have ever seen, and could do all sorts of fireworks with the drumsticks. He wasn't a

bad piper either, and when he had taught his little son to play the practice chanter, it was quite interesting to see the father blow up the big pipes, put the drones over his shoulder, and keep the bag full, whilst the boy played a march or reel, for his little lungs could not have kept the instrument going.

For a short time after the rains ceased every year there were a few small fish up to 8 in. long in all these local streams, but in a week or two they got so shy from constant harrying by the Khasias, they weren't worth going out for.

Towards the end of my time in the service, Assam at last got a Chief Commissioner, who was a fisherman, and he agreed, as an experiment, to stock the streams in the station with brown trout, the ova of which were got from Kashmir, and to preserve them. This was done just before the war, in 1914, but whether the trout have bred in the streams or not I cannot say, as I have never been there in the fishing season since, but I have seen them, so they should do all right if looked after. During the war they must have had a thin time, and now the Provincial Council is largely composed of natives, who are not likely to do much to further the sahibs' sport. In a few years, except in the native States, where the rulers do not allow their subjects to do as they like, field sports will be a thing of the past, for, if left to himself, no native will observe a close season for fish, flesh, or fowl.

At one time all sorts of regulations were made for a game reserve in the Shillong forest, which were observed just as long as the Chief Commissioner, who made them, remained in office, and he succeeded in getting up quite a nice head of indigenous game birds and small deer.

One day, some time after he left, as I was passing with my company I heard a shot in the reserved forest, extended the men, and soon ringed up a Khasia with a gun which he had just fired.

A report was sent in to the magistrate, and he wanted to know if any witnesses were available, so I offered to send 115, who had heard the shot and were present at the

catching of the culprit, on which he said three would be enough. I heard afterwards the man was let off, because he said he was on his way back from a village where he had been spending the night, and had taken his gun to sleep with, and his reason for firing was that he did not like to take a loaded gun into his house. From my experience of the Khasias, I had hitherto imagined they preferred something softer than a gun as a bed-fellow. Another native I knew was said to shoot a deer every week in the reserve, and I was thinking about catching him, when he saved me the trouble by shooting his sister, whilst she was gathering sticks, in mistake for a deer. He was, of course, tried for manslaughter, but got off, as it was an accident.

Most game reserves in British India are happy hunting grounds for the natives if they can afford to bribe the watchers, for the rewards given for the detention of poachers are so small. In one of the rhinoceros sanctuaries in Assam, the reward given for a conviction of killing one of these beasts was about thirty rupees, or two pounds. Now, a dead rhinoceros is worth several hundred rupees to a native, as his horn, to begin with, is worth its weight in silver, and every bit of his meat, including his entrails, is supposed to be an infallible aphrodisiac, so a poacher who killed one could easily afford to pay the amount of the Government reward to any potential witnesses and yet be well in pocket, for those who got the precious meat would not be likely to give him away. So, till rewards are big enough to make it not worth the outlay for the poacher to bribe witnesses, sanctuaries will always be poached. If a white man broke the rules it would be known at once, for he never goes on a shooting trip without employing many natives in one way or another, and what he does is discussed by them all, with many embellishments.

Fish in India have a much better chance of surviving than game, for they mostly spawn in the rains, and the big ones always drop down the hill streams into the plains, or into the big pools, during the cold weather, and very little harm can be done in the cold and hot seasons in large rivers, if explosives

are not used. They soon get to know all about trapping, and avoid it, and netting in clear water is never very profitable.

Assam undoubtedly affords the best and most varied mahseer fishing in India, but getting to it is the difficulty, for communications in the province are not good in the vicinity of the hills. Whichever river one elects to fish, one has almost always to go a day or two's march from the railway or the Brahmaputra before starting operations; and coolies, carts, or transport animals are always difficult to obtain at short notice. I have had most of my best sport on active service, or on the march, as regards fishing.

CHAPTER IX

SIGNALLING CLASS, KASALI—MORNI TAL—PATIALA

IT is thirty years since I was ordered to attend the School of Army Signalling at Kasauli, a station 7,000 ft. up in the Himalayas, where officers were taught how to send messages by flag, lamp, heliograph, foghorn and all the rest of it. It was an interesting and enjoyable class. Whilst there, I met the late Maharajah of Patiala, who, in addition to being the ruler of the greatest State in the Punjab, was a very first-class, all-round sportsman. There was no manly sport or game at which he was not an adept, except boxing, and he had neither the weight nor muscle for that ; besides, he wore glasses. He was equally good at polo, shooting, cricket, tennis, swimming or pig-sticking. With a rook rifle he could hit a coin thrown up at 20 yards almost every time with a bullet, and he possessed that extraordinary faculty, which some Indians possess, of being able to read something, dictate an order or letter, and listen to a conversation, all at the same time.

One day, after we had been playing cricket, he pulled an enormous catapult out of his bag and began shooting at crows with it. At that time I was a bit of an expert with a " catty " myself, and told him that a great strong thing like his was no use for accurate work, and showed him how one could light a match lying on the ground with a small one carrying No. 4 shot, like I used, which wasn't likely to do any damage with a stray shot. Of course he wanted to have one like it at once, so I made one for him. Then he wished for several, but there was no more elastic, and it was not obtainable in India, so I offered to write home for some.

He said, " Don't write ! Wire for it ; I will pay for the cable."

It was pointed out that the cable would cost about £5 for a few shillings' worth of elastic, on which he remarked, " What does that matter if I want the stuff ? "

I accordingly cabled to my brother-in-law to send twenty yards, and luckily he did so without instituting inquiries as to whether I had gone dotty. When the elastic arrived, the Maharajah equipped his brother, his wife, and many of his friends with catapults, not altogether to the enjoyment of some of his subjects, because he found this quite a useful way of attracting a man's attention.

Some twenty-five years later, long after the Maharajah was dead, I met his brother again, but he did not recognise me ; so I put up my hands as if I were using a catapult, when his countenance brightened at once, and he said,

" Oh ! that was many, many years ago, and I am an old man now." Which was rather pathetic.

During the class there was an interval of about a week just before the examination for certificates, so a man in the 11th Hussars and myself set off for a lake at the foot of the hills, about thirty miles away, named Morni Tal, where there was said to be very decent sport with rod or gun. We first rode ten miles down to Pinjore, where Patiala had a beautiful garden, modelled on the lines of the famous Shalimar, with fruit trees, fountains, cascades, shaded walks, and rectangular grass plots bordered with flowers, with a delightful summer-house in the midst, where we put up for the night.

Next day we had a very rough march across the wide, stony beds of several small rivers, and camped on the bank of the farthest one. Early next morning we set off for the lake, which was another ten miles off, across a high ridge. By noon we had reached the crest, where there was a fine old castellated Sikh fort, whence we could see the lake, still four miles distant and some 2,000 feet below us, shimmering in the sunlight and surrounded by jungle.

A Sikh policeman came out of the post in the little village, and, when he heard our kit had not come along, very kindly made us some tea whilst we waited for it. He told us that there had been much fighting round about the castle in bygone days, and, amongst other things, that it was full of ghosts.

The baggage ponies did not turn up till nearly three o'clock, and were very tired, the delay having been caused by the loads having to be man-handled over some ticklish parts of the road, so, as we saw that we should get in very late if we continued the journey, we decided to stay where we were and see what sport we could get near at hand. The fort was in very fair preservation, and two rooms had been kept in repair in one of the towers for the use of travellers, so we were able to make ourselves fairly comfortable.

The Sikh informed us that there were a good many gural in the cliffs about a mile away, which we might get a shot at in the early morning, so while our kit was being unpacked we had a look round the place. A small orange grove had lately been started close by, and as we were going to it we realised that what the policeman had said about the fighting was true enough, for from the side of a small cutting made for the path a mass of men's ribs were sticking out, just as if a lot of old baskets had been buried in there.

The only local man who could show the ground for gural was the old sweeper, who looked after the rooms we occupied, and when he appeared for that purpose next morning, clad in a red serge jumper and a pair of tartan trews, I thought our chances of bagging one of these little Indian chamois would be small. However, after we had gone about a mile, he suggested that my companion should go down the hillside through the jungle to the lower part of the cliffs, whilst he and I kept on along the top. After some distance we came to what seemed to be the edge of a cliff, when, just as I was going to look over cautiously, I heard a sharp whistling sound, which was the gural's alarm signal. A careful peep over in the direction of the noise revealed three alert little animals standing about

sixty yards down amongst the rocks, looking out below them. Selecting the one which seemed to be the biggest, I pressed the trigger, but for some seconds the smoke obscured everything, though a rattling of stones made it seem probable one was hit. When the smoke cleared away, no animal could be seen, so I told the sweeper to go down and prospect.

He looked over the edge, sat down at once, and said in English, "Your highness, I no hill man. I fall down and get killed."

It wasn't a nice place, almost a sheer drop, and covered with loose stones, but I put down the rifle and proceeded to climb down. The ground was very steep, but I got to the place where the gural had been standing without much difficulty, and there found a good patch of blood and hair on the stones. twenty yards below this the little beast was lying dead under a rock. Tying his legs together and passing my head through them, I got him on my back, but climbing up again was not so easy. The old sweeper was lying on the top with only his head showing, and kept calling out each time a stone slipped, "Mind yourself, Sahib, mind yourself!" On reaching the top I made him take the gural, and went back to the castle.

My friend came in soon afterwards, and said that the shot had evidently scared everything in his neighbourhood, for he had seen nothing, and as it was such vile walking he gave it up; so we had breakfast and went out again afterwards, but had no more luck that day or the next. The following afternoon we returned to our last camp, had a good bathe, and caught a nice lot of sturdy roach-like little fish, which took the fly and fought very well for their size. Next morning we sent on the baggage ponies, and had a beat for peafowl. Neither of us had shot these birds before, and were astonished to find how fast they flew, and how easy it was to miss them in spite of their size; still, we got half a dozen. A young one was a most excellent dish, quite as good as roast turkey. We reached Pinjore that evening, and Kasauli next day. On this trip I had two Gurkhas with me, and as we were passing through some

heavy grass at the foot of the hills we came on some camel-dung. The men pointed to it and said, "Rhinceros." The mistake was not unnatural, for they had never seen a camel, the jungle was just like that a rhino. lives in, and the dung is very similar. Years afterwards, when in camp not ten miles from this very spot, on looking at a very, very old temple, I saw a rhinceros carved on the wall, from which it is to be inferred that at the time the temple was built, some hundreds of years ago, rhino. did exist in these parts.

I remember very distinctly a conversation with these same men in Amballa, where I had taken them to show them British cavalry, infantry, and artillery, none of which was ever seen in Assam. Indeed, till we landed at Basra during the war my regiment had never formed part of a complete brigade on parade, or stood in the line with guns and cavalry, in all the 92 years of its existence. Such are the disadvantages of being a local corps in an out-of-the-way part of the world.

When they saw a parade of all arms they inquired the object of the little flags the cavalry carried, meaning the lances, and, lastly, asked me if it was true that the Russian Army was so large that a steamer could float in the water that ran from the water used in washing their cooking utensils. During the late war I was asked if it was true the Germans had a gun so big that a hundred men could sit inside it.

One could not expect men who had never seen other troops, except on small frontier expeditions, to know very much. Our men were highlanders, who, before enlisting, had never been out of their own hills. They had always served in the hills, and knew pretty well all that was required in jungle and mountain warfare, subjects which used to be considered so special as to require separate manuals of instruction. The regiment had taken part in four jungle and hill expeditions in the three years preceding the war, therefore, so as to give them the full benefit of their recent experience, they were sent to fight in a flat country, where there was scarcely a single wild tree, whilst regiments consisting of plainsmen, who had always

lived and served in flat, open country, were sent to be chawed up in the bush in the only theatre of war in which there was jungle where Indian troops were employed.

When the signalling class was over, the Maharajah invited me to go and shoot with him in Patiala, and did me like the prince he was. If there was pig-sticking, he sent out about fifty ponies for me to choose a mount from, and when we went to beat for small game, he turned out one of his battalions of infantry and a cavalry regiment as beaters. The guns rode on elephants in the line, and there was precious little game that wasn't flushed. We killed lots of partridges and hares, besides a few snipe, peacock, quail and duck.

The polo was splendid to watch, for at that time the best players in almost the whole of India belonged to Patiala. Perhaps the finest player of all was a Sikh, who had been a non-commissioned officer in the 12th Bengal Cavalry, whom the Maharajah had induced to leave our service, and made a general officer in his own. In the evening there was roller-skating, theatricals, and, of course, a nautch, which last was the least amusing of all.

When the day of departure came, the Maharajah asked me to choose a memento of my visit from his treasure house, where there were all sorts of watches, jewels, guns, swords, and everything imaginable. I told him I would prefer to anything else three of the tiny gold coins which he had specially struck to drop into a bowl of melted butter, as a sort of religious rite, when he first went out of his palace in the morning, so that I could have them made into front studs. He at once turned to his secretary and ordered him to get them for me, and bring them down to the train.

When we arrived at the railway station, the secretary was there to see me off, but made no reference to the coins; so I asked him for them, on which he said he had forgotten them, but would send them on by registered letter. A few minutes later the Maharajah and his brother turned up to say good-bye, and he at once asked if I had got the coins. On hearing that I

hadn't he turned round and asked why his orders hadn't been obeyed. The secretary said he had forgotten to give me the coins, put his hand in his pocket and produced them, thus showing that, though he was drawing a salary of £120 a month, he wasn't above stealing something worth, at the outside, ten shillings, and lying about it as well. What he must have looted his prince of in a year baffles the imagination ; and, of course, everybody who had any petition to make would have to pay through the nose before the secretary would even look at it.

I then started on my eight days' journey back to Shillong.

CHAPTER X**TRAVELLING IN ASSAM—CROCODILES—RIVER STEAMERS—EDUCATION OF BENGALIS**

A JOURNEY to Upper Assam from any part of India was a considerable undertaking even in the latter part of last century. One encountered the difficulties soon after leaving Calcutta, particularly if one elected to follow the mail route, when time was an object. The simplest way was to leave Calcutta at night by train, strike the Brahmaputra at Goalundo early next morning, and there embark on a steamer, which took one 200 miles up the river to Gauhati, where one got off for Shillong, to Nigrating another 150 for Kohima in the Naga hills and Manipur, or to Dibrugarh, which was another 100 miles further up. Beyond this the steamers did not go. Between all these places were numerous ports, or ghats as they are called, from which one journeyed into the interior of the province.

Shillong, Kohima, and Dibrugarh were the military stations of Assam up to 1891; the two first were 63 and 98 miles from the river, and Dibrugarh was on it. After the rising in 1891, Manipur was made into a garrison, and it was 100 miles across country beyond Kohima; the cart road was not opened till 1894.

The shorter route was more uncomfortable, because there were several large unbridged rivers to cross, including the Teesta and the Ganges. The distance between the two permanent railway stations on the opposite banks of the Ganges was 13 miles, and in the dry season the rails were laid on the sand as far as possible, and then one had to walk some distance from the train to the ferry steamer, when the actual crossing

only took about twenty minutes. In the rains, when the river was full, it took a couple of hours. The other rivers were crossed in country boats, poled or rowed by natives, and little uncomfortable trains linked up with them. The mail went this way, as it was over a day shorter between Calcutta and Jatrapur, where the rail ended, than by going round by Goalundo.

At Jatrapur a steamer was always supposed to be awaiting the train, but if it was not, there was a rest house where one could get food of sorts. In this, as in all similar establishments throughout India, was kept a book in which visitors recorded the period of their stay and the amount paid for rent, but at Jatrapur they often filled in the time by making sketches or writing what they considered poetry. Four entries I remember very well, which were :

“ With a fasting dawn, we came at morn
 And this good hostel tried,
 And I declare, as we all do here,
 That we were really quite satisfied.
 —C. B., October 7.”

The next man, evidently not feeling so pleased with himself, wrote :

“ Thou hungry lout, thou senseless wit, who taught
 thee words in rhyme to fit ?
 Why agonise thy fellow man with worthless verse that
 does not scan ?
 —L. C. B., October 12.”

A missionary then came along and wrote :

“ Some come and like to write their verse, and some to strut
 about and curse,
 I wean (*sic*) it is the better plan to act the part of a
 gentleman,
 And if you will of my words take heed, I am sure you
 always will succeed.
 —C. D., October 17.”

Number two, on his next visit, wrote below :

“ Your rhyme is poor, your grammar worse,
 And words that jingle don't make verse.
 —L. C. B., October 25.”

To these scintillations I felt bound to contribute my spark :

“ One would think from wit so neat
That Byron had been here to eat.

—A. W., November 2.”

The constant changes in the beds of the Ganges and other rivers caused frequent alterations in the positions of the railway stations, necessitating removal and relaying of the railway, and were for many years a puzzle to engineers and a source of anxiety to the financial authorities, but the difficulties were overcome by bridging the rivers, and now the railway runs through from Calcutta to a point three miles or so short of Gauhati, where there is a ferry steamer, and then continues along the left bank of the Brahmaputra up to Dibrugarh.

Before the steamers came it took anything from two to three months to reach Dibrugarh from Calcutta in a sailing boat.

Up to Jatrapur the scenery along the river is uninteresting and monotonous, but after that, on the left bank, the wooded ridges of the Garo, Khasia, and Naga hills succeed one another, and on the right, at a distance of 30 or 40 miles, rise the hills of Bhutan, Aka, and Daphla, with the snowy peaks of the Himalaya in Tibet behind them.

On the sandbanks, when the water is low, one sees scores of crocodiles basking in the sun, with their jaws agape. These are all of the narrow-snouted, fish-eating kind, often 20 feet or so in length, and quite harmless to cattle and human beings.

When young and thoughtless, and when the old Snider ammunition could be bought for about eight shillings a hundred rounds, I often used to shoot at them, but they were seldom killed outright, and if they were, could not be got, for the boat might not be stopped. On one occasion, however, I did secure one, by accident. On being hit it lashed about a great deal, but as its spine was broken it could not get into the water. The man at the wheel was so interested in this that, not looking

where he was going he ran the ship on to the sandbank, and there she stuck and no amount of back-paddling would move her. The skipper (a native) then had a boat lowered, put the anchor into it, which was taken down-stream to the length of the cable and there dropped. The donkey engine commenced to wind in, and slowly the ship was dragged off. I then suggested, hinting that buckshish would be forthcoming, that as the boat was afloat it might be taken a few yards further and the crocodile brought on board. So we got the beast which took six men to lift. The steersman also received a trifle to compensate him for the whack on the head he got from the skipper when the ship ran aground.

Usually, if one ran on to a bank, especially when going down-stream, it was a more serious matter, for one had to wait till another boat came to pull one off; and instances have been known when this occurred, if the river was falling after the rains, of a boat being stuck for days. In years gone by little was done in the way of buoying or lighting the main channel, and one always tied up at dark.

These steamboats only drew four or five feet of water when fully laden, and two men used to sit on either side of the bows with leads or poles for sounding, calling out the depth they found. When the cry was "Tin bom milla nay" (three fathoms not touched) all was well, but at "Kalli ek bom" (only one fathom) the engine was slowed, for sometimes the next cry was "Lugga" (struck), and there would be a bump which shook the vessel from stem to stern.

In later years the channel was marked where uncertain with poles and lamps by night, and as the boats carried large acetylene searchlights, they ran continuously and did not tie up.

One extraordinary effect of the searchlight was this. In warm weather it naturally attracted crowds of insects, large and small, from the jungle on the banks. These glowed like fireflies in the direct beam of the lamp, and continued to do so for some yards after they had passed out of it into the dark,

though they were not luminous at any other time. One night I remember, in the cold weather, a lot of wild geese flew at the light and got mixed up with the chairs on the foredeck, where two or three of them were caught.

When the boats used to tie up at night, the crew used to let down lines from the stern and sometimes caught quite large mahseer with bait, but more often got broken. The photo of one of these, weighing 70 pounds, which I sent to Cummins, of Bishop Auckland, has adorned his catalogue for many years. This very handsome fish was taken by the engineer of one of the boats, who could hold most things he hooked as he had 500 yards of line on his reel. He invariably fished on the bottom with about a pound of lead on to keep the bait down, and a chunk of paste as large as his fist on the hook. Occasionally a tiger might be seen swimming from bank to bank, and once I saw a herd of wild buffalo crossing, with nothing but their horns and heads showing.

It will be easily realised that in the old days few people went to Assam, except for a long stay, unless they had to go on duty or business.

However, officers going on leave out of the province were allowed to report their departure and their arrival on returning at Jatrapur, which was practically on the border. This was a considerable concession, as it prevented one losing pay through overstaying one's leave if the steamer ran aground.

One commanding officer we had, who seldom took leave, said he thought this a rotten rule and would allow no one to avail himself of it ; but not long after he got stuck himself, and then did not hesitate to do so, therefore afterwards he never could object to others doing the same.

Leave, however, was not very easy to obtain when I first joined. I was eight years in the Army without any leave at all, except for week-ends and an occasional ten days, and on one occasion, when I got enteric on service. The regiments in Assam, owing to the numerous detachments we had to find, were always short of officers.

When going up or down the river on duty, officers were allowed to get their actual food on the boats at about half-rates, provided they obtained a certificate from the master of the boat to the effect that they had been fed on board. Where else one was to feed on a moving boat had evidently never been considered. Most people would think it would be less trouble to all concerned if the officer were allowed to pay direct for his messing at half-rates on production of his ticket to prove he was travelling on duty, but that would have been far too simple a procedure for the Indian Government. He therefore had to pay at full rate, get this certificate from the skipper, who was usually an almost illiterate native, then claim a refund from the pay department supported by the certificate and a copy of the order authorising him to travel, when he was lucky if he got the money in a month or two without any further question being asked.

It is strange how the Indian Government has always treated its officers as if they were potential thieves and swindlers. A friend of mine once had to raise a coolie corps in the Naga hills and take it on service in Burma. Having done this, he showed the 600 men in the pay-return as Numbers 1, 2, 3, etc., of such-and-such a village, as many men who came from the same village had the same names. By this means he hoped to avoid questions as to whether he had not paid the same man twice, and whether Moba of Kohima was not the same man as Moba of Konoma, for some of these tribes have only about half-a-dozen names amongst them, the owner being distinguished by a sort of nickname.

Imagine this officer's delight, some time after the campaign was over and his corps disbanded, at getting all the pay-rolls back with the whole amount of them objected to, several thousands of rupees being debited against him personally because the payees' names had not been given nor their signatures taken against each payment. He replied that none of the men could write, and it would now be impossible to get their names as they had all gone to their homes ; but he stated

that the money had been paid to them as he had certified on the pay-roll each month. No notice was taken of this argument. He was merely told that the objection was upheld for the reasons first given, and that the whole sum would be recovered from his own pay in monthly instalments. On this he sat down, evolved the names out of his own fertile brain, and sent the amended rolls back, on which the objection was withdrawn.

A few of the skippers of the Brahmaputra flotilla, 30 odd years ago, were white men. One of them had served on the Indus in the Sikh wars—a very quaint old bird. I was once in his boat in October, when the river was very high, but falling, as the rains were over. One morning the old man came up from breakfast and, without saying a word, gave the steersman a clip on the ear which knocked him off the wheel. He then walked forward, looked about a bit, and took another turn down the deck, gave the man another cuff, and pointed out something. Afterwards he came and sat down beside me with the remark he was a little bit put out, but hoped I had not noticed it. I asked what had annoyed him, and he replied :

“ While I was at breakfast that adjective fool has taken us about a mile out of the proper channel, and if we stick now the boat will be here for another six or seven months.”

Luckily we did not stick. It did not seem surprising that the man had lost his way, for during the rains the river had the appearance of a vast swirling lake with country boats all over it, and only a few landmarks, such as villages or clumps of tree jungle sticking out like islands here and there.

Another English skipper had a fearfully pock-marked face, and of him it was told that on one of his rare visits to London he went into a barber's shop for a shave, for which he was charged sixpence. He said something about the charge being very high, on which the barber remarked :

“ I ought to have charged a shilling seeing all the trouble I had going in and out of them holes without cutting you.”

On reaching Gauhati one had often to stay the night, because

the tongas (two-wheeled conveyances drawn by two ponies) did not start after ten o'clock. The journey took eight hours. Nowadays there are motors, which make the 63 miles in about six. The ponies were changed every seven or eight miles, and most of them were very bad starters, rearing, biting, fighting, and jibbing being the usual thing at each stage. Some required to have their nostrils bunged up with a dirty clout before they would move, others had to have their ears twisted or bitten, some needed a rope put round their quarters and pulled before they would stir, whilst for one or two a handful of burning straw had to be flung down on the road under their bellies, but when once they were off they did most of the stages at a gallop.

In the garden of the rest house at Gauhati, which stood on a small hill overlooking the river, were several old guns, relics of the Burmese occupation, 1818-1824. One afternoon I was visited here by two Bengali youths, who presented a petition setting forth that they had received an English education, but had failed to pass the final examination, so they now requested the charitable to contribute towards maintaining them. I asked what their parents did, and was informed that the father of each was a small farmer. I inquired why they could not work on the land, too, when both replied that such a thing would be shameful for anyone who had received a good education, that is to say, they would not work but were not ashamed to beg from those who did. It is from such men as these the agitators are made. They fail to see that the object of education is to make a man a useful member of society, not merely to turn him into a clerk. If they are not able to get a job of this sort they are dissatisfied, and pretend that Government has deceived them by not providing them all with jobs.

Do any of them imagine now that, if the British left India, their sort would survive and be able to govern? Do they imagine that the Sikh or Punjabi Mohammedan would allow himself to be bossed by a Bengali? Do they ever realise that

the Gurkha says that, if the British Army were withdrawn, in a month there would not be a rupee or a virgin left between Nepaul and Calcutta? No, they want us to provide the protection and allow them to control us, so that they can reap all the benefit without taking the risk.

Five miles out of Gauhati the road enters the forest, and except for a few bits of cultivation here and there runs through it for about 40 miles. The change of temperature at any time of the year between Gauhati at 200 feet above sea-level and Shillong at about 5,000 is considerable, and frequently gives a new arrival a bad dose of fever.

CHAPTER XI

DUCK-SHOOTING AND NATIVE FISHING IN MARSHES OF ASSAM—
LAKES IN MANIPUR STATE

IN 1897, owing to a very bad earthquake in Assam, about 200 square miles subsided on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and the courses of many of the small rivers which came down from the Bhutan hills were silted or choked up, so all this area was turned into one huge swamp. In a few years the sites of the deserted villages and the raised parts of the roads were practically all that remained above water. The grass and water weeds grew apace, and the area became the haunt of countless wildfowl, which afforded probably the best sport of the kind in India. For Assam, the place was comparatively accessible. In later years, when villages sprang up near the edges of the marsh or on some of the larger islands which were gradually formed from the silt brought down from the mountains, one used to camp in a place where one could get boats and then paddle out and line up in suitable positions, where the high grass gave good cover, for instance, along some part of a derelict road.

A man was then sent off for a mile or so in one direction with a gun to stir the duck up. As soon as one heard the first shot one saw in the distance a cloud of birds against the sky, which looked like a vast swarm of gnats, and then in a minute or two they began coming over in dozens, in twos and threes, or singly, at all heights and angles, affording an infinite variety of shots. Then, after most of the duck on that side had shifted their quarters, another man, who had gone out in the opposite direction, would open fire and the same performance would take

place again. In the evening one could go practically where one chose and get fighting.

Every day one got eight or ten varieties of duck, such as widgeon, gadwall, tufted pochard, red-headed pochard, pintail, sheldrake, spot-bill, shoveller, etc., besides geese and teal. Gadwall were far the most numerous, but mallard were extremely scarce. In all the years I served in Assam I only got one mallard, and that was the very last duck I killed there.

The first time I went, a party of four got over 1,400 duck in two and a half days, but the submerged area gradually grew less as it was drained and the rivers through it cut themselves new channels, and my last visit in 1920 only resulted in a bag of 355 for five guns in three days. Nowadays I am told that, owing to the success of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms in stirring up racial feeling, the natives of those parts, although they always received a large percentage of the bag besides being paid for their trouble, won't take a white man out at all, or even hire their boats to him.

This great marsh absolutely swarms with fish, some of which are most peculiar. The first one when seen in the water seemed quite an ordinary little beast about three inches long, not unlike a miniature gurnard, but, if carried on to the bank by the wash of a passing boat, he instantly blew himself up into an almost round semi-transparent ball and proceeded to roll back into the water. If picked up by the tail, it seemed as if he would remain puffed out indefinitely, but he deflated the moment he touched the water.

One reads they possess this power of distention as a protection against other fish, but if this is the case they must be able to blow themselves out with water too, which I never succeeded in making them do, even after putting them in a basin and stirring them up, but they would instantly distend with air when on the surface. The other queer fish was about the size of a big minnow, and he could walk up the bank, a tree stump, or even the side of a stationary boat on the tips of his fins, which

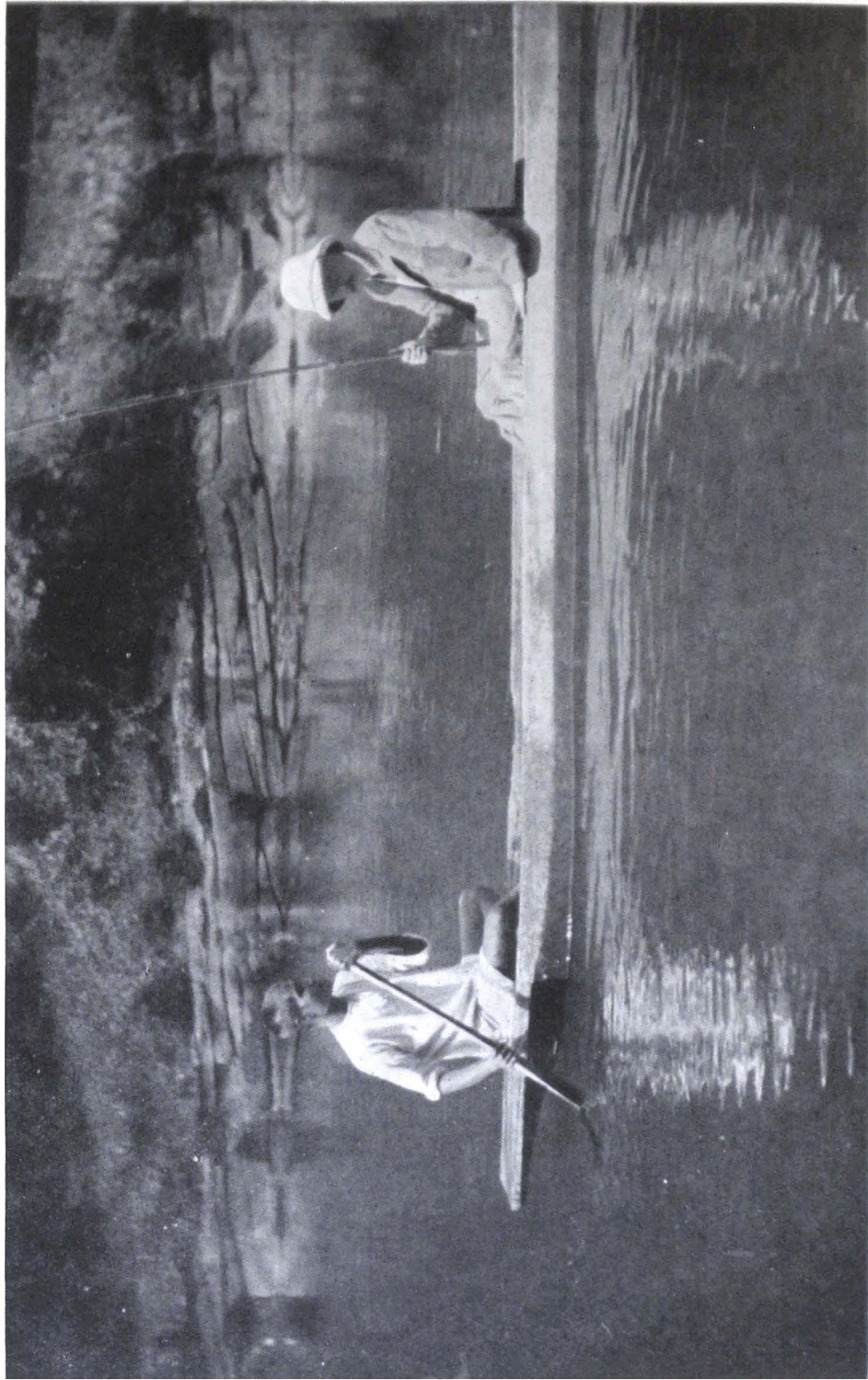
were sharp and pointed, and there remain raised up on his forefins, just like a lizard looking for flies.

The inhabitants of this district seemed to do nothing but fish during the cold weather in every manner, except with hook and line.

One method was the use of a basket, triangular in shape, made of split bamboo. Three sides of it closed to a point, the fourth side left open. It was kept rigid by a forked wooden handle. The operator holding this wades in, presses the bottom of the basket on the ground, and then tries to drive fish into it by trampling on the weeds all round it. Sometimes two rows of women, facing inwards, will drive a creek, or form a circle in a marsh, gradually closing in and pushing these baskets along the bottom in front of them, when the result is much better than one would expect, and the operation is quite amusing to watch, for the participants thoroughly enjoy it.

Another method is the use of a dome-shaped basket about a yard high and two feet in diameter across the base. At the apex is a hole just large enough to admit a man's hand. With this the fisherman wades in and dabs it down over any spot likely to hold a fish. If he gets one inside, which he is aware of by its efforts to get out, he puts his hand in through the hole at the top to catch it. This also affords quite good results. Most of the fish taken in these ways are very small. They are spread out to dry in the sun, which is all the curing they get. As may be imagined, neither their odour nor their appearance is attractive, but the native enjoys them immensely boiled in his rice. The larger fish are taken with nets or spears.

In the State of Manipur, which is also very swampy in parts, are several shallow lakes, in which the fishermen form enormous rafts or islands of vegetation. These they push into a spot where they have paved the bottom with stones and there anchor them in a depth of water sufficient to allow of the green-stuff resting on the stones, and then they leave them till the fish get accustomed to them and take cover amongst the vegetation.



A "DUG-OUT" CANOE.

After a while nets are placed all round these green masses and the fish are driven out with much shouting and thumping of paddles against the sides of dugout canoes, a none-too-pleasing sound if one has ridden out several miles to shoot duck.

The fishing rights of one lake called the Whitok used to let twenty years ago for an annual rent of about £700, and as the fish used to be sold for about a halfpenny a pound, it may be imagined what an enormous number there were in the lake.

When the rainy season ceased, the fish used to collect at the lower end of the lake to drop down the river, but they were kept in by a dam. Into this dam were built great wooden pipes through which all the outflow passed, and men stood with large conical baskets with which they covered the end of the pipes. In a few minutes these were filled with fish, when they were removed and empty ones put on at once. This went on day and night for about three weeks.

About 200 yards down-stream from the outflow was a large, crude, very indecent representation of a naked woman lying on her back, and to this the first basketful of fish taken after dawn each day was sacrificed. The smell of these fish was supposed to draw the others down-stream. It struck me that a specially small basket must be kept for the sacrifice.

To stand on the dam and look up the lake afforded a sight for the gods; for a couple of hundred yards up the valley the water was absolutely black with fish, so closely packed they could scarcely move. Hawks, cormorants, and gulls picked the little ones off the top, whilst every now and again a regular spray of fish would shoot into the air, indicating that big ones were taking toll from below. Acres and acres of ground were covered by the drying operations, the smell of which was easily perceived at the distance of a mile.

This fishery has existed from time immemorial, yet the supply of fish never seems to get less, of which this lake is said to hold twenty-two varieties.

In all the rice-fields throughout the valley of Manipur, when they were flooded during the rains, were millions and millions

of fry. Even these were caught in neat little basket contrivances something like eel traps, which were placed in the irrigation runnels between the fields.

When shooting snipe in August and September, one's orderlies always used to shake out the contents of these traps till they had filled their haversacks, and in the course of a day's shooting each would generally collect four or five pounds of these little whitebait if no one else had been round before them.

How these fish got into the fields, especially into those which were not irrigated from a stream, I could never understand, and precious few of them could have got out again, for after a while the water dried up, and the land remained dry till the next year.

CHAPTER XII

ADVENTURE WITH A ROGUE ELEPHANT

SOME thirty years ago an advertisement appeared in the *Assam Gazette* proclaiming that a rogue elephant "about 15 feet high and of a light-black colour" was killing people and destroying crops between 20 and 25 miles east of Shillong, and a reward of 50 rupees and its tusks was offered to anyone who would kill it. The description had evidently been written by a Bengali clerk and not been checked by anyone in authority, but inquiries elicited the fact that a very large elephant was on the rampage not so very far away.

The officers of the Austrian cruiser *Kaiserin Elizabeth*, which had brought out the Archduke Franz Fredinand to India in the winter of 1892-93, had presented me with a .315 Mannlicher rifle as a keepsake when they left India, and as these small bores were said to be highly efficient sporting weapons, a favourable opportunity seemed to have occurred for testing it, so I applied for a few days' leave for myself, a Gurkha officer, and a few men, and set off with the intention of bagging the elephant. I also had an old double ten-bore rifle with which I had slain a fair amount of big game, but I had had it cut down, for it originally weighed $14\frac{1}{2}$ lb., and was not a pleasant burden to carry about for long. After the alteration it weighed ten pounds and kicked like a mule, so I did not like firing it very much after an experience one of our N.C.O.'s had.

The armourer took about a foot off the barrels and put on a temporary foresight, so that the sighting could be adjusted on the range, so I ordered a revolver target to be put up on the river bank near our guard room, and went into the adjutant's office whilst it was being got ready.

The rifle was lying on the table and was being examined by some of the men who were in the office, one of whom kept stroking the butt and drawing in his breath. I asked him what he thought of that for a gun.

He replied : " It is just like one of our 7 lber. mountain guns."

I inquired, " Would you like to fire it off ? "

" Such was my desire the moment I saw it, but did not dare say so," he answered.

" Come along then," I said, and we went down to the target, followed by a small crowd of the sepoys. We took up position at a distance of about 30 paces, and loading the rifle I handed it to the little man telling him to only cock one barrel at a time for fear the other should jar off, and suggesting he should sit or kneel down to aim, but he preferred to stand.

I had not noticed, but he evidently cocked both barrels, for there was a prodigious report, and the gallant Gurkha went over backwards like a ninepin. He picked himself up, put on his cap, and remarked,

" Father, oh father ! if that had struck an elephant it would not have moved a pace afterwards."

The two bullets went into the target about two inches apart quite close to the bulls'-eye. I then fired the rifle myself, being careful to cock only one barrel, and though the recoil was not as much as I expected after seeing the havoc it had just made of the man, it was quite sufficient to make one averse from firing the rifle without sufficient cause.

So armed with these two weapons, a Martini carbine, and a '22 Winchester for pot shooting, we started off and marched 14 miles the first day to a little bungalow delightfully situated beside a stream under a steep bank covered with rhododendrons.

The caretaker of this rest house said he knew all about the elephant, and asked to be allowed to come with us, saying he would leave his brother in charge. That evening I shot a polecat and gave it to this worthy, knowing that a Khasia would eat almost anything. Next morning, on being asked how he

liked it, he told us it was quite good meat but had a "little perfume."

We marched at daybreak, hoping to get on the track of the elephant pretty soon, saying we would send back for our kit when we had settled on a place to camp. We tramped steadily on till noon without success, when we reached a village of about a dozen houses on the bank of a river called the Um Khen, and thought this was as good a place as any to stay in, so we told the caretaker to go back and fetch on the coolies, who he said would arrive before dark.

We arranged to occupy a hut which had just been built, and the men began to cut grass for bedding in case our blankets did not arrive in time, for we knew the Khasia to be a very deliberate marcher when carrying things he is not interested in bringing along quickly.

We wanted to buy some fowls to eat, but were assured there was not such a thing in the place. However, on a man going into a house to investigate, out darted quite a pretty girl with a hen under each arm. I caught hold of one by the neck and held up a rupee, but she could not or would not understand. The Gurkha suddenly closed the negotiation by cutting through the bird's neck with his kukri, on which the girl dropped the fowl, grabbed my rupee, and bolted.

Just at that moment a local chief appeared and said he had come to make arrangements for catching elephants, and when he heard our baggage coolies had not arrived, said he was sorry he had no food to offer me that I would eat, but he had a bottle of champagne which he was unable to open. I said I thought I could arrange that little matter for him, and when he produced the bottle I gently tapped the top of the neck with the edge of a kukri till it cracked, and then pulled the cork out, and we drank the wine out of enamelled iron mugs, which seemed rather vandalism. He also gave me a mahseer of about three pounds weight, which one of his followers had just caught. The sight of it made me regret not having brought fishing-tackle, for the river looked a likely one.

Below the village were some rapids where the natives practised a simple but ingenious form of angling. Bamboo splinters about four feet long were stuck into the bank at the edge of the water at an angle of 45 degrees. To each was attached a hook baited with a "chilli" (red pepper pod), with just sufficient line to allow the bait to touch the water and a foot to spare. The current carried down the chilli, and when the line was taut the spring of the bamboo flicked it upstream again, and this went on automatically, giving the effect of a grasshopper or some such insect skipping on the surface of the stream. This was said to be a very effective method at night ; it certainly was most lifelike.

Soon after dark some of our things arrived ; all the bedding, a lantern, a tin of oatmeal, another of biscuits, another of condensed milk and my leather-covered brass basin, which contained all my toilet requisites. This was great luck, especially as my man had actually brought me something to eat ; it was too much to expect him to bring anything to cook it in. However, we retired to the hut, and under my instructions one of the men prepared porridge in my basin, the fish was impaled on a bamboo spit and excellently broiled over the embers of a wood fire ; the fowl, as the Gurkha officer aptly put it, " just burnt a little," and some salt was cadged from the Raja. This, with biscuit and milk, formed our meal, all eaten together without any humbug about caste, and then we turned in, for we had arranged to start at screech of dawn.

As soon as it was light we forded the river, three of us to go in one direction, whilst the Khasia, a sepoy, and myself, went in another, nothing to be fired at except the rogue. Before we started the caretaker consulted his gods by smashing an egg and spinning the little brass box in which he carried the lime for his betel nut, as to the direction we should take to ensure success.

Within a couple of miles we came on a salt spring, which was evidently frequented by every kind of animal known in these hills, and there were great hollows where the earth had

been licked away. Just as we left the place we encountered a fine bull bison coming down to have a lick, and it is hard to say which was the more surprised. He was barely 15 yards away, and if I had not been after elephant one or other of us would have suffered serious damage in the next few seconds. He snorted violently twice, and then turned and crashed into the jungle like an avalanche.

The Gurkha who was carrying the ten bore was much disappointed I did not fire. Fresh elephant tracks led up from the salt lick along a regular road the animals had trampled out, but very soon we got on to such dry ground it was hard to tell which tracks were fresh, as bamboo leaves lay thick. So after wandering about till about nine o'clock without getting on to the fresh trail, we turned back towards camp.

When we were nearly there, as we were crossing the bed of a tiny stream, which evidently formed a considerable torrent in the rains, a sambhur stag stepped into the nullah 50 yards away, caught sight of us and stood for a second. I reached out for the little rifle which the Khasia was now carrying; the stag saw the movement, uttered a sharp cry of alarm, and bounded off across the stony ravine, but a bullet in the shoulder laid him out before he reached the far bank. It was necessary to get some meat for one's coolies, others are much encouraged by the same, and, being so close to the village, the shot would not be likely to disturb our quarry very much.

The Raja's interest in our proceedings had evidently got the better of his desire to arrange about his elephant catching, for he was sitting outside our hut when we got back, and immediately began to ask all sorts of questions about the weapons we carried.

The Mannlicher, which was the first of its kind in these parts, he dismissed with the remark that it was like a revolver, and the bullet was much too small, but he was much impressed with the Martini carbine and was most anxious to fire it, because it was so light.

I gave him a round and told him to shoot at a tree stump

about 200 yards off, warning him that the little gun could kick a bit. He replied he knew it would, all good guns did, and, squatting down, held it out with both hands at arm's length to take aim.

When he pressed the trigger the butt came back and caught him a fearful whack on the face, which so astonished him he rolled over backwards, to the intense delight of the sepoys, one of whom told him he must be a poor sort of Raja if he could not do better than that. His critic, by the way, was noted for being a most execrable shot with a rifle. In the evening I potted about near the village and got two or three jungle fowl, a black partridge, and a peahen with the .22 Winchester.

Next morning, before it was light, we were awakened by a villager, who had been down to the river to see if any fish were on his lines, who said he had heard a single elephant in the jungle about quarter of a mile off across the stream, so I got my clothes on and as soon as it was light enough to see started off in pursuit.

The tracks were quite fresh, and, owing to the hoar frost, were as easy to follow as a paper trail, but the beast was moving and not feeding. We had gone barely two miles, never expecting to catch him up just yet, when, on rounding a big clump of bamboos, I saw the head of a large elephant sticking out from behind another clump, within 30 yards. He was evidently listening for something, for his great ear was cocked and his trunk was puckered up, but he certainly had not seen us, for he was looking out at right angles to our line of advance.

I had the magazine rifle in my hand, and the Gurkha with the ten-bore was just at my heels, so I felt perfectly safe in taking the shot. Thinking the rifle would carry a trifle high at that short range, I took deliberate aim at his temple about three inches lower than I expected the bullet to strike.

A spurt of dust or something flew from the very spot I had aimed at, and with a fearful scream the animal charged straight to his front and disappeared into the jungle, carrying everything before him like an express train.

Without thinking what I was doing, I rushed after him and tried to follow up the lane he had made, but was entangled in the heavy grass and creepers before I had gone three paces into it. I could just see the beast standing with his rump towards me, and his head turned to one side, listening, so I let him have another shot just where the bottom part of his ear joined his head. He turned round like lightning, and came back on his tracks. He was too close for me to get in another shot, and it was no use trying to run, for he would have had me at once, so I stepped sideways into the undergrowth, and he was on me.

The thick, heavy grass, which was at least eight feet high, pushed aside by his body as he passed, forced me backwards. I thought he had got me and the next instant expected to feel his foot on my chest, but he had passed on.

When I picked myself up, I was trembling so much I didn't know what to do, and was standing in the most unpleasant state of mind, when back came the elephant again, but this time he crashed into the jungle some 20 yards away and I could see nothing of him. I now realised the small bore was useless and resolved to make an effort to get back to the bamboo clump where I had left the man with the big rifle, and did so, but to my horror he was not there. Naturally, on seeing the enraged beast tearing down on him after my second shot, he had sought a safer place.

I called out to the man, but this fetched the elephant out again. He was evidently puzzled by the smell of two men and not seeing either. He now stood broadside on, within 50 yards, swaying his body, swinging his head, and lifting his forefeet. Leaning against the bamboos to steady myself, I tried to shoot him through the heart, but this only had the effect of starting him off down the valley in the direction he was facing, and he never stopped as long as he was within hearing. When quite sure he was well out of the way, I yelled for my man, and presently he appeared looking rather ashamed. He admitted bolting when he heard the elephant coming back after the

second shot, because he said I had given him orders not to fire, and he had got into the nearest big tree.

I then took the ten-bore, and we followed the track till mid-day, but the beast was evidently still going strong, and there wasn't a spot of blood anywhere, so we gave it up. Whether I killed him or not, I never heard ; one wouldn't, for if anyone found him he would take the ivory and say nothing, but the rogue evidently gave no more trouble, for he was never proclaimed again.

He was a very large beast, quite ten feet high, with one big tusk and the other broken off short, which probably accounted for his bad behaviour, for the flies getting into the core of the stump must have caused him fearful agony.

I remember its occurring to me whilst he was charging that he could neither see nor smell me, because he held his head high and curled his trunk up.

Anyhow, it was the most unpleasant adventure that ever happened to me, for I have never been in such a funk either before or since, not even when I was on board a ship on fire, and I never used a small bore for dangerous game again.

CHAPTER XIII**BUFFALO—FISHING IN THE UM KHEN RIVER**

THE Um Khen, one of the numerous streams which have their source in the Peak of Shillong, is quite a fair-sized river about 14 miles lower down, and one could get on to very good water, where it was from twenty to fifty yards wide, at the end of a day's march across country. The route for the first seven or eight miles lies across undulating grassy downs, well cultivated in parts, with pine-woods here and there, but one saw very little game, even with a dog to put it up, an odd partridge, snipe, or quail, but scarcely enough to make it worth while to carry a gun. One used to camp near a settlement of Gurkhas, who kept herds of buffalo for the sale of milk and ghee (clarified butter), for which there was a good market in Shillong. A couple of miles or so from here one got into the jungle, where there were elephants, bison, and tiger, besides other big game. In fact, if one camped in the jungle near the river the elephants were often a nuisance at night, crashing about and trumpeting, so it was always necessary to keep a fire going, for one was not allowed to shoot them.

There were also a few buffalo, but whether these were really wild, or tame ones which had run wild for years, it is hard to say, for in places where the tame herds are visited by wild bulls there is no difference in the appearance of the full-grown animals.

A sporting Indian prince, whose territory borders on Assam, used frequently to send up the valley to buy good tame bulls and turn them out in his own place, for his swagger guests from England to shoot, for they were just as big and fierce as

genuinely wild ones, and, being selected, had heads above the average in length.

It is therefore injudicious, on occasion, to shoot a solitary buff, if there are villages within a few miles, unless one is prepared to pay, for natives are not above claiming damages and bringing heaps of witnesses to swear the animal was a tame one that had strayed, if they think there is the least chance of getting paid, and I have known several men let in.

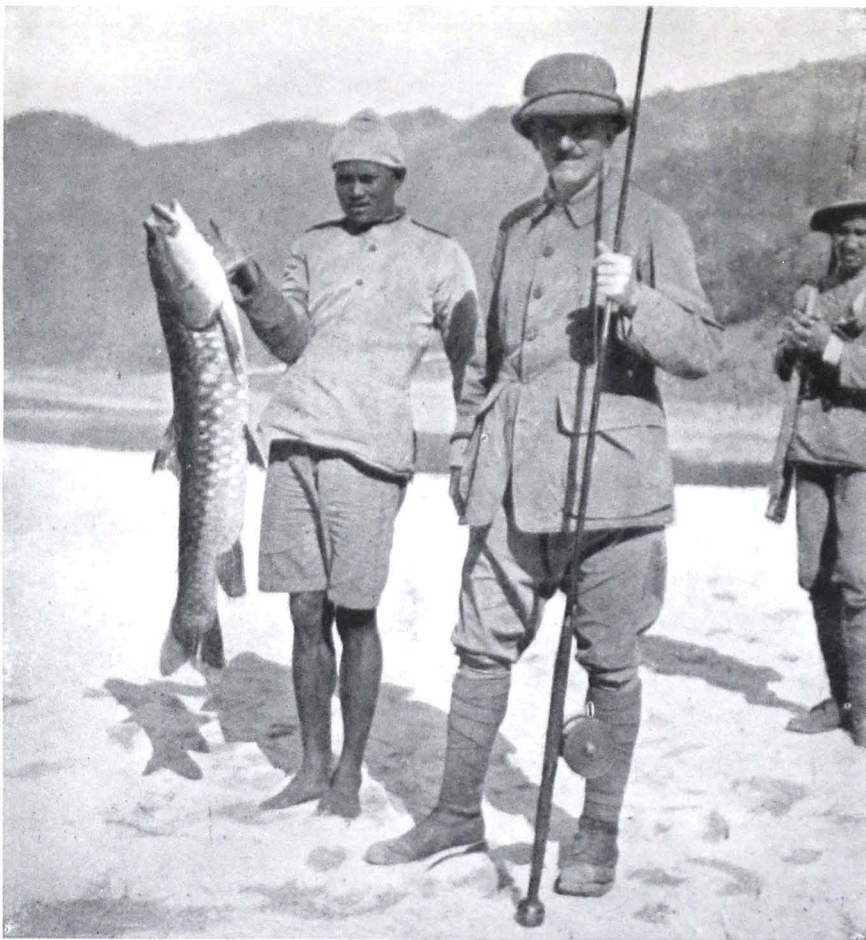
The worst case I knew of, in that way, was that of a young doctor who shot a really fine wild bull, some marches up the road along the Brahmaputra towards the Chinese frontier. There were no villages within several miles, but a native chief, who lived a considerable way off across the river, happened to be close by with some of his scallywag followers when the beast was killed, and seeing he had a new hand to deal with, promptly claimed about £5 for damage done to his cattle. The doctor, not being up to the ropes, paid the money, and actually let the ruffian take away the head as well as the meat.

The wild buffalo about there were seldom shot and consequently were very bold. They used to approach one's camp at night and would certainly attack anyone who interfered with them.

About ten years ago, I was visiting some of my detached posts on this road, and was particularly warned about one camp, so I had a zareba of four bullock carts put round the grass hut where I was to sleep.

During the night I was disturbed several times by a buffalo, trampling and blowing all round about, and some natives, who were camped about a hundred yards off on the shingle in the river bed, kept shouting out. In the morning there were the tracks of a great solitary bull all round the carts, and following them up I found him within a mile and laid him out.

Nobody came to claim him but the vultures, and to my regret I couldn't fetch his great head away, as there was no time to clean it, and I couldn't put it in my cart, for it would have made everything smell in a day or two.



A 30LB. MAHSEER.



GURKHA WITH BUFFALO HEAD.

Had the beast not proved himself to be a dangerous one and likely to interfere with travellers, I should not have molested him, for there is no satisfaction in killing a fine animal just for the sake of doing so.

Down by the Um Khen, I noticed that in many places in the jungle, oil showed on the surface. It was particularly conspicuous if there were any bamboos near, for it soaked into the dry fallen leaves and turned them quite black.

One day my batman told me he had seen a rock close by that sparkled like glass, and asked what sort of a stone it could be. On going to look at it I found it was mica ; I had hoped it would have proved to be something more valuable.

The mahseer in this river took a $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. spoon very well, and were often taken 10 lbs. or 15 lbs. in weight, but the banks were so overgrown casting was difficult and in most places it was too deep to wade much.

One day I saw a shoal of fish feeding on some white flowers, which were dropping from an overhanging tree on the opposite bank, so sent a man across to fill his haversack. Whilst he was doing so I stripped the feathers from a small salmon fly, removed my spoon bait, and attached the hook to the trace, as no cast was in the damper. The flowers were something like those of the scented geranium, but had a tough juicy calyx, which held the hook very well.

Casting one of these across under the tree, a four-pounder took it at once, was pulled down-stream and killed lower down without disturbing the others ; four others of similar size were added to the bag before the shoal got shy.

A mile or so above where we camped was quite a pretty waterfall, which was just too high for fish to jump when the river was low. The pool below it was full of good mahseer, but one could only fish the tail end of it, because the rocks were so high on either side. Close to the fall were hung some conical shaped baskets for the fish to jump into, surely the simplest form of fish-trap existing.

It was very pleasant in the mornings and evenings to

wander through the jungle with a rifle, and see the various kinds of animal, bird, and vegetable life ; to listen to the cry of the tree cricket, just like an electric bell ; or the shrill hooting of the " hooluck " monkey, a sound constantly heard though the animal itself is very seldom seen ; but when one had luck one's satisfaction was always tempered by a feeling of regret for the life taken, unless the victim was a carnivorous beast.

With fish one never has any feeling of that sort, possibly because, as the natives say, a fish is only half alive, so I think one's happiest memories of sport are those connected with fishing, and when one's thoughts turn to those happy days of jungle life, one forgets the troubles, difficulties, and discomforts they entailed, and recalls only the sport one had and the good fellowship of one's men, many of whom now rest in soldiers' graves on the frontier, in France, Palestine, or Mesopotamia.

The chief drawback to a trip to the Um Khen, or anywhere else off the beaten track in the Khasia hills, was the difficulty one always had to get coolies to carry one's kit. One either had to keep them on doing nothing, when they were usually most unwilling to stay, or waste lots of time at each halt to collect others. When the regiments on the Assam frontier kept all their own transport animals, so as to be ready to move at the shortest notice, it was all right, for Government allowed one to hire baggage ponies at the cost of a shilling a day each. But when the frontier was more or less pacified and expeditions were not so frequent, the regimental transport was abolished.

After this was done I only made one more trip to the Um Khen, taking coolies for my own and the men's kit. When we reached the river, these worthies all agreed to stay for three days, but decamped during the night after the second march, having had a good feed of fish, so I stayed three days in that camp, and walked back the 30 miles to cantonments by myself, leaving my kit to be brought in by the men in driblets, which took them the best part of a week. Luckily, I had taken six men with me. This is one of the great charms of the

Gurkha, he is always cheerful in difficult times and will never let his officer down. Whilst four of these men were carrying in some of the baggage, two stayed behind to take care of the rest of it and spent their time smoking and drying the fish and venison, and they and their friends must have had many a good feed in barracks, for they brought back four good loads, say 300 lbs. of fish and meat.

The best time to fish these hill streams is for about three weeks after the rains cease in October, but then there is always a danger of malaria, for the cold has not yet killed off the mosquitoes, also the jungle is very heavy, and in some places leeches are a plague.

I always wanted to fish one of these rivers right down to the plains, which would have taken about a month, for there are many parts of them still in which no white man has ever thrown a line, but only once was I able to get the leave to do it, and then the trip started and ended in disaster. I sent off my tents, stores, rods, etc., on six ponies three days ahead, and the night before I was going to start myself the men who had gone with the stuff came back to say the whole lot, including the ponies, had been caught in a jungle fire at night and destroyed, and they had only escaped in the clothes they lay down in. This effectually put an end to that adventure. Luckily I had kept back my guns and rifles to go with me, or I should have lost them too.

The river I intended to fish was mentioned in Thomas's "Rod in India," wherein a sportsman described how he had killed 31 mahseer, which averaged over 30 lbs. apiece and ran up to 62 lbs., in ten days' fishing, at the place where it debouched from the hills.

This was over twenty years previously, but a recent visitor had told me that though the fish were no longer so plentiful, owing to unrestricted dynamiting, there were still a good many, and plenty of tigers and bison in the hills close by, whilst, on the plateau above, the natives assured him, lived a most peculiar animal something like a pig, which had dog's feet, about which

he could get no further information. I thought it probable that by working down-stream, through a country not very thickly populated, I should get good fishing in the middle reaches, and might slay a very rare animal, which in itself would be worth the journey. Years afterwards the mystery of the dog-footed porker was cleared up. A small expedition was going on on the frontier in which my regiment took part. I always made a point of asking the men, on outposts or detachment, amongst professional details, what sort of wild animals they saw, and if there were fish in the various streams.

At one post a man told me that two days previously he had shot an animal something like a very hairy pig with dog's feet, and not knowing what it was had given it to the coolies to eat. I thought it just possible the skin might be lying about if it had not been kept, so inquiries were made and it was produced. It was that of a badger ; not unlike a European one except that it had a tail about six inches long.

The description is not a bad one, when it is realised that this creature is seldom seen in broad daylight.

I did not know that it existed in this part of the world, and therefore never connected the description with a badger.

CHAPTER XIV**ABOR EXPEDITION, 1894—CATAPULTING—FISHING IN ABOR COUNTRY**

It is not very often that the innocent recreation of angling is the cause of military operations, but one of the first campaigns I went on was due to this.

The Abors are a savage tribe, who live along the banks of the Brahmaputra, or as it is there called the Dihong river, between the north-east end of the province of Assam and Tibet. They had a great reputation as warriors, and resented the intrusion of outsiders into their territory, although they considered themselves at liberty to come into ours as much as they liked, and were not above carrying off the property of British subjects, or even the owners themselves, when they thought they could do so with impunity.

It is said that at one time they did invite a few Indian traders to bring them cloth, Assam silk, and cooking pots, which they paid for with musk, and when they had secured all the stuff these men had brought with them they knocked them on the head and took their musk back ; so this trading venture was the first and last that entered their country.

The hills the Abors inhabit are very rugged and covered with dense tree jungle and undergrowth ; the only open spaces are in the vicinity of the villages, where the land is cleared for cultivations, and the only communications are paths along which men could only move in single file. In bygone days Government had sent several expeditions against them, none of which had achieved any results, so it was found more expedient to pay them an annual tribute to keep quiet and watch the

frontier with detachments of military police, posted in stockades at intervals of ten or fifteen miles.

Towards the end of 1893 the officer commanding the military police was inspecting one of his outposts and went fishing in the Dehong, a tributary of the Brahmaputra, which formed the eastern boundary of the Abors' country. He was accompanied by an escort of six or eight armed policemen in boats.

When the day's sport was over and they were coming downstream, the boats had to go close in under the jungle-covered bank on the Abor side.

Without any warning, they were greeted by a shower of poisoned arrows from an ambush, which killed and wounded some of the escort, but the boats regained the shelter of the stockade without further casualties.

This aggressive behaviour could not be tolerated, so the Assam administration was ordered to organise a punitive expedition against the tribesmen. The force consisted of 400 military police, who were more or less armed and disciplined as soldiers, and 120 men, with the two seven-pounder mountain guns, of my regiment.

Our detachment marched from Shillong to Gauhati, and then proceeded up the Brahmaputra by steamer; and on the way I amused myself and the men with my little catapult, for which I was afterwards brought to book.

One evening, soon after dusk, the steamer stopped at a little riverside port to discharge cargo and passengers. A babu was standing at the far end of the gangway collecting the tickets, with a lantern in his hand. A little man, who was a passenger in the boat, asked me if I thought I could startle the babu, so standing well back in the shadow of the awning over the upper deck I let him have a number four shot in the middle of his broad fat back. He jumped, handed his lantern to another fellow, and then squatted down, pulled off his shirt, and proceeded to search the inside of it, to see what had stung him. A shot at the lantern was now indicated; the glass

shivered, the lantern was dropped and went out, on which arose a tremendous hullabaloo. A big European came pushing through the crowd to see what the commotion was about. The little man whispered, "Have a crack at him," which I did, as well as at the ship's native doctor, who was going ashore just at that moment.

I then put the catty in my pocket so as not to give the show away, bent over the side and proceeded to watch the inquiry going on ashore, where everyone seemed to be talking at once.

After a bit, we all went into the ship's saloon to dinner. Soon after sitting down a note was handed to the man I had been with outside, which he looked at and passed to me.

It ran :

"Sir,—The lieutenant has smitten into my head with earthen balls and damaged my brain, so that I am afraid to go on deck to report.—Yours truly, the doctor."

(The worthy evidently thought the catapult which he had seen me using before was some sort of "golel" or pellet bow which shoots dried chunks of clay the size of marbles.)

On being asked why the note was given to him and not to an officer senior to myself, who was on board, he said he had no idea. Some weeks later, whilst the campaign was in progress, I received an official letter from the adjutant of my regiment enclosing a report from the steamer company's traffic inspector to the general, which set forth that Lieut. W.—, a passenger in the company's vessel, *Heron*, had frequently made use of a catapult, causing serious interference with the working of the ship, and when he was requested to stop had actually had the audacity to shoot at Mr. Baker, the company's agent, at Desangmukh. I was ordered to explain this report for the information of the G.O.C.

I replied I had certainly used a catapult, that the shot at Mr. Baker was instigated by the traffic inspector himself, though neither then nor afterwards had he disclosed his identity, and neither he nor anyone else had ever asked me to stop, or I should have done so.

The next letter I got on the subject said that the G.O.C. had duly considered the matter and was of opinion that my conduct was not suitable for an officer in command of troops proceeding on active service, and there the matter ended for the time, though it was duly recorded amongst the archives of A.H.Q. for future use, if necessary.

It is rather typical of our Army system to worry officers on service with trifles of this sort ; most of us know the rotten questions asked during engagements in the late war, witness Bruce Bairnsfather's caricature of the C.O. being asked about plum and apple jam, whilst his dugout was being knocked to pieces with shell fire—which doubtless actually occurred.

Oddly enough, when I went on board the steamer on return from service, the first man I saw was the little beast who had logged me, talking to a big man who was sitting in a long chair.

He greeted me most affably with, "Hallo! you haven't been shot after all?"

So I told him pretty forcibly that if he spoke to me again I'd drop him over the side and give him something to make a report about, on which he moved off. The big man seemed awfully pleased, and asked why I was so annoyed. I told him the reason, and then he fairly exploded, and said :

"I am Mr. Baker ; are you the man who made such good practice with a pea-shooter?" and when I showed him the deadly weapon he was much interested.

Before we could advance into the Abor country some delay occurred whilst a month's rations and coolies to carry them were being collected at the base, but there was some first-class fishing to fill in the time. Close below the stockade near which the column was encamped, a fair-sized sheet of water, about two acres in extent, had been left in a bend of the river bed, when the floods abated at the end of the rains. It was swarming with fish of all sorts up to about 4 lbs. in weight, which rose well to any sort of small loch fly, and I used to get from 20 to 50 every evening. In the river itself I got them up to 35 lbs., and once caught two at the same time on a spoon, one of 19 lbs. and the

other about five. It happened in this way : the big one was hooked first, and when he was getting done I saw the spoon hanging outside his mouth and that he was hooked on the top treble. The water was gin clear, so every movement was visible. The smaller fish kept following him about, and every time he turned made a dart to try and get the spoon away from him, just like a dog does when another has a bone. At last he got hold of it and hooked himself on the lower treble, and it was most interesting to see the two fish trying to break away from one another, the little one doing most of the kicking. After a bit I ran them on to a shelving bank in shallow water, and they were scooped out.

CHAPTER XV

ABOR EXPEDITION—DISCOMFORT OF THE JUNGLE

THE first engagement with the Abors began in a somewhat unusual manner. We had marched for some miles through forest in which the undergrowth was so dense that one could not see 20 yards on either side of the narrow path, and so full of thorny cane brake that flanking was almost impossible, yet the enemy made no attempt to molest us ; even in the few places where it was more open, owing to bamboos, there was no sign of life.

In many paths the overhanging branches had to be cleared away to enable the elephants which carried some of the baggage to get along, so the advance was very slow.

The column then came on some open cultivated ground where a halt was made to enable everyone to close up. Soon after the next advance a few Abor scouts were seen and fired on, and then the point of the advance guard bumped into a stockade ten or twelve feet high, built of trunks of trees right across the path, in the thickest bit of forest yet encountered.

It was covered with a frieze of bamboo spikes, and the ground in front was covered with more spikes driven into the earth, which looked almost like grass, and were so sharp they penetrated the sole of a boot if trodden on.

There was no sound from inside to show if the place was occupied, so a party was ordered to clear a way to a flank to turn the position. Whilst this was going on, word was sent back to the O.C. to say what had occurred, and he and the political officer came up. The latter called out something in the Abor tongue, and instantly a roar of defiance came from

inside the stockade, but all that was intelligible to us was the P.O.'s name. He got in an awful rage and replied so forcibly that fire was opened and showers of arrows came from inside, which wounded him in the leg and killed and hit several of my men.

The seven-pounder guns were then brought up and fired at a range of 20 yards at what appeared to be the door, absolutely without effect, and then an officer and some men rushed forward in the smoke and gained a footing on the top. We scaled the stockade in several places, and discovered it was over a mile long, made of three rows of tree trunks, laced together with cane, and the spaces between the rows filled with boulders.

On inquiring what the preliminary conversation was about, I learnt that the P.O. asked if the Abors wanted to fight, to which they responded with an invitation to come inside when they would put him in their pig-sties and feed him on filth. His answer was so lurid that it caused an instant explosion.

As soon as the firing began in front, the enemy charged the baggage with the greatest determination. They charged through the line, slashing about them with their swords, and plugged the elephants so full of arrows that they stampeded, throwing their loads in the jungle and scattering the coolies who were near them. A lot of the kit which was on the elephants was promptly looted, but most of the coolies stuck to theirs very pluckily, each man squatting beneath his load to protect him from the sword cuts, whilst the escort stood near him on the path to fire or use the bayonet.

In this rush alone the Abors had fifty men killed, and never again, in this little show, nor in the one that followed it sixteen years later, did they ever make so good an effort to come to close quarters.

Next day, being still on advance guard, I noticed the barber of the 44th close behind me, so told him his place was with the baggage and not in front. He begged to be allowed to remain because the day before he had been riding on one of the elephants (which he had no business to be doing) and fell off in

the stampede. Picking himself up, he made a rush for the path to get away from the Abors, when a police sepoy let fly at him at a distance of a few feet and, said the barber, "he smashed all my little kippi-kippis." (Kippi-kippi is the Assamese word for odds and ends.) He showed me the contents of his haversack and the Snider bullet had certainly made a pretty fair mess of his razors, combs, scissors, etc., so I let the wretched creature stay where he was.

One great luxury was provided on this little show by the P.O., who took with him six Assamese fishermen with their nets, thus contributing a welcome addition to the men's rations. What a boon it would have been had some such arrangement been made in Mesopotamia, especially at the time when rations were so scarce and bad.

The two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, and all the marshes were absolutely teeming with fish, but to arrange to have them netted for the benefit of the men was much too simple a matter for the authorities to consider. However, thanks to the generosity of the editor of the *Fishing Gazette* and some of its readers in 1916, my regiment never lacked for nets or tackle, and the men were often able to get themselves fish, when near the river. A man told me one day that he had got a fish into his cast-net so large it took the net away and very nearly pulled him in. As I do not see how a fish encumbered with a lead-weighted net could manage to swim, I think a shark must have seized the net from outside and pulled it out of the man's hand. I did not actually see what happened, but I heard the man yelling for help.

We spent about a month adjusting the various Abor villages along our frontier, which was distinctly interesting, and then I was sent back to the base to collect and bring up rations for a futher venture into the hills.

Whilst doing this I had some very good sport with the mah-seer, and a little shooting besides.

One day I went down-stream some three miles to another stockade, leaving instructions that I would walk back up the

opposite bank and a boat was to be in readiness to fetch me across at sundown.

When I got opposite the camp and saw no boat, my escort yelled out to some men who were washing on the other side to know where it was. They replied the boatmen had taken it down to the lower stockade, as they had not seen me waiting when they were ready to fetch me. I knew it would take three or four hours to get back, for the river was a succession of rapids, to negotiate which the men had to get out and manœuvre the boat by hand along the bank, and it was to avoid this I said I would walk back. So we sat down to wait. It began to rain heavily, there was no shelter, and by the time the boat came I had as sharp a go of ague and lumbago as I have ever had, which laid me up for over a week, and another man had to take the convoy up, much to my disappointment.

I have never served with a better political officer than the man who accompanied this column. He sent word to the enemy before we advanced that as they had killed our people he was going to hunt them till they were sick of it, and he did. Any village that opposed us was destroyed in the most systematic manner ; first of all, all rice was removed from the houses for use by the column if required, the live-stock killed and eaten, the jungle all round thoroughly searched for caches of food-stuffs and other property, and then the village was burnt before we left.

The houses were raised on wooden piles, the sides made of thick wooden planks carefully smoothed with an adze, which had been split from the tree trunk, saws being unknown, and the roofs were of good substantial rafters covered with thick thatch, so the burning of a village was a very effective punishment.

Of course, whenever it was possible, we occupied a village instead of bivouacking in the jungle, which is merely asking for fever and other diseases. Clearing the undergrowth sets free all sorts of noisome exhalations from the damp ground, leeches, mosquitoes, and sand-flies swarm everywhere, and the huts, quickly made from the cut jungle and roofed with bamboo

or banana leaves, are seldom proof against heavy rain, and the pollen, or whatever the white dust on the latter is called, often gives one a sort of hay-fever, therefore a savage's dry house, though dirty, smoky, and always swarming with lice, fleas, or even rats, is preferable every time. Besides, pushing the enemy out of his villages, hunting him about, and making him do the camping out, especially in bad weather, is calculated to make him get sick of it more quickly than sitting in the damp jungle oneself and sending him plaintive messages to come in and surrender, as I have known some military geniuses do. But this, however, is not intended for a dissertation on jungle strategy, for Napoleon remarked long ago that the worst-billet is better than the best bivouac.

We just got out of this country before the rains swelled the rivers, and on the way back I had very good sport with the natural white ant at one place we halted at.

A small river flowed past the camp, and just before dark these insects began coming out in millions. They swarmed wherever there was a light, got into the food and drink, and made themselves a thorough nuisance; so collecting a good tin-full I walked down to the stream, which was boiling with fish rising at the ants. They weren't of much size, but I had 37, of which 21 were over half a pound, very quickly.

Although the moon was full, I noticed it gradually got darker, and looking up observed an eclipse was in progress.

I asked one of the Gurkhas what it was called in his language. He told me, and remarked there would be one of the sun the next month. It was rather wonderful he should have known it, for he had no newspapers to tell him and couldn't have read them if he had had them, and there were no priests or astrologers with the column.

After the Abors had come in, I liked what I saw of them; of course, they were fearful savages with absolutely no idea of manners, morals, or sanitation. They were treacherous and hot-tempered, but were of kindly disposition for their cattle and dogs showed no signs of fear of a stranger.



PIPES AND DRUMS, 1ST BATT. 8TH GURKHAS.



ABOR WARRIORS.

Their mithan (domesticated bison), if you held out your hand, would come up to see if you were offering a lick of salt ; and the dogs, if you spoke to them, would wag their tails and not rush away yapping like the Indian village pariah does. They were much interested in and would sit for hours watching and making much of any sahib's dog, calling it " Aiyenger " (poor fellow), or " Kampoo-er " (fine fellow). This last word literally means white, and for anything to be white that the Abors come in contact with is so uncommon the term has come to be applied to anything rare, fine, or beautiful.

They were also very keen on hunting and fishing. The hunting was done by ringing up the game with their dogs, and despatching it with spears and arrows. The fishing was done entirely by trapping. Nets and hooks seemed to be unknown in the hills. They were very jealous of their fishing rights. Each village had a certain stretch of river for its traps, of which no infringement was allowed.

CHAPTER XVI

GAMBLING IN SHILLONG—FISHING ON THE FRONTIER—A
PLANTERS' RACE MEETING

SOON after we got back from this campaign, I was appointed adjutant of the regiment, work I enjoyed very much, for through it I got to know almost every man personally, being responsible for all the recruits' training.

One of my earliest recollections of that billet was that my office was burgled one night, when a small sum of money and all the official postage-stamps were stolen. The thieves were never discovered. Later, I heard that such stamps were frequently stolen from the civil offices, too, and could not understand why they were taken, since they could not be used for private postage, as letters bearing them had to be franked; but before long I found out.

One of the recruits, who was a prisoner in the guard room, told the orderly officer he wanted to speak to the adjutant. He was awaiting trial by the civil court for manslaughter. Apparently he bore some reputation in his own country as a physician, and a pensioner, who was suffering from a complaint the Gurkha calls "displacement of the navel," which in reality is tape-worm, called this lad in to doctor him. This he did so effectually that the wretched pensioner died a few hours after taking the stuff given him.

I went to see the prisoner and was told he had deposited 160 rupees in notes with his victim, and was now afraid the widow would appropriate them. I interviewed her, and she at once handed me a little bag in which were 160 service stamps. Thinking I was on the track of something, I took them to the guard room and asked the lad if they were his property. When

he acknowledged they were, I inquired how he had got them, and why he valued them at 160 rupees, when they were only worth ten. He informed me that he had been gambling and won that sum from one of the civil clerks, who had told him these notes were worth a rupee each. Further inquiries elicited the fact that this youth and several others used to break out of barracks after tattoo roll-call on pay days and gamble with all sorts of people—clerks, servants, small shopkeepers and the like—in the coach-house of a certain official resident in Cantonments, a part of the station under military control, and that the clerks often used to pay their losings in notes of this sort.

I got permission to raid this place at night whenever I was sure that gambling was going on.

One night, having got word of what was afoot, I sent up to the lines at half-past ten and said 200 men were to fall in on the parade ground at once, barefoot and in any clothing they had on when warned, and I would come up and meet them. None of the British officers would turn out, for they said the raid was bound to be a failure.

We marched off, and small picquets were placed all round the garden with orders to arrest everyone who came out, and then accompanied by about 40 men I went up to the house, told the occupants not to be alarmed if they heard any noise behind, etc., and then we passed on to the large coach-house, which was lit up and packed with men so intent on their game that we were not noticed till I spoke.

Instantly the lights went out and there was a rush for the door to escape, but we most of us collared someone, and the captives were tied up with their own turbans, or else handcuffed by the simple expedient of taking off their coats and then buttoning them on again with the owner's arms inside. The names of those recognised were taken, and then the "Close" was sounded on the road below the house, when it was found that the picquets had mopped up about 20 more, who were running away. Sixty people of sorts were captured altogether,

those whose names we were sure of were released, and the rest detained till next morning, when the civil police came to identify them. I thought my party as it was marching back to barracks seemed a bit stronger than when it marched out, but I made no inquiries.

A few days later, all these worthies appeared "before the beak," evidence was produced as to their being caught gambling, and also that the place they were in was a habitual gambling resort; many of the culprits were old offenders, so most of them were smartly fined.

They were, of course, asked for their defence: some had gone to see a friend, others to call friends away, a few had gone out of forgetfulness, but the general's groom alone said he had gone to gamble, and was sorry that the raid had not come half an hour later, when the Sahib would have found several important people belonging to the court. "Sensation in Court," as the daily papers say. The magistrate did not ask the old man to explain this remark.

I received half the fines realised as reward for capturing the gamblers, which money was spent in prizes at a gymkhana given to celebrate our success, and providing tea, cigarettes, and sweets for the men, their wives and children. Nearly all the natives of the place seemed to attend these sports, for they knew what was the cause of them.

It was never found out though who used to rob the offices.

I have many pleasant memories of the Pachmarhi musketry class which I attended as a pupil in 1894, the best of which is that we all took a ticket in the Calcutta Derby sweep, pooled the tickets, and drew Ladas, which, after selling a half share, gave us about £700 apiece, a larger sum than most of us had ever possessed at once before.

The Commissioner of the district was so pleased at our win that he gave a ball in our honour, for he said no one worked harder for less pay than the British subaltern, consequently he was more delighted than if he had won himself. A man, who could feel like that and prove it in such a delightful manner,

is a bit of a rarity, for there are not many who go out of their way very much for the impecunious soldier.

This was a fancy dress affair, and one humorist got himself up to the life as a native policeman. He stood at the door outside, and when the general arrived asked him in Hindustani for his ticket. The general said he hadn't brought it, and was going in, when this fellow got in front of him and said he couldn't be admitted without a ticket, whereupon the general got in an awful rage, seized him by the arm, spun him round and gave him a first-class kick behind. The man then grinned sheepishly, and said in English :

“ It is only a joke, sir, it is I, Snooks,” whereupon the general remarked :

“ I hope you enjoyed it then,” and stumped wrathfully into the room.

This Derby sweep enabled me to set myself up with the best of everything required in the shooting and fishing line, and doing so proved a very sound investment.

When I had had my guns, rifles, or fishing gear for any time, and any improvement came out, I used to sell them and get new ones made to the same measurements.

I calculate that a first-class gun or rifle cost me about 25s. or 30s. a year for the use of it, and it was surely worth that to look at. For example, I bought an ejector Paradox gun for £75, and sold it, over 18 years later, for £50, and got what I gave for a tip-top Hardy rod after I had killed over a ton of fish on it. Of course, I looked after all my sporting gear most carefully. For service I always bought cheap stuff, and sold it afterwards for a little less, and came to the conclusion that one always got a better relative price for a best quality or a sound cheap article than for a medium-priced one.

That winter the general commanding the Assam district wanted to inspect the Abor frontier, and took me on his staff as I had so lately been there. We expected to get some decent fishing in the rivers, but were woefully disappointed, for a landslip had altered a lot of the best pools in the Depong, and

we only got about 50 mahseer when we had expected 500. It was curious to note the changed deportment of the Abors. Before we had adjusted them, if you were fishing, they would come down to the edge of the water on the far bank, make the most indecent gestures, and invite you if you were a man to come across. Now, when they saw us, if one went near their bank they would hold up eggs or fowls as a present, and make a great show of friendliness.

I lost a great many fish through using single wire traces, which kinked very easily if the spoon skipped on the surface in rapid water, and then broke at the least touch. I have never used them since. To make up for the bad fishing, we had some excellent duck and snipe shooting, and I got a couple of buffalo, two leopards, and a few deer of sorts, besides, on a three weeks' trip.

We went to a planters' race meeting, which was one of the biggest jollifications I have ever seen. It was only at these meetings, in the days when communications were bad and motor-cars were non-existent, that the planters, who lived miles and miles apart from one another, leading the most solitary sort of existence, met together, and then they did enjoy themselves.

On the morning of the second day's racing I saw a man, whom I knew rather well, who looked as if he had made a very wet night of it, and some remark of mine must have made him say :

" I suppose you think I'm tight."

" Of course not," I answered, " but you look a bit tired."

" That's it," he agreed, " it isn't the drink, the smoke, or the late sitting up has made me like this, but this infernal standing about waiting for the races to start," which was an ingenious way of putting it.

Through one of the tea-gardens we visited flowed a small river, where we had excellent sport with " basa." This is a silvery siluroid fish, quite devoid of scales, which is almost as good to eat as a fried sole. He takes a small fly spoon greedily, and when hooked rushes and jumps just like a brown trout at

its best. He doesn't often exceed 2 lbs. in weight, but one of half that size puts up a grand fight on a 10 ft. rod and light tackle. He lies at the edge of the rapid water, is not very shy, and, when on the feed, if a fly or a small spoon is put near him, he is sure to come at it.

One often got half a dozen without moving from the spot where the first was hooked.

They gave the best sport for their size of any Indian fish I have ever taken.

CHAPTER XVII

PIGEON-SHOOTING—REGIMENTAL MANŒUVRES

THE Colonel of one of our linked battalions had a bungalow in Shillong, where his wife lived, as she did not like being buried alive with him in the worst of our frontier stations, and he used to come up occasionally on leave to see her. He had a lot of pigeons, which his lady disliked, because she was fond of gardening and they used to scratch up her flower-beds.

One day she remarked that she wished someone would shoot the lot, so next morning, when I was going to look for woodcock, and saw all these pigeons on the road, I let them have both barrels, picked up eight, and took them into the mess.

One of our fellows, seeing pigeon-pie on the bill of fare for lunch, asked where the birds came from, so I told him and why I had shot them, cautioning him not to say anything about it.

A few days later, when the Colonel was up on leave, this fellow was passing with a gun, and saw the old man standing in his garden and the pigeons all walking about close by.

By way of ingratiating himself with a senior officer, whom he had only recently become acquainted with, he let drive and knocked over a couple.

The Colonel's rage knew no bounds. "D—— you!" he bellowed, "Come here! What the something do you mean by shooting my pigeons?"

The other promptly gave me away, and said I had told him to shoot them.

"D—— him, too, then!" was the response. "I'll shoot him the next time I see him."

The next time I saw Colonel M——, he asked, "Why on earth did you tell —— I wanted my pigeons killed?"

I feigned surprise, and said, " You don't mean to say he believed me and shot some ? "

" Yes, he did, the d—d ass," the old man replied, " and has killed my dear little Poppy ! "

On which I expressed sorrow, but rejoiced to find that he had not heard of my efforts, for any questions on that point would have been somewhat hard to answer.

This pigeon-slayer, when he got command of our regiment, once distinguished himself at an inspection.

As before stated, we had two seven-pounder mountain guns, which were worked by the men and carried by porters specially enlisted for the purpose. The gun was slung on a pole and carried by two men ; two more carried the trail, two the wheels, and two each box of ammunition in a similar manner. Consequently the guns could go and come into action on almost any ground infantry could work over. A field day, as usual, formed part of the inspection, and the general remarked that he thought a certain hill would be a good position for the guns.

" Yes, sir," replied the commanding officer, who had ordered them to go somewhere else, " I'll just go and see why they aren't firing." So he cantered off down the road, called to the subaltern in command of the gun escort, who had gone where he had been told, to limber up and get the guns into action in the other place, and then returned to the general as slowly as possible to give them a little time to open fire.

The jungle was very heavy, and as each gun alone, without its trail, etc., weighed 150 lb., the carriers naturally moved somewhat slowly. After a while the general inquired why the guns weren't firing.

The C.O. replied, " I can't understand it, sir," and again tittuped off. He came below the new position, and shouted out, " Why aren't you firing those d—d guns ? "

The officer called back, " I've only got the wheels up as yet."

The C.O., far too excited to listen to any reply, roared, " Don't talk to me. Fire them off at once ! "

Again came the answer that the wheels had only just come up.

The C.O. was now frantic, and yelled back, "Do as I tell you. Loose them off at once, and come down here and explain."

So the young man, goaded to desperation, pulled away the bamboo on which the wheels were slung, and sent them bounding down the hillside into the jungle. He then came down to get his gruel. He was brought before the general, who nearly fell off his horse with laughing when he heard both sides of the case, and remarked the position the guns were in originally would have done equally well, and before the ruction was over the boom of the guns quieted matters.

Some years previously this subaltern was the victim of an accident for which I was more or less responsible.

Soon after he joined us, I took him on his first shooting trip to try for an elephant. On the march out we went after snipe. He had a hammer-gun with rebounding locks, and I noticed that when he came to any obstacle he never lowered the hammers, so told him of the danger of the gun jarring off at full cock. A few days later, not having come on the elephant, he went after bear, and in a few hours' time a man came up and said the Sahib had shot himself and was being brought in. I was much relieved to find he was only hit through the foot, for I had imagined all sorts of things.

He told me the accident occurred as he was getting down a rock. His rifle slipped, the muzzle struck his foot, and one barrel went off. I asked if he had lowered the hammers, and he said he had; so I looked at his rifle, which I had not noticed before, and saw it was a still older pattern than his gun, and had non-rebounding locks, so when the hammers were lowered the full strength of the mainspring was pressing against the cap; no wonder it went off on getting a sharp jar. However, the bullet passed between his big toe and the next, blew off some flesh and the sole of his boot, but broke no bone, and in three weeks he was walking about again.

At another inspection this same C.O. said to me a day or two beforehand, " I am going to tell you off to command the savage enemy who will hold Nong-mai-ching hill ; the rest of the regiment will attack you, and mind you put up some really good surprise tactics, which will please the general and give the Gurkha officers and men something to think about. I don't care what you do so long as it effects a surprise."

This gave me food for thought, for the situation was anything but a favourable one. Nong-mai-ching was a low, grassy ridge, and the ground in front of it over which the attack would come was bare rice-stubble fields for a mile or more.

I then remembered that about 600 yards in front of the ridge was a small Manipuri village, and, knowing the C.O. pretty well, I guessed he would avoid the village in order to prevent his firing-line being broken up by it, so evolved the following scheme :

I told the native who was responsible for the quality of the rations supplied to our men that he was to collect every one who lived in the bazar that owned a pony of any sort ; the grain-dealers nearly all had ponies, and so had the washermen, for carrying the men's clothes to and from the river. The riding of these latter simply consisted of piling bundles of clothes on the pony and perching themselves on the top. The regiment had to march about two miles out along the road through my position, and the colonel said he would give me an hour to put out my men after he had reached his starting-point.

As soon as the regiment marched, I rode along to the bazar and asked my man how many owners of ponies he had collected, and to my surprise he had got about forty, some of whom looked anything but pleased at the prospect of a ride. I then took him and his party along and put them into the village, and gave them orders not to move or show themselves till the regiment came up abreast of them and I blew my whistle. They were then to charge out along the line of advancing troops, making all the noise they could, waving a few old rusty swords, and make the best of their way back to the lines.

I went on, put my men along the ridge, and awaited the attack, which came across the rice-fields in fine style. When the skirmishers were about 800 yards off, through my glasses I could see the C.O. looking about through his, and knew he was wondering when my surprise effects were coming off, for hitherto my warriors on the ridge had only replied to his volleys with few rounds of blank.

He was in them sooner than he expected.

As I had surmised, the leading ranks, on reaching the village, opened out on both sides of it, and when they were about 50 yards in front I blew my whistle. In a few seconds the mounted ragamuffins, led by the bazar superintendent, emerged at a gallop, yelling for all they were worth. As soon as the men realised what was up, they opened fire in all directions, and some tried to catch the ponies. The ground was soon littered with followers, and riderless ponies were careering all over the place.

The C.O. at once sounded the "Cease fire" and the "Halt," and sent for me, when he rated me severely for turning his parade into a bear-garden. I replied that this was the only form of surprise I could think of, which did not seem to please him at all, and I was told to march my men back to barracks.

The general's comment on the operations was that the idea was good, but it seemed to have been carried out in a manner somewhat unorthodox.

CHAPTER XVIII**THE MARCH TO MANIPUR—THE MURRAL—SNARING A CROCODILE**

ABOUT three years after the Manipur expedition we were ordered from Shillong to that place in relief of another regiment, nearly a month's march.

A cart road had been made from Kohima to Imphal by the pioneers and sappers and the rivers had not yet recovered from the effects of their dynamite, but, as we moved in the cold weather, there was a very fair amount of small game shooting round most of the halting-places to make up for the lack of fishing, black partridge, jungle fowl, snipe, quail, besides a few duck and pheasants.

I often got leave to fall out and march ahead of the column, and, with my spaniels, to hunt the ground on both sides of the road. I frequently got as many birds as my batman could conveniently carry.

In the Manipur State the country was hilly but not precipitous, there was not too much tree jungle, and the grass was not as a rule too high to prevent one seeing the dogs.

The weather was usually bright and frosty in the early morning, so a long march like this was a very pleasant experience, particularly when there was good sport to be had in most places. In those days I generally used a 28-bore, because one could carry more cartridges for the same space and weight than one could of 12-bore ammunition. On active service, too, I always managed to bring along a decent reserve of cartridges, by having them sewn up in wax cloth in lots of three and giving one of these small packets to each man of my wing to carry in his haversack. They were then collected by sections as wanted. More than once I carried over a thousand in this

way ; very few were lost and practically none damaged, for the wax cloth was waterproof.

This little gun only weighed about four pounds and seemed to kill as well as a 12 up to 35 or 40 yards ; the only thing I could never kill with it was a grey-lag goose. It was a splendid weapon for snipe in warm weather. At last I broke the stock of it by giving one of my dogs a rap across the back with the barrel, because I thought he was mauling a bird. I had it restocked, but it never fitted me so well afterwards, so I sold it.

I never bought another, because at that time people at home used to think a 28 knocked their birds about too much, but it didn't really.

The best killing gun I ever had was a 24-bore Joe Manton muzzle-loader, which had belonged to my father. For many years in India I always used it when I went out alone, till one day out snipe-shooting in the rain a drop of water off my hat got down in front of the powder and I couldn't get that barrel to go off again that day. This so put me off the little gun I gave it to a Gurkha officer I was very fond of, and it was stolen from him before he had had it very long.

There were one or two quite large tanks close to our lines in Manipur, which contained a great many murrel, the *ophiocephalus* or snake-headed fish. He is a long, shallow, round-bodied beast, with one fin running almost the entire length of his back, two pectoral fins and an anal fin half the length of his body, which is of a mottled bluish-green colour with black and white spots along the medial line. His tail is oval in shape and so are his pectoral fins. He runs to quite a respectable size. I once shot one of 18 lbs., but in a pond one of 3 lbs. or 4 lbs. is a good one to take on a rod. He takes a frog, small fish, beetle, or worm equally well, but is not a very satisfactory creature to angle for in a weedy tank, where he lies amongst the weeds, for if you fish fine he will break you nine times out of ten, and if you have a stiff rod and strong tackle he gives no sport.

The natives have rather an ingenious way of taking him.

They put a tripod of bamboo in the water ; from this depends a frog hooked by the skin of his back, just resting on the surface. The line is then drawn from the top of the tripod to the bank and made fast to a peg. When the murrel takes the frog, the line being taut, he is usually hooked at once.

There is a river called the Denwa in the Central Provinces, where I had fair sport with murrel some years ago. They lay in the still deep pools and rose to the surface to inhale air, for, unlike most fish, they actually breathe, so they are able to live a long time out of water.

When they rose I used to note the spot carefully, and when they had gone down put a hook baited with a small dead fish just over it, letting it sink, and they would often take it before it was out of sight. I hooked a fish one day which I put at 3 lbs. It broke me, but that afternoon I caught it with my cast still attached, when it proved to be seven. The companion with whom I was out tiger shooting was a forest officer and a bit of a Didymus. We were staying in one of his inspection bungalows, so I put the fish in the bath, in order to show it him alive with the line attached. When he came in from his work he was so full of a tiger he had just seen I forgot to tell him about the fish and he went in to change and wash before dinner, whilst I sat smoking in the verandah, as it was nearly dark.

He went on yarning to me through the open door, and then all of a sudden rushed out to me stark naked, yelling " There's the devil of a python in my bath ; when I sat down it slid over my thigh and tried to get round my waist, but I got away just in time."

I said, " You get the lantern and I'll get a gun and blow a hole in it."

When he did so I saw it was my old fish that had scared him and he wouldn't believe I hadn't played a practical joke on him. It must have been an awful sensation to feel the great fish sliding round one's naked body in the dark.

On this trip we had a bit of fun with a crocodile. I noticed that whenever I walked up a certain pool a crocodile about

seven feet long used to go out of the tail of it and into a hole in the bank under a tree root, so thought it would be rather fun to snare it. We cut sufficient wire out of the bungalow fence to make a noose, and then attached this noose to a rope made out of the tough bark of a creeper, which we made fast to a branch of a tree, then put the noose in the hole and walked up the pool. The crocodile, as usual, bolted into the hole, got caught in the noose, and then came out backwards into the river, where he made the water fly sky high, the bough springing to his struggles all the time. My pal ran off to fetch his rifle, but before he came back the brute had broken the rope and gone off with the noose. His struggles were most exciting to watch, for we never imagined such a great beast would be so active.

The murrel is quite a good fish to eat, but many natives will not touch it as food, on account of its snake-like appearance.

In its flesh are occasional dark patches, which look, when the fish is cooked, as if the flesh were stained with charcoal, and about this is a curious legend.

One of the Hindu gods (I forget his name) had assumed the form of a murrel and was thus caught by a fisherman, who took the fish home and gave it to his wife to cook. She put it into the pot, when it flapped out into the fire. As the woman picked it up to put it back again it explained who it was and was then released, so in commemoration of the god's escape the murrel has ever since carried the traces of the cinders in its flesh.

This fish often moves over land from one patch of water to another, and in the hot weather, when small ponds and streams dry up, lies up in the mud. It was a great amusement of our men to dig them out.

I have very occasionally taken murrel on a spoon or fly when fishing for other fish.

In Bengali the murrel is called "Sāl mās," and in Assamese "Hāl mās," the "s" and "h" in these two languages being interchangeable.

Assam is the Bengali pronunciation of the word Ahom, which is the name of the former ruling race of this province.

CHAPTER XIX**MANIPUR AND ITS INHABITANTS—POLO AS PLAYED THERE**

MANIPUR in the nineties was quite a good place for a youngster to be quartered in, although it was 200 miles on the north side and a hundred on the west from any port on the river, from which one could embark to visit any place in India proper. Now the railway comes within 150 and 100 miles of it. The longer stretch can be done by motor, but the shorter distance must still be marched. When I was quartered there, if I was going to any class of instruction, I always took the westward route, for there were four good rivers to be crossed in which there was excellent fishing, and one could always spend a couple of days at each by putting in a double march to make up for the extra day spent on the river.

Living was cheap. One could keep a pony and pay the man to look after it on about 30 shillings a month, for the only grain the animals got was unhusked rice, which cost about one and fourpence a hundredweight, and grass could be got anywhere close at hand for the cutting of it.

Our food was somewhat monotonous; fowls, eggs, vegetables of sorts, pigeons and fish. Beef and mutton were unobtainable, unless tough, stringy goat can be called mutton; but in the cold weather there was plenty of game, and a haunch of a sambur stag was not a bad substitute for beef.

At first no one paid any house rent, for we lived in the native houses in the fortified enclosure, which we took over after the row, but after a while Government woke up to this fact and charged us rent for quarters, which had cost them nothing to build.

This little State lies between Assam and Burma. Its inhabitants are of an Indo-Chinese type, of Hindu religion, whose origin is not very clear.

The Manipuris (Meitheis they call themselves) occupy about a thousand square miles of flat country, surrounded by hills peopled by savages—Nagas, Lushais, Kukis, and Chins. In appearance they are distinctly Mongolian, of fair complexion, not bad looking, and they keep themselves very neat and clean.

It is supposed that they are descended from a fusion of the hill tribes, for it is certain that, not so very long ago, the flat country was a lake as the water is still only two or three feet below the surface of the ground, and as the lake dried up the hill people came down to cultivate the fertile soil, and gradually settled on it, inter-married, and thus produced a mixture of the surrounding tribes.

This race embraced Hinduism, somewhat late in the eighteenth century, and are now most orthodox in their religious observances and practices, though Hindus of India proper, and even the Gurkhas, on whom Hinduism sits very lightly, are outcasted, if they eat or drink anything prepared by a Manipuri.

Caste prejudice is carried so far that a Manipuri will not touch anything simultaneously with a non-Hindu; for instance, if you pay him money he expects you to drop it into his hand, and if he passes you a polo stick he chucks it so that you must catch it. This always struck me as an excess of zeal, seeing the alliances their women contracted with all sorts of people, apparently without any loss of prestige after the intimacy had terminated.

Some of their customs, for which they are unable to account, substantiate this conjecture as to their origin, for the ruling prince has or had in his palace enclosure a hut built in the Naga fashion, the Manipuri name for which means the "long surviving granary," which points to its being a relic of bygone days, and this is an argument in favour of the Royal family being descended from the Nagas, who certainly are the strongest of all

the surrounding tribes, especially as, when the ruler is enthroned, he and his wife wear Naga trappings, and his bodyguard carries Naga weapons.

The Bengalis, who are the nearest civilised people to Manipur, called the Manipuris "Khasias," or fallen ones, this name they also applied to the inhabitants of what we name the Khasia hills, and in this latter case we have adopted it also.

When speaking of the Khasias round Shillong I mentioned the superstition they have regarding a snake which they worship. Oddly enough, the Royal family of Manipur have more or less the same superstition. They claim to be descended from a snake, and have a snake as a deity, which sometimes is large, showing it is displeased and requires sacrifices to be made to it, and at other times small, showing it is well disposed.

This descent from a snake (Nag) may have originally been made up for the chief by the Bengali astrologers, when he and his people first embraced Hinduism, and probably contains a sarcastic innuendo that he was descended from a Naga. "Naga" really means "naked," for till quite recently these Nagas wore no clothes, and some still wear none when working in their fields.

It may be mentioned that the essence of the Hindu religion is that a Hindu can only be born, not made, and the Manipuris, who have adopted it as a fashion, claim to be able to make high caste men out of absolute savages. This in itself proves they are not true Hindus.

We first came in contact with the Manipuris during the Burma War of 1824-26. The Burmese had over-run this country as well as Upper Assam, and any number of the people were carried off as slaves. From the Manipuri captives, who were good riders and excellent horse-masters, were formed the Burmese cavalry, which we called the "Kassay (or Kathay) horse." So the poetical sounding "far Cathay" is only an English corruption of the Bengali term for the country of the fallen ones. This cavalry carried a peculiar arm in the shape of a heavy iron dart, feathered with about a dozen long feathers

from a peacock's tail. It was flung from a kind of sling, and was used in an attack or a retreat, and no doubt its range and accuracy compared quite favourably with that of the old flint-lock musket. I found a lot of these in a house during the expedition in 1891, but, not knowing what they were, did not take any.

The game of polo was originally brought from Manipur to Calcutta by an officer of my regiment named Sherer, who died a major-general about fifteen years since.

From Calcutta it soon spread all over India and to England. It is said to have been started in the State about 1600 A.D., but whence it came is unknown, though a similar game has been played in Gilgit and Persia for ages.

The Manipuri games used to be played on eleven- or twelve-hand ponies, specially equipped with a saddle, which has a high peak in front and behind, and an enormous leather flap on either side under the stirrup-leathers, which curves round in front and behind the rider's bare legs to protect them from blows of stick or ball.

In addition, the pony is protected with head-stall and crupper, from which hang large cotton balls. These flap about when the pony is galloping, and often stop a blow.

It is difficult to describe a genuine Manipuri game of polo, as played amongst themselves. It is a most exciting thing to watch, for there seem to be no rules beyond that the width of the ground at either end is the goal and the ball has to be got there anyhow.

There is no offside, no objection to fouling, crossing, or hooking sticks. Play is at full speed all the time, and if a player or pony is tired or injured a fresh one takes his place. The only pause occurs when a goal is hit or the ball goes off the ground. The game is watched by a crowd of partisans, who keep up a continuous roar of comment, advice, and encouragement, above which is heard the thudding of the ponies' hoofs, with the rattle of the sticks or clicking of the ball, not to mention the continuous drumming of the players' heels on

the big leather shields, which is supposed to encourage their own ponies, whilst making those of the opponents shy off.

Each player, too, has his puggri tied over his head and ears, round his neck, and under his chin to prevent his head being injured, for nothing is thought of hitting the man or pony if it is impossible to hit the ball. Seeing that all Manipuris ride entirely by balance and not by grip, it is astonishing how very seldom anyone is hurt or takes a serious toss.

CHAPTER XX

MANIPURI HOCKEY—A HAUNTED HOUSE—FISHING IN SHILLONG
—REGIMENTAL DURBAR

HOCKEY is as much a national game of the Manipuris as polo, and is played with the same disregard for rules, with about 50 men a side. The play is almost as fast as polo, for these people can run like hares. During a game it is no uncommon thing to see half a dozen scuffles going on in different parts of the ground, because a player who had been near the ball has been scragged by an opponent, and these little personal interludes often continue long after the ball is far away. The only regard the players show for their skins is by making the stroke across the body on the left side, so that the stick, to a certain extent, protects the legs and stomach—a most necessary precaution with such reckless play.

To be a good polo or hockey player was, in the old days, almost as good an introduction to Court circles as being a successful pimp. The sides for these games used to be chosen from the various villages, thus forming a regular tournament throughout the valley, the most important games always being played in the capital itself.

The great institution of Manipur, before the Indian Government assumed control, was "laloop" or forced labour, by which every inhabitant was compelled to do a certain amount of work for the State, instead of paying taxes in money.

It could be evaded on payment, but few of the ordinary people were wealthy enough to afford this.

A political officer, writing of this system some 70 years ago, remarked: "A good artificer works along with a bad one and receives no more recognition for his work than if it was as

bad as that of his less-skilled associate. He thus becomes disgusted, and his only aim is to amass by his superior intelligence enough to obtain his release from work. Thus, if improvement could take place it would be repressed under a Government such as that of Manipur."

I am no politician, but it seems as if the aim of some of our own people is the levelling down of everyone, discouraging all workers from doing more than a certain amount, and repressing anyone who possesses more ability or more perseverance than his colleague.

I had been about eight years in the service before I got my first three months' privilege leave on full pay. Young officers nowadays would grouse pretty heavily if they could not get it a bit sooner than that. It was in the rainy season, when there was no sport to be had in our part of the world, so a brother officer and myself set off from Manipur with the intention of visiting as many of the show places of India as our funds would permit. After eight days' march we reached Kohima, and there had to wait a couple of days for bullock carts to take us the hundred miles to the Brahmaputra. One of our linked battalions was quartered there, and, of course, its officers put us up and did their best to ensure we did not have a dull moment. Here I had my first experience of a ghost, though it did not occur to me at the time that it was so.

I was staying in one of the wretched little shanties Government considered good enough for its officers in a frontier station, which was such that no self-respecting British workman would consider good enough for himself in England. It consisted of two small rooms opening into one another with a bathroom off each and a verandah running the length of the house back and front. The head of my bed was near a glass door, opposite to which was a window looking on to the back verandah.

My pal and I had turned in for the night, when after a while I woke up and, looking towards the window, saw the figure of a man standing between me and the moonlight, near the foot of my bed. Thinking it was my stable companion, I called

out to know what he wanted, when, to my astonishment, he answered from the next room, and asked what was the matter.

I told him there was someone in the room, and thinking it was a thief got up to scrag him. As I got out of bed the figure disappeared, and the other fellow came in with the light. There was no one there, the doors were shut both into the bathroom and on to the front verandah, and the window was covered with wire netting, so no one could have got out without my hearing him.

We looked round the house and, finding no trace of anyone, went to sleep again.

It was not very exciting, and I should have forgotten all about it, only three years later, when passing through Kohima, I heard there was a haunted house there, and on inquiry was informed I was the first man to see the ghost, and everyone who slept in that room since had had a similar experience sooner or later. There was no explanation of it.

Before our carts came my pal got a wire saying his leave was cancelled as he had been detailed to attend the school of musketry, so, being at a loose end, I went up to Shillong to spend my leave. There wasn't much to do there at that time of year except the ordinary society games and amusements, but I got a few good days' fishing on the lake when the white ant came out. Except for these few rare occasions the fishing wasn't worth bothering about, for though the water was full of small mahseer they were more gut shy and man shy than any fish I have ever seen, which was all the more unintelligible because the lake was not very clear. Occasionally one could get an odd fish by attaching a bit of popcorn to a small treble hook, oiling the line and heaving it out amongst a handful of similar bait previously thrown in, but it was a dull game because generally one's hook bait was studiously ignored and left floating by itself surrounded by dozens of fish, which had snapped up the rest of the corn at once and were ready to snap up as much as one cared to throw so long as it hadn't a hook in it.

One tried ground baiting with worms or paste, and fished

with these baits, but the result was the same ; yet when the white ants were on the wing and fell into the water in hundreds the fish seemed to go mad, and would take one impaled on the hook like a stone fly as soon as it was cast. With this bait I more than once got a couple of dozen mahseer up to two pounds in weight before the rise had finished.

There were a few really big fish in this lake, but one seldom saw them and never caught them. The best I ever got was 5½ lbs., but I think there were a few close on 20 lbs. I had the scales of some examined, and they seemed to average about a year for each pound in weight, like most mahseer.

At one time it was suggested that the lake should be cleaned out and stocked with trout. The Chief Commissioner agreed, but the war came on and it was never done. I was to have taken on the job with my regiment, the men were to have the fish as payment, and the deposit at the bottom of the lake would have been very useful for people's gardens. It could have been easily emptied by opening the sluice in the dam which held up the water.

Whilst on leave in Shillong I had the good luck to be selected as staff officer of a small column which was to operate against the Lushais, who had been giving a certain amount of trouble. It was to consist entirely of frontier military police, so to serve with it my services had to be transferred for a time to the Civil Department. This was quickly made the excuse for the pay people to dispute as to which side I was to draw my pay from, the civil or the military, and whilst this was going on I had to live on advances from regimental funds or my agents for over a year. In the end I found I got rather less money, in spite of what I had been told, than if I had stayed with the regiment. However, I could not spend much beyond my mess bill whilst on service and expenses weren't much greater when I returned to Manipur, so I suffered no very great hardship, but, had I been quartered in any civilised place, Government would have put me in a very tight corner, not that any of its pay officials would have cared a rap about that, for all of them

drew their own screw regularly. Indeed, one of them, when I went to his office to remonstrate about the unconscionable delay in settling my affairs, started to give me a "pi-jaw" which was the limit, and I am afraid I used language most unsuitable to the occasion he evidently hoped to make of it.

My first duty on this expedition was to halt in Silchar to collect about 300 men from the various posts spread along the frontier and take them up to Fort Aijal, whence the show was to start.

The Colonel of the regiment stationed in Silchar was very kind and used to take me out snipe shooting and fishing. The fishing was not very good, for the Barak, which was quite a large river, was muddy, and the big fish could only be got on dead bait, for which I had no patience. Still, there were any amount of little ones running up to about four ounces which rose well to the small fly.

The colonel's methods were original and peculiar. He said you could get great sport out of anything if you only had sufficient imagination, so he would get into a boat and catch these little fellows, pretending each one was about a pound weight and playing him accordingly. The playing consisted of letting the fish swim about for a bit on a loose line and then dragging it into a landing net, which the old man said was good practice for his orderly, and whilst he was amusing himself this way with half-a-dozen I used to get about 50 by whipping them straight out.

One day he said, "Do you ever have durbars in your regiment?" and on hearing that we didn't he replied, "Well, you ought to; you had better come to one of mine and see what they are like."

(A durbar is a reception varying in magnificence according to the importance of the person holding it.)

Hearing one was going to be held next morning, I went over to the lines and, seeing some officers standing about, asked where the durbar was held and when. They told me it was in the regimental orderly room and would begin as soon as the commanding officer arrived. After a few minutes the Colonel

came walking across the parade ground from his house, so I went up to him, saluted, and said I had come to attend his durbar.

“Very well,” he answered, “just you come along and sit beside me.”

When he appeared every officer who was in the orderly room bolted outside, and the Colonel stalked in, sat down, put me in a chair beside him, and told the drum major, who was standing at the door, to announce that the durbar was open. I was much impressed by this drum major, for he had six medals, the first of which was for Maharajpore, fought 52 years previously. He was a very old man, and was evidently only kept on for show on occasions like this.

On this all the British officers, followed by the Indian officers, filed in according to seniority, saluted and stood at attention. The Colonel greeted each one solemnly, as if he had never seen him before, and then when the last had entered inquired if all were present, and when he heard they were he said to the British officers,

“Now, gentlemen, take off your swords and sit down,” and to the Indians, “Please be seated.”

Then ensued conversation about the weather, the lines, the rations, the training, and all sorts of commonplace subjects for about half an hour. When every subject was exhausted the Colonel stood up and announced the durbar was closed, on which everyone trooped out in the same manner as he had come in.

I walked over to breakfast with another subaltern, who grumbled: “Can you imagine what torture it is to a man of intellect to have to sit twice a week and listen to the dregs of imbecility and essence of boredom such as you have heard to-day?”

I replied: “Thank God not many of us are men of intellect, or we wouldn’t be here in this forlorn place,” which did not seem to please him. I must say I thanked my stars we had no such institution in my regiment, but the durbar evidently was, or had been, a regular thing in the Indian Army, for I had often been puzzled to see it referred to in Regulations.

CHAPTER XXI

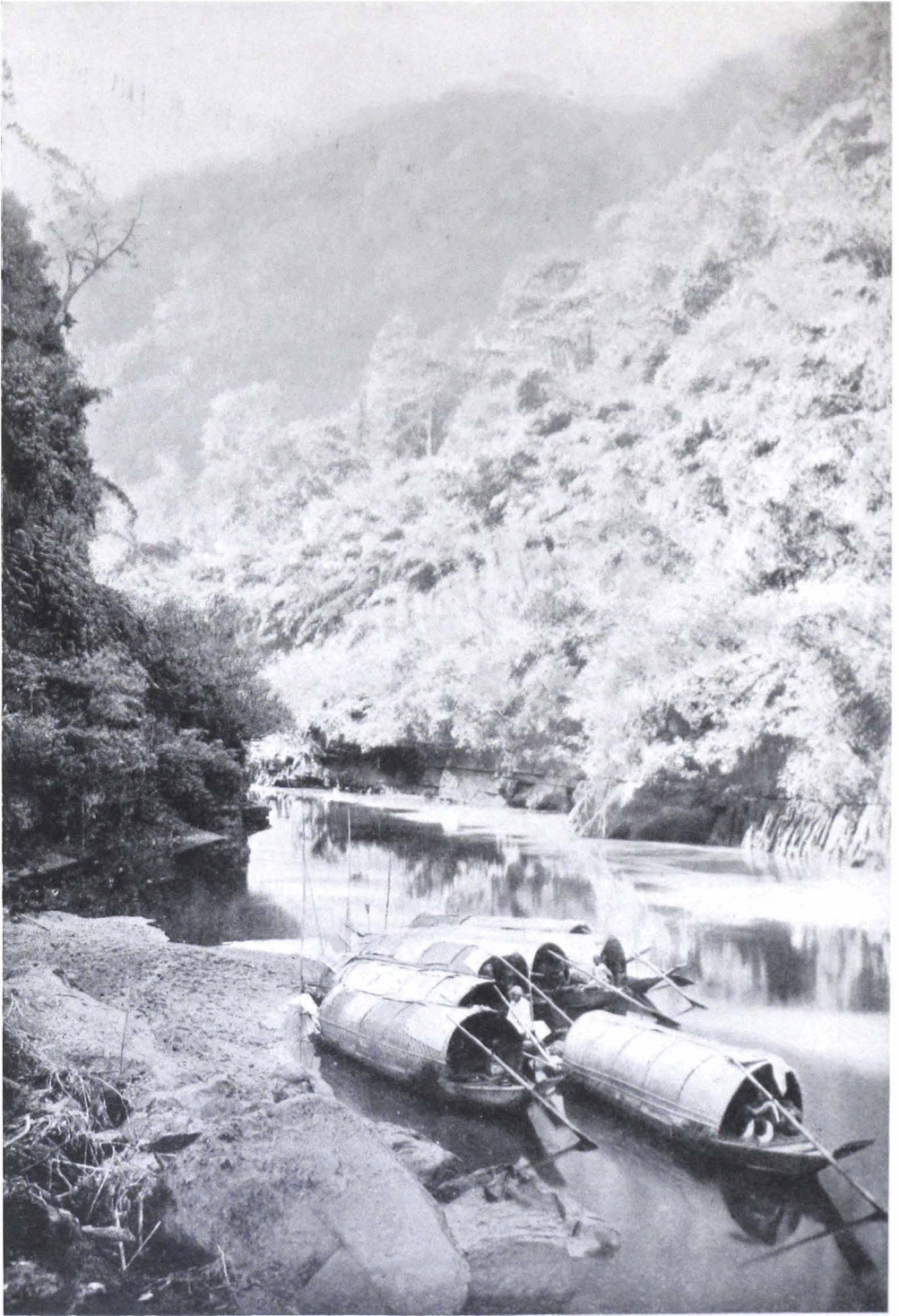
LUSHAI EXPEDITION, '95-'96—THE LUSHAIS—A LUSHAI GHOST—
FISHING IN LUSHAI

As soon as the Military Police had come in from their outposts we set off for Fort Aijal, about twelve days' march away in the North Lushai hills.

I had never commanded any of the Assam frontier police before, so now had an opportunity of seeing their methods, and was much impressed by the initiative of the Gurkha officers, the smartness and soldierly appearance of the men, and the excellent state in which they kept their arms and accoutrements, for these battalions have only two British officers each and consequently there can be little dry nursing of men on outposts, where there is every inducement to slackness, unless there is a good soldierly spirit in the unit.

After the first three marches the path led through low hills, mostly covered with bamboo jungle, and gradually ascended to Aijal, which lies at a height of almost 5,000 ft.

The Lushais, whom we were going to adjust, were not a very warlike race, though for savages they were pretty well armed and had plenty of guns. They were not averse from doing a bit of raiding now and then, and then avoiding retribution by taking cover in the jungle, where they were hard to follow, for it was not much of a punishment to burn their villages because they never remained on the same site for more than three or four years, owing to their system of cultivation. One year they would clear the jungle and burn it, hoe the ashes into the ground and sow their crops, which usually did well at the first harvest. The next year the so-called "Kuki weed," which grows profusely in any open ground, came up with the good



RIVER SCENERY, LUSHAI.

stuff. The third year weed and cereals were about equal, and the fourth year the weed had generally swamped everything else, and it was time to clear out, when the villagers moved to another site, leaving their houses to rot and their fields to relapse to jungle. Another reason for these frequent moves is that the Lushais have a pleasant habit of keeping their dead in their dwelling houses till the body has dried up, and then burying it just outside, which must tend to disease, particularly as in most villages the surface drainage seems to go into the water supply, therefore they are often forced to move by an epidemic.

The Lushais did not put up any sort of a show on this expedition, because the various chiefs were not unanimous in supporting Kairuma, the one against whom the operations were directed for not having surrendered the number of muskets he had been fined the previous year, and not even the destruction of his village produced a kick from him; besides, the chiefs had all been warned that anyone seen carrying arms would be shot at sight.

Apropos of this warning, I might on one occasion have got into rather an unpleasant scrape through no fault of my own. The political officer had, after much deliberation, decided to burn a certain village, whose fine had long been outstanding, and had warned the headman that it would be done on a given day if the guns were not produced before then. He went off with an escort to try a little personal persuasion the day before, and told me that I could burn it next day unless I heard to the contrary. I consulted with the C.O., and we decided the next day began any time after midnight, as is usual in the army.

No word came in to our camp, so starting about two hours before dawn I reached the village just as it was getting light, lit up the houses on the windward side, and with my escort of a dozen men set off down the valley in search of further adventure, fully expecting to be attacked. We had gone about a mile or so and had reached the cultivation clearance when suddenly two Lushais with guns on their shoulders came dodging through the jungle, about 400 yards away, down the opposite

slope. The men wanted to give them a volley, but as I had a new Webley revolver with a $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. barrel, I thought it a good opportunity to test its range, so sat down and opened fire. At the second shot the men disappeared and we went on.

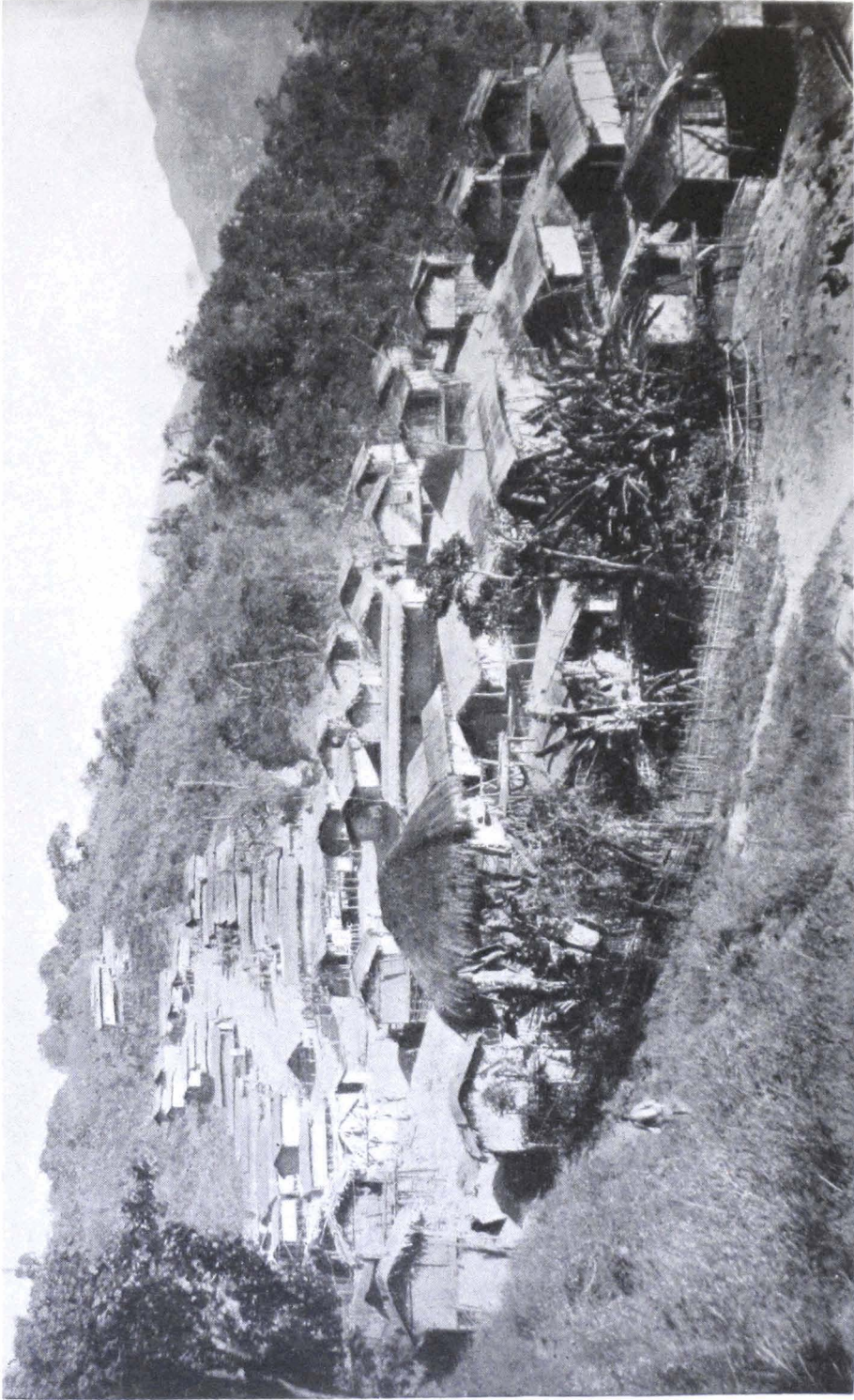
After a while, in a very dense bit of jungle, someone called out "Ho!" and there was some conversation which I did not understand. The interpreter said a man had got a note for the Sahib, but was afraid to deliver it as he had been shot at twice already. He was presently reassured, and when he emerged from the undergrowth he proved to be one of the political officer's Lushai attendants, carrying his master's express rifle.

It seemed rather a weird proceeding to send out an armed Lushai in view of existing orders, as few people are disposed to let an armed tribesman have first shot if it can be prevented.

The note said: "Please come in at once. You have done far too much damage already," so I went up to what remained of the village and found the writer in a very great rage, for he had been sleeping in one of the houses, so narrowly escaped being burnt out, and he had lost some of his kit. He said he had sent me a note telling me he had decided to give these people a few days' more grace and I had refused to take it from his messenger. I insisted on his producing this man, which he did with very great reluctance, and then he discovered I was not the officer to whom the note had been offered.

The beauty of the whole thing was that whilst this altercation was going on the guns began to come in, as the chief evidently thought he would be in for more trouble if he delayed any longer.

When this political got any sort of idea into his head it was extremely difficult to get it out. One day he and I were shooting along the opposite banks of a little stream, which was not very easy to cross, and he dropped a partridge into some heavy grass. He put some of his Lushais on to look for it and cut the grass. I called out that the bird was some 20 yards farther on, and if he would leave it I would come across



A LUSHAI VILLAGE.

later on and gather it with my dog. He wouldn't have this at any price. He urged on his men with blows and opprobrium, and when they had cut about half an acre of grass, not wishing to be hung up indefinitely waiting for him, I took the dog across and got the bird, but even then I had difficulty in persuading him it was not one I had shot myself and was giving him to get him on.

I had a very queer experience at one place in these hills. The C.O. and political officer had gone to visit some distant villages, leaving me to sit on a ridge with a hundred rifles to hold a certain chief in check, who it was thought might venture on some reprisals, if he thought most of the column had moved on.

The position we selected for camp was on a spur in the shape of an L reversed, that is the angle faced the west. It was the site of a village, deserted a year or two previously, and had a distinctly eerie appearance. The ground was covered with the red blossoms of the cock's comb, or "love lies bleeding," and looked like a sea of blood, out of which rose the remains of the mouldering houses, and poles decorated with the skulls of various animals.

The ground was soon cleared for camp and the men brought in bamboos and grass for shelters. Picquets were put out at the top, angle, and bottom of the spur to command the slopes on both sides of it. Whilst these were being posted, my spaniel routed out a few bamboo partridges and a woodcock, which I shot, and then after some food I turned in for the night.

Just before dawn I was awakened by the sound of men running and the rattle of accoutrements. I turned out at once, blew my whistle, and the men stood to arms, but I could not understand why the picquet was retiring without a shot being fired, so went down to meet it. The N.C.O. halted his men and reported all present, and while he was speaking I heard the picquet from the toe of the spur doubling up the hill, but there was no sound from the one above camp. I asked the man what he meant by deserting his post, and he replied the men

would not stay because there were ghosts about, and the N.C.O. in command of the further post reported the same when he arrived. I addressed both these gentlemen pretty forcibly, and asked what they meant by such nonsense.

Both replied, "Please listen."

I did so and noticed a sound I had been aware of all the time, which was just like that a little child would make if lost in the dark and crying its soul out.

"That," they said, "is the ghost."

The noise was coming out of the angle of the L which was full of grass seven or eight feet high. It was now getting light, but this angle was still deep in shadow. I went some distance down the path, making the men come with me, and could feel what a funk they were in. The wailing continued, sometimes it seemed quite close, sometimes a couple of hundred yards down the hillside, till the rays of the sun lit up the grass, when it suddenly ceased. The noise might have been made by some animal or bird, so about noon, when the grass was quite dry, I had it set alight from the bottom, but nothing came out except a wild pig and some jungle fowl.

That night I slept in the middle picquet myself, got volunteers for the far one, and gave orders I was to be awakened at once if anyone heard anything unusual. About 4 o'clock a man took hold of my foot and said, "Sahib, it has come," and there was the same crying, sometimes a little distance off and sometimes so close it seemed as if the child, or whatever it was, would be amongst us the next moment, which was most creepy and unpleasant, for it was too dark to see anything. The noise lasted just as long and stopped in just the same way as it had on the previous morning, so when it was quite light we extended and moved down the hill-side to see if there were any tracks amongst the ashes of the burnt grass, which lay thick on the ground, but there were none, nor could anyone suggest any cause for the noise, except a ghost.

This occurred every morning as long as we stayed in this camp. We constantly heard tigers roaring during the night

in the river bed below, but no tiger ever makes a noise anything like this, and if one had been there we should have seen his tracks in the ashes. There was nothing to account for it, but sometime later I heard there is a superstition amongst the Lushais that if, when they are moving their villages, a child gets lost and dies in the jungle its spirit haunts the spot crying for its mother, till she dies herself.

Below this haunted camp was a very good little river, which contained lots of mahseer. Like other Lushai streams, it was rapid and clear with rocky banks and pebbly bottom, and here and there a nice deep pool. The fish ran up to 8 lbs. or more and would take any sort of bait, but a small fly spoon was by far the best. It was not long before I was reduced to making spoons out of silver two-anna bits with the aid of a brother officer's nail clippers.

I often killed from 20 to 50 mahseer running from $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to 5 lbs. in a few hours' fishing, and once got one of 6 lbs., which followed the spoon out of deep water and picked it off the sand, where I had let it lie whilst gathering in the line preparatory to making a fresh cast.

Sometimes I got a good fish by casting the spoon into very deep still water, letting it sink with a slack line till it was out of sight, and then working it with a sink and draw motion near the bottom.

CHAPTER XXII

USELESS INTERPRETERS—JOURNEY FROM LUSHAI—MY SERVANT'S MATRIMONIAL AFFAIRS—REMEDY FOR JAUNDICE—CHARMS

As before stated, the political officer of the Lushai column had a miscellaneous collection of friendlies constantly following him about, on whose information and opinions he seemed to set great value, although they generally proved to be inaccurate or worthless.

None of these worthies had the foggiest notion of our way of reckoning distance, nor had their employer the least comprehension of their method of doing so.

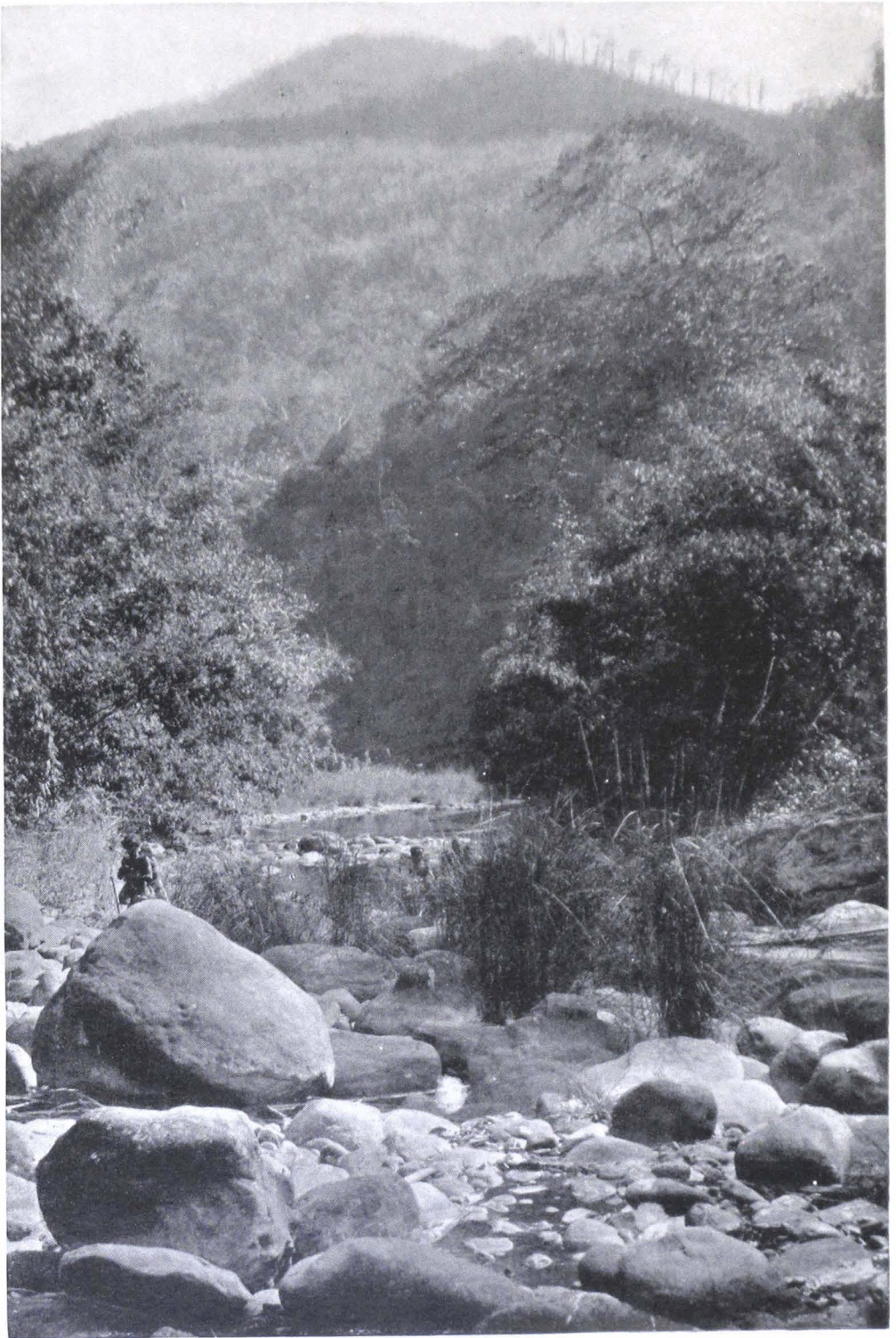
About the most intelligent of them was a chief named Khamliéna, whose portrait now embellishes the Government report on the Lushai clans, as a frontispiece.

Whenever we had marched a fairly long distance the P.O. would invariably say: "Khama, from my bungalow to the post-office in Aijal it is half a mile, tell me how far you think it is to the next ground we can camp on."

Khama would as invariably reply: "Half a mile!" which sometimes was correct, but more often a couple of miles or more out.

One day we had marched from six o'clock in the morning and were halted for a bite of food about noon, when the usual question was asked and the usual answer received. We then struggled on through interminable bamboo jungle for another two hours and seemed just as far from a decent bit of ground as we were when we started.

The C.O. and political then had a little consultation, after which the former said to me: "Just you take a few men as



THE SONAI RIVER, LUSHAI.

escort and go on for a bit with Khama and see if there is any sort of place for a camp."

I did so, and after a while found myself on the bank of a river with rocky banks and deep pools. I then asked Khama how far the camp was from here, he replied, "Half a mile," and when I said, "Is it on this side of the river or the other?" and he replied he didn't know, I told him to go and find out, and pushed him into about six feet of water. He disappeared for a second, and then scrambled out and bolted off back the way we had come as fast as he could travel.

The rest of us returned more slowly, and when I reached the column the men were clearing the jungle in order to settle down for the night.

I got the C.O. aside and inquired if the old man was much annoyed at the treatment his satellite had received, and was much pleased at his answer :

"Oh, no! He told me to send you on and hoped if you did not find a place soon you would do something to Khama which would teach him to judge distance a bit better."

After this Khama usually pleaded ignorance when asked.

We spent the cold weather marching about those jungly hills, collecting a few old guns, but getting no fighting; still, I enjoyed the experience very much, for there was a little small game shooting and plenty of good fishing in all the rivers. I always had a rod carried with me when we were likely to cross a decent stream, and when we halted there for the men to fill up their water bottles and eat their food, I could generally rake out sufficient small mahseer to provide our mess for dinner. If we halted for a day or two close to a river I generally got very good sport, though I never got any large fish, and don't remember even seeing one over 10 lbs. The Lushais used to net and trap the fish, and it was owing to the dams they made across the lower end of the pools that the mahseer remained in them during the cold weather, instead of dropping down-stream to a level where the water was warmer.

I returned from Aijal to Silchar by boat, an easier and

more comfortable way than marching, as the weather was beginning to get warm in April. The boats were only large dug-outs with matting over them to shelter the passengers from the sun, and I slept and kept my kit in one, whilst my servant and two orderlies lived in the other; the boatmen had a third for their stuff.

The political officer seized this opportunity of sending down to the Treasury in Silchar, in my boats, between £3,000 and £4,000 of Government money, which was somewhat of a risk, seeing that there were only the two orderlies and myself to protect it. Later, when I asked him for a certificate as to when my duties with the police terminated, he gave it as the date on which I left Aijal, which lost me a little pay when I at long last got any. Naturally I objected, so he said that he had overlooked the fact that I was not a police officer when he asked me to take down the money, which of course was a "terminological inexactitude," to put it mildly, as well as mean, for I was saving Government the cost of transport for an escort from Aijal to Silchar and back, in taking all this silver with me, not to mention the inconvenience its bulk caused in a small boat.

Soon after rejoining my regiment, the servant, who had been with me in Lushai, said he had become enamoured of a Manipuri princess and wished to marry her, as she was quite willing to become a Mahommedan. It may be mentioned that any Manipuri who had a drop of Royal blood in him or her, however much diluted, made the most of it, and in the State there must have been hundreds who claimed this honour, for the males of the Royal family were anything but monogamous.

My man, Bunia by name, told me that one day he had spoken to this lady in the market-place, where she was selling greens of all sorts, and she had given him a charm, which had caused him to fall in love with her. As he had done me very well, I stood him his wedding expenses, and soon after our troubles began, for she had the most violent temper, and when she was in one of her quarrelsome moods poor old Bunia never dared go into his house without pushing open the door with a

stick, in case she was lurking behind it to down him with a log of wood. She went for my batman, too, and he said she used such fearful language sometimes that if he had not been a soldier he would have struck her.

She cursed the Abor, who, not understanding what she said, and being none too chivalrous, shot a pailful of dirty water over her fine clothes, after which she gave him a wide berth, for he went after her with a polo stick. Bunia interfered, whereupon the Abor picked up a knife, for which I spanked him. To score off me, he collected the few bits of clothing and a mosquito net I had given him and set them alight, but he only scored off himself, for I did not replace them for some time, and let him run about in the little jacket he stood up in, which was all he had on at the time.

Once, however, the lady indirectly rendered me a great service. Two or three days after her wedding, I was in my house, cleaning my guns, when the first mess bugle sounded. After a while, thinking it strange Bunia had not come in to lay out my mess kit, I went into the back verandah to call him, and noticed a queer sort of light on the ground. On my shout, he came round the side from the front of the house and yelled out that the thatched roof was on fire, so I ran through to the front verandah and called the mess bugler to sound the "Fire alarm" and "the double," which he did, and in a minute a lot of men came up, got all my stuff out, and extinguished the fire, which, owing to the roof being damp, had not got a good hold. When all was quiet again I asked Bunia what he was doing round at the front, when he ought to have been getting out my clothes.

He said: "You know it is guest night, and I thought it likely the wife might be getting in some of the bandsmen whilst I was doing my work, so I was just hiding to see what she did."

Which showed he had formed a better estimate of her character than I had imagined, and also that a native hasn't much faith in woman, even though she be a newly-wedded wife. We never discovered who had tried to burn me out ;

that sort of thing seldom is found out in India, and the Manipuris had a pleasant habit of tying a bit of rag soaked in paraffin oil to an arrow, lighting it, and shooting it into a thatched roof in the hope of being able to loot the place during the ensuing confusion.

Speaking of charms, I have had one or two experiences of them, though they were not of the nature of the one Bunia had from his princess, and if what happened was not due to their efficacy, it was a very strange coincidence.

Once I was taking out a small party for a night raid to surprise a village, and when we were starting it was so dark I had to count the men by putting my hand on them.

When I had finished, and was going out of the gate of our stockade, the Gurkha officer, to whose company most of the party belonged, drew me aside and said :

“ Sahib, you are going into battle, and I am not, therefore take this and no arrow will kill you ; if one hits you chew this thing and put it on the wound, and the poison will become harmless as water,” and he gave me something which felt like a small piece of bark, so I put it into the tobacco pouch I carried in my haversack, and thought no more about it. Next morning we had a little scrap, and the man beside me was hit on the inner side of the groin with an arrow. Thinking it rather a nasty place to be hit in, I pulled round my haversack, in which was an enamelled iron plate, to cover me there, and had scarcely let go of it when an arrow came smack into it, with such force that it nearly knocked the wind out of me.

I broke it off, and after the enemy had cleared out I looked to see what effect it had had. The arrow had cut through my pouch, cut the charm, and knocked a good dent in the iron plate. I have the head of the arrow still.

There could have been no faith healing in this, as there may have been in my other experience of amulets.

In the hot weather of 1916 jaundice was very prevalent in Mesopotamia. I had a go of it myself, and when writing to an old Gurkha pensioner told him so, adding that lots of my

men suffered in the same way. He sent me out six hundred necklaces made of lotus seeds, which are about the size of small acorns, each composed of twelve seeds strung on thread, saying they were an infallible remedy for jaundice. These were issued to any man who wanted one, and, strangely enough, scarcely a man of ours got that complaint afterwards. I gave mine to a lady at home, who was also suffering from jaundice last year, and she assured me it did her no end of good. The efficacy of these necklaces may have been largely due to faith, especially with people brought up to believe in charms of all sorts, but I do not think that faith was always responsible for their action.

Anyway, it had nothing to do with the Gurkha officer's bit of bark in my case, for I had forgotten all about it, and I doubt faith deflecting an arrow, though we are taught it can move a mountain.

CHAPTER XXIII

A MURDER—MY ABOR BOY—MY SERVANT'S WIFE

THE redoubtable Bunia was a very good servant on the whole, and was with me many years, but after I got married we had to part company, for his Manipuri princess had constant feuds with the other servants and caused endless trouble by her vile temper and loose morals, whilst Bunia wrought havoc on our belongings by cleaning silver with emery powder, and smashing the glass and crockery, which was impossible to replace in such an out-of-the-way spot as Manipur.

When I was going home he used to describe the paradise our establishment would be with my then staff of servants (plus a cook) run by himself as head man, and he invariably added with an ingratiating smile,

“And perhaps the mem sahib will be good enough to train the princess to be her maid.”

Unfortunately his predictions were never fulfilled, largely owing to his own obstinacy and the behaviour of his wife ; but more of that anon.

He certainly was an excellent servant on the march or in camp—never got tired or downhearted in any weather—and, though a Mahomedan, got on very well with the men, who were Hindus. He was a bit of a wag, too.

One day on the march a Brahman came up to me and solicited alms. I asked him who he was, and he replied, “Brahman,” and thinking possibly I might never have heard of that caste, he added, “Padre” (priest).

“Padre,” jeered Bunia, remembering, no doubt, his success with the Manipuri princess, “a nice sort of padre you are, you would sell your daughter for two annas.”

A jest highly appreciated by one of the Punjabis in charge of my mules.

This latter gentleman found himself in considerable trouble when he got back to Cantonments. The Political Agent wrote the following morning and asked me to come over to his court and bring my servant, when he inquired if I had heard any sort of disturbance during the night at one of the places I had halted at. I had not, nor had Bunia, who had slept at the door of my room in the rest house. I then heard the reason of the inquiry. The two muleteers who looked after my baggage animals had murdered a Hindu trader, who was also spending the night at this place, and robbed him of about 400 rupees and some jewellery, which the police had found on them when they came into the station.

I remembered then how very pleased with themselves these two ruffians seemed to be after we left that camp, singing and playing a sort of penny whistle as they marched ; their high spirits doubtless being due to their success in doing in their victim within ten yards of me without making a sound. The crime was discovered by the rest-house caretaker, who came round after we left in the morning to clean up the place, and seeing the trader's bedding lying in a corner, turned it over and found the dead body beneath it.

He then ran the 30 miles into Manipur and reported the matter, and the crime was easily fixed on the drivers, who were promptly hanged.

Bunia accompanied me to a cholera camp in 1896, where he had many differences with the Abor lad I had brought from the campaign against his people two years previously, and who was still in many ways an absolutely wild creature, and, though only about fourteen years of age, truculent to a degree.

The rats were very troublesome about the huts I occupied ; they ate the food in the cook-shed, gnawed my boots and, worst of all, nibbled my fishing line into sections, so I sent to Calcutta for a trap, showed the Abor how to bait and set it, and told him to put it in the cook-house at night. Next morning I asked the

lad if he had caught a rat, and could not understand his reply when he said he had got seven. He explained that as soon as he put the trap down, a rat came into it at once. He then killed it, prepared, cooked, and ate it, and when he had finished it, another was waiting for him, which shared the same fate, and so on till seven were caught, by which time it was daylight and no more rats came.

Bunia heard most of this explanation through the grass hut, and then came in and remarked: "I know now why the Sahib's cooking-pots were dirty this morning, though I cleaned them last night," seized the Abor by the ear and marched him out, when yells from the cook-house gave me some idea of what was going on. These were followed by wrathful shouts from Bunia, and on going out to see what was the matter, I found that the Abor had seized a spade, which was used for clearing the drains round the huts, wiped Bunia one across the shins with it, and escaped into the jungle. The boy was soon caught, tied to a tree, spanked by my orderly, and then left for some hours to ruminate over his misdeeds, till he had recovered his temper.

On one occasion I was teaching my pony to jump a hurdle by getting the syce to give him a lead over it with a carrot in his hand; but when I got up nothing would make the beast take it, so, as he was quiet and unshod, I got a lot of men to stand on both flanks of the hurdle to prevent his running out and to close up behind him to force him over.

Seeing this manœuvre, Bunia offered the advice that I did not come up to the jump fast enough.

"You should see my brother in the 1st Bengal Cavalry," he said; "he makes his horse go really fast and flies over everything like a bird."

"Can you ride as well as your brother does?" I inquired.

"Very nearly," he replied, "but I am rather out of practice."

I invited him to get up and have a try. So he got into the saddle, hitched his big toes into the stirrup-leathers, and kicked the pony into a canter.

As he neared the hurdle the men closed up behind, the

pony propped, Bunia shot over his head, landing on the other side of the hurdle, and the pony followed, putting one foot on the most protruding part of his anatomy, amidst howls of amusement from the men. After this Bunia said no more about riding, and was very stiff for some days.

When I married, someone gave us a set of silver fruit knives and forks, and the day we were giving our first dinner-party I said to my Mrs.,

“ I hope you told Bunia he was not to clean those fruit knives on the knife board.”

This was the first occasion on which they were going to be used.

She said, “ I told him, when I gave them to him just now, they were silver, and that should be enough.”

“ Not for Bunia,” I said, and rushed into the pantry to find the ruffian seated on the floor, scrubbing a fruit knife on the emery board.

“ What did the mem sahib tell you about those knives ? ” I inquired.

“ She said they were silver,” he answered, “ but, of course, she doesn't know ; knives are always made of steel, but the more I rub it the duller this one gets.”

Luckily this was the first he had started on, and a little forcible explanation seemed to convince him that, whatever he thought other knives were made of, these were not to be cleaned with emery.

The amount of china he smashed was appalling. One day my wife drew his attention to a cup with a great chunk out of the side. He looked at it with some surprise and remarked,

“ That wasn't broken by me ; when I break a thing like that I smash it into little bits, for these cups are very badly made.”

One morning he complained that his wife had tried to kill him with an axe, and begged my protection, so I sent her off to the court, with the necessary witnesses, with the result she was sentenced to a short term of imprisonment. From that

moment I knew no peace ; he was always badgering me to get her out, or hanging round the gaol and neglecting his work, for he said he was sure she was up to some of her games with the gaolers.

When she came out he presented me with a letter, written in English by someone in the bazaar, saying, owing to her treatment in prison he was certain she was now "in the embryonic state," and wished the gaolers punished. What he meant by that I guessed, so told him I would consider the position in a few months, when he would be better able to judge, and as I heard no more I presumed his fears were groundless.

We tried in vain to dismiss him. He said he was going to stay with me as long as I remained in the regiment ; but at last I got rid of him when I was going to a garrison class.

On reaching the railway station at Silchar I did not take a ticket for him to Calcutta, and when he perched himself on the top of my baggage in the open truck, which was used as a van, I told the ticket collector of this fact, who ordered him to come off it. He seemed absolutely astounded when he heard I had got no ticket for him ; but in a few seconds said,

"I don't mind ; I will now go to Italy."

How he heard of Italy or what he proposed to do there I hadn't time to ascertain, but he returned to Manipur, where he started a tea-shop, which he was still running when I last heard of him some twenty years later, and if he is alive he is probably there still, and is certain to have amassed a fair share of wealth. I am sure I hope he has, for I have always had a soft corner in my heart for old Bunia, as he had a very thin time after he got entangled in the noose of love.

CHAPTER XXIV**A GURKHA'S LOVE AFFAIRS AND SUICIDE**

AFTER getting rid of Bunia, which we would probably never have done if his wife had not demoralised him, we took on a Gurkha Christian, the first convert of that nation I had ever seen. He had good testimonials from some missionaries, and, as he was smart and intelligent, he seemed likely to suit us. He had lost caste, and therewith all social standing amongst his countrymen, through contracting an alliance with a woman of the lowest caste ; so, in order to get a better status and enable him to take up domestic service, which he would not have been able to do had he disclosed his protégée's caste, he embraced Christianity, or at any rate pretended to do so for a time.

As the woman was not with him when he came to us, we did not bother ourselves about his love affairs ; but he would have been entangled in another, which would have troubled us a lot, only he came to an untimely end. After about three months we had an insight into his other failings.

The Lieutenant-General commanding the Bengal Army told his A.D.C to write and ask if I could arrange for his party to have some sport along the road between Kohima, in the Naga hills, where my regiment was quartered, and Manipur, both of which garrisons he was going to inspect. I wrote back and suggested that my colonel be asked to place the services of myself and six men at the disposal of the L.G.C. for that part of his tour, when I would endeavour to do all that was required. This was easily arranged, and after the inspection I set off with my retinue in the general's train, taking Peter Sambo, as the Christian called himself, as my personal attendant.

When we reached the last stage before Manipur the Superintending Engineer of that State came out in his buggy to drive the general in. He asked me if I had lost an Express rifle by Holland with my crest on it.

I said I did not think so, as I had given it to my servant to carry that morning.

"Well," he replied, "I found an Express rifle that looked like one of yours lying in the road as I came along, with a Gurkha drunk in the ditch close by, so I picked it up and brought it along." It was mine right enough.

Some time after we got in Peter Sambo appeared, looking none the worse for his debauch except that his eyes were rather like poached eggs, and accounted for the loss of the rifle by saying that one of the sepoy had given him a small taste of some liquor before he started, which was so powerful it stretched him out before he had gone half way. He expressed great contrition for the occurrence, so, as I had recovered the rifle, I said no more about it beyond warning him about the potency of Manipur spirits.

We were several days in Manipur, witnessed their games of polo and hockey, and had some decent duck and snipe shooting after the inspection was completed. I then returned to Kohima, but, when my baggage arrived, was surprised to hear that all the sepoy with me had been put under arrest for attempting to smuggle liquor into barracks. The regimental police had noticed that one or two of these heroes showed signs of being somewhat inebriated, so searched my carts and found six large tins, each containing about four gallons of native spirits, concealed in them. When the colonel inquired into the case at orderly room next morning, he asked the lance-corporal who had been in charge of my party what he had to say.

The reply was: "Nothing, except that I have fallen on evil days."

The colonel remarked: "You have, you have lost your lance stripe." Some time later it transpired that Mr. Peter Sambo was really bringing in the stuff as part of his master's

kit, and had told the men they could take a little to help them along on the march.

I returned three days before New Year's Eve, on which night we were giving a small dinner-party to see the New Year in. Peter said he had been suffering from fever ever since his return, and could do no work. As I was dressing for the party my wife came in and said :

“ You might just go down to his quarters and see if Peter is well enough to sit in the pantry and see that the dishes are sent in properly.”

I did so, pushed open his door, and, finding all dark, put out my hand to guide myself along the wall to his bed. It gave me a bit of a shock to find my fingers had slipped into somebody's wet mouth, so shouted for a light. A lantern was quickly brought, and the light disclosed Peter crouching against the wall, and round his neck was a rope fastened to the rafter above. His knees were almost touching the ground. A kukri was fetched, the rope cut, and the man collapsed in a heap and was found to be quite dead. At this my batman spat violently on him, gave him a kick and remarked :

“ The swine lived like a dog and has died like a dog.”

I then inquired if any of the other servants had heard anything, and one stated he had heard a sort of drumming on the wall, which he thought was caused by the sweeper opening a box. I went into the kitchen, which was only about three yards away, and asked the cook if he had noticed anything peculiar, and he cheerfully replied :

“ I heard Peter hanging himself, but how could I go and stop him when I was preparing dinner ? What would the mem sahib have said to me if the soup had been spoilt ? ”

The doctor then turned up and said nothing could be done, as the man had been dead some little time. He offered the opinion that he evidently had not intended to kill himself, but only to make a disturbance and give us a fright, as the rope was not short enough to hang him ; but he was evidently so drunk that, having put the noose over his head, he could not

get it off again, and had then fallen over and strangled himself, which seemed quite probable. I then had to go into the house, tell my wife the man was not fit to do what she wanted, and entertain our guests till after midnight, which was rather difficult in the circumstances.

I tried hard to find out if there was any reason for this, but could get at nothing. A few days later a letter arrived from Manipur addressed to "Peter Sambo, Esq.," which I opened and found to be written in such high-flown Gurkhali that it was beyond me. I therefore took it to my clerk and said I could not make out what it all meant, though as a rule I could read Gurkhali quite well.

He looked at it and said: "This is not Gurkhali, Sahib, but poetry," and read it out. It was from the Gurkha ayah of the lady in whose house I had stayed at Manipur, and was to the effect that, since Peter had left, the place had become a howling wilderness, though whilst he was there it had been a garden of bliss, but her mem sahib was soon coming to Kohima and taking her along. She had charge of sixty rupees belonging to her mistress, and she understood Peter's master's spoons and forks were of real silver, therefore he should take them and they could go off together, when their lives, which were now like two streams flowing separately, would join together like a beautiful river and flow united in an earthly paradise.

When she came to Kohima my wife told this lady what her maid had written, and though she admitted she had given the girl the sixty rupees to take care of, she would not believe that she ever contemplated robbing or leaving her.

Still, even this little romance did not afford any reason for the man's suicide. One would have thought it rather an inducement to live, so the doctor's theory was the most likely one.

I collected the wretched creature's belongings, his clothes and bedding, Oliver Goldsmith's works in shorthand, the Bible, various Hindu religious books, vests, shirts, and stockings he had stolen from me, and photos of English ladies he had stolen elsewhere, and no doubt paraded to his friends

as victims to his charms. These last I destroyed, but the rest I packed up intending to send them to his brother, who was a caretaker of some missionary establishment in Simla. Such an agglomeration of wealth was too much for another of our servants: he broke into Peter's quarters one night, bolted with the bundle, and we never saw or heard of him again.

This affair was the cause of great discomfort to us, as servants were unobtainable in Kohima, and my wife had to do a lot of the housework herself, till other servants came up from Calcutta, which took about three weeks, for they did not hurry, being paid from the day they started.

CHAPTER XXV

OUR HOUSEHOLD STAFF IN SHILLONG

FORMERLY one used to hear a great deal about the excellence of the Indian domestic servant, but this was more in the time of our grandfathers, when communications with India were not so rapid and changes of station were less frequent, consequently the British official more seldom took leave home, and, as he was not so often moved from one station to another, his servants stayed with him so long as he treated them well.

Most Indian servants are married and therefore dislike frequent moves, and even if they raised no objection to taking their families, what officer could afford the expense of paying the cost of passage for the large number of women and children his domestic staff would possess ?

I myself once had more than a dozen moves in less than two years, and whose purse could stand the cost of a lot of passages ? For Government did not pay for more than two or three, and on one occasion did not even pay for my wife, whilst the allowance for baggage was always inadequate for a married man, and still more so if his servants' baggage were included.

The result has been that servants have deteriorated, through frequent change of masters, and generally prefer to stay in their own neighbourhood, when they can walk out of your house if anything displeases them, and you get no redress. Even now, I don't believe they are more troublesome than the average article of the same class in England, and are as honest and industrious, nor have they yet acquired the inordinate craving for sweets, silk stockings, and cinemas most English

domestics of the present day seem to possess ; still, drink, cigarettes, and gambling are quite a good substitute.

Perhaps the most satisfactory, or perhaps it would be more correct to say the least unsatisfactory, staff of servants we ever had was in Shillong about twelve years ago, when almost every one of them was a drunkard.

The most important, of course, was the cook, Romesh, a descendant of Chittagong pirates, who was generally tight by evening ; but he never let us down if we were having anyone in for a bite of meat and spot of wine, or when friends were staying in the house. If he was so drunk as to be incapable, he was deluged with three or four bucketfuls of cold water, which were always kept ready in the compound for such delinquencies in him or others, and those gentry, who did not happen to be drunk themselves, took the greatest delight in administering this corrective to any of their number who was.

He would go to sleep anywhere and had regular lairs amongst the bracken in the compound, where he would sleep off his potations, if he was able to reach one of them, so as to avoid the water.

On one occasion, I suppose in pure bravado, he removed all the crockery from a shelf in the pantry, placed it on the ground below him, and lay down on the shelf where he could not be disturbed without all the cups and plates being removed.

Once he lay down in a pond in the garden. The batman was attracted to the spot by the behaviour of one of the dogs, and hauled him out, otherwise he would probably have been drowned. He looked a ghastly sight covered with weeds and mud, but was sleeping quite peacefully.

The table servant was a Khasia, the only man I have ever seen who got absolutely paralytic drunk.

One day in camp one of my subalterns remarked that he thought the man standing behind my chair in mess was tight. I turned round and accused him of being so, which he denied in so thick a voice I knew him to be full of liquor. I told him to clear out of the tent, but he did not move. When one

of the other servants touched him to get him to go, he fell over and lay like a log till he was dragged away and put in the quarter guard till sober.

Inquiries next morning as to how he got the liquor resulted in the discovery of a temporary liquor shop established in the jungle close to camp by some Khasia women for the benefit of the men, and their entire stock was confiscated.

One night at dinner in my own house he was again like this, so I told another servant who was in the room to march him out, whereupon the Khasia raised his arm to strike him and stiffened in that position. The other man was afraid to go near him, so I pulled him out on to the lawn and called to the batman to bring the water. After the third bucket the Khasia ran briskly round in a circle on all fours, emitted a most violent eructation, and called out, " Now I am all right. He then stood up, shook himself like a dog, and went to put on dry clothes, returning in a few minutes to wait at table as if he never even smelt any sort of intoxicant.

Once, when we were going on service, I had him up and told him no doubt he thought I might not come back and could thus worry my wife by getting constantly drunk. I added he had better remember, if he did so and I was killed, my ghost would haunt him till the flesh dropped off his bones through fear. At this he got in a great funk, flung himself at my feet, and swore he would never touch liquor again till my return. He kept his word, but when I came back he fully made up for his abstinence.

The masalchi, literally torchbearer, whose former duties were to light his master's way at night, but nowadays consist of cleaning the plates, knives, and lamps, often with the same duster, was a dangerous beast. One night, when we came in from the club, he was drunk, and we were told he had been beating his wife, and had just gone for the cook with a hatchet, but had struck a doorpost instead. The cook had hidden, but the masalchi was walking about by a bonfire in the compound, dressed in a soldier's greatcoat, and defying anyone to come near him. I walked up to him and ordered him to drop the

hatchet, but he swung it back to hit me. On this I gave him a hard thrust in the stomach with the point of my walking-stick, which doubled him up at once and made him drop the axe. I then flung myself on him, pulled his greatcoat over his head, and sat on his shoulders, from which position of vantage I belaboured the lower end of his body till I was tired. When I let him go he picked himself up, darted into the darkness, and yelled out he would kill me next time he saw me, so I replied that if I saw him again I would shoot him like a dog. Next day I reported the incident to the civil authorities and he was bound over to keep the peace, his old mother going surety for him.

This old lady then came to my house and requested me to enlist him in the band, now he had shown what a warrior he was. The next time I saw this worthy he was engaged in the unwarlike occupation of pushing a child's perambulator.

Our sweeper was a Naga woman, who went by the nickname "Pagli" (*i.e.*, mad). On pay day the men used to fill her up with drink to enjoy her antics till she became unconscious. Her husband, named Machalu, also a Naga, was one of the regimental sanitary servants of the king, and he punished the liquor pretty freely also. If he thought his wife was drunker than he was he used to put on his ammunition boots and kick her, but sometimes, when she was not as tight as he thought, she would hammer him; when sober they were the best of friends.

He was a good man, except for these periodical bouts, so the colonel made him head sweeper and told him to mount a corporal's stripes in yellow, as a badge of his authority.

When the C.O. went home on leave and I was commanding, Machalu came to me and requested some other badge should be devised for him, as the men chaffed his life out over his corporal's stripes, so I got him those of a rear-admiral, which I thought more appropriate to his calling and less likely to excite the ridicule of the men.

Pagli was devoted to our dogs, and they to her. One or other of them used generally to mount guard over her when she was drunk, to protect her.

When there were any pups she used to sling them in a cloth on her back and carry them about whilst she was doing her work. It was very quaint to see them all peeping over the edge of the cloth, and I often wish I had taken a photo of her thus carrying them.

Her husband got the sack when I was home on leave, and old Pagli went with him, much to our regret. We tried hard to find out where they had gone, but were unable to get any tidings of them.

I luckily had an excellent batman, who kept a watchful eye on all those people and generally managed to keep them quiet when they were drunk, and saw they did no damage to themselves or one another, so they really gave us more amusement than trouble, particularly when the water cure had to be administered. Everyone enjoyed this, even the dogs, who used to bark furiously at the culprit when he began to wake up.

None of them were real thieves, nor were they often lazy or impertinent, and on the whole they made us quite happy, which is not often the case when one's servants give constant trouble and annoyance.

CHAPTER XXVI**CHOLERA CAMP—FISHING IN CAMP—A TAME OTTER—SHOOTING
IN CHOLERA CAMP**

THE cholera camp previously referred to, was on the banks of the Thobal river, about 18 miles from the city of Manipur, and I had all the men of the regiment who could be spared from the necessary guards and duties of the garrison with me there.

It seemed quite impossible to keep cholera out of barracks, for the only water supply was from the filthy Manipur river, which was contaminated by numerous villages up above, in all of which this fell disease was raging, and the epidemic had nearly abated before a parsimonious Government would go to the expense of less than £100 for sinking a well in the permanent lines of the regiment.

Being in camp, I escaped all office work, that bugbear of every officer in the Indian Army, for the men's accounts were run at headquarters, so had plenty of time to look after the building and sanitation of the camp, and for sport, in which I encouraged the men to join.

The fishing was first class, so I ordered up hooks and lines for the men and issued them as required.

Whenever I went up or down the river I took half a dozen men with me, and in order that they should learn how to use a rod and line they were changed every day. Some of them turned out first-class anglers, and one little chap used to fish the natural grasshopper and clear-water worm like a professional. He made a rod out of a kind of cane called "ringall," which was fairly solid and not too whippy. He had no reel, so fastened his line to the tip of the cane, and if he hooked a fish too big to pull straight out he played it by the simple expedient of letting

the rod go, when the fish towed it about. When it stopped he would wade or swim in and stir matters up by pulling at the rod till the fish was tired out and he could draw it on to the shingle. He once got a 5 lb. mahseer in this manner.

There was a flat rock over a deep pool about half a mile above camp, from which one day I took eighteen nice little fish without stirring off it, but I never got a chance there again, for whenever I passed it there was always a man sitting or lying on it, intently watching his line. Our senior Gurkha officer, who had then about 35 years' service, got badly bitten with the gentle art, so I gave him a proper rod, reel, and flies, which he soon learnt to use most successfully, and spent all his spare time wading in the rivers catching small fish on the fly.

The only time I try to smoke a pipe is when I am fishing, for usually a pipeful of tobacco and a box of matches will keep me going the best part of a day. I suppose the subadar-major thought a pipe was an indispensable part of an angler's equipment, for he made himself one out of two bits of bamboo, and always had it in his mouth when he was wading. This was the first time I ever saw a Gurkha smoke a short pipe, though during and since the late war many of them have taken to it.

When we were in Mesopotamia some clerks in the Military Accounts Department used to provide the men of my regiment with little luxuries, and their secretary often wrote to know what the men would really like, so I asked them, and, to my surprise, they plumped solid for wooden pipes, flea powder, and toothbrushes. The last item was most extraordinary, for an Oriental looks on a toothbrush as the most unclean thing to put in his mouth, and always cleans his teeth with a bit of chewed stick. He attributes the uncleanliness of the toothbrush to its being made from the bristles of a pig and the bone of a dog, both of which are looked on by most Indians, especially Mahomedans, as very unclean beasts, so I could not understand why the Gurkha was fired with this desire for a toothbrush.

Later on I was told the reason. After the battle of Beit Aiessa we were burying some of our dead in front of our line, and the

men drew my attention to the foremost British soldier before they buried him. He was lying on his face, with a toothbrush firmly clasped in his right hand. What he was doing with a toothbrush when he had evidently broken through the Turkish line and been killed there I have no idea, but the Gurkha evidently considered it was some sort of amulet conducive to valour, and wished to have a similar one for himself.

The men remained in this cholera camp from about the middle of May to the end of the following March, and were very healthy from living practically in the open air, for their huts, made of grass and bamboo, were open on all sides for eighteen inches all round under the eaves.

When the rains ceased at the end of October the river began to fall, so a day's leave was given to every man who was not on duty to construct fish traps. They built dams of boulders across the bottom of two large pools close to camp, placing the stones close enough together to prevent fish getting through, but not so close as to materially interfere with the flow of water. In the dams were left gaps at intervals of three or four yards, and in the gaps were fixed large extinguisher-shaped baskets, which caught any fish going down-stream, and the rush of the stream prevented them getting back.

The first morning after this arrangement was completed, every basket was full of fish, and in them were also three full-grown otters, which had evidently been going down-stream, and when once in the basket had been unable to turn round and escape.

The men skinned these very neatly, removing all the flesh and bones through the mouth without breaking the skin in any way, and then they stuffed them with moss. I had one for many years afterwards. The fish got used to the traps in a very few days, and seldom went into them afterwards.

Otters were very numerous in the Thobal river, and they were very like the English ones in size and appearance. I had a half-grown one as a pet for several months. It was very easily tamed, and would play with me or my spaniels just like

a kitten, and never evinced the least desire to go back to the river. It would follow anywhere in its own fashion, that is to say, if I called to it when I was going out, it would wait till I had gone some 20 yards, then catch up and wait till I had gone on a similar distance, without losing sight of me, when it would rush forward again. If I halted, it would come up at once and play about till I moved on again. It loved having its head rubbed, and would raise itself up on my leg, so that it could put its head against my hand. If I was fishing it would follow me across the water, and eat a fish, if given one, but never made the least effort to catch one for itself, nor could I train it to do so.

One day we filled a tin bath with water and put half a dozen little mahseer into it. The otter rested his forepaws on the edge and watched the fish swimming about. We put him into the bath, but he got out as quickly as possible and resumed his position of observation. We then baled out the water, and as soon as the fish were only just awash, the little beast jumped in, seized one, and took it off to his box to eat it.

He was a nice pet for camp, but would not have been so pleasant in cantonments, for we could never make him house-clean. He would always do his little duties in the same dark corner, and when my batman, hoping to simplify the matter of cleaning up, put a box lid in the corner, the otter would always miss it deliberately by an inch or two, so we gave up that form of instruction and taught him to go outside. This, with a copious use of cayenne pepper and a certain amount of smacking, was easily accomplished.

About this time I saw an advertisement in an Indian newspaper inserted by a firm in New York, saying they wished to obtain live specimens of certain animals, amongst which the otter was mentioned, and were willing to pay for the same or give American articles in exchange. I wanted to get a medal given to the North American Indians by the British Government in 1757, so wrote and said if they would get me one I would either pay for it or send them a pair of young otters in exchange.

For several months no answer came, but one day I got a letter saying : " We have obtained the Indian Mutiny Medal of 1857 from a party in Lahore, and will be glad if you would send us a young hippotamus (*sic*) and two wild boars, carefully packed."

I replied, repeating the description of the medal I wanted, and added that the hippopotamus was somewhat difficult to obtain in India (as it never existed there), but that the wild boars could be easily got, so before sending them I wished to know whether the big beast should be sent in a birdcage or a bucket, and the boars packed in sawdust or cottonwool. To this there was no reply.

The Thobal was a beautiful rapid stream, in the cold and hot seasons some 20 or 30 yards wide, flowing over a rocky and pebbly bottom. In the rains it was generally a muddy torrent of more than twice that width, rushing between its jungle-covered banks, but it cleared and ran into fishable dimensions after a couple of days' break in the rain, as there was not much cultivation above our camp.

From August, the forest at a short distance looked as if filled with faint blue smoke. This appearance was due to the most beautiful orchid the *Vanda cœrulea*, one of the loveliest flowers in existence, which grew in great numbers on almost every tree trunk. Each orchid had two or three great fronds of blossom hanging down, and every frond had a dozen or twenty sky-blue flowers on it, each of which was three or four inches in diameter, and they lasted up to the middle of November, and even later. There were many other kinds of orchids besides, but this one was the commonest.

In every pool were great shoals of mahseer of medium size, the two largest I got were 14 lbs. each, but I used to consider a seven-pounder a very good one for this water. These fish had never before, in all probability, seen anything but the most primitive hooks and lines, and took any sort of bait, particularly the fly-spoon, greedily, till the weather got really cold, when it was very little good trying to catch them. There was a kind of

mullet, too, which would take no kind of bait. In the stiller water these used to swim on the surface, with their eyes sticking out, and a charge of shot into the midst of the shoal of eyes would generally result in half a dozen quarter-pounders being picked out by one of my orderlies. They were very good to eat.

The small game shooting was first class. About three miles away was a grassy valley, marshy in places, which simply swarmed with black partridge (francolin) and snipe. Men from a neighbouring village would turn out to beat, and about twenty or thirty of them, walking in line, about a yard apart, would put up almost every bird. A brother officer and myself once got 52 brace of partridge, 50 couple of snipe, and a few duck in two days' shooting.

Nearer camp there were a few pheasants, jungle fowl, and imperial pigeon, the last a bird about twice the size of an English wood-pigeon, but none of these were very easy to get because the jungle was so heavy. It was hard to flush them, and often harder to get a shot at them, when they were up. There were also a few deer, and an occasional bear or leopard, so what with the sport for recreation and a fair quantity of hard work this camp was a paradise for a youngster. I used to get up with the sun and have my dinner at sunset, and turn in about an hour afterwards. The dinner consisted invariably of a plate of pea-soup, so thick one's spoon would almost stand up in it, a bit of fish, and sometimes a chicken or partridge, with a rice pudding to top up. Beef or mutton I never tasted the whole time I was in this camp.

Early one morning I was walking up the river, my orderly carrying a shot-gun behind me, when an animal emerged from the jungle about 80 yards away and walked across the shingle towards the water. As the sun was on the far side of it, and it was at first in shadow, I could not make out what it was. The orderly thought it was a big monkey, but when it came out of the shadow we saw it was a leopard. I snatched the gun from the man and ran towards the beast, which promptly took to the water.

The gun was only loaded with number six shot, but I thought if I gave the leopard two barrels of that it would make him turn and come for me, so I fired into the back of his neck and shoulders from 25 yards distance. He splashed about a lot, but, instead of turning, so that I could shoot him in the head at close range, kept straight on, climbed somewhat groggily up the far bank and disappeared into the thick undergrowth. The man offered to swim across and see if the leopard had lain down, but not wanting to get him mauled I would not let him go. Next day, however, he asked my leave to go and bathe, and with two of his pals went up to the place; they swam the river with their kukris in their waistbelts and proceeded to investigate.

They found the animal dead about 20 yards from the water, and brought back the skin, but as the weather was distinctly warm the hair had begun to slip, so it was no good as a trophy.

CHAPTER XXVII

LIFE IN CHOLERA CAMP—OUR SPORTING DOCTOR—HIS METHODS
WITH SNAKES

FOR about three months after going into camp I never, except once, saw a white man to speak to, and that exception was a worthy who came riding through my lines in a very lordly manner one morning. Wondering who he was, I passed him the time of day, and asked him to come and have some breakfast, which he declined in rather an offhand manner and went on.

An hour or so later the N.C.O. of the south picquet on my new road reported there were twenty coolies carrying baggage and asked if they should do the hour's grass-cutting, which we exacted as toll from everybody, who used our private road. It was quite early in the day and they were only going about six miles farther into the hills, therefore, as the work would not delay them very much, I told him he could give them their choice of cutting grass or going round by the proper path, which was three miles longer.

He then mentioned that there was a native woman with the party, who was being carried in a palanquin by six bearers, and asked what was to be done about her, as she said she was the Sahib's bearer's wife, so I told him that if the rest of the party elected to do my little task, she could be put down by the quarter guard till the others were ready to go on.

In a short while a very fancy lady was carried in, who promptly launched out at me in quite fluent Hindustani for stopping her. She said she would get me into trouble, as she belonged to the padre sahib, who had gone ahead, and she could not be delayed. I replied that I thought as much, for otherwise

she would be carrying her man's kit instead of being carried herself, so if she gave any more of her lip she should do a bit of grass-cutting with the others instead of enjoying a little pleasant conversation with the men on guard. On this she remained silent, and an hour later proceeded with the rest of the party.

Next day I received an indignant letter addressed to the Officer Commanding Cholera Camp, which reported that the writer's coolies had been detained by one Lieutenant W., who had made them all do forced labour on the camp, which was against the law, so it was hoped that this officer would be punished for his action.

I wrote back saying I was O.C. Camp myself and would forward the letter just received to anyone desired, but should add for the information of the Society that employed the writer that a woman with the party had stated she belonged to him, and I did not think she was a possession they would approve of. It was not long before another letter came requesting that the first might be cancelled, and asking as a favour that I would arrange to forward any post letters into the station with my own. I informed the gentleman that I would do so with pleasure, but it would be by means of the forced labour of which he had expressed such strong disapproval.

I heard no more, but regularly received his letters for despatch. It should possibly be explained that this forced labour was no hardship, but only a slight inconvenience to those who had to do it. The surrounding villages were so well off, and so little appreciated the value of money, that they would do no work for anyone but themselves. Consequently I had to tell the village headmen that they had to provide a certain number of men to do odd jobs, such as carrying letters, cutting wood, and such like, and in return I housed and fed them as long as they remained in camp. How long they stayed was a matter the villagers settled amongst themselves.

Even those who did an hour's casual labour as toll for use of the road got something, such as a chew of betel nut, a few cigarettes, or a handful of sweets, and very few ever raised any

objection, for they were all accustomed to do a certain number of days' unpaid work in the year, under the old régime.

By the time I had about 500 men in camp it was considered necessary that a doctor should be put in medical charge to look after the health of the men, as a single native hospital assistant was not enough to cope with the work single-handed, so I was very glad when our own doctor came, for he was good at his job, besides being an enthusiast in everything relating to sport. Moreover, he could speak the Manipuri language very well, which rendered me more independent of an interpreter, who, I felt sure, only told me what he thought would please, or what he had been bribed to say by anyone who had a petition to make.

This officer's adventures would make a most readable book, if he could only be persuaded to write them, for he was a great character. He once sent a portrait of himself to one of the illustrated papers, in which he was surrounded by trophies of the chase, and in the footnote to it he stated that he had killed over 2,000 head of game in a year.

These, of course, were mostly snipe and duck, though he did not say so, but some furious critics promptly got on his track and denounced such slaughter as being the cause of the increasing scarcity of big game in India. This put a stopper on the doctor's literary efforts for some time, as he was much perturbed by the notunnatural interpretation put on his words.

One day he came to me and said, "Look here, old chap, I've just got word that a tiger has killed a pony about six miles out on the Kohima road. Let us go and shoot it."

So, getting our orderlies to carry our guns, and about twenty men to beat, we mounted our ponies and set out.

On reaching the place, as there was no sign of the kill, the doctor dismounted and began to make inquiries of three or four dirty-looking Nagas, who were hanging around. Then ensued an interminable conversation, of which I did not understand a word. Suddenly it was brought to an end by the doctor

seizing a bamboo from one of the Nagas and laying about him vigorously on all sides. Naturally they all bolted, but it was some time before he could tell me what had caused this explosion, he was so angry.

At last he said, " The d—d brutes have cut up the pony and taken it off to their village to eat it, so we must go back ! "

On another occasion we went out to a lake to shoot duck. We got there by boat, but had sent our ponies ahead so that we could ride back. After the day's sport we rode some distance along the stream we had come down, and then the doctor pulled up near a village, and said,

" Hallo, where is the bridge I ordered to be made here ? " and rode about looking for it.

There was no bridge, but in a few minutes the usual crowd of natives assembled to see what we were doing, so I suggested that instead of looking for a bridge which did not exist he should ask someone where the river could be forded, for it was raining heavily and the water was rather muddy.

He inquired, and said, " It's all right ; they say it is only about two feet deep here, and there is a gravel bottom. You go on first."

From the steep muddy banks I guessed the depth would be a good deal more than two feet, and there was no sign of gravel, so I told him to give me a lead, as my beast did not like water. He thereupon rode down the bank, gave his pony a kick and the two of them instantly plunged into eight or ten feet of muddy water. They got out at once, and the doctor made a rush at the crowd on the bank, which promptly took to its heels, whilst he yelled something after it. He then sat down and began to rub the water out of his clothes, cursing horribly, and saying what he would do to the village headman when he came. I told him I wasn't going to wait till doomsday, for the man would never come, to which he replied,

" He'd be a fool if he did," and then we rode off.

One sunny day in camp I was going into my hut when I noticed the tail half of a snake sticking out below the grass

wall close to the doorway. One of my batmen was sitting just outside, cleaning my accoutrements, so I picked up my sword, cut off the projecting bit of snake, raked out the head-end, and called to the doctor, who was a bit of a naturalist, to come and tell me what sort of a snake it was. He said it was a very dangerous one, and that I ought to have called to him to come and kill it. I said I didn't see the object of calling for him, when I could do the job myself, unless he had some patent way of his own for doing snakes in.

"I have," he returned, "I always pick them up by the tail and crack their heads off. It is far the most certain way."

"All right," I answered, "I should like to see that, so will call you another time."

That same afternoon there was another tail sticking out in almost the same place. I asked the batman if he had put the dead snake there; but he denied doing so, and said it was the pair of the first one. I called the doctor, and pointed it out. He looked at it in rather an old-fashioned manner, and asked if it was alive. I suggested that if he picked it up by the tail he would soon find out. He grinned, and remarked that I was pulling his leg, and had put a bit of the first one back.

I said, "Please yourself about that, so pretend it is alive and crack its head off, but if you funk it, say so, and I will cut it in two."

On this he stooped down, seized the end of the tail, pulled out the snake, gave it a flick, and its head knocked up a puff of dust ten yards away, and the body, as he dropped it, writhed vigorously upon the ground. He was very white, so I was sure this was the first one he had killed this way.

I believe natives often do so, and that it is perfectly safe if done quickly, for a snake held up by the tail can't get its head up to the end of its tail, unless it can touch something to lever itself up by.

Once he complained of a bad toothache and asked if I would put the forceps on his tooth and hand them to him, as he didn't care to have the hospital assistant fingering his mouth.

I agreed, and he went and fetched the forceps, pointed out the tooth, and I put them on, took them off again at once, and asked if that was the right tooth. He said it was, told me to put them on again, and sat down on a chair.

I put them on again, gave them a twist and a pull and the tooth came out quite easily, for it was loose. As soon as I gave the pull he let drive such a yell I thought I must have taken hold of his tongue as well, but when his mouth was clear he asked if the tooth was out, and when I showed it to him and asked why he made all that noise, he said,

“ I had changed my mind and was telling you to pull it out,” which showed he was never at a loss for an answer.

I think he had shot pretty nearly everything that walked or flew in India, except a man, and he was very keen to make that addition to his bag.

Manipur was full of burglars at one time, so he never went to bed without a loaded revolver in the hope of getting a shot at one. He shared an old house, built on piles, with two field officers, one very ferocious, the other comparatively tame. Steps went up from the ground to the front and back verandahs. One night he awoke with a start and heard a noise as if someone was trying to get into the house. Thinking a grand opportunity had come he seized his pistol, opened the front door, and quietly crept along the verandah. As he turned the corner he nearly ran into the ferocious major, who had come out at the back to ascertain the cause of the noise.

He was greeted with a terrible oath, and “ What are you doing here? In another moment I should have driven this hog-spear through you.”

The doctor nervously explained, and together they went to investigate these mysterious sounds to find they were caused by an old Brahmini bull, which had got under the house and was rubbing itself against the piles. After this episode the third officer never dared move at night without coughing loudly or throwing his boots about for fear of being stuck or shot.

After a few years our friend left the regiment for civil

employ in Assam, where he did lots of shooting and enjoyed a lucrative practice besides. He was, of course, recalled during the war, and the last time I saw him was in Basra, where he was in charge of one of the big base hospitals.

He came on board ship to see me off when I was invalided, and on my asking if he didn't think Basra next door to Hades he looked quite astonished and said,

"Nonsense, old fellow. I would like to stop here for five years, for I can kill something every day."

To which I replied I hoped he didn't mean his patients.

He has now retired, and spends half the year in India after big game, and the other half travelling about Europe, which he is lucky enough to be able to afford. An enviable existence.

CHAPTER XXVIII**SHOOTING IN THE MANIPUR STATE—THE MANIPURI DEER**

MANIPUR State was, and probably still is—unless everybody can afford to pay fourpence for a licence is allowed to have a gun—a perfect country for small game. There were various kinds of pheasants, some of them very rare, bamboo partridges and a few woodcock in the jungle-covered hills, whilst the grass, round the rice fields in the valley, simply swarmed with black partridge, and at certain times of the year with a good number of quail. The painted francolin or Burmese partridge was found in the tree jungle near the cultivation. In the winter time countless geese, duck, teal and snipe inhabited the lakes and marshes.

Close to the rifle range was an excellent place for snipe and partridge, where one could walk practically without getting one's feet wet. The snipe used to lie amongst the irises, which grew round the buffalo wallows, and the partridges almost anywhere where it was dry and there was a bit of covert.

As I was adjutant I spent a good deal of time—in fact, most afternoons—teaching the recruits their musketry, and in the cold weather could generally manage an hour or so's walk with a shotgun, after the firing was over. I never made any large bags here, but usually got five to ten couple of snipe, two or three partridges, and sometimes a duck, before it got too dark to see. I never shot a woodcock in Manipur. The only one I ever saw there was killed by the mess-orderly, who saw it pitch on the tennis-court one evening, threw his kukri at it and killed it.

The only time I ever attempted to make a big bag of snipe was on a bit of ground about three-quarters of a mile square,

some ten minutes' ride from my quarters. It was where the natives used to get clay for brick-making, and was always damp in the cold weather. One day I set out to see if I could kill 100 snipe, and stopped early in the afternoon, when my orderly said I had got them.

On reaching home I found there were only 99, which was a pity, as I could easily have got a few more on the way to my pony, had I wanted to.

One year, between the end of August and the beginning of December, I killed over 300 couple of snipe to my own gun, when pottering about alone. I never kept any account of my own bag when shooting with other fellows.

Eighteen miles away was a big marsh or lake called the Logtak, some seven miles long and up to two miles wide, which was covered with geese, both bar-headed and greylag, teal and duck of many kinds, mostly pochard, widgeon and gadwall, but no mallard. In all the years I served in Assam I never killed but one mallard there, and he was the very last duck I fired at in India.

Once, late in March, I saw an incredible number of geese at the Logtak. They were along the shore at the top of the lake for about a mile and a half, a solid mass about 200 yards in depth, packed so close together they seemed to be touching one another. We had gone down to shoot duck for three days, and, finding my little 28 would not bring down a goose, I borrowed a single-barrelled eight-bore and eight cartridges from our doctor. It was not exactly a serviceable weapon, as he had lost the fore end of it, so it came in two each time it was opened. This difficulty was overcome by binding a puttee from the muzzle right down to the breech, where it was given a few extra turns, and then tied. This did not handle very well, but the gun could be opened and closed, so I sallied forth to find a goose, and came on this enormous pack at a distance of 500 yards, when turning a corner. They would not let me get within shot, as the nearer birds kept getting up and settling again at the far end of the pack, but I felt sure if I went on till



A MANIPUR SNIPE BOG.

they could settle no more in the water they would all get up and then possibly some might come within range.

At last the boatmen said the water was so shallow they could no longer pole the boat, so I made them get out and push it. At last the geese got up with a deafening roar, and the deep bass note caused by their wings sounded like the enormous drone of bagpipes and their cries were like the chanter. They began to come back, and pass about 200 yards away, and were so close together one could not see through them, but as there was S.S.G. in the gun I opened fire into the dense mass at that range and loosed off my eight rounds.

At each discharge the shot clattered against their feathers, making a noise as if one had fired into the leaves of a forest, and a bird or two dropped, either hit in the head and killed dead, or else winged, for the distance was too great for the shot to penetrate elsewhere. I picked up thirteen for the eight cartridges. It was not a very sporting proceeding, I admit, but I had never shot a wild goose before and the temptation was very great.

On returning to camp I told the owner of the gun about what I had seen, and he set off at daybreak next morning to try his luck, but only saw one wounded bird, which he gathered. The geese had evidently collected for their northern flight, there must have been thousands of them, and had departed after my salute.

In the heavy grass alongside one shore of the Logtak were deer peculiar to Manipur. They were as big as red deer of this country. They had peculiar C-shaped horns, the brow antler being very long and curving forwards and upwards. Their hoofs, owing to the damp ground in which they lived, were abnormally long, ten or twelve inches, on all four feet, evidently a provision of Nature to prevent the animal from sinking too deep in the mud.

This deer is evidently a local variety of the Burmese "thamin" (*Cervus eldi*). The latter however is found miles away from water, whereas the Manipuri deer never is.

They were very easy to approach, if one could see them ;

so long as they did not see or smell a man, they did not mind the crashing through the grass, because they were accustomed to herds of semi-tame buffalo moving amongst them, and if at last they had not been protected this lack of caution would probably have led to their extermination.

Before the rebellion of 1891 they were preserved by order of the royal family, and any man who was proved to have killed one had his hand chopped off, but after we took over the affairs of the state the deer were allowed to take their chance, and the Mahomedans who lived in the vicinity were not long in waking up to the fact. They used to mount their buffalo, armed with spears, ride quietly up to the deer, surround them in the heavy grass, and then stick them. Stag, hind, or calf being all the same to the native, who, unless made to, will observe no close time.

Luckily a sporting political agent finally issued orders to preserve this rare beast from indiscriminate slaughter, which it is to be hoped are still observed.

The only way to stalk one of these deer with a reasonable chance of success was to get on one of the two big mounds, which rose above the sea of grass, and try to spot a stag feeding in an open patch. When found, a man was left on the mound to observe the deer and signal whether one was keeping the right direction, when with luck one might come to the edge of the open patch and get a shot at fairly close range. All of which sounds very simple, but even with the help of signals it was extremely difficult to keep direction in heavy grass, through which it was impossible to see more than a few yards at best.

Two of our men once took leave to go to their homes in Nepal, but went off to the Logtak after these deer instead. This was only discovered some time afterwards owing to one having shot the other through the body in mistake for a deer. He tried for several days to patch his comrade up, by plastering the wounds all over with buffalo dung and tying them round with a puttee, but when he found he couldn't cure him he carried him into the regimental hospital on his back, where the

invalid was lucky enough to make a good recovery instead of dying from blood-poisoning or tetanus, as most people would have done after such heroic treatment, but the Gurkha is a pretty tough bird, and with the exception of cholera or pneumonia it takes a good deal to kill him.

One of our lads once found an unexploded shell, from one of our seven-pounders, lying about after some gun practice, and endeavoured to prise out the fuse with his kukri. It went off, blew off both his arms and legs, or parts of them, so that they all had to be amputated, yet he recovered sufficiently to be sent to his home, where perhaps his people would not be at all pleased to have to feed him as he could not contribute to his own support.

CHAPTER XXIX

TAME BEARS—LEECHES, ETC.—SAMBUR SHOOTING

THERE was not very much big-game shooting to be had close to Manipur, except the brow-antlered deer. There were a few sambur in the hills, and plenty of hog-deer in the valley, but these last were not worth going after specially, for they had very small heads and always lay in heavy grass, from which it was difficult to drive them. The "mithan," or bison, which had existed in the State in fair numbers, were practically wiped out by foot and mouth disease in 1896, before we went down to garrison the place; there were a few leopards, and bears, but not in sufficient numbers to make a trip after them worth the trouble. One of our officers once brought back two bear cubs, tamed them, and kept them about his house till they were full grown, when they became such awkward and destructive pets, they had to be constantly kept chained up. They never got actually savage or dangerous, but they might have done so at any moment, and so, as they often managed to get loose, he decided to get rid of them.

He did not like to have them destroyed; they were therefore put into a bullock-cart and taken some twenty miles into the jungle, where they were turned loose.

Three months afterwards this officer was coming back from mess one night, and to his consternation found a huge bear sitting in his verandah. His fears were soon allayed by the beast evincing the greatest pleasure at seeing him. It was very strange that a wild animal like that should have returned to captivity, and been able to find its way back such a distance, the last three miles of which was fairly thickly

populated. This time, however, he sent it to the Calcutta Zoo, from which it did not return.

As is usual all over India, the black bear of Manipur was a ferocious brute, and occasionally one of our men would get mauled through disturbing one at close quarters when in pursuit of other game. One had his hand so badly chewed by a bear, which attacked and mauled him before his companion killed it, that he tried to amputate it himself with his kukri, and failing to do so, tied it up and walked three days' march into hospital to get his wounds dressed. Our doctor patched him up and actually saved his hand, though it was very little use afterwards, and the man had to be invalided out of the service. This is a fair example of the nerve and endurance of the Gurkha.

I once saw a man struck by a round bullet, which lodged between the bones of his forearm, without smashing either. Most people would have at once make tracks for the doctor, but this youth calmly sat down, pulled out his bayonet and tried to lever the bullet out with the point of it. Only after he failed to do so, and I insisted, did he think of going back to have the wound dressed.

In Manipur, the men did a lot more big-game shooting than the officers. They used to get a few days' leave, make up small parties, and go off into the jungle. They were quite content if they got a deer, and delighted when they killed a pig, for they love pork. They looked on the cartridges I used to fire at small game as great waste of valuable material, saying, "The Sahib only kills enough to make a meal for one man with three or four cartridges; now when we fire a shot we expect to get enough meat to feed forty or fifty people." Of course, they did not care whether the deer they killed had good horns or any horns at all; all they wanted was to get the meat, meat not being included in their Government rations.

What deterred most of us from going after big game, without any definite information as to where it was, was the fearful quantity of leeches and ticks one encountered in the undergrowth. For the men they were no deterrent, as they

always went barefoot and barelegged, and could at once remove any of these creatures, but with clothes on it was different. One scarcely ever felt a leech bite ; it could get through the eyelet of one's boot, or through any gap in one's clothing and suck itself full without one's knowing. I once found eighteen on myself, from my waist downwards, after I had been after an elephant, most of which had sucked themselves full, and I bled for the whole night after they had fallen off, from some of the wounds. The loss of blood laid me up for several days, and some of the bites formed nasty sores, which itched abominably and were difficult to heal.

The ticks, some of which, before they had fed, were as big as a threepenny-piece and announced their presence by a bite, which felt like a red-hot skewer being jammed into one's anatomy—these could generally be removed before they got a good hold, but it did not conduce to success if one had to stop short, when close to an animal, in order to undo one's clothing to catch the intruder, or else continue the pursuit suffering awful discomfort.

My wife and I once went out about fourteen miles to a hill called Kanjupkul, where there was a small bungalow, for a few days' change to a cooler climate, the hill being 2,000 feet higher than our cantonment.

Behind the house was a pine-wood, and on both sides were deep valleys, with hills rising steeply beyond them to a considerably greater height than the one on which the bungalow was built. They were covered with grass, quite short in many places, and small patches of tree-jungle were dotted about here and there.

In the evening, after our kit was unpacked, I took my gun and dogs to see if we could rout out some partridges, which were calling in the scrub below the little garden. I had only been gone a few minutes, when there arose a tremendous jabbering amongst the servants and muleteers up at the house, and then my wife called to me to come back, as she could see a deer. I thought there would be precious little deer left after all that noise ; nevertheless, I went back and asked her where it

was. She pointed up the hill to the west across the valley, and there, about a mile away and 1,500 feet up, were two great sambur stags, standing out like statues against the sky. The sun had already dipped behind the hill, so snatching a rifle and three cartridges, and telling my wife to see the dogs didn't follow, I set off, accompanied by one man, as hard as I could along a path, which luckily ran round the top of the ravine, and up the hill on which the deer were.

After running nearly a mile, and seeing that the animals took no notice of me, I began to ascend the steep part of the hillside. It was rough going, as there were a lot of boulders hidden amongst the grass, but we got within 400 yards of the top without disturbing the deer. Here there was a slight swell in the ground, which I saw would cover me till I got within shot, so lay down to get my wind. At this moment I heard my wife down at the bungalow, cry, "Mose! Mose! Mose!" so knew from that that one of the spaniels, Moses, had escaped and was coming after me. It was now a question of whether I could get within shot before the dog saw me, for I knew that as soon as he did he would give tongue, and then good-bye to any chance of a shot. Therefore, blown as I was, I pushed on and had only about fifty yards more to go to reach the spot, whence I could take the shot, when I heard "Yap, yap, yap!" a quarter of a mile below. Regardless of the noise I made I ran as fast as I could to the top. When I got there I could scarcely stand I was so blown, but what a sight met my eyes! Not two, but seven sambur, three of them stags, trotting quietly off thirty yards away! The first shot I missed clean, the second caught the biggest stag somewhere, and he went rolling down the hill like a rabbit. The rest, thoroughly alarmed, made off in different directions, so cramming in the sole remaining round I let drive at a big, dark-coloured stag, which was running broadside on 120 yards away. He seemed to stagger to the shot, and I followed a little distance, but finding no blood, concluded I had missed him too, so turned to look at the one I had seen go over. To my great surprise I found

the stag standing up some sixty yards below the crest of the hill and my orderly just above him with his foot against the animal's shoulder, trying to push him over. He called to me shoot, to but I had no more rounds, and the stag took absolutely no notice of him or of the dog, which was barking excitedly. I told the man to chop the beast with his kukri, and he did so. I saw the thick white skin show under the blow before the blood came, but the stag just moved along a few paces and stood still again. The Gurkha followed and had another prodigious smack at him. This time his wretched old kurkri broke off at the handle and we were done. The sambur now lay down.

As it was nearly dark, and we had to get down the rough hillside we left the poor brute, feeling sure he would be dead before morning.

Soon after dawn we started off with six other men to cut up the stag and bring him in. Imagine my surprise on reaching the place where he had lain down to find he had vanished, and only a small patch of blood remained to show he had ever been there. We were looking round for more blood—it was useless trying to pick up the track, for the ground was covered with fairly fresh tracks on all sides—when one of the men who had come with us touched me and pointed along the hillside.

There, 150 yards off, was a sambur stag, evidently lame, just coming over the ridge. I took steady aim and killed him as dead as a stone, when there was another surprise for me. This was a different stag altogether. He had only the one bullet in him, and no sign of any other injury. We hunted for the one I had hit last night for a long time in all directions, but never found him.

Where he was hit I have no idea, for in the dusk I saw no wound except where my man chopped him, nor can I think why he behaved as he did, unless the bullet had grazed him and partly stunned him, in which case one would not expect him to be able to stand till he was fit enough to go off.

I have shot many stags in my time, but never had a similar experience with any of them.

CHAPTER XXX**NOTES ON GURKHAS**

I HAVE already attempted to give some slight description of the various races amongst whom I have served, but though the Gurkha has often been mentioned, I have not done the same for him.

Most people heard during the late war that such a person existed, but have not the least notion of what he is, where he comes from, or what he looks like, an ignorance largely shared or possibly sometimes affected, even by officers of the Indian Army, for one of the generals who commanded the division of which my battalion formed part, and who himself belonged to the Indian service, actually asked one of our officers to tell him exactly what a Gurkha was.

As a rule, I do not think Gurkha regiments are much loved by the rest of the Indian Army, which may possibly be partly due to jealousy, for they see rather more than their share of active service and are quartered in hill stations, which have a better climate than the plains, though some of them are deadly dull, but it is also partly due to the fact that many of their young British officers have an unfortunate habit of ramming their men and their virtues down the throats of everybody else.

This failing recalls a remark by Captain Kincaid in his book, "Adventures in the Rifle Brigade," during the Peninsular War : "I will not mention any regiment but my own if I can possibly avoid it, for there is none other that I like so much and none else so well deserves it"—a most excellent opinion for every regimental officer to hold of his own corps, but one with which those of other units are not likely to agree wholeheartedly.

Young men should remember that the men in the ranks are usually what their officers make them, so they should endeavour

by their own efforts to maintain the good name of their own unit without boasting about it in the presence of others.

The Gurkhas are the ruling race in the country we call Nepal, which runs for about 500 miles, with an average depth of 100, along the Himalayas, south of Tibet; but all the inhabitants of this country are not Gurkhas.

The Gurkhas, coming from hills between 6,000 and 10,000 feet in altitude, are therefore essentially highlanders, and, in common with all hillmen throughout the world, look down on everybody else as outsiders, inferior to themselves, and this feeling has produced a proud and independent type of character, quite different from that of the inhabitants of Hindustan proper.

They are of Mongolian origin, which is clearly shown in their almond eyes set wide apart, flat noses, faces almost devoid of hair, and sturdy figures. In disposition they are somewhat phlegmatic, slow at learning, rather lazy, good-tempered and cheerful, not inclined to be particularly sober or clean, but of a very virile nature. This last is evinced to a certain extent by their language, in which to all intents and purposes there is only one gender—the masculine; indeed, to speak of a woman even, in the feminine, is considered derogatory to her.

I was once much amused by a Gurkha hospital assistant we once had, who was very proud of his English. He had been sent for to see my wife's ayah, who for some time had exhibited a most marked disinclination for any kind of work, which she attributed to ill-health.

My wife asked him what the was matter with the girl, and his reply, if quaint, was decided: "I think, sir, he is pregnant," thus translating the Gurkhali idiom. His opinion subsequently turned out to be wrong, but that is a detail.

When the Mongols invaded Nepal from the north, centuries before our era, and finding it fertile, settled there, there was, in addition to the aborigines of the country (Newars), a steady influx of the natives of India, who blended with the Mongolians and Newars, and thus was evolved the present race. The men of Northern and Eastern Nepal are much more pronouncedly



GURKHA WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Mongolian in their features than those of the South and West, for they naturally have less of the southern strain in them, whilst some of the high-caste Gurkhas, who are seldom enlisted in our service, look almost like Hindustanis.

There are no Mahommedans (except foreigners) in Nepal, for the great Mahommedan invasions of India never touched that country. The only Gurkhas of this religion I know of live in British territory a few miles from Simla. They are descendants of the men of Shah Shuja's Gurkha regiment who were captured at Charikar during the outbreak which led to the first Afghan war, and were forcibly converted. It seems strange that people, who have been converted against their will by a simple surgical operation, should retain a religion they dislike and bring up their children in it. These prisoners were released after Kabul was taken by the British in 1842, and as they could not be welcomed back into their own country, having lost caste as Hindus, they settled down in the Simla hills and took to themselves local hill women, whose religious scruples were not very great.

This district up to 1815 had been part of Nepal, so that is probably the inducement they had to go there. Their descendants still retain the Gurkha traits and language, and call themselves Gurkhas.

The Gurkhas adopted the Hindu religion through force of circumstances. The immigrants from Hindustan were mostly high-caste men of much higher civilisation than the people they found living in Nepal, but these people were proud, if ignorant and rough, and they would not allow their women to mate with the foreigners unless they would concede to the children the full rights and privileges of their social standing and religion. Thus it is the Gurkha of to-day is a Hindu, for his ancestors gradually adopted the Brahman customs and beliefs; nevertheless, the orthodox Hindu of India still looks on him more or less as having no caste, which does not tend to much good feeling between the two races.

In 1814, Nepal and the East India Company came to blows over the constant encroachments on the Company's

territory, and the campaign which ensued was probably the most arduous ever undertaken by the Indian Government. Throughout the war the mountaineers displayed the most resolute gallantry and chivalrous spirit, and when peace came, three regiments were raised from prisoners and deserters, which still remain in our Army.

The difficulties of this campaign in the hills were largely increased by the utter uselessness of some of the generals in command. One, because one of his detachments had been scuppered, and he was so alarmed by the rumours he had heard as to the strength of the enemy, actually rode out of camp and left his 13,000 men without a leader. Another started the siege of a Gurkha stronghold, and, after six days' bombardment, withdrew because he feared its garrison, which he outnumbered by about three to one, would come out and attack him. The reasons for the latter's selection for command were to give him the chance of regaining the ground he had lost in the public estimation during some operations in the previous year, and that it was difficult to find any other officer senior enough for so large a command.

That is to say, he was too old for his job, and had besides shown he was unfit for it, yet the man who appointed him, well knowing all this, was not even censured.

Since then our relations with Nepal have always been friendly, and on two occasions she has rendered us conspicuous assistance. First, during the Mutiny, and lastly in the Great War, when she found the men to maintain 40 regular battalions, besides sending two complete brigades of her own troops for service in India, but the Gurkhas have steadily refused to admit British traders or missionaries into their country, thinking that if they did so it would lead to our interference with their Government, and next, to the loss of their independence. Consequently, no British official even is allowed into Nepal without the personal permission of the Prime Minister, who is to all intents and purposes the head of the State in both civil and military matters.

Till quite recently, soldiering was the only thing which

induced the Gurkha to leave his own hills, for he loves a military life of adventure, besides being keen on all sports and games. In barracks, one constantly sees the men's children playing at soldiers, and formerly the men did so too, drilling one another for sheer love of the thing; but nowadays there is less of that, for parades, all sorts of military instruction, and fatigue duties occupy most of a man's time.

They will eat almost anything except beef, yet many of them raise no objection to buffalo, as they say it is not of the cow tribe, and therefore not sacred, but the food they love most of all is fish, and do not care how high it is. I once brought out a 15-pound salmon to let some of the men try what our fish tasted like. I had him kippered and tinned up, but when I reached my destination, the heat of the journey had been too much, the tin had burst and fat was oozing out, whilst the smell was awful. I told my orderly to take the thing away and burn it. He removed it, but evidently considered it far too good to burn, for he told me that he and some of his pals ate it, and had never tasted anything so good.

Their great vice is gambling; this, drink, and women are the most frequent causes of punishment in a regiment.

In spite of their independent character, they are very amenable to discipline, and bear no ill-will towards any officer who is strict with them, so long as he is just and consistent.

Their fighting qualities are too well known for me to enlarge on them. In seven campaigns I have never known or heard of a Gurkha not standing by his British officer, for one of their proverbs is, "It is better to die than live a coward."

Their devotion to anyone they like is quite touching, for it is seldom due to self-seeking. Once or twice a year I still get a letter from a Gurkha pensioner, who left us twenty-five years since, and whom I have not seen for over twenty, and he has never asked me to do anything for him. He was an officer when I first joined the 44th, and as he could speak English, I was able to learn a great deal from him about the men, their customs and their language.

When I was first appointed to the staff and was stationed not so far away from his home, as distances go in India, he walked 110 miles to see me, stayed a few days, and invited me to come and visit him. Not long after that I was able to do so, as duty took me within 15 miles of his village. He had a quaint little fortified house, perched on a cliff overhanging a lovely river, and the attention I received there from everybody was at times a positive embarrassment. He laid in all sorts of things which he thought I would like to eat, such as oatmeal and English jam, and put me up in a nice little room over the gateway. We made one or two short trips for shooting and fishing, and where four men would have sufficed to carry my baggage, forty would turn up and each insist on carrying something, such as a tin of sardines, a rod, or a pair of boots. After the first day, therefore, I never attempted to pack anything, for it only meant undoing it all again, and no one would take any pay for anything he did for me.

If I went fishing, this retinue would go too, and squat about anywhere but where I wanted them to, and would not keep a proper distance to enable me to cast properly till I had hooked one worthy through the ear.

I had very fine sport in that river, catching one afternoon fifteen mahseer, averaging over eight pounds apiece, and I also hooked a drowned woman by the hair and brought her to the bank, which was not such a pleasant experience.

The onlookers were not the least bit put out over this, nor were they even interested ; they tore out the hair to loosen the spoon, and then pushed the body into deep water again. When I inquired who the woman was and how she might have got into the water, the reply was " Who knows ? " and there was no further notice taken. The people from the surrounding villages all wanted me to go and visit them, which, of course, was impossible, but, had I been able to accept, no doubt I could have put in a couple of months quite easily.

CHAPTER XXXI**MY BATMAN—GURKHAS' METHODS OF SHOOTING**

DURING the twenty-nine years I was in my regiment I had a good many of the men as batmen. A batman generally looks after one's uniform and sporting gear, makes himself useful in many other little ways, and lives in one's compound. He receives a certain amount of extra pay from the officer employing him, and need only attend the commanding officer's and adjutant's parades, as well as all parades for musketry. He is not supposed to wear uniform when working about the house. In the field most officers have two batmen, or orderlies, to look after them in the firing line and on the march.

When I first joined the Gurkhas, old soldiers were told off for young officers, because they were supposed to know something about a Sahib's ways, but if they were really good, intelligent men they were likely to be promoted before long, and then one had to get another, and it was always a nuisance changing, for it takes a little time to get accustomed to a fresh man.

As soon as I could speak Gurkhali fairly well I chose a lad of about 19, who had about 18 months' service, for he was a quiet, attentive and comparatively intelligent creature, whom nothing seemed to disconcert. He soon learnt how to look after my kit, mark a bird down or land a fish, so I kept him for about ten years, and he never left me except when he or I went to our home. I once took him to Calcutta, where I thought I would be able to show him various things which would surprise him, but if he was surprised he never showed it.

We went on board a British cruiser, which was lying in the Hooghli river, and were shown all over her. We saw the big

guns traversed by machinery, the ammunition hoists working, the shells, which were almost as long and a great deal thicker than our little mountain guns, the engines, the men's quarters, and all sorts of things he could never have seen and probably never heard of before. He looked at everything with the same stolid expression, without saying a word, and when we got ashore I asked him what he had thought the most wonderful thing he had just seen. "There was a big gun in the cook-house." He referred to one of the ship's guns, which was mounted in the men's galley.

I took him to a church parade in Fort William, telling him he would have to remove his cap on entering the church, stand up, kneel or sit down just as the British soldiers would do. I offered him a coin, and told him to put it in a bag which would be passed to him, as it was for the benefit of the poor, but he declined it, saying he would prefer to give something of his own.

I then placed him in charge of a sergeant of the Gloucestershire Regiment, who took him into his pew. From where I sat I could watch him. He behaved admirably, never stared about, but looked straight to his front, stood up, faced east, knelt, or sat and listened most attentively to the archbishop's sermon, of which he, of course, did not understand a word.

I asked what he thought of the service, and he replied that he thought it the finest act of "puja" (worship) that he had ever seen, but did not like the fat sergeant, who did not pass him the offertory bag.

Another day I took him to the Zoological Gardens, and showed him all sorts of birds and beasts, such as the ostrich, the lion, the mandril, etc., all of which were strange to him, but he stayed longest looking at a sambur stag, because he recognised it, and he was slightly interested in the mandril, because, as he pointed out, it was the same colour (blue) fore and aft.

All the while he was followed by an admiring group of English children, who fingered his medal, his bayonet, or his

kukri, but of them he took not the slightest notice, nor seemed in the least disturbed by their pulling his kit about.

On service he never left me except when he or I were getting our food, or it was his turn to go with the baggage-guard and look after my kit. If there was any firing he always got on that side of me from which the shots came, and one day, when the enemy charged the baggage, and most of the coolies dropped their loads and hid in the jungle, he stood over my roll of bedding and shot or bayoneted three men who came at him. He behaved so well throughout the show that I told him I would send his name in for promotion, whereupon he shed tears and asked what he had done that I wanted him to leave me. In vain I explained it was for his own good ; he would not look at it in that light, so he remained my orderly for nearly six years after that. He got to know me so well that, though he had never learnt English, he often understood what I wanted if I asked my wife for anything about the place, and he was perfectly invaluable out shooting or fishing. He was a very fair shot with either rifle or gun, but with the latter he was very slow ; for, like the rest of his countrymen, he looked on all ammunition as " khazana " (treasure), and did not like to waste it. One year when I went home he took furlough and never returned, and I afterwards learnt, to my sorrow, he had died of pneumonia.

It is the fashion of India, even amongst those who know them, to look on all Gurkhas as poachers, but in a country where no native who has a gun will respect any close season unless compelled to, and will slay any animal for meat, regardless of sex or size, the Gurkha is no worse than anyone else, except that the average man is a better tracker, and therefore more successful than the average plainsman.

There is an Army regulation that the privately-owned guns of all sepoy are to be stored in the armoury, with the service rifles and side-arms, and not taken out without a pass ; so if soldiers go shooting in the close season it is the fault of their officers for letting them have passes. In my regiment no man

was allowed to take a gun out during the close season for birds, unless it was distinctly understood he was going after big game, and this was when we were stationed in a cantonment situated in independent territory, the inhabitants of which killed anything and everything they could at all times of the year. At one of the stations where I served one summer in India proper there were other Gurkha battalions, whose men I discovered were shooting small birds all round the place in the close season, and even some of their young officers did so too.

I asked the general if he would issue an order that all this was to be stopped until the cold weather, and he said he would. He was one of those worthies who occasionally rise to high rank in our service through having invented a cinerator that won't burn, or something similar, and never giving a definite opinion or taking a strong line about anything. He was no sportsman, though I believe at one time he collected birds' eggs or butterflies, so the order he issued was something like this:—"It has been brought to notice of the G.O.C. that birds are being shot in the breeding season. Whilst there is no objection to making a collection of birds for scientific purposes, the indiscriminate slaughter of small and harmless birds should be discouraged."

What could one expect from an order like this, when it did not make the shooting a punishable offence? And what would the Gurkha be likely to know about scientific bird collecting, when all the science he cares about is that required to provide him with a tasty meal? Anyway, the order had no effect, because it did not prevent guns being used, but I think commanding officers might have given orders that no sporting-guns were to be taken out of barracks before a certain date.

I remember an occasion on which a certain big wig in Assam wanted to go after big game in the Khasia hills, and told the local civil authority to arrange a shoot for him. The official evidently didn't want to take the trouble, so replied that the game had all been killed or driven off by Gurkhas hunting in the jungles. This report was passed to me, as

Commandant of the Gurkha Regiment in the district, for information. I noted on it that my men had not been allowed to take their sporting arms out of the lines for the last two months, that Government rifles and ammunition were never allowed to be used for private shooting, therefore if Gurkhas had been in those jungles for shooting they must be settlers, who had been given licences by the official who made the report, and it was his business to stop them. I heard no more about it.

Similarly, when the civil authority had built a great system of troughs with taps for washing clothes in, because indiscriminate washing of dirty rags all up and down the stream, which ran through the station, was objected to, the local washermen disliked their liberties being curtailed, and one night the taps disappeared. As this place was quite close to our lines it was, of course, stated that the Gurkhas had taken the taps, and the Deputy Commissioner came to see me about it.

I had my own opinions as to where the taps were, so got him to walk over to the washermen's houses, taking two of the cantonment police with me. We searched two or three of the houses, and found about half-a-dozen brass taps concealed in them ; then I left him to struggle with the new idea thus thrust upon him, and took no further interest in the matter, nor did I hear what happened, but washing went on blithely in the stream, as it always had done, and the new place was deserted.

CHAPTER XXXII

ANOTHER BATMAN—CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE NAGAS

DURING the last twenty years of my service, I noticed that the Gurkha recruit was not, as a rule, nearly such a keen shikari or naturally so good in the jungle as he used to be when I first joined, and attributed this to the forests being gradually cleared in the mountains of Nepal to make room for more cultivation by the increasing population. This was corroborated by the much larger number of men who left their hills in search of other occupations besides that of soldiering, because they found it more difficult to make a living at their homes. This exodus grew to such an extent that the Nepal Government asked ours to discourage Gurkhas from settling in our territory, and not to give employment to Sepoys on taking their discharge from our Army. Just before the war there were over 100,000 of them in the province of Assam alone, excluding those serving in the Army and military police, and there must have been far more than this number in other parts of India.

Although they are so fond of a military life they do not stay long in our Army. The average length of service of the "other ranks" of my own battalion was always well under four years. This is quite intelligible, when it is realised that most of them are themselves, or their fathers are, small land-owners.

Disputes over land occur; a father dies when his sons are in service, or the wife, who has been left to look after the place, takes on someone else, a not infrequent occurrence, all of which events call for the man's presence at his home, so he "cuts his name" and goes. If he is still keen on soldiering, he will join the Nepalese Army, in which he is not so much out of touch

with his home, and sometimes, though rarely, he will re-enlist in ours. Consequently, after being trained by us, many join their own service, where their better education is an advantage to them.

Nepal has a standing Army about 35,000 strong, excluding reserves, a big force considering that the hill population of the country is under three and a half millions, who provide, besides about 25,000 men to the Indian Army and military police, that is to say, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the hill population, including women, children, and men of castes, who are not enlisted, are volunteers for the profession of arms.

The average height of a recruit is about five feet three inches, with a chest measurement of thirty-three and a quarter inches, at seventeen and a half years of age, though, of course, during the war we took almost any sort or size of Gurkha we could get.

The orderly I was fondest of, and who was with me when I left my old regiment, was named Bali Rana. At first I cannot say I knew much about him, beyond that he had been about two years in the service, and had never toed the line in orderly room, though I had often noticed his chubby, slit-eyed face, and clean, sturdy, stolid appearance as he stood in his place in the ranks.

One day, on active service, I saw him standing with folded arms on the edge of a pool a sapper officer had just dynamited. There he stood, stripped to the buff, absolutely without any expression on his face, gazing down into the water, in which dozens of excited Gurkhas and one or two Sikhs, still wearing their turbans, were swimming about, picking up the little dead or dying fish, and flinging them out to their comrades on the bank. I asked him why he didn't go in and get some too, as he had taken his clothes off. His reply showed a much more intimate acquaintance with the action of dynamite than would be expected in one so young, "I am going in when the bigger fish show, which they never do at first."

A moment later, the gleam of a fair-sized fish in distress

showed beneath the surface, and the boy dived in and got it. As he brought it out a very pompous, self-important staff-officer pushed his way through the crowd on the bank and, not perceiving that the general was standing close by watching the men's gambols, addressed me in not the politest manner with, "What do you mean by letting your men foul the camp water supply?" I told him he had better refer to his old man, who was standing over there, and he went off, possibly with the intention of wheeling him into line, but evidently without success.

Bali offered me the fish he had caught, and thinking no doubt as I had asked him a question, he could ask me another, inquired if the brigade major wanted anything, so I told him he had said they were making a mess of the drinking water. He asked how that could be, as the place marked for drinking was higher up-stream, and I could not very well tell him that a staff-college education evidently had not taught this officer that water doesn't usually flow up hill, so suggested he should go and get some more fish.

He swam and dived like an otter, so I put him into my own escort, who were extremely useful at clearing my spoon baits, whenever they got hung up on the bottom—my "candidates for pneumonia," as the general called them from the way they were constantly in the water, when we halted by a river, and I was amusing myself.

One day on the march, when I had my arm in a sling, having been stung in the wrist by a scorpion, he asked me if the pain was any easier, a somewhat unusual thing for an unsophisticated Asiatic to do, which showed a certain amount of interest in his officer, so after this expedition had dragged its weary and unexciting length to a close, I kept him on as my permanent batman, as my other had gone sick, and was not a very bright individual. The following year there was another little disturbance on the frontier, and I was put in command of the force detailed to straighten out matters, so of course the boy went with me.

The enemy had successfully ambushed some police a short

time previously, and were said to have their tails very much up in consequence, and anxious to lift more heads.

We crossed the frontier, and were within a mile of the first hostile village, which was built along the edge of a cliff and strongly fortified at both ends, when a heavy fog came down, which effectually screened our movements from the enemy, who hitherto had been full of thrust, beating their war-drums vigorously, but had now promptly ceased.

Parking the baggage-coolies under a sufficient escort in some open cultivation, we moved about 200 men as silently as possible up the hill through the jungle, in the hope of turning the enemy's right flank, and managed to get within 600 yards of the stockade before we were discovered.

When we had got so far, and were evidently on the ridge overlooking the village, a tremendous hubbub arose amongst the enemy, so we halted for a bit in the hope that the fog would lift and we would be able to see what we were up against. Then voices were heard calling out something which the political officer said was an invitation to us to advance in peace. As these people had been thumping their war-drums all night and all morning until the fog enveloped us, this seemed rather an unaccountable change of mind, so we advanced with all precaution to avoid the pitfalls, bamboo spikes and other delicate attentions, which had been prepared for us all over the place.

Suddenly the fog cleared away, and we found we had got into a position of advantage, which accounted for the enemy's new attitude.

There was the village rising up straight in front of us from behind the stockade, 200 yards away, and it was full of armed men. It was a difficult situation, for though they still called to us to come in peace, I knew they were capable of any treachery.

I told the Political Officer to order them to send out their chief to explain matters, and they replied that they would do so if ours would come and meet him.

The P.O. at once wanted to go, but I reminded him that as

I was the boss it was therefore my job, and he could send his interpreter with me. So telling the men to be ready to fire at a moment's notice, I went forward to the gate of the stockade with many misgivings. The chief and a friend of his came half-way down a steep flight of stone steps leading to the gate, and invited me and the interpreter to come inside.

Someone called out to me not to go a step further, but I hadn't the remotest intention of doing so, for, once inside, the gate would have been closed behind me like the door of a mousetrap.

I beckoned, and the interpreter called to the chief to come down and sit beside me, but he stayed where he was, and then the men in the houses above ordered me to go back, so I shouted to the men to fix bayonets and advance. Why I wasn't shot or speared through the stockade, when they did so, I can't think, but the houses above were emptied as if by magic, so we went through the stockade and through the village till we came to a sort of stone fort at the far end, which the enemy had manned, but still did not fire, though they had their guns ready. They were warned to clear out or we would open fire, but they still wouldn't budge, so two men were ordered to fire one shot each. The enemy then fired back, and we jumped the place without more ado, without much loss of life, for the enemy legged it like hares when they saw the bayonets.

I asked Bali what he would have done if they had shot me in the gate. He said: "When the two men sat down on the steps and the others began yelling at you, I lay down behind a tree and covered the chief, so he would never have gone upstairs again," which showed he had more confidence in his rifle than I had in his marksmanship.

We stayed a couple of days in this village, to adjust matters properly and give its owners food for reflection, and sent a small party to look up another place about five miles off. When Bali asked leave to go with this lot I asked if he was going to try for the Indian Order of Merit (the reward of valour), and he said he was going to do his best to earn it.



A NAGA FORT.

Unfortunately opportunities do not always come to those who are willing to seize them, but in the evening the boy returned quite pleased with himself having, as he put it, "smitten with many bullets."

The young officer who took out the party told me they had completely surprised the enemy, who had been bold enough to stand, and consequently lost heavily in men and property which they had not had time to remove.

He said that on the way back, as they were passing along a small stream, he noticed a big leather shield, which looked as if it had been carried over a waterfall and stuck among the rocks below. At the same instant a shot was fired behind him, the shield jerked violently forward and a man was struggling in the water, shot through the breast. He had evidently been lying up to kill an officer, and had chosen this quaint form of ambush, which was promptly discovered by my orderly, whose action possibly saved this officer's life.

A few days later, I was standing on the edge of a cliff, in another village, watching the men hauling up various goods and chattels, which had been hidden amongst the rocks, when my trusty henchman threw up his rifle and fired at a man who had been trying to stalk me through the jungle. He missed him, but the Naga had vanished before he could put in a second shot.

Just at the last, as we were about to recross the frontier, I went down with pneumonia, brought on by watching villages being burnt in rainy weather, when I was roasted on one side and frozen on the other, and had no dry kit to change into or dry bedding to lie down in, so I was carried up to the nearest outpost and lay there for over a week before I could be moved. While I was sick, the military authorities from the highest downwards amused themselves by badgering me because a Eurasian clerk had reported me for having used bad language to him for not having sent over the maps of the country, which he had promised before I started.

This lapse seemed to be of much more importance to them

than the success of an expedition, in which it was finally admitted "the wishes of Government had thoroughly been carried into effect."

During the whole of my illness, the gallant little man proved himself a most efficient nurse, and did everything for me, which very few Hindus would do for one another, even.

Needless to say he accompanied me to Mesopotamia. Going across, he was most awfully seasick, and evidently considered himself at death's door, for once when I went to see him he pressed the belt in which he kept his money into my hand without a word. He afterwards explained that he did so because someone had tried to relieve him of it, when he was almost unconscious.

One of the first actions we took part in was one of the unsuccessful efforts to force the Turkish position at Sanraiyyat, in which we suffered about 1,500 casualties in less than an hour. When we got back into our own trenches, all the boy remarked was: "The Turkish position is very strong." He stood by me under all sorts of fire, and when we had to advance he always got out of the trench first and stood on the parapet to give me a pull up, and never showed the least sign of excitement.

Once I sent him back from the firing-line to get a pair of my boots from the rearward area, and while he was coming back the Turks began putting over a fair amount of heavy stuff. I asked why he had not waited till the bombardment was over. "I was all right," he replied, "I came on in artillery formation on one side of the road." The battalion having been taught to get off the road and open out, if any shells came when they were in close order, no doubt made the simple creature think that if he moved off the road, when he was alone, he would be perfectly safe, as he was obeying orders.

When we returned from the war, a man came and offered to tell Bali his fortune for the modest sum of two annas (2d.). He began by giving him some dice to throw, and then said: "Your Sahib is very fond of you and will soon give you

promotion." "No doubt," said Bali, well knowing his name had been put down for the first vacancy.

"You will soon receive a lot of money."

"I hope so, for a year's pay is due to me."

"You will then go to your home, and your parents will be very glad to see you."

"You are a scoundrel, they have been dead for years; give me back my two annas," roared Bali, accompanying his words by a cuff on the head.

The fortune-teller bolted, leaving his dice on the ground, which the lad picked up and presented to me as a trophy. They were never claimed, nor did we ever see their owner again.

Before I retired, I made Bali a Gurkha officer in a new battalion of our regiment, which was being raised, and he did good work with it, till it was disbanded two or three years later. He then was pensioned and went to his home, and since then I have heard nothing of him, much to my regret, for he was the finest little fellow that ever served me.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SHOOTING EXPERIENCES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS—RHINOCEROS
—KASHMIR STAG, ETC.

NOT very long since, a friend showed me his sporting diary, which at the time seemed rather an unusual one, for it was largely filled with entries of birds and beasts he had *not* bagged.

On reflection, however, I came to the conclusion that it is often such incidents one thinks of most, sometimes with regret for opportunities missed, but they are by no means always unpleasant memories.

A man asked the other day whether I would sooner get hold of a big fish and lose it than see it and not hook it. I replied I thought it better to have hooked and lost than never to have hooked at all, recalling a huge mahseer I once hooked in the Kopili river in Assam which was played for two hours and twenty minutes on a 14-ft. fly rod and never seen once.

I hooked him on a fly, when drifting down a rapid on a raft. I made a cast to get the line out of the way whilst I pulled out my watch, and when I had looked at the time and raised the rod again, I felt something large had taken the fly. It was then just five o'clock.

The fish went off with a great rush of about 100 yards down the big, deep pool we had just entered, so, as soon as possible, I got on to the bank, where it was good going and I could have better command of the situation.

I played that fish all over the pool till it was almost dark. He never sulked once, and did not feel as if he were foul-hooked. Unfortunately there were two flies on the cast, and towards the end the dropper was taken, as it was dragging along the surface, by a smaller fish, possibly two pounds in weight.

The big fish was getting nearly done when this occurred, and each time I butted him the little one was dragged out of the water, when his struggles put a great strain on the cast. Suddenly the gut broke below him, and he went hurtling over my head. The line broke again with the jerk as it straightened, and the fish disappeared like a rocket into the jungle behind.

Sick is not the word for what I felt, and I did not notice for a few minutes that my orderly had disappeared. When I called and asked what he was doing, he came and said he was looking for the fish, as it was a pity to lose it after it had been on so long, which showed how much he had realised of the struggle. It was then half-past seven.

I remember hooking a good salmon when I was worming for trout, as a boy, and how angry I was with my grandfather, who would not leave the tree under which he was sheltering from the rain, because he said he could have done no good as I would never have held the fish. A perfectly sound argument, but one which did not carry much weight with me at the time. In sport, with a gun or rifle, there are more varied regrets, and one feels much more the wounding of an animal than losing a fish, which cannot suffer so much.

I once flushed a black snipe in some rice-fields about five miles above Shillong, and missed it because I was paying more attention to the conversation of the girl I had gone out with than to the job in hand. Needless to say I never saw that bird again.

Another opportunity lost was given by a giant woodcock, which I took for an owl till it was out of shot, when it turned and showed its beak. It was never found again, though I hunted for it with my spaniels for a couple of hours afterwards.

I never bagged a rhinoceros, though more than once had helped to slay one, for I never was lucky enough to put in the first shot. I once took leave for the express purpose of taking one on single-handed, so looked for nothing else.

After several days' pursuit on fresh tracks, without getting a shot, my orderly and I on separate elephants came up against

a high wall of grass on the edge of what had, almost till then, been a marsh. There were two or three lots of fresh tracks leading into the grass, and I was debating with myself which to follow, when we heard a rhino coming lumbering towards us. He came out into the open so close that the hairs on his ears were distinctly visible.

The mahout promptly funked, caught the elephant a clip on the ear with his goad and turned him in the wrong direction ; the orderly on the second elephant was just behind and blocked the line of fire on that side, as the rhino circled round us and disappeared into the grass we had just come out of, before I could get a shot, and though we tracked him for five hours we never got close enough to the beast again. This is a very exasperating recollection, and so is one of a tiger in the Central Provinces. I saw him, when out after peacock with a .22 Winchester, lying in the bed of the Denwa river. Reaching for my Paradox gun, which a forest watcher was carrying behind me, I sat down for a comfortable and easy shot. As I was raising the gun to take aim, the wretch of a watcher collared me round the neck from behind and implored me not to fire as the beast would kill us both. Whilst I was struggling to shake the man off, the tiger leisurely rose up, let drive a roar, walked into the bushes on the opposite bank, and then bounded off.

I felt as if I could have treated this worthy Government servant to something of which the mildest ingredient would have been boiling oil, but he did not give me the chance to treat him to much ; still it was sufficient to make him forsake the amenities of our camp for the rest of my leave.

On that same trip a glorious bison appeared in a beat for tiger and walked almost under the tree in which I was seated, but I let him go, for I wanted to kill the tiger, which was a notorious cattle-lifter, and he never came forward. He killed two young buffalo I had tied up as bait before I managed to lay him out. He was a very large beast of the kind called in those parts a " babar-sheer " (lion-tiger), because he had hair on his neck quite four inches long, almost like a mane.

Many such disappointments could be noted, which are quite interesting to look back on, and one of the most poignant, possibly because it was the most recent, was an unsuccessful shot at a Kashmir stag, which I had taken a lot of trouble over, the last I ever fired at.

We were camped at an altitude of ten thousand feet in November, and a big beast was reported to have been seen on a ridge two thousand feet above us.

For several days I tried to get a shot at him, but whenever the place was reached, where he had last been seen, he invariably had disappeared into the forest. The morning before I had to go back, we got up two hours before dawn and proceeded up a rocky nullah, down which an icy wind was blowing. We reached a grassy slope covered with rocks just as it was getting light.

Searching this with the glass, two hinds were to be seen feeding on the skyline half a mile away, moving slowly from us as they fed. The stag had been heard to roar in that direction half an hour before. The shikari suggested that I should go along towards them, whilst he took a look down the slope on the other side of the ridge. The hinds soon disappeared, so it was an easy matter to reach the top unobserved by them. The far slope was rocky and the forest grew close up to the top, but it was so steep one could only see a short way down it ; the edge of the ridge had elevations along it at intervals which made it easy ground for a stalk. From the slots it was evident that the hinds had gone along in a westerly direction, so I followed cautiously, keeping a sharp look out for the stag. Suddenly I spotted a hind about 500 yards off, feeding quietly and unsuspecting of any danger. A bit of rising ground prevented my seeing what was below and beyond her. Getting down the far slope a bit I crawled forward till a big lump of rock was reached, which afforded good cover. Nearer I could not go without the hind seeing me, as the ground sloped gently towards her for about fifty yards and then dropped suddenly, forming dead ground. The ridge continued beyond

this dip with a narrow but well-defined cattle track through the bracken. The hind was still feeding quietly, facing down hill, now and then looking up, and again stooping her head to graze.

On account of the dip it was difficult to estimate how much dead ground there was, but I put her distance at 300 yards.

While I was watching her, two young stags, six pointers, came out on to the slope from the dead ground below, put their heads down and began pushing at one another like goats, then taking a few bites of grass and then playing again.

The peculiar whistling moan of a stag, not the least like the roar of the Scottish red deer, now rose from the jungle on my right. He must have been very close, for one cannot hear the whistling part of the call at any distance. The young ones took no notice, but the hind looked up and another appeared from behind her. Presently the call sounded again, much closer, but still no sign of the animal making it.

I was considering if I would not get down the left hand slope in order to try and see on to the dead ground, when a fifth animal appeared amongst the bracken near the cattle track. The whole of that side of the ridge was in shadow, so it was impossible to see with the naked eye how big his head was. I put up the glasses which showed a magnificent beast, with wide-spreading antlers, on which twelve tines could be counted, so he certainly carried more, for he was facing away from me and the brow antlers were not visible.

As said before, it was hard to judge the distance on account of the dead ground, but I took him to be about 180 yards off, as I could not distinguish his ear with the naked eye. Being well above him, I calculated that the 100 yard sight taken between the shoulders would catch him somewhere along the spine if I was a bit out in my estimate, so let drive. The stag stood for a moment, made a staggering plunge for the jungle and I thought was crumpling up; but before I realised he was not, the trees prevented a second shot. I was almost paralysed with disgust, but got up and went down to where the stag had stood.

On reaching the edge of the dip, I found there were 150 paces of dead ground, and from the end of this to the spot he stood on was over 100 more. From where I lay I took it to be 50 yards to the place where the ground dipped suddenly, it proved to be 80, so I had miscalculated the range by about half.

While I was looking about for blood or hair, the shikari arrived breathless, in the hope of being able to do a little throat-cutting, so as to make the meat lawful for himself and his Mahommedan friends, and was distressed to find there was nothing doing. We found a bullet-hole in the ground amongst the bracken, and close by a bit of fat and a few light-coloured hairs, with a small spot or two of blood.

I suggested the bullet had grazed the inside of the thigh, but the shikari said it might equally well have gone through him and knocked the hair off his belly, in which case he would not be far off.

Then began one of the most breakneck descents I have ever attempted, which I preferred to do sitting down, otherwise I should probably have done it on my head. Ten minutes of it was enough, so I gave the rifle to the man and told him to go on for a bit, whilst I would wait there.

He returned in about an hour, saying he had followed for about a mile and only found one or two drops of blood, where the stag had halted for a little, and, as he had called again, he came to the conclusion that the beast was not badly hurt, which was the only satisfactory part of the business.

Now had I kept a diary similar to that of my friend, this adventure would have gone into it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MYSTERIOUS ANIMALS—LIONS—TAKIN—LUMINOUS SNAKES
UNICORN RAM

I HAVE just mentioned the killing of a tiger, which the natives called a "babar-sher" (lion-tiger), because it had more of a ruff, which extended down its neck, than the ordinary tiger has. This in no way resembled a lion's mane, but the people think this animal is a cross between a lion and a tiger.

I am not enough of a naturalist to know if such a cross is possible, but, if it is, there is no reason to suppose that when lions began to get scarce in the Central Provinces in the middle of last century both sexes would not seek a mate from a species of animal somewhat akin to them. The last lion killed in the Central Provinces was shot near Saugor in the 'sixties.

These "babar-shers" are said to be particularly fierce, and prone to man-eating. One had killed a native, and was finally either trapped or driven inside a sort of stockade. The victim's brother, now very bold, got on to the top of the stockade, and began to revile the savage beast to his heart's content from what he considered a safe position.

He got so excited over this form of amusement that he lost his balance and fell in beside the tiger, which promptly killed him before any of the villagers could shoot it.

But there are other mysterious beasts in India.

When I first went to Assam, nearly 35 years ago, the takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*) might well have been classed as one. It is of the goat tribe, but is as big as a large donkey, with peculiar twisted horns, somewhat resembling those of the African gnu, there being practically no difference between those of the male and female. These animals inhabit dense

jungle at altitudes over 5,000 ft. along the northern boundaries of Assam. They also extend into China, Bhutan, and Sikkim, though at first they were said to only inhabit the Mishmi country, which lies roughly between the Debong and Lohit rivers. This I always doubted ever since 1894, when on an expedition against the Abors I found several fresh-looking heads in their villages a considerable distance from the Mishmi country. Again in 1912, in an Abor village a long way up the Dihong, which is the Sanpo of Tibet and the Brahmaputra of Assam, I found a comparatively fresh head, which was said to have belonged to an animal which was washed down the river during the previous rains. Still further on two more heads were found, and the natives seemed to know something about the creature's habits. They spoke of it as inhabiting very heavy jungle, going about in small herds of five or six, and as being a much more dangerous animal to tackle, when ringed up, than a tiger, because when wounded it charged more quickly. In the winter of 1912-13 the exploration party, which went up the Dihong to try and find the great falls spoken of by an earlier explorer, shot two or three takin, and about the same time they were proved to exist in Bhutan and Sikkim, so no doubt this animal will ultimately be discovered still further afield, for in 1900, when shooting in the hills beyond Almora, I heard of animals whose description agreed with that of the takin, which lived in the jungle on the slopes of Trisul, but I had neither the time nor the means to go after them.

Captain Bailey, of the 32nd Sikh Pioneers, who came down the Lohit from China in 1911, may safely claim to be the first British officer to shoot one of these rare animals in our sphere of influence. He described to me how he came on a place where there was some sort of medicinal spring, at which the takin had collected in hundreds to drink, and they were so closely packed together that a young one which got pushed off an overhanging bank had to run some distance along the backs of those standing below before it could reach the ground again. He added there was no fun in killing them ; it was just like

shooting into a herd of tame cattle, so he only shot what he required as specimens.

The Mishmis avail themselves of the animals' liking for this water at a certain season of the year, and shoot them by the dozen for the sake of their horns, hides and meat.

There is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence of the lion existing a good deal further East than the Gir forest, which is the last place in India where it is known to survive.

In the mess of my regiment is a beautiful painted scroll taken at Gyantse during the Tibetan expedition of 1903-4. In the centre is depicted a very evil-looking man seated beside a waterfall with a bear-cat on his lap. He is rubbing its back, and it is vomiting a stream of various-coloured balls, quite in the approved style of the Indian conjurer. This weird performance is being watched with great interest by some sambur and a lion. The sambur are distinctly of the "equine," so-called Malayan, type, which is known to inhabit the jungles of Assam, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet. The bear-cat is found there too; so if the artist could draw them true to nature, is it stretching the imagination too much to conclude he had seen them, and also the lion? It is scarcely likely that this last would be taken into Tibet as a pet, although an elephant was found in a cage in Llassa.

In 1910, when shooting in the plans of Assam, a planter, whose word I had no reason to doubt, told me of a curious adventure he once had. A native came to him one morning and said that one of his buffaloes had just been killed in the forest by an animal something like a tiger, but without stripes, which had a very large dark-coloured head. He immediately had a "machan," or platform, on which to sit, rigged up in a tree over the kill, and took up his position on it.

Towards evening the animal came, but did not go on to the kill, and it could not be seen, as the undergrowth was too thick. After waiting till it began to get dark for the animal to show, my friend tried to stand up quietly on the platform in the hope of being able to get a better view, when the beast saw him and

bolted. He did not see it then either, but, as it turned, its tail flicked up above the bushes for an instant, and he distinctly saw a dark blob of hair at the end of it.

In 1911, when we were at Kobo waiting for an expedition against the Abors to start, whilst the staff amused themselves by teaching our men, who had only one pair of boots apiece, the soldierly practice of wading through muddy pools instead of moving to the side of them so as to keep their feet dry, or of trying to make the Naga coolies "charge spears" when all their lives they had been accustomed to throw them, a message was brought to the commandant of the military police which said that a Mishmi had brought a skin to one of the police outposts for sale. The skin was described as being of a yellowish colour, with long, dark hair about the head and neck, and with a tuft of dark hair at the tip of the tail. The writer wanted to know if he should buy the skin for his C.O., as the price asked was fifteen rupees. This officer brought the message to me, so I suggested he should get a reply off as soon as possible, and tell his native officer to buy it. He did so, but heard the Mishmi had gone off before the instructions were received and taken the skin with him. Now if this was not a lion's skin, what was it? The native officer, who made the report, would have seen many takin skins, which, *except for the tail*, would roughly answer the same description, so would not be likely to make a special report about one of them. Unfortunately, nothing more was heard of the man who wanted to sell it.

The planter just referred to told me another extraordinary yarn. The Bengali clerk at Silghat, one of the steamer stations on the Brahmaputra, came to him one day and said that a rhinoceros used to come at night to the grass shed, where unhusked rice was stored, push its head through the wall and eat the rice, taking no notice of the watchman inside. The babu suggested my friend might come and shoot the rhino, but he naturally disbelieved the story, still he thought a buffalo might be the thief, so offered to lend the babu an old muzzle-loading musket.

The babu took it, loaded it with an enormous charge of powder, two bullets and a lot of buttons, and then sat on the pile of rice bags and waited, with a lantern beside him, for the rhino to come. He hadn't to wait long ; the huge beast pushed its head through the wall and began guzzling the rice. The babu leant down, put the muzzle of his gun against its ear, and filled its brain with bullets and buttons.

Thirteen or fourteen years ago two other planters had a very strange experience. They were going on elephants through a part of the very dense forest which extends along the foot of all the hill ranges in Assam, and came on a lake with an island in the middle of it. On this island, half in and half out of the water, lay an enormous reptile, as thick in girth as a buffalo, somewhat resembling a lizard in that it was smooth and scaly, not rough like a crocodile. They went back to get rifles, but when they returned the creature had disappeared, and was never seen or heard of again.

One occasionally in the old days heard of tea-planters who saw scarlet rats and purple mice, but never of two seeing them simultaneously, and these men were not in the least inclined that way.

In the Khasia hills is said to exist a snake with a luminous head, and when I was in Shillong a pony was killed in the stable of one of the bungalows, which was close to some jungle. The servants said they saw a light come out of the jungle and move along close to the ground into the stable, but were afraid to go and see what it was.

They heard the pony kicking about and making a noise, and then the light came out again and disappeared. Next morning the pony was dead, and there were marks on the ground which might have been made by a large snake.

Two very well-known British officials of those parts told me of their experience. They were at a village about 45 miles from Shillong, where the natives offered to show them such a snake. They went out after dark to the bank of a river just below the village and sat down. Presently a light came out

of a small wood on the opposite bank, and went undulating down the hillside till it got into the dry bed of a little stream, where they could no longer see the light itself, but only its reflection on both banks.

They saw this on more than one occasion, and both were convinced it was caused by a snake.

A missionary who lived near Shillong was going home one night with a lantern in his hand when he saw a light coming along the path, low down upon the ground. He stepped to one side, and, when it came level with him, saw by the light he was carrying a large snake, which, on perceiving him, went off into the grass at the side of the path.

Shortly after hearing these things I read in the *Occult Review* of what some man considered a supernatural adventure in West Africa.

He was staying at some place overlooking a marsh, which the natives told him was full of ghosts.

He described how he saw lights come down from a rocky elevation at one side of the marsh into the marsh itself, where they moved about for some hours before returning to the rocks. Next day he searched the rocks for some explanation of this phenomenon, but could find nothing there except a great quantity of snakes, but he did not seem to connect them in any way with the lights he had seen. I myself saw luminous snakes in the sea at Cox's Bazar, off the coast of Arracan, but attributed their luminosity to phosphorescence, whereas from the descriptions of these others the light appeared to be very much brighter and to be concentrated in the head.

For a long time the unicorn ram of Nepal was considered to be a myth, till specimens were presented to our Royalties when visiting India, and I had two of them myself as regimental mascots, one of which, on state occasions, used to have his horns and hoofs gilded and march past at the head of the band. The peculiarity of these rams is doubtless caused by some sort of surgical operation, for on both those I had there was a small scar on either side between the ear and the base of

the horn, probably from cauterisation when the animals were young, which caused the horns to grow so close together out of the top of the forehead that they formed one. It certainly is not a natural growth, for the horn curves back, and would grow into the neck and kill the beast were it not periodically sawn off.

It is a pity some explanation of the other mysterious creatures I have mentioned is not forthcoming.

CHAPTER XXXV**ORIENTAL PECULIARITIES—A CLERK'S PECULATIONS, DESERTION
AND CAPTURE**

ONE comes across many and varied examples during one's Indian service of how different from a European's is an Oriental's way of looking at things, and how little constant association with us teaches him to understand our mentality.

One day, while I was adjutant of the regiment, our master-tailor came into the office and reported that his wife had tried to poison him by mixing red lead in the betel-nut and "pān" he was in the habit of chewing. He stated that this was due to an intrigue the lady was carrying on with one of the mess orderlies, produced a chew containing red lead, and said that if I would come over to his quarters and search his wife's kit some more of the poison would be found.

Not being very keen on interfering with the men's matrimonial affairs, I told our senior Gurkha officer (the Subadar-major), a man with about 30 years' service and seven or eight campaigns to his credit, who was in the office at the time, to come along with me and do the searching in the husband's and my presence.

We went over to the married lines, and three chews of betel-nut mixed with red lead were found in the woman's box amongst her clothes. These were confiscated and sent over to the police, who came and removed the frail one to a place where she could attempt no more damage. A few days later the Subadar-major and I were walking up to the court to give evidence in the matter, when he asked me what he was to say when called up as a witness. On my asking what he meant, he replied: "Am I to say we found the poison in the woman's box

or that we did not find it?" I inquired if, after all his service, he didn't know that he had to speak the truth, especially when he was put on oath to do so; whereupon he remarked that he knew that quite well, but wanted to ascertain if I wished him to speak the truth, and seemed quite surprised when I told him that if he didn't he would probably be in the jug himself.

The woman, of course, was convicted, and imprisoned for some considerable time, but when she was released her husband took her back, and they seemed quite happy together.

A pensioned Subadar-major of another regiment, who had built himself a house in the civil bazaar at another place where I was stationed, one day said he was entangled in much trouble. He related how his neighbour had let him finish the house, and had then laid a complaint before the local court that there was not a space of 4 ft. between it and the next building, as was the order regarding any new houses built in the place. The error had occurred through the distance having been measured with an old tape that had stretched, instead of with a steel rule; consequently the space between the houses was only 3 ft. 10 in. instead of 4 ft., and the old gentleman feared the magistrate might order him to demolish part of his house, which would put him to a lot of expense.

I promised that I would see the magistrate on his behalf before the matter was taken up officially, and did so, pointing out that the complainant must have known of the error from the first, and only waited till the house was finished either to gratify some private grudge or else in the hope of being bribed to hold his tongue. I also said that if the case went into court the old soldier would be put to a lot of expense he could probably ill-afford.

The magistrate saw the force of this argument, went down to see the place, and, finding the space was quite wide enough for a man to pass between the houses, agreed to let the matter stand as it was.

I sent for the pensioner, told him what had been decided,

and said I hoped he was pleased. He asked if there was not going to be a big lawsuit, and, when told there would not, looked quite disappointed, so I explained that if the matter had gone into court it would certainly have cost him a lot of money and he might have lost the case, as technically he was in the wrong. At this he was not at all satisfied, and said: "As you had spoken to the magistrate I could not possibly have lost, but would have made a great name for myself." It was impossible to persuade him that what I had said privately could have had no effect on what was right or wrong in a lawsuit, and I was sure he thought I had deprived him of a lot of kudos and pleasure, for all Indians dearly love litigation, and on such the native pleader batters.

A pensioner of ours did a still stranger thing. He joined the regiment in 1858, and retired 38 years later with the honorary rank of captain and several decorations, having been, for the last six years of his service, the senior Gurkha officer. Several years after he retired, whilst I was at home on leave, this old gentleman was fired with the desire to build a temple quite close to our barracks, but on ground which was not under military control.

I told him there would be trouble over this, as he had asked no one's permission to build it, and I would oppose permission being granted, as the proximity of a temple would bring many undesirable characters into the neighbourhood of our lines, and create trouble for the men. He urged that it was a very religious act to build a temple, plant a grove of trees, or make a tank (enclosed bit of water), so I said I would raise no objection to the grove, especially if it consisted of fruit trees, but I would not have the temple, so he had better go and ascertain what the civil authorities thought about it before spending any more money over his project.

The next day he came to my house, weeping, and said he was in great trouble, as he had offered the Deputy Commissioner a bribe, at which he was very angry.

I asked why he did that, and if he had ever known a British

officer take a bribe. He replied that of course he had not, but when the Sahib offered him a chair and asked what he could do for him, he had laid 150 rupees on the table, and said he wanted leave to build a temple. The Sahib wanted to know what the money was for, and when told it was for him, " he used many heavy swear words, and ordered me out of his house, and now I do not know what to do."

I told him he was an idiot, and thought he would be lucky if the matter ended there, for I believed he could be put in prison for offering a bribe, and that would bring much more disgrace than the temple would bring credit, so he had better sit down at once and write, in his own language, an apology for what he had done and ask for forgiveness, saying no more about the temple.

This he did, and the affair ended satisfactorily. This old man was not a very brilliant specimen ; but another of our Gurkha officers, who was by far the most able, whether from a military or educational standard, of any we ever had, once did a thing which seems almost incomprehensible to anyone with a sense of honour or *esprit de corps*, both of which this man certainly had.

When we were on active service the head soldier clerk, a very smart man, managed to steal about £250 of Government money. His procedure was simple. One of the duties of the officer left in command of the depot was to see that the balance of pay due to officers on service was remitted to their banks every month. He told this clerk to make out a statement of the amounts due and send them off, which for the first month or two was done correctly. The clerk then discovered this officer's method of working, or, rather, the lack of it. He noticed that the banker's receipts were never asked for, so all was plain sailing ; he made out the statement of having sent the various sums, but never sent them. The gambling which went on in the regimental lines was notorious. This clerk, with two of his pals, was running a regular casino, combined with a drink-shop, for the benefit of anybody who liked to come and play there.

Another clerk reported to the officer commanding the depot what was going on, but he took no steps to verify the man's statement, as he said afterwards, because he thought it an improper report to make ! If he had thought that, surely the correct thing to have done was to have found out its truth or otherwise, and commended or punished the man accordingly.

Amongst the men on service this gambling was common gossip, and some of the officers mentioned that their pay had not been received by their agents of late. As the colonel was sick and I was in command, I wired for a statement of the depot accounts to be sent for my inspection, but was told that the colonel, though on the sick list, was well enough to see to the accounts. The regulations lay down that an officer on the sick list must do no military duty, but hand over his work to the next senior. Still, it was no use reporting my own C.O., for ninety-nine times out of a hundred the junior goes to the wall, and I had no reason to suppose I would be the exception ; moreover, I felt sure that the colonel was checking the accounts, so they would be all right.

When the regiment was on the road back from service the head clerk asked for three days' leave to visit a sick relative, and did not return at the end of it. As soon as I reached our headquarters station I wanted to report the man to the police as a deserter, but the C.O. would not let me do so. However, as he went off to England a few days later on sick leave, I made the report and commenced to make inquiries about the gambling and to struggle with the regimental accounts. The first receipt I asked for could not be produced, and so it was with many others. The matter was reported to superior authority, who held that the wretched depot commander, who had signed the accounts, was responsible for making good all losses.

The next thing was to catch the deserter. His photograph and description had been sent to the police all over the place, but no word of him was forthcoming, so catching him seemed to present many difficulties.

One day a Gurkha officer of ours, by name Jangbir Rana,

who was not altogether free from the suspicion of being a gambler himself, told me he had heard that the man we wanted was living just across the border in Nepal, and if I would give him leave and pay his expenses he would go and cut him out.

I told him that the British had no jurisdiction in Nepal, and I had no wish to be embroiled with the Nepalese authorities by him, when acting under my orders, so he was to be careful.

He promised to do nothing to cause trouble, so I let him go, and wrote privately to the Prime Minister in Nepal and told him what I had done, relying on his assistance if necessary. Long before I expected any news a wire came from Jangbir to say he had got the man, and a few days later the details came by post.

The deserter was living in a Nepalese village just across the border, and used frequently to invite the constables of the British police post on our side to come over and shoot with him. Every one of them must have well known who he was, for his portrait and description was hanging up in their quarters, but they never made any report.

One day the Subadar joined the party, and soon established confidence with the man by pretending he thought he, too, was on leave, and got him, on one of their jaunts, to step across the border unawares, when he promptly seized him, made the constables who were with him tie him up, and, when he had seen him safely handcuffed and taken a written statement that the culprit was in safe custody, he came back to report to me.

The little bill he presented for his expenses showed that he had done himself extremely well, but I was very glad to pay it.

It was somewhat amusing to receive the police account of the arrest and a claim for reward, as if they had caught the man, for no mention was made of Jangbir. In reply, I asked why they had not caught him sooner, as they had been associating with him for weeks, if it was true that they had only taken him over from Jangbir, and, if not, why they had given a receipt for him, to which no answer was given.

The clerk was tried, when he got three years' imprisonment, and Government recovered the money he had stolen from the

officer they held responsible. While the man was in jail we received an official report that he was receiving money and communicating with one of our Gurkha officers, the man I have referred to as being so much above the average. This seemed almost incredible, for this officer had frequently expressed the strongest disapproval of the man's behaviour ; and when asked if it was true he had been helping someone who had robbed and disgraced his regiment admitted it was, and gave as his excuse : " He appealed to me as a caste brother, so I *had* to help him." He did so, well knowing he was risking his own commission, and, if he had not borne an excellent character, he would most assuredly have lost it.

Whilst serving his sentence this clerk inherited quite a respectable sum of money from a relative, so I made inquiries as to whether Government could not recover the money he had stolen, having found out that whilst the Statute of Limitations prevents ordinary people from recovering a debt after three years, Government can claim up to 60 years.

The reply was that, as Government had received an " accord " (*i.e.*, had recovered the money from the officer responsible), they could make no claim on the thief.

From this it will be seen that a man can steal regimental funds, and Government will recover the money from the officer concerned, but will not exert their rights to get it out of the actual thief, who can do the imprisonment, so to speak, " on his head," and then come out to enjoy his ill-gotten gains, laughing at the wretched creature who has had to make them good.

Such cases are not infrequent, if the man has only stolen sufficient before being detected.

CHAPTER XXXVI

GARRISON CLASS, RANIKHET—SPORT IN THAT NEIGHBOURHOOD

IN 1899 I was ordered to attend a garrison class at Ranikhet to qualify for further promotion or for staff employ. Such classes for junior officers have since been abolished, and C.O.'s are held responsible for teaching their youngsters all that is required in the way of professional knowledge. I do not know what the objection to the classes was, unless it was the expense connected with concentrating the pupils, the rent of a messhouse and classroom and the staff pay of the instructor, but they certainly made for uniformity in the system of education, which the present order of things does not, for all commanding officers are not born teachers, nor have they all the same attainments ; besides, regiments, especially those in small isolated stations, do not all possess the many requisites for practical demonstration.

I enjoyed the course there very much, imbibed a certain amount of knowledge, and passed a satisfactory exam., for the teacher was an excellent man at his job, besides being a good sportsman. A man, who was attending the class, hearing me speak of woodcock, said he never had shot one, so we asked the teacher if there was any place near at hand where there were any. He said he didn't trouble much about small game himself, but would find out from the cantonment magistrate, who usually bagged a few 'cock in the season. He obtained the required information, and we set off early one Sunday morning with my spaniels. On reaching the top of the glen we had been told of, we were surprised to meet the cantonment magistrate just coming out of it, as, of course, he knew we were going there. He greeted us cheerily with, " Oh, there you are ! I have just killed the 'cock in here, but missed another, which

you may be able to find, so now I'm off to breakfast." This from the man who had put us on to the place, and knew we could only get out shooting once a week, though he could go any morning he liked. My companion was so disgusted he wanted to go back, but as we had come out so far I said we might as well have a look round. It was lucky we did, for we found two birds in a neighbouring nullah, got them both, and a pheasant besides, so experienced a certain amount of pleasure in telling the C.M. that night at the club what we had done, and seeing his face of disgust, for he was a very jealous sportsman.

Another man, years ago in Assam, was also very jealous about woodcock, and he used to carry the dried head of one in his pocket so as to make borings in the muddy places in the pine-forest, in order to mislead anyone who happened to come that way to look for the birds.

There is a place called Khairna, fourteen miles from Ranikhet, where there was a big rest house, which would have been quite comfortable had it not been for the prodigious amount of vermin which harboured in the beds, a fact we duly noted on the wall above those beds whereon we had passed a troubled night.

There was some quite decent fishing here, though the fish were difficult to catch, and very fair shooting besides, so we sometimes made up a party and rode down on Saturday afternoon, returning in time for the first lecture on Monday morning.

On one occasion we got a lot of fish, some partridges and a barking deer, from which we ordered our dinner to be prepared. When the meal was put on the table, to our annoyance we found it consisted of some fish, tough fowl, and an equally unpalatable leg of mutton. On remonstrating with the khansamah, or bungalow purveyor, he said he had given our dinner by mistake to another party, who had just come in. This party consisted of our Lieut.-general and staff, so the ruffian knew we were not likely to go and tell them this, but we wrote in the visitors' book that we were dissatisfied with the food. Of

course, they were charged full price for eating our stuff, which would have cost us no more than the fuel to cook it, and we had to pay for what was put before us.

Some time afterwards I met the general, who said he could not understand why we were not pleased with the bungalow fare that day, for he and his party had had an excellent dinner—good fish and two kinds of game ; so I told him that that was the reason we were displeased, for he had had our food and we his, at which he was much amused.

One reason why the mahseer were so shy at Khairna was that everyone, who stayed in the bungalow and had a rod, had a go at them. Standing on the bridge close by and looking down into the clear water, one could see hundreds of fish lying in the pool below, many of quite respectable size.

The first time we saw them, one of the fellows said he would give me a bottle of whisky for every one over a pound that I could pull out. I closed with his offer at once, mounted a quill minnow, and began to fish the pool up from the foot. At almost the first cast a fish of about 2 lbs. took it, and was soon landed. A few casts more extracted another, so I called up to the man, who was watching operations from the bridge, to ask if he would compound for a case of whisky or nothing on the result from that pool. He agreed, but I had no more luck till I reached the top, where the stream ran at right angles against a crag on the far bank, making some lovely eddies. One or two fish moved, and then I hooked one of about 6 lbs. in the rough water, which, on the 10 ft. rod and light gut trace, gave ten or twelve minutes' exciting play before he was brought to bank.

His rushes down the pool, and mine after him, thoroughly disturbed all the other fish. I hooked no more, so came out of the water, having lost the whisky, and my pal descended from the bridge to try his luck with paste, which, after two hours' contemplation, produced two very small fish.

About half a mile further up was a biggish pool, with a lot of little waterfalls across the top of it, between each of which was an eddy, where good fish were bound to lie, so I changed the

minnow for a $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. gilt spoon, having first battered it between the stones to dull the glitter and make it wobble more. I cast this into the nearest eddy, where the water looked very deep, and instantly there was a drag, as if the spoon had fouled a rock. A second later I discovered I was into a good fish. Instead of going off with a rush, as most of his kind do on feeling the hook, he moved into the heaviest water, and bored steadily against the stream for some minutes, which was the best thing he could have done to help me, as he had the force of the stream, as well as the strain of the rod from behind, to contend against. He then changed his tactics, and made a rush across the stream to the next fall, the small fish flying into the air in all directions at his approach. Unfortunately, it was impossible to get a direct pull at him from below, as owing to the rocks I couldn't get further down-stream, but I put on as much side strain as I dared, which eventually brought him under the near fall again. When he began to show signs of distress I told the coolie with the net to put it down and grab the fish by the gills when it came past him on the top of the water. He assured me he knew quite well how to do this, so I gave the butt, which brought the fish to the surface, when he turned on his side and floated gently down-stream. I couldn't quite guide him as far as the man, as a nasty slippery bit of rock was in the way, so that miserable wretch, instead of walking closer up to the fish, reached out at him and partly over-balanced, fouling the line with his arm as he tried to recover himself, which was the end of all things for me as far as that fish was concerned, for a good 12-pounder was lost.

In the evening I tried the same water over again and brought the day's catch up to nineteen fish, of which the morning's six-pounder was the best, but there were five three-pounders amongst them, which was not so bad from a stream where they were supposed to be almost uncatchable.

Whilst at Ranikhet I had one very good bit of luck. One afternoon a very fine-looking old man walked into the rest house where I was staying, and, as he looked very tired, I

offered him a drink and a bath, both of which he declined, saying his own things were close behind, and would be in shortly.

From the amount of his kit and the number of people who came with it soon afterwards I judged he was someone of importance, and soon discovered he was the general who had been in the Khairna bungalow and eaten our dinner some time before, though I had not seen him then. He had come over to inspect the place, and several days later one of his comments on his visit was passed to me. It was to the effect that I was disobeying Queen's Regulations by not growing a moustache, and was therefore to conform to them. I replied that I would do my best as quickly as possible.

After leaving the class, I spent a short time in Naini Tal, which was the summer headquarters of the command, and naturally left cards on the lieutenant-general. He invited me to dinner, and when I was formally introduced, he remarked: "I didn't recognise you at first." Guessing what he referred to, I answered: "I am glad, sir, it makes such a difference." "Well," he returned, "I won't say that, but it shows an honest endeavour to obey orders." He then talked about the Khairna episode, and mentioned how once before he had run in a cavalry major for not having a moustache, and when he inspected his regiment some months later found he still had not got one, so demanded a written explanation of this continued disobedience. He was defeated when he received the explanation, which was that this officer could not grow a moustache, and had never shaved his upper lip, so he thought that if Nature could not provide a man with this military adornment no efforts of superior Army authorities were likely to be successful.

Not long afterwards I was offered a good staff billet, but I feel quite sure that had I had hair on my face when the general first saw me he would probably have never noticed me, nor inquired about my professional capabilities.

CHAPTER XXXVII**MARCH TO KOHIMA—LANGUAGES IN THE INDIAN ARMY—THE
NAGA TRIBES**

DURING my absence the regiment had moved to Kohima, the only military station in the Naga hills, and also the headquarters of the civil administration of those parts, a very dull place, for besides our own lot there were not more than half a dozen white inhabitants.

It lies about half-way between Manipur and the Brahmaputra, and in those days this distance had to be marched on foot or on horseback, whilst one's kit was taken in bullock carts.

The road, which had been considerably improved during and after the expedition of 1891, was not good, and had only been metalled in a few places, so during wet weather the most of it was an absolute sea of mud, which turned to choking dust in the hot season.

Knowing the awful discomfort of the journey at any time but the winter, not to mention the risk of malaria, I left my wife with some planter friends in the Assam Valley till such time as it would be better for her to travel, and set off with my carts for the first halt, Golaghat, which was 19 miles from the river.

The next, Nambhar, from which the great forest, which stretches for a couple of hundred miles along the foot of the hills, takes its name, was only nine miles, so I sent my carts off at five a.m., in order that they should arrive in good time, and started myself in the afternoon. At four p.m. I overtook them, and was horrified to find that, owing to the mud, they had only covered about half the distance ; so telling them to push on,

I turned into a tea-garden by the roadside to sponge a night's accommodation off the planter.

As visitors were rare, he gave me a hearty welcome, and proved a most interesting man to talk to. He had come out to India just before the Mutiny, as a clerk in the Oriental Bank of Calcutta. Knowing the manager of that bank in those days to have been a friend of my father, I asked if he remembered him, which, of course, he did, and regaled me with several anecdotes of his career. One was that when the Mutiny started, and it was known that the native troops at Barrackpore, only a few miles away, were disaffected, the white people in Calcutta expected all the natives of India would rise, and there was great excitement amongst them and the Bengalis.

About fifty native clerks were employed in the Oriental Bank, and most of them worked in one large room.

They soon began to be turbulent and disrespectful, so one morning the manager, without saying a word, took a wafer off his writing table, walked down the gangway between the desks at which the native clerks were seated, and stuck it on the wall at the end of the room. He then returned to his table, took a pistol from his pocket, and drove the wafer into the wall; a fine shot, which caused considerable improvement in the clerks' demeanour.

After four marches through the forest on the level, one reaches Nichuguard, so called because there was formerly a guard stationed there at the foot of the hills to keep the road open. Here a fine river, the Dhansiri, debouches into the plains, and as my bullocks were very tired, it was a good excuse to get a day's fishing by letting them have a rest. The water was slightly coloured, so I did not expect much; however, the mahsèer were well on the move, and I got thirty, the best of which was 18½ lbs., and he gave good sport on a trout rod.

In the pool where he was killed was the largest turtle I have ever seen. His shell was well over 4 ft. long and within a foot as wide, and I regretted I had not a rifle handy, for he

would have made a fine trophy, and would have afforded an easy shot, as he was lying on a sandbank within fifty yards.

Whilst I was fishing a native came and spun me various yarns about the enormous fish a Sahib had caught there the previous year, one of which was so large the narrator had to take his clothes off to help to land it. From further inquiries I elicited particulars which showed that this angler could have been no other than myself, and as on that occasion I had killed nothing over 6 lbs., I suggested that this 18-pounder would have grown to 80 lbs. by the time the next Sahib came along.

Just after leaving Nichuguard I passed several carts with regimental stores in them, and learnt from the drivers that they had only come this distance from the Brahmaputra in a month, an average of about two miles a day. Soon afterwards I saw a large iron roller, which had got turned on its side in the roadway, where it had sunk in so deep that only about three inches of it were visible. This was metalling the road with a vengeance, and I wondered how my own kit would get along past this place.

However, as the carts were not heavily laden, they came through safely, and when next day they got on to the metalled part of the road, I left them and rode the remaining 30 miles into Kohima, having had a pony sent out to meet me half-way.

On arrival there the first bit of news received was that a new language test had been introduced for officers of the Indian Army, each of whom was to speak the language spoken in his own unit, thus breaking the Army up into watertight compartments. Hitherto the language spoken by the men of the regiment had not been an obligatory test, for Urdu, or Hindustani, as it is usually called, had been the language of the camp since the days of Akbar, and was more or less spoken by all members of the Indian Army. The impracticability of the watertight system was discovered during the late war, when officers were drafted from one unit to another and found it difficult to understand their men or be understood by them, so, in addition to all the other intensive training, the task of

teaching recruits Hindustani was piled on to the C.O.'s shoulders, an almost impossible task in a Gurkha regiment, where the recruit had never before in his life heard anything but Gurkhali spoken and the majority of the young officers had scarcely a smattering even of Urdu.

As I flattered myself I could speak the men's language quite well, and, moreover, could read and write it, and thinking it would be rather nice to be the first to pass the new exam., I applied for a board to be assembled to examine me, and got it at once. But I had reckoned without the idiosyncrasies of the staff; the proceedings of the board, which passed me, were returned, pointing out that every candidate, according to the new conditions, must appear before a board one member at least of which should have passed the new test himself. In vain it was urged that the first man to go up under the new rules could not have a properly constituted board; I was held to have failed, so took my time before presenting myself again, and by the time I did go up the force of the argument had been duly recognised by the powers that be.

Kohima was, and probably still is, the very worst military station in the whole of India. One saw no other troops from whom to pick up new ideas, the parade ground was the only level bit of country within ten miles or more, and where the hills were not covered with dense tree-jungle or wormwood scrub they were terraced for the Nagas' rice cultivation, so any sort of manœuvring by troops was impossible. As for amusements, there was no shooting close at hand except a very occasional woodcock, pheasant or partridge. The Dhansiri River was 30 miles away, so one could not go there to do any good on less than six days' leave; there were no golf links, but there were two tennis courts. The houses were vile to a degree, being merely daub and wattle sheds covered with corrugated iron roofs, so it is not surprising that in the old days, when communications were really very bad, people who had the misfortune to be quartered in such a place took to drink and other vices.

The Nagas, who inhabit the range of hills dividing Assam from Manipur and Burma, are a fine-looking race, much resembling North American Indians when togged up in their full war-paint. There are at least half a dozen different tribes of them, distinguishable only by the way they dress and cut their hair, as well as by the style of their weapons. The Semma and Angami tribes are the most numerous and powerful.

The Tangkhuls are a branch of the latter, residing in Manipur territory. In former days they all wore practically no clothing when pursuing their ordinary vocations, and still wear very little in the more remote villages.

The Tangkhul male is peculiar for wearing a ring, made of bamboo or bone, on a certain part of his person, which he assumes on reaching the age of puberty, so some people surmise that it is worn as a check to his amorous propensities, for which purpose it is certainly entirely effective. It is only taken off by day for the purposes of nature, and by night the man's wife wears it on her finger, so it is truly a wedding-ring. A man wearing it and no clothing used to consider himself quite decently dressed, but to our eyes it made him look hideously deformed.

On festive occasions, most Angami men wear a head-dress decorated with the large black and white feathers of the hornbill and a black kilt adorned with three or four rows of white cowries. Formerly no one was allowed to wear these unless he had slain at least two men. They carry a shield made of buffalo hide or stout cane basket-work, which is sometimes covered with tiger, bear, or leopard skin. Their spear shafts are hackled with rows of human hair dyed red and left its natural colour alternately, and the handles of their knives have similar decoration, the colour being intended to hide the stain of blood. Some wear armlets of sections of elephants' tusk, brass, or canework, covered with cowries or coloured beads. They also are fond of cornelian, shell, or bead necklaces, on which is fastened the shell of an enormous whelk placed at the back of the neck. Some wear cane leggings made on the leg and never removed till

they rot off. Their shoulder cloths are dark blue, with stripes of white, yellow, or red.

All these tribes were head-hunters, and still are, when they think they can indulge in the sport with impunity. They look on the head of an enemy as a great trophy, and, if the owner of it was an important person, the skull is dried, enclosed in basket-work, and then embellished with a pair of horns with tassels at the ends. In one trans-frontier village which we once had to adjust I saw forty human heads in a single house, strung together like onions, of which I kept two of the most ornamental, intending to take them home with me for the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. Unfortunately they got mislaid and were found, after I had sailed, mixed up with the mess cooking-pots. A brother officer sent them after me by post, declaring on the Customs form the nature of the contents of the parcel. The parcel was returned to him from Bombay with the official remark "Human carcasses are not allowed to be exported." He tried again, this time labelling them "Indian drums," which alteration caused them to reach their destination safely.

One very noticeable habit common to all these tribes is that, when a man is carrying a load, at every other pace he expels his breath with a loud "How" in a deep musical sound, which, when a lot of men are walking together, and do this in a different note, has a very impressive effect. Hence the Manipuris speak of all Nagas as "How."

The style of fortification of their villages, the shape of their weapons and houses, their general appearance and habits, are not at all unlike those of the Mishmis, Lushais, and Abors, and even of the natives of the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, and Celebes, which points to their all coming from a common stock originally. The Nagas themselves say their ancestors came out of the bowels of the earth through a cave.



NAGA DOORWAY.



A NAGA HOUSE.

CHAPTER XXXVIII**APPOINTED TO STAFF—JOURNEY TO NAINI TAL—SPORT ROUND
NAINI TAL**

My wife rejoined me at Kohima, as soon as the cold weather had fairly started, and we spent nearly six months in this forlorn place before I was appointed to the staff, consequently we had to do the journey down the hills at the beginning of the hot season, and the discomfort of it was indescribable. The dust and heat, coupled with the attentions of wasps, house-flies, sand-flies, horse-flies, "dim-dams" (poisonous little insects whose bite always raised a blood blister), mosquitoes, bugs, and fleas, at all times of the day and night, made life a positive burden to one, and thankful we were to reach the comparative cool of the river.

When I knew I was leaving Kohima I rather wanted the batman who had been with me for about ten years, to take furlough and come too, so that at the end of that time he could, if he liked, obtain his discharge from the Army and stay with us as long as we remained in India, for he was inclined to be delicate, and would probably not be able to stand the rigours of guard duty in the cold weather, after not having done any for so long.

He had reasons, however, for wishing to go to his home, so it was therefore necessary to get another batman, and there were many volunteers for the post. The man finally selected, named Nauratan, was the son of an old soldier, and had been born in the regiment, so was much more intelligent than the average Gurkha.

On the way down the river, when the steamer halted at one of the landing-stages, I sent him ashore to get a rupee's worth of

oranges, with instructions not to delay, as the boat would only stay a few minutes. When the syren blew for departure there was no sign of the man, but there seemed to be some disturbance behind the crowd of natives on the jetty, in which most of them seemed to display more interest than in the ship. Suddenly Nauratan burst through the crowd with a large basket of oranges in one hand and a policeman hanging on to his coat behind. When he reached the gangway planks, some of which had already been removed, he gave the constable a violent yank forward with his free hand. That worthy promptly let go of his coat to save himself from being propelled into the water, and Nauratan leapt across the last plank as the Lascars took hold of it to drag it on board. As the boat swung out with the current, Nauratan rushed on to the upper deck, and, cursing the bobby and his ancestors in the most filthy language, flung every one of my oranges at him, regardless of whom else they hit, and when the man replied to him somewhat feebly, he slipped off his shoes and blazed those into the crowd too.

This outburst was apparently caused by the policeman telling him he could not take the basket unless he paid for it, and, when Nauratan said he intended to bring it back, trying to detain him. This explanation was accompanied by the request that I should give him the money to get a new pair of shoes when we reached Calcutta.

Before we started Nauratan had carefully made a list of all our baggage, for he had been told he had to check it at every change. We stayed in Calcutta with friends for a couple of days, and when we had got about half-way to Naini Tal I missed my rod box, so asked Nauratan where he had last seen it. He was positive it was on the platform at Calcutta for he had sat on it, but suggested that it had been taken by a survey party which was at the station, when he was seeing other things put into the van, as they had several long boxes very like it. This seemed probable, so I wired to the officer in charge of the survey party, but he had not got it; then, as the railway company could get no trace of it, I put an advertisement in several

papers. Later, I received a letter from the people with whom we had been staying to say it had been left in the house my orderly had occupied. So much for his having sat on it at the station. When I told him this he was completely unabashed, and remarked that he must have been sitting on something else.

Soon after we reached our destination he was run in by the police for brawling in the bazaar, and, as he had already broken several of our household ornaments by merely looking at them, I came to the conclusion he was rather too expensive a luxury for me to keep, and told him to spend the rest of his furlough at his own home. He did so, and overstayed his leave, for which he got something that tamed him a little on rejoining the regiment. In the end he turned out a very fine soldier, and did good work in the Great War, where he attained commissioned rank for gallantry in the field.

Naini Tal was an infinitely superior place to any station in Assam, for one had as much social amusement as one wanted, there were good houses to live in, and, as there was a fair amount of shooting in the neighbourhood, I found my new billet most congenial. There were lots of big mahseer in the lake, from which the place takes its name, but they were extremely difficult to catch, being so gut shy that the cast going out would often put them down, even before it struck the water. A few could occasionally be got on the fly when there was a wind, but the usual method was "pill fishing," as it was called. One took a large chunk of dough and made it into pills about the size of a pea, one of which was placed on the hook, and then cast so as to strike the water at the same time as a handful of the pills was thrown in. The rod point had to be kept down so that there was no jerk at the bait, and the line remained as straight as possible between hook and reel, so that if a fish touched it there was a remote chance of his hooking himself, but the results were always meagre, as the fish were so shy. Still, one sometimes got a good one. A slightly more productive method was to get a lot of small fry and dry them in the sun, then throw out about a dozen as far as possible

and cast one with a hook in it where they fell. After a time the mahseer would rise, inspect them carefully, and occasionally one would take the hook bait. I once killed one of 35 pounds in this way. The bait was thrown out over some weeds, the fish took it, and at once dived into the weeds. Luckily a British soldier was fishing with paste from a boat close by, whom I told to flog the water with his oar. The fish left the weeds at once and made for the middle of the lake ; I got into the boat, the soldier rowing me, and after about an hour's play I killed the fish at the boathouse, about 600 yards further up the lake. There were several other lakes within a dozen miles where one could occasionally get good sport with fly or small spoon, but Naini Tal itself was unsatisfactory.

The natives used to fish it on the bottom with paste or worm, but did very little good. I once asked one whom I constantly saw fishing, how long it was since he had caught anything, and he told me six weeks. This was fishing of a sort only a native could enjoy. I asked him why he fished when he had such small results, and his reply was characteristic : " I have taken out a licence, and therefore I must."

I was station staff officer and cantonment magistrate at this place, and my work was chiefly in connection with the British soldiers at the convalescent depot and the detachment of Indian troops kept at Naini Tal during the summer to provide guards and orderlies for high officials, but I was frequently roped in for courts-martial, boards and other duties.

The cantonment was very nicely wooded, and there I was able to do the only bit of game preserving I ever did in India. During the rains I noticed that a few pheasants had bred on the slopes below the barracks, so used to have them fed for some time before the season opened. By the middle of October most of the men at the depot (who were convalescents from various parts of the Bengal Command) had gone down to the plains to join their units, so the place was comparatively quiet, and we used to have some quite jolly little shoots. We never made any big bags, fifteen brace was, I think, the best for four

guns, but we always saw plenty of birds. The walking was easy, for the forest was cut up by paths and fire-lines, so was not difficult to beat, but the Indian pheasant is a great runner and hard to put up.

My chowdry (the man who used to look after the rations, fuel, etc., and generally assist the quartermaster-sergeant) took a great interest in the sport, and trained the beaters very well. One day a leopard killed a cow and dragged its body into a dry watercourse below the depot. The chowdry tied up a native bedstead in a tree a little above the kill, and asked me to sit up for the beast that night, so I sent down my Paradox and some blankets and went. I rigged up a luminous sight for the gun with two fireflies, fastening one at the foresight and another at the backsight by means of matches placed at right angles to the barrels across the middle of the insects, and kept in place by rubber bands passed over the ends of the matches and under the barrels. The flies would then glow for hours. I sat till it was dark, but the leopard never came to feed, though I heard him in the jungle once or twice, so I dozed fitfully till dawn, yet the animal never came, and after a while I went away.

At orderly room that morning, the chowdry brought up two of the cantonment sweepers, who he said had sat in the nullah below the kill to keep the leopard off it, so that they could steal the meat after I left. They admitted doing so, but I remarked I didn't see what punishment I could give them for that, on which the chowdry said: "Sir, there is no punishment authorised by cantonment code, but with your permission I should like to give each two hard kicks." "Very well," I replied, "please leave the room, quartermaster-sergeant, and close the door behind you," and to the chowdry, "Now carry on." At this he hunted the two wretches round the office till they managed to open the door and escape. That evening the leopard, having no one to keep him off, returned to the kill, and I bagged him.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MY ASSISTANTS—RIOT IN BAZAR—SEROW SHOOTING—STRANGE
ADVENTURE WITH A LEOPARD

WHILST in this billet I had an excellent example of the method of trading adopted by a firm in England, which specialised in cheap jewellery. The assistant clerk in the station staff office was a miserable, weazened-up specimen of Indian humanity, who called himself James Roberts, as he was by way of being a Christian. The woman he lived with was a low-caste creature, whom he had picked up somewhere in the bazar.

The man had evidently seen an advertisement in some newspaper, which had been inserted by a firm in London offering to send out specimens of jewellery to anyone who would undertake to sell it on commission ; and thinking, no doubt, that it would be the means of enabling him to decorate his fancy lady at small expense to himself, he wrote off and ordered a consignment to be sent to her, giving as an address, "C/o the Station Staff-Officer, Naini Tal."

Of course I heard nothing of this till one day a letter arrived from the London people, saying that some months previously they had forwarded a selection of their goods, worth so many pounds, to Mrs. Mary Roberts, but had neither received any acknowledgment nor payment. I accordingly ordered the chowdry to bring the woman up in the orderly room with her man, so that the matter might be inquired into.

When she appeared, most wonderfully attired, I asked the chowdry, as a matter of form, who she was. "Sir," was the reply, "she is a w——e." I told him I hadn't asked him *what* she was, as I could see that for myself, but *who* she was, apart from the fact that she was living with my clerk, for it

was his job to know the antecedents of all native residents in cantonments.

On this he expounded her past and present lurid history, adding that her man had written for the jewellery and told her it was for her. This he of course denied, but admitted he had got it for her to sell, and did not understand why she had not sold it. The trinkets, or at any rate some of them, were produced, and did not seem worth more than a few shillings—the stones the chowdry pronounced to be of the “bottle caste,” in other words, glass—so I told him to take charge of them till I got a reply to a letter I would write to England.

I then wrote to the firm, gave them my opinion of their honesty in sending out such rubbish and of their business methods in dealing with persons about whom they had made no enquiries, and added it was no part of my duty to collect tradesmen’s bills in order to save them the expense of legal proceedings; but if they would send the cost of postage and insurance, I would endeavour to see that their rubbish was returned. They either did not like this letter, or else did not consider the stuff worth the cost of postage, for they took no further notice.

A little later, however, there was more trouble in connection with this business. Roberts complained that the chowdry had desolated his home by giving the jewellery back to the woman, in return for her favours, so what was he to do, as I was his father and his mother? The chowdry indignantly denied this accusation, but could not produce the things I had told him to take care of, so the clerk was advised to take his troubles to the civil court. He did so, with the result that the chowdry went into enforced retirement at Government expense and I lost the services of a very useful man. Roberts then had the audacity to ask for the vacant post, for which he was utterly unsuited, but, needless to say, he did not get it.

We had some little amusement, about this time, in connection with the celebrations for the capture of Pretoria.

There never had been much love lost between the detachment of sepoy, who furnished the guards in Naini Tal, and the inhabitants of the bazar. On the evening of the festivities, some dispute arose between a sepoy and a bania (shopkeeper), which resulted in the sepoy getting a hammering from the bania and his friends. As soon as the man could escape, he went down to barracks, collected a few of his pals, and then returned to the bazar to get a bit of his own back. Thereupon ensued a royal row; the bazar people fled to fetch the police, and when the blue-coated gentlemen arrived on the scene, accompanied by the commanding officer of the sepoy's regiment, who happened to be on leave in Naini at the time, not a sepoy was to be seen, but the contents of all the grain and sweetmeat shops had been flung into the bed of the stream which flowed along the front of the bazar. No information about the disturbance could be obtained in barracks as to what had happened, no one had heard of any row, so the usual court of inquiry had to be assembled to try and get at the truth.

According to the Indian officers who were on duty in the lines at the time, not a man was out of barracks when the row occurred. A most voluble witness was asked by the court if he could identify anyone who had helped in the onslaught on the shopkeepers, and he promptly pointed to the C.O., who was attending the proceedings on behalf of his men, and said he had seen him riding on his pony at the head of his men, directing which shops were to be looted. As this officer had come down to assist the police, he was rather pleased at the way this witness stultified his own evidence.

Most of the witnesses were equally untrustworthy, or else spoke from hearsay, and many members of the court were beginning to think that the whole affair was a put-up job by the banias to get the soldiers into trouble, when the police sprung a great surprise by producing the British sergeant-major of the local Volunteers and his native servant. This witness stated that he lived between the sepoy's barracks

and the bazar ; on the night in question, he was going to see the illuminations, but had been delayed by some accounts. Just as he was leaving his house, accompanied by his servant who was carrying a lantern, he heard a tremendous hullabaloo in the bazar and, immediately afterwards, was almost knocked down by about thirty or forty sepoys, who came from that direction and ran into the barracks. The servant made a statement to the same effect.

The court was then adjourned till the following day, in the hope that some evidence could be obtained amongst the 120 men who lived in barracks ; but no one admitted he knew anything or had heard any row. This incident will show how difficult it is in India to get reliable evidence on any matter, if the natives have made up their minds not to give it.

As it was clear that the sepoys had made all this trouble, and that the two native officers must have known all about it, but wished to screen the culprits, the Commander-in-chief, in consideration of their previous good service, ordered them to be placed on pension instead of being tried by court-martial for neglect of duty, and the detachment to be relieved by another regiment.

In winter Naini Tal was pretty nearly deserted, for nobody would visit a place for pleasure which, for weeks at a time, was under a foot or so of snow. So, except for the clerks at Command headquarters with a few officers in charge of them, and two or three civilian officials, there were probably not a dozen white men in the place. I myself had little work to do in the winter, except send in periodical reports and returns—mostly blank ones—for all the troops had gone down to the plains ; so if I was not roped in for manœuvres, courts-martial, or similar depressing occurrences elsewhere, I could often get away for a few days by asking another officer to answer for me.

When the place was empty, or nearly so, it was strange how the wild animals used to come into it. Leopards, of course, were common throughout the year, and in the season used

to take frequent toll of visitors' dogs, thereby affording a certain amount of unprofitable amusement to young men, who used to sit up for the said leopards, and a certain amount of profit to the local shikaries, who were paid for bringing in news of kills and for providing goats, which the young men hoped the leopards would take, when they were sitting over them, but which they very seldom did take.

I used to see the tracks of bears in the snow on the high-road alongside the lake. These animals had come over at least half a mile of ground, closely studded with houses; and once, within quarter of a mile of my bungalow, which was near the top of one of the ridges overlooking the lake, I found those of a serow, a most timid and retiring species of wild goat. As the track was quite fresh, I took a rifle and went after him; but the jungle on the other side of the hill was so heavy and the ground so steep and difficult, I never came up to him or saw him.

Serow are rather difficult beasts to stalk, owing to their habit of frequenting heavy forest and steep ground; and many sportsmen think they are not worth the trouble of going after, because the head, with its slightly curved horns, seldom more than nine inches in length, is not a very impressive trophy. But since I value a trophy as much on account of the difficulty of obtaining it as for its appearance, I have always considered the serow well worth the trouble entailed in his pursuit.

At Christmas I heard of a place about five miles away where there were said to be some of these beasts, so packed a very scanty kit, intending only to sleep out two nights, and set off to try my luck.

I camped for the night that I arrived in an empty forest-watcher's hut, and only managed to keep warm by going to bed in my clothes and putting a waterproof sheet above and below the blankets. A voluble but sportingly-inclined shop-keeper from a neighbouring hamlet, whom my servant had met when purchasing materials for his evening meal, came

over to see me and declared the place was absolutely stiff with sambur and serow, whilst leopards and gooral, pig, barking-deer, and bears were simply jostling one another, having been driven down off the surrounding high ground by the heavy snow.

Not wishing it to appear as if I doubted his statement, I suggested he should shut up his shop next day and come at dawn to show me this sportsman's paradise, to which proposal he readily agreed. Next morning, as he had not arrived by seven o'clock, I went down and routed him out of his shop, where he was still fast asleep. He said we should first look for sambur, of which there were several fine stags about.

After proceeding about a couple of miles down the valley below the village, we came on a place where two or three had spent the night, and perfectly fresh tracks were visible all around. Following these up, we came to a very steep slope, covered with short bamboo jungle, overhanging a small stream. The guide now said he felt very tired, and asked permission to sit down and smoke a cigarette, whilst he looked about him and rested.

The instant he began to speak there was a crash in the jungle below and we got a momentary glimpse of some sambur breaking away, which must have been lying within fifty yards of us.

At this the little man perked up and said, as he had frightened them, he would go down to the stream and see in which direction they had gone, so if I would wait there he would shortly come back and report. When he set off, I took out my glasses and began to search the opposite hill-side, where I had noticed a bit of jungle, about 250 yards off, moving rather unaccountably, as there was no wind to stir it.

In ten minutes the man came back and said one of the deer had gone down-stream, whilst another had crossed and gone up a ravine on the far bank. I drew his attention to the bit of jungle I had seen move, and asked if he could see any animal. He suggested that one of the sambur might have gone up there; but this would have been impossible

without my having seen it. The branches then swayed again, so he said he thought there might be a monkey ; but I did not agree. Once I fancied I saw something which might have been a monkey's tail hanging down, so began to think the man might be right after all.

Overhanging these bushes was a great rock, which cast a deep shadow and made it hard to see. " Try a shot into the bush and then we will see what it is," advised my companion ; but I was not going to do a foolish thing like that and frighten everything within hearing, so told him that, when he had finished his smoke and was sufficiently rested, I wanted him to go down to the stream again and creep quietly up the far bank, which might cause the animal, if it was one, to show.

Soon after he set off, the branches again began to shake as if a beast were pushing through them ; then suddenly, under the shadow of the rock, I perceived four light-coloured legs, with a dark body above them which harmonised so exactly with the background that I could not see it without the help of the glasses. A few seconds later a serow stepped out into the sunlight, so, taking a full sight for 200 yards at his shoulder, I pressed the trigger. But there seemed to be no result, except that the animal had entirely disappeared. I could not understand it, for the slope was so steep, nothing could have gone across on one side without my having seen it, or on the other, without having moved the bushes.

Five minutes later the man came up to ask what I had fired at and whether I had killed it. I told him I had seen a serow, but could not be sure whether I had hit it or not, so he had better go and see.

Borrowing my knife, he set off ; but before he had got half-way up the opposite bank, the beast suddenly shot off what was evidently the ledge he had fallen on, and dropped down about forty feet, where he stuck in a tree, quite dead. In a short time the man got up to the tree, pulled the dead animal out, when it rolled down another 150 feet to the bottom of

the hill, where I saw it was a good buck serow, with horns nearly ten inches in length.

We got a couple of men to carry the beast back to my temporary abode and, on the way, encountered a woodcutter, named Dharmsingh, who said if we crossed the river and went to the top of a hill he pointed out, we would be sure to see sambur. As it was quite a thousand feet down to the river from where we stood, and the same height up to reach this place, which looked quite two miles off, I suggested he should come and show the way, in order to find out if he himself believed what he had told us. To my surprise, he jumped at the proposal, so we told the coolies to take the serow on to the hut and come there in the evening to get some meat and their pay.

The woodcutter set off in front, and the shopkeeper, carrying my Paradox, brought up the rear. The way to this hill led through one of the rockiest nullahs I have ever been in, and the ground was slippery with snow and ice. We followed the bed of the stream for about a mile, and then Dharmsingh led straight up a bare scree, caused by a landslip.

This was terribly steep, so within a hundred yards of the top I had to call a halt to get my wind. Above the slip were a lot of holm-oak trees in which was a crowd of lungur monkeys, chattering loudly and much disturbed either at our appearance or at something in the jungle below them. In the grass under the trees was something dark-coloured, which I took to be a pig, but Dharmsingh said it was more likely to be another monkey.

At this moment a great noise broke out amongst the lungurs, and a leopard and a great monkey, scragging one another, came rolling down the hill towards us, a cloud of dust and shingle following them. With a cry of "Bagho (run), Sahib!" the man with the Paradox disappeared into the nearest bit of jungle, for he evidently thought the struggling creatures were going to bump into us.

When they passed, about four yards off, I let drive a bullet

into them ; they disappeared into the undergrowth below the slip and all was quiet, except for the rattling stones.

We could not tell what had happened, so I shouted for my gun and the man brought it. I asked why he had told me to run, and he denied having done so. He said he had only called out, "The tiger has come!" (Bagh aiya), which was rather a clever reply, but no explanation as to why he had bolted himself. He then made a profound salam, and said, "They are both dead." This was purely a figure of speech, for he could not have seen what had happened any more than I could, so I took the gun, which was loaded with buckshot, and proceeded to investigate with the aid of Dharmsingh climbing trees to see how far I could go, without being jumped by the leopard.

We got some fifty or sixty yards into the jungle when the monkey was seen, a picture of misery, holding both his sides, which were streaming with blood. The other man put the rifle down, shinned up another tree, and yelled out in high glee that he could see the leopard, quite dead, lying in the stream. He put his hands together and said he had a favour to ask, which was—might he have a shot at the leopard? I told him he was much too brave a man to shoot a dead animal, but handed him the gun, saying he could finish off the lungur, if he liked. This he promptly did. The bullet, which passed through the monkey, had entered the leopard's chest and penetrated his heart—a very lucky shot.

When we got back to the hut a heavy snowstorm came on, so I sent the two animals down to the village to be skinned under cover, and told my servant to get my food ready. He then confessed that he had tied up my spaniel within reach of the food-basket and all had been devoured, except the whisky, two eggs and a box of biscuits.

To show how quickly news travels in India, it may be mentioned that my servants in Naini Tal got word, the same day, that I had bagged a serow, and one of them came out through the heavy snow to ask for some of the meat. It had

all been divided before he arrived, so I made the ruffian, through whose carelessness I had lost my dinner and the next morning's breakfast, give up the portion he had annexed for himself, at which he looked much injured, but said nothing.

When the leopard's skull was being cleaned, I was surprised to find that two large leeches had taken up their quarters in the beast's nostrils, which must have caused it awful discomfort. It would be interesting to know how long leeches will remain up an animal's nose and how they are got rid of by wild beasts, for, once or twice, I have known one stick in a dog's nostril for several weeks before it could be caught, for at that time I was unaware that a five-per-cent. solution of chloroform in water, injected up the nostril, will almost invariably bolt any leech at once.

CHAPTER XL

HAWK-CATCHING—SHOOTING IN OUDH—THE HISPID HARE

SOON after arrival at Naini Tal, we had rather a quaint experience about a house.

The Lieutenant-general, who had given me my staff appointment, had told his A.D.C. to write and suggest that I should take over a bungalow, which was just being vacated by a friend of his, which he thought would suit us. This I was glad to do not only because it was diplomatic, but it also saved us the worry of house-hunting.

A few days after we had got in and unpacked most of our things, my Mrs. walked into my dressing-room and said a man had come in to say he had arranged to take half this house, so I had better go and talk to him.

I went into the drawing-room and found a rather dishevelled-looking individual seated there, who informed me he had expected to find half of this house ready for him.

I said I did not understand how that could be, as I had taken it over from the previous tenant and had signed an agreement with the landlord.

He explained that some weeks ago the previous occupant had written to him and asked if he would care to chum with him for the summer, as his wife was going home, but he had not definitely decided whether he was coming up to Naini Tal or not ; later on, he had written to say he would come, but had had no answer. I remarked that this was unfortunate, for nobody had told me about any proposed arrangement, and I would not have taken the house on such terms. I suggested he should go to an hotel, whilst he looked out for another bungalow.

He hastily informed me he could not afford the expense of an hotel (which was rather surprising, as he was in a much better billet than I was and drew about three times as much pay), nor did he want the bother of running a house for himself, as he would have to get a lot of servants.

He evidently wanted us to have the trouble of looking after him and doing for him with our servants—always a most unsatisfactory business in India, and especially so with a total stranger. I consulted with my better half, and she said we had better ask him to stay as our guest for a few days, whilst he looked about for some friend of his own to put him up. We showed him that our house was very small. A small dining-room, ditto drawing-room, one fair-sized bedroom, with dressing-room and bathroom attached, and another very small bedroom with bathroom was the extent of it, except for a verandah, which ran the length of the house and was glazed in at the end opposite our bedroom.

He looked the place over and said the little bedroom was big enough for him, and the end of the verandah would do for his office and for his native clerk to sleep in.

My Mrs. did not fancy this at all, for the clerk could look straight into her room, at any time, unless the curtains were drawn and this would shut out the light and air; but to oblige the man we agreed to try to fit in.

He accordingly moved in at once and filled the end of the verandah with his office-files and boxes. The first night at dinner, when asked what he would drink, he replied he always carried his own liquor, and produced a flask from his pocket, somewhat to our astonishment.

Next day, his Babu appeared, sat down opposite our bedroom door and made himself quite at home, coughing, clearing his throat and yelling to his chuprassies, or messengers, in the way his kind dearly love to do when they know they are making a thorough nuisance of themselves to Europeans, who do not like to object.

We stood this for a few days and, as the gentleman showed

no sign of departing, went to see if we could not get another house and leave our visitor in possession.

That evening, as luck would have it, he asked us what we had been doing, so we said we had been house-hunting, for we had found our little place was not large enough to hold him, his clerk and his office, as a permanency. He looked a bit taken aback at this, and again pleaded poverty as the reason for not having made other arrangements; so I told him our house was rented about the lowest of any in the station, and he could probably afford the rent of it better than we, especially as Government gave him an allowance for his office rent, which was considerably more than he proposed to give me for putting both himself and his office up. He did not make any reply to this, but instantly changed the subject.

Next morning, when I got back from parade and wanted breakfast, my wife told the table-servant to tell Mr. X. that breakfast was ready, when we heard for the first time that he had gone out and left word he would send for his personal and office belongings some time during the day.

Where he went I have not an idea, for he never wrote a line to say he was going, or even to thank us for having taken him in, though he left a pony in my stable, giving my groom a verbal message that he hoped I would look after it; so I told his man to take it away, and when he inquired where his master had gone, I told him he had better get on the horse and try to catch him up, which I suppose he did, for he too disappeared, and we never saw him or his master again.

But all the people we met were not of this style; most of them were very friendly and helpful. We got to know one family, who owned a big estate in Oudh, who were most sporting and hospitable. They came of a distinguished north-country stock, who had lost their land and money through having sympathised with the Stewarts; and the sons, instead of entering the service of foreign countries, as many in their unfortunate position did, had gone out to India as soldiers of fortune. An account of their adventures and vicissitudes has filled a book.

One of the young men asked me one day to give him leave to catch some hawks in my little game preserve, which he hoped to train. I much wanted to see how he set about it, so he came down to the cantonment and brought his bird-catcher. This fellow was carrying a bundle of sections of bamboo, which reminded one of a chimney-sweep's broom, and was used for catching the bait for the hawk.

The man first produced from his bag a sort of wooden fork, which he smeared all over with birdlime and fitted into the thinnest joint of bamboo. He then prowled about till he spotted a dove sitting in a tree. On this he put one section of the cane into another, just as if it were a fishing-rod, pushing it up between the branches till it was long enough to reach the bird, when he gave a flick and the dove stuck to the birdlime. The rod was then disjointed and the bird removed. It was then tied by the leg to a peg in the ground, and a little fence of well-lined twigs built round it. We sat down in the jungle a little distance off to await results.

Almost at once a great hawk seemed to appear from space, stooped at the struggling dove and got tied up by the twigs sticking to its legs and wings. The native ran forward, seized the screaming hawk and stuffed it into his bag.

These hawks are comparatively easy to train for hawking partridge, bustard and hares in the plains, but as they cannot stand heat, they have to be released when the hot season begins. I never saw them being trained or at work.

This boy's parents were both noted tiger-slayers, so I was delighted to receive an invitation to join one of their shooting-camps in rough, almost uninhabited country near the Nepal frontier. The party consisted of the old gentleman, his two sons, two officers of the Black Watch and several ladies. There were plenty of elephants for riding and for beating, and we first went after swamp-deer, of which my host had a famous preserve.

The ground where these animals were most plentiful was on an island formed by the Sarda river on one side and its old bed, which still contained a good deal of water, on the

other. On most parts of this island, which was about three miles long and two wide, the grass was eight or nine feet high, and was simply alive with deer. The elephants in line drove this along, and the deer just bolted like rabbits from bracken. No skill was required to shoot them ; the only difficulty was to kill one with a good head, before a hind or small one got in the line of fire.

We killed about ten in a very short space of time, but it was no sport shooting them, for they were not even cut up for meat and were soon a mass of heaving, struggling, repulsive vultures, a sad end for such beautiful animals. Yet, as our host told us, he believed over a thousand shootable stags harboured on this island ; if they were not kept down, his tenants at a distance would soon complain of their crops being ruined.

Some days we went after small game, and got plenty of pea-fowl, partridge, hares and a few lesser bustard. Shooting from a howdah was rather difficult at first, for it was as if one were standing in a heaving boat, but the motion was not so smooth. It was the snappiest of snap-shooting I have ever gone in for ; still, one soon got into it.

The hispid hare was quite common in this part of the country ; it is an extraordinary looking little animal, something the size and colour of an English rabbit, but heavier for its size. It has harsh, stiff hair like an Aberdeen terrier, and its legs are short. The meat is white, and quite good eating. The mahouts killed quite a number of them by throwing sticks at them as they darted out from under the elephants' feet.

Some people say this creature is the link between the guinea-pig and the rabbit, but it does not burrow.

With tiger we were unlucky, for only one was bagged ; but we killed two leopards, one of which was an excellent fighter. It was wounded first in the hind quarters, and got into a big patch of grass, and every time an elephant approached the spot where it was lying it charged like lightning, but never actually got home, for someone fired at the movement in the grass. At last, almost all its covert was trampled

out and it showed in the open, where it was promptly killed ; but when it was examined, there were only two wounds in it, the first and the last, though over fifty shots were owned to as having been fired at it.

Coming back in the train, I remarked how much I would like to have a go at the tiger in Nepal, whereupon my host said if I could get the pass to enter the country and let him arrange the party, he would ask guests, who would contribute elephants, and provide the camp paraphernalia, grub and liquor himself, so beyond my train-fare in getting to the starting-point and back, the trip would cost me very little ; but, he added, the pass would be very difficult to obtain, as the Nepalese authorities were very chary about giving them to any person, except royalties or very high officials.

A few years before, I had met the Prime Minister of Nepal, Sir Bir Shemsher Jung Rana, in Calcutta, when he was very interested to hear about the Gurkha regiments serving in Assam, and invited me to come and talk to him about that province, two or three times. When I said good-bye to him, he said if ever I wanted to shoot tiger, I had only to write to him and he would give me leave to come into his country and kill as many as I wanted to, so I did not anticipate much difficulty over the matter of the permit.

It may here be remarked that the Army regulations laid down that if any officer wanted to get a pass to enter that country, he was to apply to the Resident at Khatmandu, who is a British official.

I then wrote to Sir Bir Shemsher, reminded him of his promise and said what a favour I would consider it if he would let me go into his country with four friends and shoot a few tigers ; at the same time, to comply with regulations, I wrote to the Resident and told him I was applying for a pass. His answer was the first to arrive, and merely stated that he could give no assistance, from which I inferred that a captain in a marching regiment was not a sufficiently big bug to receive such a privilege.

Before my letter could have been considered by Sir Bir Shemsher, he had been assassinated, and a few days later his successor was deposed, so I was therefore surprised to get a pass from the Minister who had succeeded him, Sir Chandra Shemsher Jung, who is happily still the ruler of Nepal.

The letter forwarding this document is rather a curiosity, for it says: "With reference to your application to the late Prime Minister, Sir Bir Shemsher, I have the honour to state that it was favourably considered by his successor, Sir Deb Shemsher, who has now left Nepal, and I therefore have the pleasure to forward a pass for yourself and your friends to enter this country," and was signed, "Chandra Shemsher Jung Rana Bahadur, Prime Minister and Marshal of Nepal." It therefore bridges an interesting epoch of Nepalese history, besides giving permission for myself and friends to kill twenty tigers.

Prospects of sport looked rosy. However, just at that time, a new ruler of the British province adjoining the part of Nepal where we were going to shoot had just been appointed, and rumour gave us an inkling of what was likely to happen during his period of office as regards big-game shooting.

Still, we never imagined that anything could be done which would interfere with our sport before he actually had arrived, especially as the ground we were going to shoot over was outside British territory.

Nevertheless, we did get a foretaste of what was likely to happen, and, whilst this official was in power, it was made almost impossible for anyone to get a shot at a tiger except by the purest accident, and what was thought of the situation thus created was frequently and picturesquely expressed in many furious letters in both English and Indian sporting papers from men, who had spent their money and wasted their leave, to find all their efforts to get sport frustrated.

CHAPTER XLI**TIGER-SHOOT IN NEPAL—SPOILT BY AN OBSTRUCTIVE OFFICIAL**

HAVING got the pass to visit Nepal, the rest was easily arranged. My friend, Mr. H—, brought his son Dick, and asked, besides, a Mr. A—, a retired Revenue officer, who had come out to India for the cold weather to visit the scene of his former labours; also a police-officer, who was to bring with him twelve shikari elephants. A local Rajah was very anxious to help Mr. A— to have a good time, so lent him ten elephants. Another potentate, who was under many obligations to Mr. H—, contributed twenty-five more, so with Mr. H—'s own four beasts, we could count on having about forty elephants in line.

I got ten days' leave and went down to the Nepal frontier, within ten miles of which the first camp was pitched. Mr. H— met me at the frontier and said he would not be able to join us for two days, being unavoidably detained on business, but he gave me instructions where to go, all of which I wrote down, as except himself none of us knew the ground.

He said that he would be very much surprised if we had not got at least two tigers by the time he came out, as several very good shikaries were in our camp, all of whom had served him very well in the past.

The next morning our troubles began. The policeman's elephants, with the exception of the one he rode himself, had not arrived, and that one he sent for, saying he could not join our party as he was engaged in making arrangements for a Mahommedan festival, which would shortly be due.

This he must have known when he agreed to join the shoot, and at any rate he could have let us have some of his elephants, if not all of them, if he was not going shooting himself. If it

had not been for the loss of his elephants, I think we would have been quite pleased at his absence, for he bore the reputation of being a very jealous sportsman and a selfish one besides.

The country where we were going to shoot was quite flat, mostly covered with light tree-jungle, broken by many damp nullahs, in which grew the long, heavy "narkul" grass, where the tigers lay during the heat of the day, there being practically no other shelter for them. We mounted our elephants immediately after breakfast and set off to beat the nearest nullah, when to our surprise the shikari took it in the reverse direction to what Mr. H—— said he should, and posted Mr. A—— and myself, who were the stops, at the place we expected the beat would have begun.

As we approached the nullah we saw chital and hog-deer starting out of the grass, which looked as if something had disturbed them, and the beat came through without any tiger having been seen, though it had killed a tied-up buffalo calf close by that very morning, and was reported to be lying up in the "narkul."

In the next beat there were said to be no less than three tigers. Mr. H—— had told me the exact spot, at one side or other of the nullah, where the beast usually broke covert. It was marked by a small stream running into the main nullah under a big "pipal" tree. The shikari said he knew it well, so I ordered him to post us there.

We set off, and after going some distance he halted in some tree-jungle and said he had lost his way. This seemed extraordinary, as he was supposed to have been there that morning and tracked the tigers into the nullah. I remarked to Mr. A—— that it looked as if the shikari was up to some rascality, but he seemed to think the man really had missed his way. We pushed our way through the trees to the right place, the thirty elephants making a great noise in doing so, and of course found no tiger in that beat either.

Next day we moved to another camp, and were disgusted to find each place we beat or intended to beat, had either

been burnt before we got there or was set on fire, whilst we were in it, but saw no one who was likely to have done this, unless it were some of our own people.

When we returned in the evening, thoroughly disgusted, I was delighted to find Mr. H—— had arrived. He could not understand our bad luck, and scouted my suggestion that someone was deliberately trying to spoil our sport, for he said most of the natives in camp and round about had known him all their lives, and had never behaved in such a way before.

Next day we again moved camp to try fresh ground. The first beat was in some most promising covert, the old bed of a river full of cool, damp, shady places. Mr. A—— and myself, again being stops, were stationed at an open, sandy place, where any animal crossing would give one a certain shot. The line of elephants came up to us but nothing showed, not even a pig. The shikari then said he was sure there was no use in beating the rest of the jungle, as there was nothing in it, and suggested we should try another nullah, where he said a tiger had snarled at him that morning when he was going round to see if any of our baits had been killed.

Mr. H—— agreed, though he said we were leaving an excellent place untried, and told the man where to take and post us two stops. He started off, and after about an hour, in reply to a question as to where he was taking us, said he had not understood Mr. H——'s directions. This statement, coupled with the fact that whilst we were wandering about I had noticed absolutely fresh tracks of an elephant, through every bit of likely covert, convinced me there was some conspiracy afoot to spoil our sport.

When we all met again, a cowherd came running up and said he could show us a patch of jungle, in which a tiger had sat every day for the last three months.

This seemed to be the only genuine bit of information we had received up to date, so off we went to beat the place, but did not find the beast at home. "Never mind," said Mr. H——, "there is only one other spot where he is likely to be,

and I'll bet we see him there." I was delighted to hear this, for I could only stay one more full day, and was beginning to think that I should have to go back without having fired a shot.

We moved over to the place, and Mr. H—— said the tiger was there all right, so we had better have lunch and shoot him afterwards, as there would not be time for another beat that afternoon, as we had come so far from camp.

The luncheon-baskets were opened, but were not fully unpacked when we heard the crackling of fire close at hand. We got on our elephants, and soon discovered an attempt had been made to fire the jungle we were intending to beat. The "narkul" was green, so would not catch readily, so a large bundle of dry grass had been lit and thrown into it, which of course drove the tiger out at once.

I felt absolutely mad about this, and told Mr. H—— it could have been done by no one but our own shikaries, and was sure we would not have a dog's chance of getting anything, as long as they were with us. I repeated how, before he came out, they had beaten every place the wrong way, how they had pretended to misunderstand his orders and pointed out the perfectly fresh tiger-tracks at our feet, which the shikari must have seen, but had never drawn his attention to.

He admitted there was truth in this, so would send all the shikaries off next morning early, ostensibly to look at some distant ground, and so get rid of them that way, whilst he could see what information he could pick up by personal inquiry.

Soon after we got into camp it was reported that the old gentleman's own howdah elephant was dead lame, having spiked its foot whilst we were coming back, so we all went to have a look at it. The mahout was ordered to make the elephant lie down, and then Mr. H——, not seeing anything in the foot in which it was lame, took a hammer and tapped the sole all over till he hit on the exact place. He cut into the foot here and with a pair of pliers pulled out a green bamboo

spike fully six inches long, which had obviously been driven in on purpose to incapacitate the poor beast.

He was very angry at this, and told the mahout to take the elephant straight away to a place in the forest which was at least six miles from the nearest village, tie her up under a tree near some water and stay there till her foot was well. He was to take no rations with her, but cut green branches in the forest for her to eat.

The mahout was much perturbed at this order, for he had hoped to be sent back to Mr. H——'s place, where he could live in comfort and do no work. The man's face was a study ; he expostulated vehemently and said without her ration of flour, the animal would surely die, for of course he stole his own supply of flour from the amount allowed for his elephant.

Mr. H—— calmly replied, " If she dies you can bury her and come to me for your pay, and then I shall be able to get rid of you, which I have wanted to do for a long time."

He then explained to us that this was a very famous shikar elephant, so staunch that every Rajah round about wanted to buy her, but he had always refused to sell, consequently the mahout was bribed to dope her or gall her almost every time she was taken out on a shooting-trip, in the hope that Mr. H—— would get sick of her and let her go.

She was taken away that evening, but next morning the mahout returned to beg for mercy, saying he had sat on the elephant's back all night without once getting down for fear of the tigers and leopards, which swarmed in the forest all round where she was tied up ; but Mr. H—— was inexorable. He said he only wished the man would bolt, so that he could get a more reliable one in his place.

After the departure of this worthy and the shikaries, I began to feel that we might do some good the last day, and Mr. H—— said he thought our best chance was to look up the tiger we had heard of the day before, for he would be sure to have come back, as the jungle would not burn.

On the way there it was very amusing to listen to the way

he extracted information, for he thoroughly acted up to the principle of never asking a straight question from a native if a straight answer is wanted.

We saw a man attending some grazing cattle, so Mr. H—— stopped and asked to whom they belonged.

The cowherd replied that they were owned by two washermen in the nearest village.

“ They are very fine ones,” said Mr. H—— ; “ where are they kept ? ”

“ About three miles away from here.”

“ Do you live beside them ? ”

“ Yes, I do.”

“ When was it you went into Sonaripur and said you had seen a very large tiger hanging about your cowsheds ? ”

“ It was my brother, not I, who went, but I saw the tiger only this morning.”

“ Then come along with me and show me where you saw it.”

“ I cannot do that, for if I left my cows two leopards would instantly come and kill about thirty rupees’ worth of calves.”

“ Is there anyone you can get to look after them ? ”

“ That man might if you asked him to,” pointing out another cowherd esconced in a tree about a quarter of a mile off.

“ Then get on to my elephant and we’ll go and ask him.”

The man climbed up and Mr. H—— went over to the other, and said, “ Look here ! I am taking away your friend for a little, and you have to look after his cows till he comes back. If any of them are killed, I will send a big man from my camp who will beat your head into a jelly with his shoe,” and with that we set off to look for the tiger we had just heard of.

This was a lovely spot—a marsh covered with bright green vegetation, surrounded by forest, and in the middle of it was a small island covered with high grass. The elephants lined up along one end of it, with Mr. H—— and his son on the flanks, Mr. A—— and I going on to the far end. Almost as soon as the signal to advance was given, one or two of the elephants trumpeted, an almost sure sign of the presence of

a tiger, but, before the line had advanced very far, an old tusker got bogged, so Mr. H—— reluctantly recalled the line to avoid further accidents.

It was a magnificent sight to see all those huge creatures move slowly out of the dangerous part and file round the end of the marsh, their tusks gleaming in the sun and their dark bodies showing in sharp relief against the green trees. It was also an impressive thought that these animals, the mightiest of God's creatures, were one and all putting forth their vast strength and working for the pleasure of an insignificant mortal like myself.

The tusker kept rolling about, just like a ship in a storm, but eating steadily all the time, till he got himself clear and joined the others, seemingly no worse for his adventure. The disappointing part was that there was a tiger on the island and we had to leave it there and move on to what was for me the last beat of the trip. How I hoped it would not be blank!

The elephants moved across the old river-bed we had beaten the day before. There were no results from the first few patches of grass, and then we came on a much larger bit, terminating abruptly in a pool of water a hundred yards wide, so if this grass held a tiger, he would have to break along one bank or the other, for the water was quite deep.

A crocodile rose slowly to the surface, and as I was watching him, suddenly an elephant in the line began to make a curious little squeaking sound. My mahout said, "He always speaks like that when he smells a tiger."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when there was a mighty roar and rush in the grass. Some of the elephants screamed with rage, others trumpeted wildly with fear.

I saw Mr. A—— lean over his howdah and fire down into the grass below him, and then, under the far bank, an enormous tiger came bounding out along the edge of the pool. I fired and down he went, but immediately picked himself up and began crawling up the bank. The second barrel rolled him over again, and as he lay struggling on the edge of the water,

Mr. A—— gave him a shot, which finished him off. Mr. H—— then came up and remarked, "That is the two hundred and fifty-first tiger I have seen killed." He was my second one only.

The huge beast was then padded and we set off for camp. When measured he was over ten feet long between pegs, fifty-six inches round the chest and twenty-seven inches round the fore-arm. The first bullet had caught him behind the shoulder, the second had broken his back, and the last shot, fired by Mr. A——, had gone through his heart. When skinning him an old round bullet was found flattened against his ribs, a relic of some former encounter.

That night at dinner, when discussing our bad luck, Mr. H—— told us he had heard that a policeman we had asked to join our party had been extremely anxious we should not shoot over this ground, as he hoped to get a pass for it himself a month later; and when he discovered Mr. H—— was determined to go, he spoke to a relative of one of the Rajahs who was lending some of the elephants, and told him he did not want us to kill any tigers, for when he came to shoot himself, he would bring the future governor of the province with him, and if he had good sport, it would be to the great advantage of everyone who had a share in providing it. He actually had sent his own elephant the first day so that his mahout should spread this about amongst the shikaries and mahouts we were employing.

There is no doubt that many people attain success in life by judiciously licking the boots of the powers that be, but Manipur was the only place I have ever heard of where this was recognised as a good quality. There, however, the man who was most successful in pandering to certain of the old Maharajah's tastes was a high court official, rejoicing in the fine-sounding title of "Prince of Pimps."

So ended the only shoot I ever took part in in the Nepal Terai, with the small result of two tigers seen and one killed, out of the twenty we had permission to shoot.

CHAPTER XLII**A TIGER IN THE TERAI—WAZIRISTAN BLOCKADE, 1901-2—
PECULIAR OFFICERS**

JUST before my trip to Nepal, I had rather a curious experience with a tiger (if one may be considered to have an experience of anything one does not actually see) near Kaladhungi, a place at the foot of the hills, fifteen miles from Naini Tal.

I went there to stay with a forest officer who was very anxious to shoot his first tiger, and he had selected this spot because, three weeks previously, when fishing a little stream close by, I had seen a tigress and three nearly full-grown cubs walk across a bit of cultivation within two hundred yards of me early one morning, and unfortunately I had not a weapon handy.

There seemed to be no useful shikari in the neighbourhood, and all the information we could get from the villagers was of such an extremely sketchy nature as to be absolutely useless, though we did manage to pick up a leopard the first afternoon, more or less by chance ; so the next morning I took out an elephant and went with an orderly, who was a very useful man, to look for signs of tiger on my own.

About three miles from our camp a little stream flowed out of the hills between high, overhanging crags, and on the sand in its bed were the absolutely fresh " pugs " of a tiger, which had gone up the gorge not long before. We followed them some distance, till the space between the rocks got so narrow the elephant could go no further, so we got off and proceeded on foot.

Before very long we came to a place where the gorge opened out into a sort of amphitheatre about 150 yards wide, full of

trees and bushes and surrounded by steep, high cliffs. At the far end was a pool at the foot of a tiny waterfall, some ten feet high, and leaning from the pool to the top of the fall was a fair-sized dead tree, which had stuck there during the rains. From the appearance of the sand, we saw a tiger had drunk that morning, if not both of them, which lived in this quiet little spot, and they evidently used the dead tree as a ladder when they wanted to go up-stream. In fact, everything pointed to their being quite close to us at that moment, possibly watching us all the time, which was very exciting.

I accordingly went back to camp, leaving the orderly sitting in a tree at the mouth of the gorge in case the beast should come out in my absence, and told my host that if he would agree to sit up all night, it would be a practical certainty that one if not both of us would get a shot. It would have been rash to try and beat the place, for in that confined space someone would be pretty sure to get mauled or even shot.

I proposed to have one "machan" (native bedstead) fastened up in the tree, where I had left the orderly, and another in one of the trees close to the fall, where a buffalo could be tied up as bait, so after lunch we both set off with some men to prepare the places, taking along with us axes, ropes, and the bedsteads. On reaching the tree where the orderly was, we learnt that he had seen nothing, so my host stayed there to get his position fixed up whilst I went on to the top.

First of all we cut the dead tree, so that it fell into the pool and barred that way of egress, and whilst this was being done a tiger roared quite close to us, having been disturbed by the noise. He caused great consternation amongst the coolies, some of whom bolted at once, but I managed to get the two that remained to tie up the machan, and stood guard over them with my Paradox, but the beast did not show.

The buffalo was tied close to the pool within fifteen yards of the machan, and then we tossed for choice of places, which I won, choosing the top one, and was in position a

little before sunset. The mosquitoes were very fierce after dusk, so there was not much temptation to drowse, and it soon got too dark to see the tiger, unless he actually killed the buffalo, which showed up to some extent against the sand.

Soon after the light failed, the buffalo got very restless, although I heard no sound of the tiger moving; but after a while he lay down, so, as he was so close and the noise would wake me if he were attacked, I muffled myself up in a blanket and tried to get a bit of sleep. No shot came from the lower position, which was strange, as I was sure a tiger was on foot soon after dark, which had frightened the buffalo.

It had been arranged that an elephant should be sent for me at seven o'clock in the morning, and about that hour I heard it trumpet lower down the nullah, so got out of my tree and walked down to it. At the mouth of the gorge the sand showed that two tigers had walked out within ten yards of the other machan, so why they were not fired at was a mystery till I reached camp.

What had happened was this. My friend's wife, after she had had tea, thought she would like to sit up with her husband, but after about an hour the mosquitoes were too much for her and she wanted to go back, so naturally he had to go with her.

Having to get back to my work that day, I left immediately after breakfast. Two days afterwards, I got a letter to say that the wretched man, who had been sent to fetch in the buffalo, had been killed whilst he was untying it, and my host had sat up again and shot the tiger.

On receiving this news, I could not help thinking that if the lady had not come out the man's life might have been spared; or if I had been prepared "to incur a slight reprimand sooner than perform an arduous duty" and let the elephant wait or go back, while I sat a little longer, I might have killed the animal myself.

However, as my orderly said, the man's fate was written, and nothing I could have done would have altered it.

In April of that year I was appointed Deputy-assistant-adjutant-general, and the opportunity was seized by my servants to demand an increase of their pay on the ground that I had become a "General Sahib"; not that they proposed to do any more work on that account, but they soon realised their mistake—or, more probably, had never even thought that I had reached this exalted rank. For many months I was so busy learning all the ins and outs of my new billet that I had no time for much sport, except an occasional day's fishing, and as soon as I had learnt to know my district pretty well, I was transferred to Jubbulpore in the Central Provinces.

I had not been here six weeks before being sent to take part in the Mahsud-Waziristan blockade operations which, being on the north-west frontier, afforded different conditions of country, climate, and fighting from what I had been accustomed to on the north-east. The original idea of the show was to contain these tribesmen in their own hills because the Government of India did not want to send an expedition into the country; but before long it was realised that no passive blockade would prevent these sportsmen from raiding our territory or cutting up our patrols whenever they had a mind to do so, and therefore it was considered better to send columns into their territory and give them a little diversion in that way.

Soon after the show started, in which over 10,000 troops were engaged, and a good number of casualties had been incurred, a circular came round to say that His Excellency the Viceroy desired that the officers and men engaged should not consider themselves as being on active service. The object of this effusion no one could guess, unless it was to herald some weird new economy of depriving them of the free rations, clothing and other concessions always given to all ranks, other than officers, when in the field. Officers used to get no concession except free transport. Even if they wanted revolver ammunition they had to pay for it.

The leading Indian newspapers criticised this circular very severely, one going so far as to express the opinion that, because

the Viceroy had said, when he first came out, that he intended to have no expeditions in his time, he was now preparing to victimise the troops by pretending this so-called "blockade" was an ordinary peace operation. Feeling on the matter was so hot that at last His Excellency had to issue a disclaimer through his chief secretary writing to the paper to say it had never been his intention to deprive "the brave officers and men" of their just dues, but nothing was said about what the circular complained of was intended to mean. The man who was chiefly responsible for championing the soldiers' cause not being an official, and therefore not liable to be deprived of any office or emoluments, or be transferred to an unhealthy station as a punishment for his temerity, was struck off the viceregal invitation list, which doubtless did not affect his sleep or digestion for long, seeing that his efforts obtained for the troops all usual concessions during the campaign and a medal at the end of it.

Whilst the show was in progress, or just at the end of it, the Viceroy made a speech in Peshawur, in which he remarked that there had been unbroken peace on the frontier during his tour of office—a statement those who had been fighting in Waziristan throughout the winter did not concur in, for the Mahsuds had broken the peace many times, as is their invariable practice, when feeling possibly a bit bored; hence they have earned the reputation of being the most uncertain quantity of all the frontier tribes, a reputation they still do their best to maintain.

One seems to meet with more people in India possibly because one comes in closer contact with them, who have a standard for their own actions quite different from that they expect of others, and when their juniors see this, it goes a long way to slacken discipline, not to say create bad feeling, so does not tend to efficiency.

I once heard of a colonel who drew the allowance for a charger, but as he could borrow a horse from someone else, would not buy one for himself. At one time, this same officer used to dine in mess every night in plain clothes because he

did not want just then to go to the expense of getting a new lot of mess kit ; yet if one of his officers had a button or a bit of braid out of place, he would be down on him like a thousand of bricks.

It is a pity that no one had the courage to try dining in mufti, for it would have been very interesting to know what the C.O. would have said or done.

One general had a most peculiar idea of what was right as regards some pecuniary matters, although he was by way of being very religious. If he was visiting one of his out-stations when he was supposed to travel on warrant, he would borrow a conveyance from a man to whom he paid nothing and, at the end of his journey, take the warrant to the carriage contractor, sign the declaration that he had been provided with carriage, extract the amount from the man and let him recover it from Government, thus being nicely in pocket each time he did this journey.

This sportsman had two Australian kangaroo-hounds. He would take them out into the country for a few days, wound black-buck and run them down with the dogs. On his return he used to put in a bill to Government for expenses incurred whilst inspecting military roads in his district. He never sent in a report on any road, so it was a bit surprising it was never called for. Had any officer under his command done this sort of thing, he would probably have had him tried by court-martial.

Even when the old man's daughter was married, he would not buy the champagne from a wine-merchant, but got, from the Commissariat, the stuff supplied to hospitals, so that he could escape paying the duty, and then published an order that a case of hospital comforts was to be sent to a certain station, thus getting it conveyed at Government expense. As one of the wedding-guests remarked, " Poor bridegroom ! Still poorer guests ! "

No wonder, when such things occur, the pay people ask all sorts of questions about bills sent in to them for payment, but

they never seemed to dispute any of this old man's, except once, and that was on an occasion when he took his son, who was on leave, with him as his European servant. His staff officer had signed the warrant for so many third-class tickets for his native servants, and the general altered it without telling him. Later a question was asked as to what was the name of the European servant who had travelled on warrant number so-and-so, the staff officer answered that there was no European servant on the warrant. The warrant was then sent for his inspection, so he took it to the general for him to explain direct. He was very angry about it, but I never learnt how he settled the matter.

One of the finest soldiers I ever served under was the commander of the column I accompanied in Waziristan. He was a splendid man to look at, a first-class swordsman, as brave as a lion and an excellent leader of men. He was always to be seen where the firing was hottest, and met his death through exposing himself when some of his men were held up, whilst attacking a tower full of riflemen. Nothing ever ruffled him ; he never used bad language, and was always strictly just and fair.

The utter desolation of the outposts in the Gumal, Kurram and Tochi passes along the border I shall never forget, and was thankful that I had not to serve permanently on that frontier, as in those days some units had to do. Little forts along the road from which one could not move beyond rifle-shot without an escort, practically no games, very little society of one's own kind and scarcely any sport. Places where the occupants used to come out from sheer boredom, if a conveyance was passing, to see who was in it. The steep hillsides, strewn with huge rocks and boulders, which reflected the heat of the sun till one felt as if one was in an oven ; no grass, few trees or bushes ; almost no water, and much of what there was so impregnated with saline as to be almost undrinkable without disaster to one's inside. A district where there was seldom a drop of rain to lay the dust.

Yet the gallant officers of the old " Frontier Force " never grumbled, and were justly proud of their service in that forlorn country ; and well they might be, for they spent their time with their lives in their hand.

As a stranger one soon noticed, when going up the road with an escort, how the men were always prepared for instant action and how their eyes flickered over every rock, ridge or scar that could harbour a sniper, which shewed the excellence of their training.

But when one entered the Mahsud hills, how the scenery changed ! Here were miles of grassy uplands, fields of cultivation, terraced so as to get full benefit from every drop of water ; here and there small pine woods, or groves of cactus and " majra " palm, used for making sandals, and fortified villages, each with its tower or two, dominating all approaches. One felt that one was in a country of warriors. The houses were built of mud with flat mud roofs, the towers were sometimes of stone, almost solid masses except for the room at the top, which had a covered gallery round it loop-holed for musketry, and every man had a rifle which he was prepared to use on the slightest excuse.

CHAPTER XLIII**A DAY'S FIGHTING ON THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER**

I WILL now endeavour to describe a day's operations against the Mahsuds, as I have said hitherto precious little about fighting in these mixed recollections.

Our column had gone in from Datta Khel, a post at the top of the Tochi Pass. We were taking part, with three other columns, which had entered the country from different directions, in a combined effort to round up the enemy's cattle, of which they had vast herds. After a few days' advance and a little scrapping, we had reached a point from which the officer commanding was of opinion we might be able to make a push, and if not mop up many cattle ourselves, at any rate, we might drive them into the arms of one or other of the columns working with us.

"We ought to come up with the cattle in the morning, and there are a few towers in the far valley we shall have to blow up. I think 600 men will be enough for the job, and we will take one of the guns, too; issue orders accordingly. March at seven; that should bring us up to the pass by eight." This was what my chief said to me one evening.

Next morning we paraded in the dark and bitter cold, outside the village we had taken the day before, and marched off at a little after seven o'clock with two companies of Punjabis in front, and four companies of Gurkhas in rear, with the seven-pounder screw-gun in the middle. Slowly we struggled up a dry, stony water-course and then struck along a kind of path on the south side of the valley, the chickore, or hill-partridges, calling all around us as the day began to dawn,

and numerous covies were flushed by the scouts and flankers, as they pushed their way through the stunted ilex trees and bushes with which the rough hillside was covered.

Suddenly, a mile away, the pass over the ridge on our left was lit up by the sun, and we saw two camels crossing. "We shall have to step out if we want to catch them," said the C.O. and step out we did. So far, not a shot from the flankers or at us. Why was this? We knew the enemy was on the alert, for his piquets were here and there visible on the hills in front.

The reason was soon forthcoming. On crossing the ridge, far away we could see herd upon herd of cattle, sheep, and goats being driven off, but so far away that it would be hopeless to try and overtake them. As they seemed to be heading in the direction we wanted them to go, our C.O. decided to search all the nullahs around and capture those which were certain to be hidden in them. Three towers were also visible comparatively close to, the nearest on the river-bank about a mile distant, and these would have to be dealt with.

We halted on the ridge to allow the force to close up, and what a magnificent sight met our eyes! Below us lay miles of grassy uplands surrounded by hills, where till probably the day before thousands of cattle had been grazing, and here and there was a little wood, or a fortified village with its towers. To the west was the snow-clad peak of a mountain some 11,000 feet high, and to the south a mighty range named the "Takht-i-Suliman" (Throne of Solomon), while in the valleys below the rays of the morning sun had not yet dispersed the rolling mist.

We now started for the nearest tower. Covering parties were sent out to protect the sappers with their explosives, and then the tribesmen could be seen creeping slowly along to those points from which they hoped to be able to harrass the men engaged on the work of demolition. Weird-looking creatures they looked when seen through a powerful glass, with their long beards and dark-coloured clothes, their rifles and swords occasionally flashing in the sun, as they crept from

bush to bush and rock to rock, often to find our men had forestalled them in the places they hoped to reach.

This tower was found to be unoccupied, so was soon ready for destruction, as we could tell by the sappers running back from it. In a minute more it cracks asunder with a dull report, and settles down in a dense cloud of dust.

Across the valley lie two others. Will we be able to reach them before the enemy can do so? It seems improbable, for already we hear the "thump, thump, thump" of the war-drums, and we have spent more than an hour in getting out the flankers and blowing up the first one. Down we plunge with the advance-guard into the river-bed, 500 feet below, and climb slowly up the far bank, which is almost precipitous.

Just as we reach the top comes a "Crack, crack, crack!" "Pht, pht, pht!" which shows we are not going to settle the next business so easily. The Punjabis, who are with us, extend at once like a handful of peas thrown on to a table, and return the fire—a most inspiriting sight. The piquets on the flanks are also busily engaged.

Still, we must push on and occupy the hills beyond the towers, or the demolition will mean unpleasant work, if the enemy can hold the village in strength before we reach it. They had evidently taken away almost every man to escort the cattle, or they would be holding it more strongly now. A few little caches of sheep and goats have been discovered, which have to be brought along with the main body, and are rather a hindrance to rapid movement; but the advance guard pushes on and seizes the hill, which overlooks those surrounding the small plateau on which the village stands.

We get up there, at first with only some 30 men, and the C.O. says with a grin, "I am afraid we had to rush a bit to get here before the enemy, but now we have the place all right we will rest a while and let the main body close up."

So we sit down and have a look round. A mile behind us is a large heap of rubble which a short time ago was a tower, and round it is a fair amount of stuff blazing. The flankers

are continuously engaged and in front of us, 700 yards off, are some small stone sungars (parapets).

I wonder if they are occupied, but a very sharp crack on a stone by my side soon convinces me on that point.

“Line of fire,” says my orderly, which I take to mean he thinks I am in it, so shift a bit to one side and, as I do so, “smash” comes another bullet. “Limit four,” remarks the Punjabi native officer sitting beside us, so I gather they refer to a man with a Lee-Metford rifle, who is trying to amuse himself at our expense. I look amongst the sungars with my glasses and spot an object which looks suspiciously like a puggree, then slowly a rifle-barrel is pushed over the stones and “swish!” comes another bullet; so I take a man’s rifle and put a shot on to that puggree, the owner of which either departs or else he has been hit, for he does not fire any more.

The sappers have now come up, and as they and their escort approach the tower, they are greeted with a shower of bullets which, beyond wounding one sepoy slightly, did no further harm, and, a second or two afterwards, every spot from which a puff of smoke appeared is literally a hopping mass of dust from our bullets.

1,500 yards or more away is a ridge covered with trees from which comes a continuous roll of drums; turning the glasses on to this, we see, in an open space, two hundred at least of the tribesmen, dancing and waving their swords, which sparkle in the sunlight. They are stimulating one another to deeds of valour. Our gunner subaltern, however, is not asleep, for he promptly puts a shell into the dancers, who abruptly scatter, but whether any damage has been done it is rather too far to see.

The Gurkhas of the main body have not been idle either, for their colonel signals over to say they have collected about a couple of hundred more goats from the adjacent nullahs.

It is now past one o’clock, and when these two towers, like the first, have gone up in dust and flame, the C.O. says it is time to retire to our last camp, and that it will be better to do so by way of a ridge instead of down the valley we came

up, as, though this makes the distance longer, the ground is much more suitable for the movement. Orders are therefore signalled to all concerned and the retirement commences. The piquets still in position hold their ground till all the force has passed through, the main body piqueting any ground further along from which accurate fire could be brought to bear on the column. The C.O. and staff remain with the rearguard, from which the column takes its pace, to see all the piquets come in.

This is the moment the enemy have been waiting for. Our progression is necessarily slow, for every bit of ground from which we could be sniped has to be denied to the enemy, some wounded have to be carried and the captured animals have to be driven, so the Mahsuds have plenty of time to collect under cover along our route ready to occupy any ground as soon as it is evacuated by a piquet, so a continuous fire goes on, with the gun getting in a helping shot now and again.

It is an inspiring scene to be taking part in and, although we have been told we are not to consider ourselves as being on active service, it does not seem to be a bad imitation of it, for now and then one feels as if one of those spitting bullets, which come so unpleasantly close, will find a billet in one's own person. It will be dark before we reach camp, therefore, while it is yet light, we helio' down and ask them to piquet the last mile or so in. And so we go on, shooting and being shot at, till we reach the first camp piquet just as it gets dark.

The enemy now ceases to follow up, and evidently wishes to replace his stock of ammunition, for we see in the distance torches moving over the hills our piquets have occupied, and conclude he is searching for the empty cartridge-cases and any full rounds, which may have been dropped by our men. In those days a full round was worth a rupee on the frontier, and even fired ones had their value for reloading—a fact Government took some time to realise, but, when it did, orders were issued that all cartridge-cases were to be returned to store

after musketry or field-days, whilst if a full round was lost, there was no end of an inquiry about it.

I remember well on one occasion when a sentry fired at a man approaching his post in cantonments, who had not answered his challenge, there was more fuss made about accounting for the round than there was about finding out why the man had loosed it off.

We reached camp that night with very healthy appetites and, soon after, some of the captured mutton did not taste amiss. The Gurkhas were evidently of the same opinion, for they seemed to sit up most of the night preparing, cooking and eating the mutton—a favourite practice of theirs when a sumptuous feast is to be had for nothing.

CHAPTER XLIV**MARKHOR AT SHEIK BUDIN**

FOR some reason the Indian Government has always been very much averse from occupying Waziristan, possibly because it is considered that the Waziris and Mahsuds would be constantly giving trouble to the administration ; but it would seem to be a much simpler plan to control the country from inside than to maintain a lot of troops along the border to guard against raids, with an expensive expedition every few years.

The so-called blockade of 1901-2, as soon as the active operations began, was conducted in a series of counter-raids for ten days or so at a stretch from different points ; on the conclusion of which the troops came out and were kept at various places along the frontier, ready to dash in again when ordered. This gave the Mahsuds time to cogitate over matters, and decide when they had had enough of being hunted about from pillar to post.

In the intervals between the raids it was possible to get a few days' leave and, as I had never shot either an oorial or a markhor, a favourable opportunity seemed to have occurred for trying to do so. The straight-horned markhor is a large kind of wild goat which inhabits the steep, low ranges of hills along the right bank of the river Indus, and is fairly numerous in the vicinity of Sheikh Budin, a small sanatorium lying at an altitude of 4,000 feet between Dera Ismail Khan and Bunnoo.

The ground it inhabits is bare, except for a few stunted bushes and wild olive trees, so it is not a difficult beast to find, though to approach within shot of it when found is quite another matter, owing to the precipitous ground it frequents.

The horns are straight and twisted like a screw, but in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Budin seldom exceed 24 in. in length, so do not form a very imposing trophy. In Waziristan they run considerably larger, and I saw heads on ziarats (holy places) in villages of 40 in. or more, measured along the straight.

After careful inquiry, I found the only place where I could go with a reasonable chance of getting one without giving a lot of trouble over an escort, was Sheikh Budin, about 20 miles away from the headquarters of our force. My general, who commanded the expedition, got a local Nawab to arrange for a shikari, who met me at the foot of the hill, where I left my pony. This individual said my servant and kit had better go up to the rest-house by the mule-road, whilst he and I took a short cut straight up the hill, as we might have a chance of seeing some game.

We started up a dry water-course, which was terribly rough going for about four miles, and then struck a grass-cutters' path, which zigzagged up the hillside for some distance. The ground was almost bare of trees, and in places where there had been landslips it was devoid of any kind of vegetation. In other places there was a certain amount of short, dry grass, and amongst the rocks were a few stunted olive-trees.

Near the top of this path we startled a markhor kid of about a year old that was lying under some overhanging cliffs. A funny little beggar he was, a typical goat in appearance, and as he stood quite still he gave ample opportunity for me to examine him through my glasses. He seemed much annoyed at being disturbed, but did not seem to be much frightened, for he just ran up on to a ledge of rock where he could get a better view of us, and stamped his little forefeet and barked for a good minute without making any attempt to run away, till we moved on.

Further on we came on a herd of five does with two small bucks, which afforded a good chance for comparing them with the ground on which they lay, both with the naked eye and

through glasses, so that there should be no difficulty in spotting others.

After watching them for some little time, we decided to push on, as I wanted to get my kit unpacked before dark and get some rest, so as to be able to make an early start next morning.

We reached the little station about five o'clock. It was an extraordinary-looking place consisting of perhaps a dozen houses all unoccupied at this time of year, built round a hollow on the top of the hill. In this hollow were four or five concrete reservoirs to catch the rain-water, a racquet-court and a small library, in front of which was a tennis-court.

The drinking-water had all to be brought up on donkeys from Pezu or Paniala, each about 11 miles off at the foot of the hill, as there is no spring nearer. Everything was covered with reddish-brown dust, there not having been a drop of rain for over six months. Next morning the shikari brought along with him two strange-looking men, who earned their living during the summer by carrying water from the reservoirs to the houses, and earned enough in the six months people lived there to keep them in idleness the other six. They were paid at the rate of about a penny a journey. They expressed themselves as being desirous of helping me to get a markhor.

We started out about seven o'clock, passing the little cemetery, of which the occupants seemed to be mostly English children, then eastward down to a little pond, now almost dry, where it was said the markhor sometimes came to drink. North from here ran a deep, wide nullah with high crags on the east side of it.

Some considerable distance below us stood a young markhor on a big stone, motionless as a statue, with the morning sun shining full on him. The elder coolie, a ruffian with a blind eye, remarked that where he was, there was generally quite a big beast, so he was sent down the left side of the ravine to see if he could spot him, whilst the shikari and I went along the near side from which we could search the ground opposite.

On getting to a suitable place we lay down to have a look round, and the shikari pointed out a large animal lying under a bush within 300 yards of us. He was very grey, and his coat seemed much longer than I expected. His horns were very thick, but not more than 24 in. in length; still, as the shikari assured me he was as big as any we were likely to find, I thought I might as well try to get him. It was no use attempting to get down to him, for he would have gone off the moment we showed ourselves over the edge of the cliff, and although I had a Lee-Metford rifle, I did not care to take the shot at that range, so asked where the old coolie was, in order that he could be sent to drive the markhor up towards me.

The shikari said he was lying under a big rock, which he pointed out. I could see the rock well enough, but it took some time to pick up the man, even with glasses, though he was well within 800 yards of us.

I then appreciated why it was so difficult to see the Mahsuds when we were hunting them. This man was lying on his face in the shadow of the rock, and his dirty clothes exactly harmonised with the colour of the ground, so that he looked just like a lump of earth.

The markhor now got up, walked leisurely along the face of a small landslip and disappeared into a ravine not far from the coolie, who I presumed had seen him, for he still remained motionless. Thereupon I told the shikari to go down into the big nullah and signal to the man to come down the small one, and then I thought the markhor would turn on seeing the shikari below him and come up towards me. To make certain he understood what was wanted, he was made to repeat these instructions before he went off.

He disappeared behind the rocks, and had gone possibly a quarter of a mile when he began shouting at the coolie, who, not hearing what he said, got up and began to yell back. Watching the pair of them through the glasses, I felt nearly mad with rage.

At last the coolie apparently understood something, and

went into the ravine just as the markhor came down it, almost on top of him, on which he nearly fell down with surprise. The whole incident would have been laughable if it had not been so annoying. I signalled to the men to come up, and of course the shikari, like all natives, said he had not understood what was wanted. He was then sent to find out which way the animal had gone.

In half an hour he returned and said he thought he knew, so after some fearful climbing we came to another place overlooking a steep hillside. Below us were several females and young ones, feeding on the bushes and trees about half-way down the slope, but there was no sign of the buck. It was strange to observe that some of the markhor had climbed the trees and were feeding on branches ten feet or more above the ground; others were standing on their hind legs and reaching up to nibble the shoots, whilst some were playing about and butting at one another, just like tame goats.

While I was watching them the shikari moved off to see if he could find anything for me to go after, and before long returned to say there was a good beast lying down about a 1,000 yards away, which would involve a considerable détour to get within shot of it; so we started off, but had not gone far before a whistle from one of the coolies recalled us, and from the signs he made it was assumed that the beast we were after had moved. Going up to him and looking over the edge of the cliff, we saw at an angle of 45° and nearly 200 yards below, that two good bucks were feeding in an open space.

The shikari was of opinion that I would not be able to get any nearer, so I took a steady shot at the nearer one and saw the bullet strike a little beyond him. The echo made them think that the shot had been fired from the other side, as the beast I had missed, with several females, came running up the steep rocks towards us. They stopped, sheltered by a clump of ilex bushes 100 yards away to look about them, and in a few minutes continued the ascent. The buck I had missed jumped on a projecting rock to have a last look, and

it was his last, for a bullet caught him and down he went, bumping and crashing to the bottom of the cliff, where I felt sure he would be found smashed to atoms.

A shout now warned me that the second one was coming up, and I saw him ascending a place which looked as steep, and to have as much foothold on it, as the side of a house. I let him get clear of the top before firing, but he carried on after the shot and vanished at once amongst the rocks.

The shikari swore he was hit, and soon found blood, and we got the beast within a mile quite dead, much to the men's disgust, as they were thus unable to cut its throat to make the meat lawful. His horns were a trifle under 24 in. The coolies then went down to bring up the first one killed, and unfortunately his horns were all smashed to pieces, for they were the better pair.

I had read in many books that the smell of an old markhor was very strong, but there was no unpleasant odour about these, though both were old, and the bit of meat I ate was quite palatable, if somewhat tough. What was peculiar about them was the fact that their hoofs were not hard, but more of the consistency of india-rubber, and they had tough, hairless cushions on their chests and knees, like camels have.

On the way back I asked the men if the markhor really did eat snakes, for this is what his name implies, and one of them said he had never actually seen one do so, but his uncle had once killed a markhor, many years ago, which had the head and part of the neck of a snake sticking to its shoulder, and he supposed it had eaten the rest, which was not much proof of the markhor being a snake-eater.

I stayed two more days at Sheik Budin, but though I saw over a hundred markhor, there was none with a larger head than that I had got, so I did not fire another shot, thereby causing my retinue to consider themselves done out of a feast of meat ; but it was most interesting to see the animals and watch their habits.

I also went for one day towards Paniala after oorial (wild

sheep), but only saw five, none of which was good enough to shoot. They were particularly game-looking, high in the fore-quarters with coats like deer, the only thing at all resembling a sheep was the head. These were the only live oorial I ever saw, for I never was stationed in any place near which they were to be found.

CHAPTER XLV

A MILITARY POLICEMAN RUNS "AMOK"

DURING one of the lulls in the Mahsud operations, a lot of us were sitting together one night after mess, and regaling one another with our experiences in different parts of the world, as soldiers usually do, but one officer had remained silent and did not seem inclined to say anything, though he put away his liquor all right. After a while, as the conversation began to flag, he was asked whether, during the five years he had spent in Burma, he had never had an experience, which would interest us, so he started :

"Some years ago I joined the military police, which, as everybody knows, after the 1887-9 campaign was the great refuge of the destitute who, as they could not hope to rake in a breast-full of medals and decorations, expected, at any rate, to amass a good few shekels. I had just taken over the command of one of the Upper Burma battalions which, while on service, had rendered a continuously good account of itself, but in cantonments left a lot to be desired in the way of discipline. This was hardly surprising, as many of the men who had come to it from the regular Indian regiments had two or three defaulter-sheets apiece.

"One of these warriors was a very fine specimen of a trans-frontier Pathan, named Bostan Khan, who had been broken as a non-commissioned officer in his former corps, and hoped to retrieve his fortunes by taking service with the police in Burma, like many others of his kind.

"Unluckily for him, he had become seriously enamoured of a young Japanese girl who, with several others of her nation, lived in the Yoshiwara, in the bazar of the place in which we

were quartered, and he was terribly jealous of the way in which she distributed her favours to others.

“ In order to give you an idea of what ensued, it is necessary to describe how this ‘ abode of bliss ’ was situated.

“ It lay on the outskirts of the bazar, in the middle of a row of houses about a hundred yards long, facing an open piece of level ground, on three sides of which was fairly thick jungle. At right-angles to the houses, and from each end of them, ran two roads, which led to the civil part of the station, half a mile distant, and behind these civil lines were the barracks of the regulars and the military police.

“ One bright moonlight night after a guest-night at mess, we were all sitting outside and were just thinking of turning in, as it was getting fairly late, when a rifle-shot rang out from the direction of the bazar, followed by another and another.

“ We all sprang to our feet and ran as quickly as we could in the direction of the firing, when we met several unarmed sepoys running down the road towards their barracks.

“ They told us that Sepoy Bostan Khan had murdered his Japanese flame in a house adjoining the Yoshiwara, and had got his rifle and bandolier, with forty rounds of ammunition, and shot several men who had attempted to interfere with him, saying he would treat anybody else who came near him in the same manner.

“ We instantly went back to the lines, turned out two companies of the police and sent word to the regular regiment, the inlying piquet of which was already under arms. It was at once decided to form a cordon round the bazar and open patch, to prevent the murderer escaping into the jungle and, if he refused to give himself up, to shoot him on sight.

“ I ran up the right-hand road of the two previously mentioned followed by my men, who having lined the back of the bazar, extended to surround half the open ground under cover of the jungle, the regulars taking the other half of it.

“ As Bostan Khan belonged to my crowd, I walked a few

yards nearer the house in which he was said to be and called on him by name to surrender. His answer was a bullet, which struck the ground within a yard of me. I naturally took cover behind the nearest tree and called on him again to give himself up, adding that if he did not do so we would fire into the house till he was killed.

“ ‘ Fire away, sahib, ’ ” was his reply ; “ ‘ you won’t do me any harm as this house is made of mud, and your shots will only kill the bazar women in the others. ’ ”

A few yards in front of me lay the dead bodies of two sepoys he had shot at first, and a little further on, nearer the houses, lay a third man also dead.

“ At this moment our political officer, who had followed me in the hope of being of some use, said, ‘ If you can keep his attention fixed, I will go round and try to stalk him through the other houses with my revolver. ’ So, when I had given him time to get started on his perilous journey, I called out :

“ ‘ Bostan Khan, I will come and take you myself. ’ ”

“ ‘ Come along, sahib ! ’ he replied.

I sprang out from behind the tree and jumped back more quickly, for he fired instantly, and I managed to draw three or four shots more in this way by jumping out and back, and calling on men who I knew were not present to follow me, for I did not want to get anyone hit who was there, till the result of the political’s scheme was seen.

“ The murderer now began to get suspicious, as there was no attempt made to rush him, and he either heard or imagined he heard someone coming near him, for he yelled out, ‘ Anyone coming near me will soon be dead ! ’ ”

“ He stepped out from behind the balcony of the upper storey in which he had been taking cover, into the room, as if to look for someone, and as he returned I tried a shot with my pistol, but all the effect it had was to draw another bullet from him. I then began to revile him in the hope of getting him to stand up, or at least of keeping him where he was till dawn, of which the first streaks were already visible.

“ He never moved, but cursed me and my ancestors back to the remotest generation with a string of opprobrious epithets which in fluency and virulence I have never heard equalled, either before or since.

“ During this flow of language there was a sound as if someone had tripped and fallen in the room behind, and then the man made a rush at the door and struggled to try and force it open. At last he succeeded in doing so, when there was the muffled sound of a shot inside and we all rushed forward and some got into the house.

“ On climbing the little stair and going into the front room, I saw by the light which came in from the balcony the political officer standing with his revolver in hand, looking down on the huge Pathan, who was simply spouting blood from a wound in his throat, and beside him lay the body of the little Japanese harlot, which was absolutely cut to ribbons.

“ What had happened was this. The plucky little political had actually succeeded in getting into the room unheard, when he tripped over the body of the girl. He had hoped to be able to get across the room and shoot the man in the balcony, but his fall prevented this and he had only just time to reach the door and try to close it, before the other got there. This door opened with the hinge on the left-hand side of anyone stepping through it on to the verandah, which was a great piece of luck, for it prevented the sepoy from putting his rifle to his right shoulder without exposing the whole of his body to anyone inside the room, and he evidently never thought of taking the rifle in his left hand or of firing through the door itself. He therefore tried to force it back and push his assailant over, and finally succeeded in doing so.

“ Feeling he could not hold his own much longer against the superior weight of the Pathan, the political put his revolver round the door and pulled the trigger, but the cartridge missed fire and next moment the man was in the room. The next round went off with the result already described.

“ Surely the Victoria Cross has been given for less cool and plucky deeds.

“ The hard lines were on the girl, for she had often said she would live with the man if he would keep her entirely, but he would not go to the expense, though he wanted her to give up her only means of livelihood—so very like a Pathan.”

CHAPTER XLVI**A CONJURING OFFICER—INDIAN JUGGLERS—THOUGHT-READING**

ONE afternoon I was sitting in the office of the Base camp, doubtless struggling with some important problem, when a young officer walked in to report his arrival. He said he was passing through on his way to join one of the regiments along the frontier, and asked, as his tent and servant had not yet come along, if there was any place where he could get dinner and a shake-down for the night. As he seemed quite a nice-mannered lad, I told him I would be very glad to put him up myself.

He was very grateful, asked what time dinner was and whether he should bring his cards. I replied that he could certainly bring cards if he wished, but I did not think those in our mess were marked. To which he returned, "I thought you had invited me because you knew I was a conjurer." I assured him that I had never heard of his talents, nor did I know his name even till he wrote it in the arrival and departure book, but we would be very glad if he would amuse us a little.

When we had assembled for dinner, having told the general that a guest was coming who was a conjurer, I took the boy up to introduce him. The old man said: "I hear you are going to show us some card tricks, so hope you have brought your cards." The boy replied, "Yes, sir, but you seem to have a good many here," stooped down and pulled an interminable string of them out of the bottom of the general's left trouser-leg, much to everyone's astonishment.

During the meal he played various tricks with the cutlery and glass, one of which was to hit a wine-glass with his forefinger so that it sprang into the air, turned over and landed on its base in its original position on the table.

After the cloth was removed he did other extraordinary things, amongst them picking up four ping-pong balls by placing his hand over them, without bending his fingers, when they stuck to his palm.

Once in our own mess a planter used to juggle with billiard balls, and he could palm one, pretend to swallow it, and then pull it out of his mouth. On seeing this, one of our fellows remarked, "Anyone could do that," picked a ball off the table and rammed it into his mouth, and there it stuck. It filled his mouth entirely; he could not get it out and was completely gagged.

I shall never forget his face or contortions, whilst the doctor was getting a couple of spoons with which to lever the ball out. We laughed till our sides ached, and could see the wretched man was getting madder and madder.

My guest did another trick which everybody thought very wonderful, and as it is the only one that I ever discovered the working of, I cannot resist describing it. He asked for a common earthenware bowl, told the general to break it and give him back a fair-sized piece. When he got this, he took a bit of charcoal and drew a Swastika on the broken piece, which he then put on the ground. He next asked the general to grind it up with his heel, and hold his hand over the fragments. When this was done, he stooped down, caught hold of the general's hand, turned it over and we all saw the Swastika imprinted on the palm.

This was manifestly worked by the conjurer putting his thumb on the Swastika as he placed the potsherd on the ground, and simply transferring the mark to the general's palm as he turned his hand over—a trick so simple anyone can do it straight away.

Speaking of conjurers, one hears of and sees some very queer things done by natives of India, particularly the famous rope-trick, which is said to consist of throwing a rope into the air, where it remains upright. The performer sends a boy up the rope, who disappears, and then follows him himself

with a knife. Bits of human flesh then shower from the sky, the conjurer descends, hauls down the rope and calls the boy, who appears from amongst the audience.

One reads of this trick, but never meets anyone who has seen it done.

The basket trick I once did see performed on board a ship lying in Calcutta.

The man had an oval basket under four feet long, with the sides curving in towards the opening. He made a small boy get inside and covered all with a cloth. He took a sword and thrust it several times sideways through the basket, from which issued fearful screams, and blood dripped from the sword.

The performer then stood inside the basket, stamping the cloth down to the bottom, got out, pulled away the cloth, and there was no sign of the boy, who was then called and appeared from somewhere else. Except for the appliances being so simple and the surroundings not being prepared in any way, this trick was nothing like so good as Maskelyne and Cook's "vanishing lady."

I have often seen men drive iron spikes through their arms or necks and even through their cheeks and tongues, and have put my finger on the flesh to feel the point come through. There was no deception about this, the incomprehensible thing being that there was no blood from the wound.

A tea-planter, who had lost his leg and wore one of those new-fashioned framework limbs, played a fine game with an itinerant snake-charmer and conjurer. The man produced a very large cobra, piped to it and made it sit up, when the planter gave it a slight kick with his false foot.

The snake-charmer said, "Don't do that, Sahib; the snake will bite you, for it has its fangs." He did it again and the snake made a savage lunge at him, catching him just above the ankle. It nearly stunned itself with the force of the blow against the hard substance of the leg, and lay wriggling, till its owner picked it up and returned it to his basket, telling the Sahib he would be sure to die.

“Never mind about that,” was the reply; “show us something better than your cobra.”

After some more of the usual tricks, the conjurer bared his forearm and pushed a metal spike through. The planter, without a word fetched a broken polo-stick, sharpened it, and said to his entertainer, “Now you do this.” He sat down, pulled up his trouser-leg and pushed the stick through his drawers and out on the other side, pulled it out and threw it over to the other man, who picked it up, felt the point and looked at it in the greatest amazement.

“I can’t do that, Sahib,” he said disconsolately.

“Then you should get a leg like this,” said the planter, pulling up his drawers.

The native seemed more surprised at seeing the artificial leg than he had been at what had been done when he thought it was a real one.

A conjurer, whom I had engaged to give my regiment a show, did some things which seemed quite unaccountable, as he had never seen the ground before on which he was asked to perform, and could not possibly have had a confederate amongst the men. His appliances were most primitive, consisting chiefly of a few old bags, tins and bottles. The place selected for his performance was on a path curving round a re-entrant on a hillside, so that all the men, about 1,000 of them, could sit down and see everything; the officers sat on chairs on the path within a few feet of the performer.

He first produced an old bit of rope, four yards long, and told two of the men to hold either end. These warriors thought there was to be a pulling match between them, so it was with difficulty the native hauled in enough slack in the middle to make a loop. Holding the loop in both his hands, he invited me to cut it, and when I did so, he dropped the rope, so that all could see it was divided. He picked up the two ends, rubbed them for a few seconds between his palms, and they were joined. There really was a splice, for one could see it. The rope was a little thicker there, and there were a few fluffy

bits sticking out. The men pulled on the rope and it was perfectly strong. How was it joined so quickly?

Later he handed me a common glass tumbler to mark, and then smashed it on the ground. After picking up the pieces, he put them aside, pretending to forget them, and did a few more tricks. Afterwards he pointed to a bush on the hillside, amongst the men, and told them to pass down to the colonel what they found in it. They passed down the marked tumbler.

I have seen fights arranged by snake-charmers between a mongoose and a cobra and, when the latter is apparently killed through having its head chewed, and is so limp that one can pick it up on a stick, its owner will put something in its mouth and bring it back to life. Whether it lives or not afterwards, I cannot say, but at the time it seems lively enough after having been apparently dead.

When I was quite young, I met a native in Assam who could tell me what I was thinking about, so long as it was something comprehensible to his own intellect, so that he could describe it in his own language. I mean, for instance, he could not have described to me an electric current, but he did tell me what my father was like and gave a good description of the place he lived in, though he never could have seen a house like it.

He saw I was very much interested, and afterwards wrote to me and offered to teach me how to do this myself, and also how to communicate with anyone at a distance, if I was in sympathy with him. I have regretted ever since that I did not answer his letter, for it is not hard to imagine the delight there would be in being able to hold converse with someone one loved, when unable to express one's thoughts in writing, and to do so instantaneously, for it would tide one over many lonely hours. One often feels that a person is thinking about one, witness how letters cross between people who have not written to one another for ages, but one does not know of what the other is actually thinking, or dreaming.

CHAPTER XLVII

MAHSUD PRISONERS—JUBBULPORE—FISHING IN THE NERBUDDA RIVER—BEES—FRAUDULENT SHIKARIES

THE Mahsud operations were over by the end of March and, to celebrate the occasion, about 120 prisoners of war were released in Dera Ismail Khan one evening instead of being sent under escort to the frontier, 60 miles away, and released there. Such a grand opportunity of taking a few mementos of their incarceration was not to be missed, so they walked off with a valuable collection of coins and other things, the property of the man who had been chief political officer of the show, and on whose order they were set free—the medals and some of the uniform of another, who had commanded a column against them, as well as relieving the regiment who had been guarding them of about a dozen rifles.

Needless to say, there was not much sympathy wasted over the man who had lost his coins, for he was simply asking for trouble when he caused a gang of expert thieves to be let loose in the station just before dark.

A few days later, when I had seen off the troops that had taken part in the blockade, I returned to my permanent job at Jubbulpore. This place was, and probably still is, a very pleasant spot to soldier in, for it is one of the most charmingly-situated of all the plains' garrisons of India. It lies about half-way between Bombay and Calcutta, at the junction of the Great Indian Peninsular and East Indian railways. It is surrounded by low hills, which looked green at all times of the year; the roads all round were very good, and there were comfortable houses standing in gardens, most of which contained plenty of bamboos, as well as mango and other fruit-trees.

If you had plenty of mangoes, the only way to secure a sufficiency of them for your own wants was to sell the entire crop on the trees to a contractor, who then put on a watchman to look after it and allowed you to have as many as you needed for yourself. If you did not come to such an arrangement, but posted your own watchman, your servants and their friends and possibly his, too, soon relieved you of your fruit.

Twenty years ago there was quite good small-game shooting almost anywhere within a radius of ten miles—duck, snipe, quail and partridge.

In this neighbourhood the red jungle-fowl and the grey, the black and the painted partridge, or francolin, were found in proximity to one another, though the two former of each kind belong properly to country north and east of the Nerbudda river and the two latter to the south of it. The grey jungle-cock is the one with wax-like tips to his hackles, which are so much used for salmon flies.

Big game was also to be had fairly close to. I once went out after lunch and was back before dinner with a tiger ; and one day a leopard actually came into the cantonment in broad daylight, and was hunted out of the artillery mess-garden, when it crossed the road and took up its position in the gunner C.O.'s bungalow, where it was shot.

Three miles away were the waterworks—a large kidney-shaped reservoir over a mile long, which contained plenty of small mahseer ; and in the jungle surrounding it were chital (spotted deer), nilgai, the largest kind of Indian antelope, but not a very sporting one, a few sambur and one or two herds of black-buck.

About the same distance off was the Nerbudda, which held very good mahseer, but they were shy and did not take the fly, spoon, or any artificial bait at all well. The best way to get them was to surface-bait some selected spots for a few days by sending out a man to throw in quantities of parched gram, a sort of small pea. This, as it floated down, collected the fish ; you then baited by threading some grains

of gram, previously perforated, on to the hook. This bait was then cast like a fly into the midst of a handful of the grain, and the mahseer would take it as it floated down.

As each fish was hooked, he scared the rest of the shoal, which dropped lower and lower down the pool till they got quite out of reach, and then one moved on to the next place. If one caught three or four out of each pool baited, one was thought very lucky. The best I ever got was only nine lbs., though one often saw fish three or four times as large. Whilst the mahseer were taking gram, they would look at nothing else, not even a spoon or fly cast into the middle of the shoal.

The river consisted mostly of long, still reaches, though where the banks were rocky there were rapids. Had I the opportunity of fishing there again, I should try having the gram thrown in towards the lower end of the pool, casting up-stream and pulling the hooked fish down, so that he would not disturb the others.

Fifteen miles away from Jubbulpore was the great attraction for picnickers and sightseers—the Marble Rocks, which certainly were very beautiful. Here the Nerbudda flows, for about two miles, between cliffs of white marble 100 feet high, which in places have seams of black volcanic rock running through them—a contrast which only enhances the whiteness of the rest. At the top of the gorge is a magnificent waterfall, where the great river dives over the cliffs.

The only drawback to a visit during the warm weather to these rocks, and going up between them in a boat, is the great number of swarms of bees, which make their honey under the projecting ledges at the top of the cliffs. Any sort of loud noise, or even the smell of tobacco smoke, is liable to irritate them and cause them to attack the intruder, so when one was in a boat it was always advisable to have a blanket ready so as to be able to cover oneself up. People bathing have been attacked and drowned, and their graves are to be seen at the mouth of the gorge.

It is less risky to visit the place in the cold weather, when

the bees are more or less torpid ; and at full moon the height of the cliffs seems greater, whilst the whiteness of the marble and the blackness of the shadow show up more effectively.

These insects are very common throughout the Central Provinces ; more so than in other parts of India. I was once in camp on the bank of the Denwa river, evidently within a few yards of a place where bees were in the habit of coming to drink, during the hot weather. Soon after dawn, and again at dusk, one heard afar off a deep humming, which gradually became louder, and then a vast cloud of bees passed over and settled along the water's edge, completely hiding the damp shingle. They remained a few minutes, then rose and went back together without attempting to molest us.

The natives collect the honey at night and do a good trade with it, although some of it is said to be noxious, having been drawn from poisoned flowers.

As is natural, a spot with such remarkable scenery as this gorge has been sanctified by the Brahmans, and several fine temples have been built close to it, and the river-bank below forms a favourite burning-place for the bodies of devotees, for the Nerbudda is one of the most sacred rivers in Hindustan, almost equalling the Ganges. No doubt casting a number of half-burnt bodies into the water has attracted the crocodiles, for they are very numerous near the temples, and are often to be seen basking on the rocks. They are all of the broad-nosed, flesh-eating sort ; the narrow-beaked Garial, or fish-eater, is not found in the Nerbudda.

Although there were a good many tigers within reasonable distance of Jubbulpore, it was a very expensive business for the ordinary individual to try to get one. From what others told me—for I never kept any special account of that sort myself—I reckoned it usually cost a man about £40 before one was bagged. This was mainly due to the rascality of the local shikaries. A man would rent an area of Government jungle for about 10s. a month, and employ a shikari to look out for a tiger in it. This worthy would commence to tie up

buffalo-calves as bait. These did not cost a large amount each, but the master was told they were frequently killed by wild dogs and had to be replaced. It was generally impossible to verify this, for, in the days when there were no motor-cars, few would go to the trouble or expense of hiring a conveyance and driving out ten or fifteen miles to make personal investigation, so the same calf was probably paid for many times over.

Then, when the tiger really did kill, forty or fifty beaters had to be collected and, of course, paid. The tiger might be in the beat, or, again, he might not be, of which the shikari was well aware; and if the animal was there it was a simple matter to turn him, before he came up to the gunner, so that he would be able to produce a few more beats, with consequent profit to the shikari. So the game went on till at last the tiger was fired at or killed, when the shikari received the Government reward paid for the destruction of each tiger, in addition to his pay.

From this it will be easily seen how quickly working expenses can be piled up if one is employing an unscrupulous man.

I once had an excellent example of how the ramp was worked. I could not go out very often or very far, and could only very rarely get a jungle close by. I rented one some nine miles off and employed a shikari, who told me the usual tale that three or four calves had been killed by wild dogs.

One day the shikari came in when I was down with a dose of fever and was in bed. He saw I was out of action so, of course, had great news; the tiger had killed that morning, he had marked where he was lying up and had assembled the beaters, so I must come out at once.

The doctor was with me at the time, so I asked him if he would like to go out and, when he said he would, I told the shikari to wait and go out with him in his dogcart. At this the ruffian's face dropped about a yard, and he said he would go ahead and see if the beaters were all there. I pointed out there was no necessity for him to start, as he would get to the place sooner than by going on foot; besides, the coolies would

not be likely to go away without their pay, so he could go with the doctor and wait till he was ready.

When he was outside, I called in one of my cavalry orderlies and ordered him to get on his horse and go to the jungle to find out what had really occurred, and informed the doctor I would let him know as soon as the man returned. The orderly was back in little over an hour ; he said that no buffalo had been killed for weeks by wild dogs or anything else, that my calf was tied up by the shikari's hut, and, of course, no beaters had assembled or been told to assemble.

I then wrote this to the doctor, sent for the shikari and told him unless he disgorged the money he had received for the calves he said had been killed I would put him into court, and in any case would report him to the forest officer, who would not allow him to enter any Government area for a year. He innocently asked how he was to live if he could not make money in this way ; to which the only retort was to ask him what he did with the pay he got and what it was given him for. I employed another man, who evidently had taken to heart this one's example, for I shot a tiger in that place soon after.

To a man who did not get much opportunity for sport owing to work, this sort of swindling was most annoying. Still, I occasionally managed a trip with one of my friends in the forest department, and got some quite good sport. I think the bison-stalking was the most attractive of all, for one was always in the most delightful forest and did the work on one's own legs ; whilst tiger or leopard, though got in much the same sort of country, were usually driven up to one, when it was only a matter of selecting the right moment to shoot. Still, a tiger, when he is killed, is a most satisfactory brute to have laid low, on account of the damage he does to game and tame cattle.

It requires an abler pen than mine to describe the pleasures of a trip in the Satpura forests, but if anyone wishes to recall or imagine the sights and sounds of the Indian jungle, the foliage of the trees, the murmur of the bees and the shrilling

of the crickets, the appearance of the wild animals and the excitement of their proximity, the fierce heat of the sun and the solace of the shade, where the wild mango drops its fruit into some clear pool to slake the sportsman's thirst, let him read Glasfurd's "Rifle and Romance of the Indian Jungle," and he will maybe remember the days when his eyes and ears were keen and his muscles supple, when he stalked the lordly bison, or compassed the end of some fierce cattle-slayer; and the nights when he lay in the open and watched the stars on high, thinking over past triumphs and planning future efforts.

He will then realise something of the brighter side of a soldier's life in our great dependency.

CHAPTER XLVIII**PACHMARHI—ITS CAVES AND SCENERY—WILD DOGS—A
PRACTICAL JOKER**

IN the hot weather the headquarters of the Nerbudda district, or, as it was subsequently called, the Jubbulpore Brigade, used to move to Pachmarhi in the Satpura hills which, for the same time of year, was also the seat of the civil administration. Pachmarhi (five caves) gets its name from some Buddhist excavations in the side of a hill, rising from the middle of the plateau, on which the station is situated.

The average height of the plateau, some ten square miles in extent, is only 3,500 feet, so it never is really cool in summer, though infinitely preferable to the plains. The hills which surround it run to 1,000 feet higher. Its general appearance is so green and parklike that, except for the difference in the trees and flowers, one might almost imagine that one was looking on a bit of English scenery. From the edge of the plateau the view is splendid in almost every direction, ranges of forest-clad hills decreasing gradually in height till they merge into the plains.

A most remarkable feature of the Satpura range is the number of deep ravines, or vast clefts in the rocks. One in Pachmarhi, named Andeh Koh, begins close to the roadside and drops away sheer for 2,500 feet, with scarcely any sort of projection from the face of the rock on either side. The big trees below look just like dots, so great is the depth, and the only sound which rises from the chasm is the faint murmur of running water.

It is said that the bottom of this ravine has never been

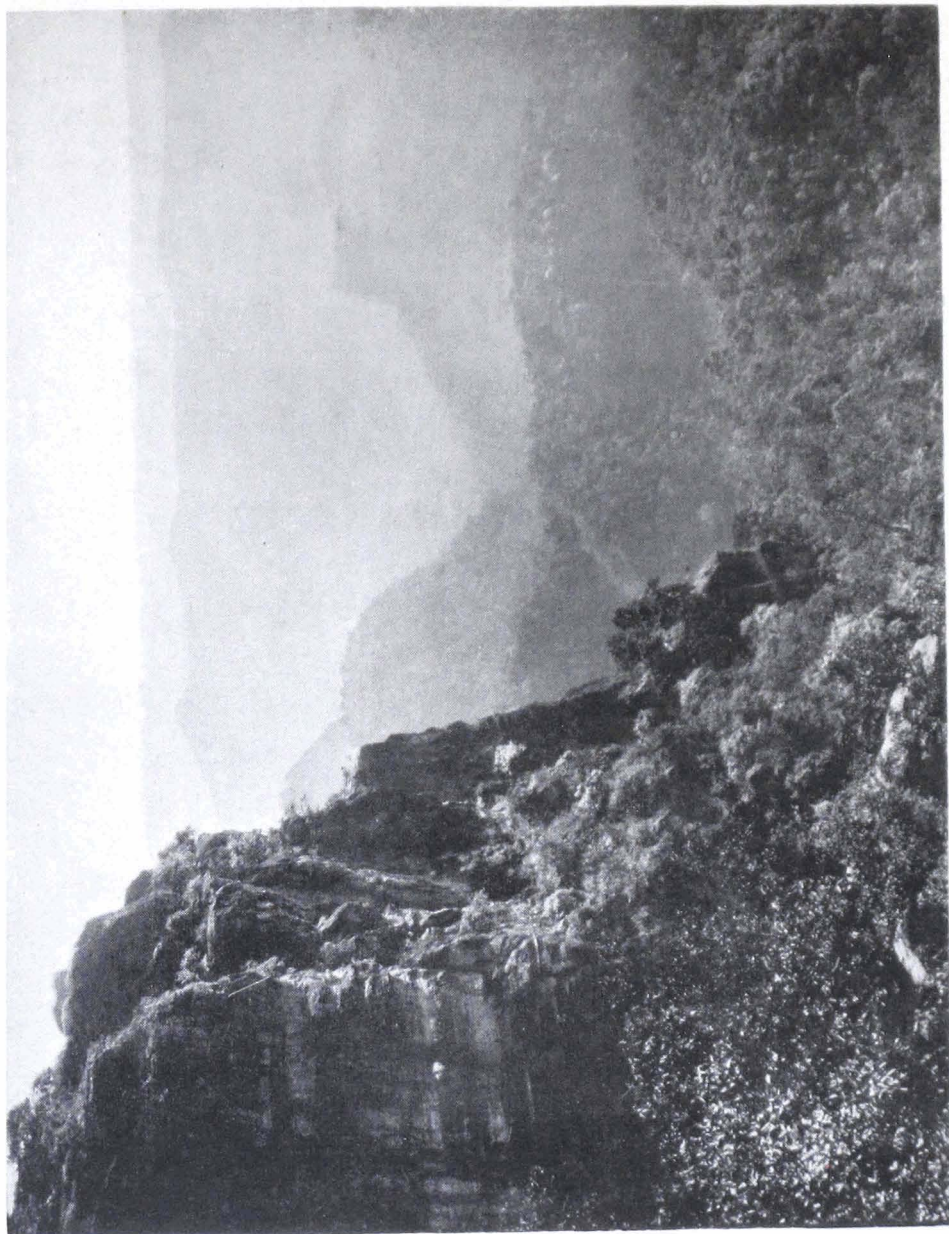
trodden by the foot of man. According to native superstition, it is the abode of demons and also of an enormous snake, which lived in a lake on the plateau till expelled by the god Mahadeo. The first writer on the subject of these hills, Capt. J. Forsyth, says that the origin of this legend is easily traceable, for, in the sacred books of the Hindoos, Buddhists are always alluded to as snakes. They had a settlement here, and certainly made a lake of considerable size by damming a stream, for traces of the dam and bricks, from which it was partly constructed, are still to be seen, besides a fair-sized sheet of water still remains.

When the Buddhists were driven out by the Hindoos, in the fifth or sixth century of our era, it is quite probable that some of them were flung into Andeh Koh by their oppressors, who then destroyed the lake by cutting the dam.

On the opposite side of the plateau is another big ravine, named Jumbo Díp, which, however, is accessible by means of a very steep, rocky path dropping 1,000 feet in the first mile or so, when one reaches a small stream a short distance along which is a cavern, said to be the residence of the god Mahadeo.

During our wars with the Mahrattas in the first quarter of the last century, one of our opponents, the Raja of Nagpur, took refuge in this ravine and escaped the British troops, who were searching for him everywhere else. A lot of his treasure is still supposed to be hidden in the vicinity, and even in my time there were people who searched for it. The Chief Commissioner once got up an ancient man, who was said to have been shown it by his father, who had been with the Raja; but, when this old gentleman arrived, he was found to be blind, so was not much use as a guide.

I forgot to mention that in the present lake there was said to be some mysterious reptile, which was visible at times. More than once I tried to get a shot at it in the evening, but never saw anything more exciting than a great swirl in the water, which might have been caused by a very large fish, a crocodile,



CLIFFS AT PACHMARHI.

or even an otter moving along ; but nothing ever broke the surface, and there were no traces of the last two creatures on the bank anywhere.

The aborigines of the Satpura hills practise, wherever they are allowed to, the same method of agriculture as the Lushais. At the end of the cold weather they fell every stick of timber on the plot of ground they mean to till, burn it in May, hoe the ashes into the ground, and sow the seed when the rains break. Nowadays, as most of the forest round Pachmarhi is reserved by Government, this waste of valuable material has practically ceased.

There were quite a good number of bison in the jungle below the plateau, and a fair lot of tiger ; whilst the sambur on an average carried the best heads to be found in any part of India. But the wild dogs took an enormous toll of all the four-footed game. On one trip I went, every day we found the remains of freshly-killed animals, within a radius of five or six miles of camp, which will give some slight idea of the damage done in twelve months.

One day as I was going up the course of a small stream, I saw one of these red dogs jump off an overhanging rock, and then another and another. They seemed to be occupied with something in the bed of the stream, which was not visible, and took absolutely no notice of me.

On getting within about sixty yards of the rock, I saw a sambur hind, with her calf cowering against her side, standing in the pool below, and the dogs were jumping one after the other on to her back, giving her a bite on the head or neck and then running round on to the rock to repeat the process.

As soon as I saw this horrid sight I bowled over two of the dogs, and hoped the deer would go off ; but they never moved. I told the shikari to drive them away. They had taken no notice of the shots, and when I spoke the hind turned her head towards us—a most ghastly spectacle, for the whole of the flesh on her face had been torn off, and her eyes had gone, so another bullet ended her existence. The wretched calf

actually followed us for nearly a mile for protection, and then disappeared.

I never missed an opportunity of killing a wild dog after that, but they are extremely difficult animals to get a shot at. I never but once saw them in the open, and then the motor-car I was in ran through a pack of five very early one morning as they were crossing from one patch of jungle to another. The fact that in the Central Provinces the reward given for killing one of these cruel brutes was as much as that given for a leopard shows that Government has formed a pretty accurate estimate of their powers of destruction.

The companion of most of my shooting expeditions in these parts was a forest officer; we will call him Hunter, though that was not his name. He was a confirmed practical joker, and loved to send letters, or, better still, wires, which he hoped might create complications. On one occasion I was to meet him at a certain place and he was to let me know the date. A telegram arrived, "Dearest, at last I can escape and will meet you on the fifteenth.—EMILY." This came when I was out, and my Mrs. opened it. She gave it me with the remark, "I think this must be from Mr. Hunter." A glance at the office of origin showed that it was.

Another effort of his caused him considerable expense. A monthly nurse in Bombay advertised that her services would be available on such and such a date. Hunter at once wrote saying he would engage her, signing the letter with the name of a man in his own department. The lady replied accepting the situation. The recipient of the letter wrote back to say she must have made some mistake, as he was not married and, therefore, did not require her. Three days later he got a telegram to say that, as he had engaged her, he would have to pay or she would put him in court.

After some acrimonious correspondence, the wretched man engaged a lawyer, who managed to get hold of the original letter which had caused all the trouble, and it was traced to Hunter, whose irate colleague promptly reported him to their

boss. The boss ordered Hunter to pay the woman's charges, and all the other man's expenses in addition, besides reprimanding him very severely.

Hunter and I lived for one summer in the Pachmarhi hotel and, during the hottest part of the season, used to sleep out of doors. Sometimes at night a huge pariah dog would come wandering about, and would seize and worry anybody's small dog that happened to be loose. One night it came walking round Hunter's bed and, when he tried to drive it off, it growled truculently and submitted his pillow to gross indignity, for which he swore he would shoot it.

Some time later, very early one morning, I heard an awful uproar at the back of the hotel, rushed into my room and looked out to see, in the grey dawn, this enormous brute worrying a wretched fox-terrier and shaking it just like a rat; so, snatching up a gun, I jumped through the window and settled the matter with a charge of shot.

When my servant brought the early morning cup of tea, he said he thought the dead dog belonged to the Honourable Mr. S., as it had a collar on. He produced the collar, and it had this man's name on it all right, which was an awkward complication. I at once got some paper and wrote to Mrs. S—— that I had killed her dog, which I did not recognise, told her why, and said I would make any amend she thought fair. The messenger brought back no reply.

At breakfast I told Hunter what I had written, and said it was funny there had been no answer. Half an hour later I was given a note by my servant, and read to my astonishment: "Captain W——, nothing will compensate me for your atrocious behaviour in shooting my pet pariah dog, and I intend to prosecute you with the utmost rigour of the law." I replied I was sorry my friendly overtures had been taken this way, so could say no more. My messenger returned with an answer to the effect that Mrs. S—— did not understand, as she had not written to me at all, but was making enquiries as to how her dog came to be at the hotel.

I then asked my man where he had got the note from that he had given me soon after breakfast, and he said: "From Hunter Sahib's bearer." I went over to see S——, who was inclined to be nasty, and implied that I had deliberately killed his dog, as it was never loose before seven o'clock in the morning, so could not possibly have been at the hotel. I told him this was evidently what his servants had told him; the dog was dead before five, and I had told his wife so before six, and could produce a dozen witnesses, if he wished, that would prove the beast had been constantly coming about the hotel at night, at which he got more reasonable and we parted friends.

When I got back, Hunter was very anxious to know what had happened, so I told him that S—— was very angry over the loss of his dog, but absolutely furious with him for having forged his wife's name in the letter she was supposed to have written me. Hunter instantly rushed off in a great state of mind, put on his store clothes, and was going off to see S—— in case he was in for another reprimand; but, just as he was getting on to his pony, I told him he needn't trouble to go, for I had not given him away. The relief displayed on his countenance was ludicrous.

For the pariah, I had to give up a topping little terrier of my own as compensation to the good lady, so came off most decidedly second best in this venture; but anyhow, peace prevailed, which is not always the case when one shoots other people's dogs.

CHAPTER XLIX**DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING LEAVE—RETURN TO ASSAM—A
BENGALI CRICKETER**

ON one of my trips after bison I had the bad luck to get a big thorn into my right thumb, which I tried to dig out with a pair of scissors. They must have been dirty, or else the thorn was poisonous, for by the time I got back home my hand and arm were so swollen that the thumb had to be cut open and a bit of bone taken out, which, of course, prevented my writing till it was well.

I was entitled to two months' privilege leave for Waziristan, which meant leave on full pay, so asked my general if I might take it. He enquired who would do my work, so I told him that Captain R——, the station staff-officer at Pachmarhi, was anxious to take it on. "I will not accept Captain R——," was the brief but decided answer to that proposal, and it very much annoyed that officer.

There were several other men who were willing to take my place, but the General would have none of them ; so, getting rather desperate, as the doctors were urging me to go away, I asked the old man if there was anybody he *would* take. He said the only man he fancied was Captain G——, of the British regiment in Jubbulpore. I knew Capt. G—— did not want to come, having worked under this general before and been hunted like a hare ; he was, moreover, on leave, but I wrote to him and he said he would come if I would give him half my staff pay.

I told the general this, and pointed out that such an arrangement would deprive me of any privilege as regards the leave, for R——, as was customary, wanted no extra pay ;

but all the answer I got was : " Tell Capt. G—— to come up and then you can go at once." This did us all in, for in spite of the extra pay, G—— was not at all keen on coming. However, he did come, and I went off.

G—— must have shown his feelings pretty soon, for a few days later the general wrote that he had sent G—— back to his regiment, ordered R—— to do the work, and found he displayed " the most marked disinclination for any kind of exertion of any officer I have ever met. Please explain this." In reply, I suggested that R——, perhaps, was hurt at being ordered to do something he had offered to do and been refused. Anyhow, the general wrote back to say he had sent R—— away to his own job and was doing my work himself, which suited me very well, as I now could draw my full staff pay.

Personally, I liked the old man very much, for he always treated me very kindly and taught me my job thoroughly. He was the best man in office I have ever seen. He would get a letter on any subject and, if he drafted a reply to it, would quote regulations or previous correspondence, giving the paragraphs, numbers or dates, without referring to any books, and then say, " You can look up my references to check them ; it will teach you how to remember them yourself," and I must say that I do not recollect his ever having made a mistake.

At one of his garden parties there was a screen put up with holes in it, behind which ladies had to stand and look through the holes. Men then walked along the front and voted which eyes they thought most beautiful, for which the lady was to get a prize. As I walked along, someone behind whispered to me, " Capt. W——, Hawkins has just pulled my nose," so I went behind to see who had spoken, and found it was Mrs. General. I got her to let me take her place to see if anyone else played the ass, and the next man to come along was the padre. He put his face close against mine and whispered, " Is that you, Kipper?" So, of course, I murmured ' Yes,' thereby earning Mrs. Padre a good mark.

I then got the lady aside and asked her if her husband knew anyone whom he called "Kipper." She blushed and said, "Yes, he sometimes calls me that in bed." So I told her she ought to stop it, for I was sure it was an absolute misnomer; and then went off to tackle Master Hawkins, who told me he had walked down the screen, tweaking the ladies' noses to make them give tongue, and then he would know who they were. He got the wind up very badly when he heard who had complained, for the general disliked familiarity very much; so I advised him to go to the offended lady, talk to her nicely, and she would be sure to forgive him, which she did.

In 1903 I had arranged to go for a jaunt in the Altai mountains after Siberian wapiti, but was laid low by an attack of appendicitis, brought on, no doubt, by the amount of dust I swallowed at that, for the soldier, somewhat melancholy function called the Delhi Coronation Durbar; and the medal I received for my contribution to the festivities did not compensate me for the loss of the wapiti, for I had to go home and take it easy instead.

When I returned I found another general in the saddle, and my regiment on active service in Tibet, the country of all others I had always wanted to visit, so weighed in application after application to be allowed to resign my appointment on the staff.

But it was no good. I only got the general's back up, and one day he said, "Look here, if you put in this again, I will enter in your confidential report that I consider you lacking in zeal." As he was quite capable of doing so, without assigning any reason for the opinion, I resigned myself to my fate and said no more.

During the five years I was on the staff, eight months of which were spent on leave, I served no less than ten brigadiers, two of whom I was with for over twelve months each. In recent times there have not been so many changes, except during the late war, so staff officers have had a better chance of getting to know the man they serve, and *vice versa*.

I was not sorry when the time came for me to go back to Assam, where at any rate I came in personal contact with my men and had a larger amount of responsibility in training them, instead of being a sort of post-office for distributing other people's ideas and having my own, such as they were, sent out as theirs. However, I enjoyed most of my tour of staff service and learnt a lot which stood me in good service in the regiment.

I found Shillong very different from what it was ten years before. Not a single building, with one exception, was the same, all having been wiped out in the great earthquake of 1897; and twice as many new ones had sprung up, owing to the enormous increase in population, both European and native.

One of the first persons I met who remembered me was an old Bengali Babu, whom I knew rather well, as he used to play cricket in the old days, when there were not enough white men in the place to make up two sides. "Sir," he greeted me with, "you have returned, after revolving many years on your glorious orbit, and again we shall all be happy once more." In response to my enquiry as to how he was getting on and where he was working, he said, "I had slight difference in office, so burned my boots and took pension; and now, like Greenwich pensioner, I lie on my back and observe the sun." His English always had been flowery and his metaphor somewhat mixed.

Perhaps his best effort in this line was once when we had a cricket match, Married *v.* Single, and Janoki was asked by someone on which side he was going to play. "Sir," was his answer, "that is a difficult conundrum; I was married, but now my good spouse is dead, therefore I contracted temporary alliance, so may be described as a midwife." I forget which side he was put to after that—not that it made much difference, for on such occasions he generally arrived as full as a tick with liquor.

But there was still good sport to be had, though one had

to go a little further for most of it. Fishing in the Assam valley, and big game in the hills round about, if one knew where to go for it ; and, throughout the winter, the woodcock still frequented the damp, shady nullahs in the pine-woods round about Shillong, where, luckily for me, there were not many others who took much interest in this little sporting bird or thought him worth the trouble of going after regularly.

CHAPTER I

SHILLONG—LAST DAYS WITH WOODCOCK

THERE is an old Assamese saying that if anyone once passes Peacock Island in the Brahmaputra, opposite Gauhati, he is bound to pass it many times, which I, for one, have found very true, for I often left Assam never expecting to come back, but always did so, and I spent the last days of my service there.

Quite the pleasantest memories of sport in this province are the happy hours spent after woodcock in the shady dingles amongst the pine-forests round about Shillong, for, in my humble opinion, this bird is the finest of any that flies in India to pursue for the genuine sport he affords, and in order to bring him to bag a considerable amount of woodcraft is required.

He is not found in such numbers that anyone, however good a shot he may be, can make a heavy bag, but a few birds can generally be seen any day throughout the season, which extends from October to March, any time one goes out, if one has learnt where to look for them. The necessary knowledge of the woodcock's habits is not easy to pick up, and one is always adding to it, which makes the sport all the more fascinating.

The plateau on which Shillong lies is more or less covered with pine-woods, in which are many damp nullahs full of ferns, daphne, and low bushes, where the birds love to lie and feed. Thirty years ago the jungle was so dense that a bird might often be flushed without being seen, but within the last fifteen years so much timber has been cut for building purposes and fire-wood that there are plenty of fairly open bits,

where one consequently has a much better chance of getting a shot.

To give some idea of the numbers of the woodcock, I may state that throughout one season I carried a pedometer, which showed I had walked five miles for every bird shot, and I bagged 94 out of 145 seen, some of which no doubt I saw more than once, and thus counted again.

A good dog is a *sine qua non*, or, failing that, a lot of beaters, but for interest there is no comparison between the two. I think an Airedale terrier, on the whole, was a more useful beast than a spaniel, for he had just as good a nose, was as tender-mouthed, and much more obedient, besides being easier to break in a country where there were so few game birds. The best day's bag of woodcock I ever made in Shillong was eight in one morning, between six and eleven o'clock. Occasionally I got four or five, but generally one or two, for the same amount of walking. Many people will say that at this rate the game is not worth the candle, nor is it, if the sport is judged by the weight of one's bag.

With experience one learns where the birds usually lie, and they visit the same haunts year after year, if the conditions of the forest have not much altered. One seldom flushes more than one bird at a time, and, when once flushed, he generally makes for another favoured haunt, so one only has to discover that to run a very good chance of putting him up again.

In all the years I shot round about my old garrison, only once did I flush three birds at once, and then did not even get a shot. Two or three times I flushed a brace and bagged one of them, but never till the very last time I went out did I bring off a right and left, though I killed altogether about 1,000 woodcock in those hills.

One learns a lot about the quiet, unobtrusive little bird when he is almost the only sort of game one encounters in a morning's ramble with the gun, and each time one seems to learn something fresh about him, or find someone else's experiences corroborated. One reads, for example, how he

loves to lie up in a shady place, whence he can walk down to his feeding-ground, but I only once had pretty conclusive proof of this. I was working along a woody ridge some 300 feet above the marshy borders of some rice-stubble fields. In the dry bed of a little stream the old Clumber bitch got on the track of something she fancied very much, and began questing zig-zag down the hillside amongst the bushes. I had not intended to go down myself, but as she seemed so interested I followed her.

She went on about a couple of hundred yards, when up got a woodcock out of some bracken, and I shot him. The dog did not see the bird fall, so I picked it up and called her off, but she paid no attention; I, therefore, told my orderly to catch her and put her on the lead; before he got up to her she reached the marshy ground and put a woodcock out of the rushes, and I got him, too. This was evidently the bird she was following, for, when she had retrieved him, she came along at once.

Another day, as I was walking along the high-road, she routed a woodcock out of the bottom of a little garden, and I was so surprised to see him there I missed him with both barrels, after which he was so wild I did not get another chance at him. A day or two later, when passing this spot, I got over the fence and hunted the garden; nothing got up, so I went back on to the road. The spaniel remained behind hunting along the ditch. The woodcock got up again, and again I missed him.

I could count the number of woodcock flushed in the open in Shillong on the fingers of one hand, yet here is one found twice running in the same open place, and not a very quiet place either. I once saw one on a green on the golf-links, 800 yards away from the nearest bit of forest; and I saw another that had walked into a shop in the bazar in broad daylight and been caught by the simple expedient of shutting the door: so one can really never tell in what unlikely spot one may not see a woodcock.

I do not understand how anyone can go into a forest and



A HALT FOR WATER.

not be completely happy in it, for there is so much to be enjoyed : the scent of the trees, especially of the pines, the light and shade on the foliage, the sight of the birds, insects and flowers, and lastly, if one has a gun or rifle in one's hand, the pitting of one's wits against the instinct of the quarry.

A young officer who often used to accompany me, once remarked that what he so much enjoyed about this form of sport was that one generally saw the bird two or three times, even if one did not get a shot at it ; so I pointed out to him that one had to be able to judge the way a bird was likely to go when it had a large choice of what might seem very similar covert ; also, if he did not rise above the tree-tops, there were certain routes amongst the trees, one of which he would be pretty sure to take, so the thing was to be able to judge which was the most likely, if one hoped to find him again.

We were just going to try a fairly wide nullah, one side of which was covered with bracken and brambles, and flanked on both sides by tall pine-trees. We soon flushed a woodcock, which got up out of shot, carried straight on to the bottom of the nullah, turned to the left and disappeared. He asked where the bird would have gone, so I replied that on reaching the edge of the jungle it would probably have carried on a couple of hundred yards along the side and pitched in a bit of thick scrub which grew there—a very favourite lie for woodcock.

Being a good deal younger than myself, he was told to shin up the bank and get above the scrub in case the bird broke up-hill. The spaniel was put in below, and our two orderlies advanced in line between us. I could not see the dog, but from the tinkling of her bell, which was always put on her collar, when there was any thick bush to be worked, to show where she was, I guessed she was on to something, as the sound was pretty much in the same place.

Presently two woodcock rose ; one went forward, the other back. The first went down all right, but the jungle was so thick the result of my second barrel could not be seen. I

called to my orderly to know if he had marked the bird. He said he had but, as I could not see the man, I did not know which one he referred to, though when he emerged from the bushes I saw he had gathered the second one, and a minute later the old Clumber brought the other, so I had achieved at last what I had been hoping for for thirty years. I knew that this was the last brace of woodcock I would kill in Shillong, and was pleased that a man of my regiment was there when I brought off the right and left.

In these last few hunts after my favourite bird I was able to visit most of the places where I had killed woodcock from the time I was a recruit, though some of them will never hold a bird again. I saw the spot near our range where, as a youngster, I sometimes sat at dusk to hear them fighting, with their peculiar cry of "Whisk, whisk, grr, grr!" as they went to feed in a marsh below. A house now stands there, and most of the marsh is drained, but there is still a bit of jungle left close by, which does on occasion harbour a woodcock.

A nullah, which used in days gone by to be a certain draw, is now a filthy drain for the houses on both sides of it, but within a mile or two of the cantonment many places survive which will always hold birds, for trees for timber will always be required, and the natives always let the jungle grow for ten years, after they have got what crops they can off the hillsides, before they clear and burn it in order to cultivate again. So the neighbourhood of Shillong will long be able to provide a fascinating walk for a sportsman who is content to take a good deal of exercise for a small but very satisfactory bag.

THE END