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LIFE IN THE INDIAN POLICE



HEARING REPORTS IN CAMP

[Frontispiece.

LIFE IN THE INDIAN POLICE

BY

C. E. GOULDSBURY

(LATE) INDIAN POLICE

AUTHOR OF

"DULALL, THE FOREST GUARD A TALE OF SPORT AND ADVENTURE IN BENGAL"

WITH 24 ILLUSTRATIONS



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TO

SIR STEUART COLVIN BAYLEY, G.C.S.I., C.I.E.

LATE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF BENGAL
(AND AFTERWARDS A MEMBER OF COUNCIL OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA)

DURING WHOSE ABLE AND MOST POPULAR ADMINISTRATION

THE AUTHOR PASSED THE PLEASANTEST YEARS

OF HIS LONG SERVICE IN THE POLICE

FORCE OF THAT PROVINCE

AUTHOR

NOTE

THE illustrations are all taken from photographs, for many of which I am indebted to friends and brother officials, who served with me in the districts mentioned in the book; and I take this opportunity of acknowledging their kindness in giving or lending copies which have enabled me to illustrate the book more fully, and with the more interesting of the illustrations it contains.

C. E. G.

WEYBRIDGE,
1st August, 1912.

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LIFE IN THE INDIAN POLICE

CHAPTER I

"APPOINTED Police—start at once."

Curt as was this message, a score of words could not have made its meaning clearer, or given it more importance nor—myself—greater satisfaction than I experienced on reading these two short, decisive sentences which—transmitted through eight thousand miles of sea and over land—had just been handed to me.

Sitting in my dingy rooms in Bayswater, I had been brooding on the hard fate which, for lack of funds to purchase a commission, had necessitated my choosing a life in a city office or that of a soldier—but in a foreign service and for some years practically as a trooper—nevertheless I had selected the latter.

For the last two years, since leaving school, I had pestered every relative and friend I had in India to find me some employment there. But hope so long deferred had turned to despair and at length, through the influence of friends, had obtained a so-called cadet-ship in an Austrian Cavalry Regiment which I was shortly to join.

Imagine then my astonishment and delight as I read the words with which the message opened. The telegram was from an uncle—an official of some influence in Calcutta—in whose house I knew I would be welcome.

It was some time before I could realize my good fortune in having obtained an appointment which of all others I had most desired ever since I had arrived at the age when a boy begins to think of the career he should adopt. This predilection was, indeed, due to the fact that a cousin of mine—some eleven years my senior—was already in the

Indian Police, and during the ten years he had been in India, wrote such glowing accounts of life in that service that I had long secretly resolved to follow in his footsteps if I could. In the days of which I write, a Police appointment in India could only be obtained by nomination, and without any examination qualifying or competitive; hence, was doubly attractive to youths who, like myself, had devoted more attention to cricket and football when at school, than the less interesting subjects necessary for such examinations. This seemingly haphazard method of appointment to positions so important and responsible answered better than might have been expected, since the majority of these youths, though educated in England, had passed their early days in India, and being, therefore, more or less familiar with the country, and the manners and customs of the people and their language, were especially suited for the work.

. . . . .

With the telegram in my pocket, I set out for the office, and requesting an interview with my employer, tendered my resignation, which from the readiness with which it was accepted, showed that my services were not considered absolutely indispensable by the firm.

I now called upon the family Bankers, and was informed by them that, under instructions from my uncle, they were prepared to advance the money necessary for my passage out and outfit, and presenting me with a cheque-book—the first I had ever owned—requested I would be " so good " as to draw on them up to £150.

To me, whose annual income had hitherto amounted to less than £40, this seemed a princely fortune. However, concealing my amazement, I thanked them for their kindness and pocketing the cheque book, went on to the steamer office.

I have said this was the first cheque-book I had ever possessed, but it was also the first I had ever seen, for as I have already hinted, money in any shape except a small monthly allowance paid quarterly, and often anticipated, was a commodity I was seldom troubled with, and never in sufficient bulk to necessitate opening an account at a Bank!

My knowledge, therefore, of the uses and purposes of

cheques was as vague as that of the youth I heard of later, who, on being informed by his Bankers that his balance was overdrawn £100, promptly drew a cheque for that amount and forwarding it to the bank, requested that the account might be adjusted!

However, seeing that the cheque-book contained a large number of slips—all perforated ready for tearing off—I concluded there must be 150 of them—each of the value of £1—and satisfied I was right, dismissed the subject from my mind.

Arriving in due course at the steamship company's offices, I saw a long counter before me, behind which were several, smartly dressed young clerks, and selecting one who seemed to me more good-natured looking than the rest, I went boldly up to him and requested he would book me "a cabin" in the next steamer for Calcutta!

"Do you want a whole cabin?" asked the youth, in evident surprise, eyeing me somewhat superciliously. His question rather puzzled me, but thinking that some of the cabins were possibly divided into two, I replied meekly that "perhaps half a one would do."

At this he burst out laughing—much to my indignation—then, apologising for his mirth, he said: "I see you are a 'griff,' so let me settle the matter for you—what you need is a berth. What class are you travelling?"

Here was another poser, for although I guessed a berth must be some portion of a cabin, I had not the faintest notion what class I ought to take, but as I had always travelled third by rail, I ventured to suggest that "I would like a third-class berth."

But here again I found I had blundered, as my friend—trying to suppress his laughter—went on to inform me that steamers were not like railways, and that I must book by either first or second class. Finally, after discussing the matter financially, it was decided to book a first-class passage in a two-berthed cabin.

"You will pay by cheque, I suppose?" he asked presently as he was making out the ticket. "Oh, certainly," I replied, glad of the opportunity of showing I had a cheque-book, and taking out this, asked him "how many I had to pay?"

"Pounds do you mean? Just wait a moment," and rapidly adding up some figures, stated the sum—£68 odd, as near as I can remember.

I was rather staggered at the amount, but too shy to ask questions, proceeded to tear out the cheques, till I was interrupted by my friend who, having completed the ticket, had been evidently watching my proceedings, and now inquired what I was doing.

"Why you said £68, didn't you? and I have only torn out ten as yet," I replied innocently, somewhat surprised at the question. He looked at me for a moment as if wondering whether he was dealing with a lunatic—then, as the truth suddenly dawned on him, went into such paroxysms of laughter that the whole office came crowding round us.

"You don't mean to say you were going to pay in sixty-eight cheques?" he exclaimed at last, as soon as he could speak.

"Of course I was, and I don't see what there is to laugh at," I replied angrily, and seeing I was annoyed, he again apologized, and then showed me how I should make out the cheque, and finally handing me the ticket and receipt, wished me a pleasant passage and we parted the best of friends. Thus ended my first attempt at business on my own account—a fiasco I might easily have avoided by asking a few questions when presented with the cheque-book, instead of assuming I knew all about it as young men are often apt to do.

. . . . .

Leaving the shipping office, I proceeded to an East India outfitter, where, after much bargaining and a final reduction of his estimate by half, I procured an outfit for £40, which, thanks to my recently acquired knowledge, I paid him in a properly drawn-out cheque.

The rest of my preparations did not occupy me long. I had no parents or relations to whom to bid adieu, nor many friends in town; accordingly just ten days from the date I had received the telegram found me one of the usual crowd on the deck of the SS. "Nubia," *en route* for Calcutta.

It is not my intention to describe the passage out.

This has been done before—possibly *ad nauseam*—at any rate, by abler pens than mine. The passengers were of the number and variety generally found on Indian mail boats, from Colonels, Merchants and Commissioners, to the latest thing in Subalterns, just let out of Sandhurst, with the usual sprinkling of the other sex, as motley in their way.

There was another youth on board going out to the police, and we, together with the subalterns and some young "completion civilians," soon fraternized, and what with dances, cricket and theatricals, enjoyed the best of times.

Amongst the passengers I have mentioned were two genuine old "shikaris"—a staff-corps Colonel and a civilian—men who had passed most of their lives amidst the Indian jungles, and shot every kind of beast to be found in them.

To listen to their tales—told in the smoking-room at nights—was one of my greatest joys. They always had an audience including one curious-looking old person whose name I don't remember—so may call him Jones—who at the end of each story seemed about to tell one of his own, but, up to the night before reaching Aden, had not as yet succeeded in producing it.

At Aden we took up two fresh passengers, officers proceeding to India, and in one of them the individual referred to had evidently found an old acquaintance, a man about his own age, but very dissimilar in appearance. That night these two were in the smoking-room with others, and after a time one of the old "shikaris" commenced one of his adventures. As he concluded we saw Jones making his usual preparations to begin, but, this time, to our amazement he went on:

"Gentlemen," he began, "I think you will all agree that we are much indebted to Colonel S. and Mr. C. for the amusement they have afforded us, and I have long wished to assist them by relating a strange adventure which happened to a friend of mine and myself, many years ago, but the facts are so extraordinary that I have not dared to tell the story without some evidence in support of it, which, however, I am now in a position to produce."

Of course there were loud cries of "hear, hear!" and

" let us have the story," " I thought you had one up your sleeve "—and so on from the crowd now assembled—many having come in on hearing that " Jones was actually going to tell his story at last." Encouraged by all this acclamation he commenced. I cannot now recall the details of his tale, but it was to the effect that on one occasion while he and a friend were sitting on a tree, a tiger suddenly appeared beneath them, and in their excitement both fell off—one on to the tiger's back and the other close behind it. The tiger—alarmed at these strange proceedings—bolted with its rider clinging on to its neck and the other sportsman being towed along by its tail—the end of which by some extraordinary mischance, had caught between his clothing and his belt !

It was certainly—as the narrator had put it—" an extraordinary tale," and one too Munchausenlike in character to be believed without corroboration, hence when he had finished there was a dead silence—more eloquent than words—the meaning of which was not difficult to guess.

" Ah, I see, gentlemen, you think I am drawing a long bow," said Jones, " but my friend here will vouch for the truth of the story. You remember the affair, Armstrong ? "—turning to his friend.

" No, I am afraid I don't," replied the individual appealed to, in solemn, uncompromising tones.

" What ! " cried Jones, " you don't remember our adventure ! Why, it was you who rode the tiger, while I was being towed behind ! "

" No, I regret to say, I have no recollection of any such occurrence," replied his friend again, more decidedly than before.

Jones looked at him for a moment, then turning to the others, he said : " Gentlemen, I am sorry my friend's memory has failed him," and bidding us good-night, went off to bed. He never entered the smoking-room again, and when we arrived at Colombo he left the ship, although he had taken his passage to Calcutta.

However, before the voyage was over, we discovered that the story as he told it was absolutely true, and " his friend (!) "—who now admitted it—confessed that he had

not dared to corroborate the tale as he could see that none of us believed it! Not a very satisfactory explanation, to say the least of it, and we all felt very sorry for poor Jones, more especially as he had told us that this was the only adventure he had ever experienced, and had waited many years for this opportunity of relating it. Hence, I am afraid we gave his "friend" rather a bad time of it during the remainder of the voyage!

CHAPTER II

We had been about thirty days at sea, and were all more or less tired of each other and the monotony of life on board, when an accident occurred which created some excitement and furnished a fresh subject for thought and conversation for the time. Having anchored for the usual six hours at Madras we had left shortly after mid-day, and by five o'clock were well out at sea, bowling along at about thirteen knots.

Tea was just over and most of the passengers were on deck—lounging in groups, smoking or playing deck quoits, when suddenly, above the throbbing of the engines, there came the sound of a loud splash, followed immediately by a cry of "Man overboard" from some one in the fore-part of the ship.

Next came the sharp, short order from the officer on the bridge, "Stand by to lower the life-boat," and then a loud tinkling of the bell conveying his order to the engine-room to stop, reverse, and drive full speed astern, but before these orders could take effect the man was half a mile behind us. His head was now all that we could see of him, and that only at intervals as it rose upon a wave—showing, with the gaudy "bandana" handkerchief bound round it, a tiny speck of colour on that vast surface of neutral tinted water.

On hearing the splash one of the passengers had run to the vessel's stern, and as the man went floating by, with the best of good intentions, threw a lifebuoy at his head, and, had his aim been as good as his intentions, the unfortunate individual would have sunk beneath the waves, considerably sooner than in the ordinary course of nature. Fortunately it missed him, but we noticed that, although it fell quite near, the man made no attempt to seize it.

Meanwhile the Lascar boat's-crew had lowered the life-boat—always kept in readiness—in incredibly quick time, and with the third officer in charge, rowed rapidly towards their comrade—followed slowly by the ship which had been " put about "—but now, looking through our glasses, we witnessed a strange sight.

I have said the boat was rapidly approaching what we imagined to be the drowning man, but to our amazement the latter—as the boat drew nearer—swam deliberately away from it, making such good progress, that it was some time before it overtook him, and then ensued a scene probably unique in the annals of nautical experiences.

No sooner was the swimmer overtaken by the boat, than he redoubled his efforts to escape, avoiding each attempt his comrades made to catch him by diving deep beneath the surface, whence he would reappear at some distance from the boat, and swimming away from it would dive again as soon as it approached him.

This went on for some time. Yet strangely enough, the man while so determinedly evading rescue, seemed equally determined to preserve his life, his extraordinarily contradictory actions being apparently actuated by some motive we could not fathom at the time.

At length, exhausted with repeated diving, he eventually gave in, and one of the crew, putting his boat-hook through his clothing, he was dragged into the boat, and bound securely hand and foot, was brought back to the ship.

Next morning we learnt that the man—who was one of the life-boat's-crew—having a day or two before been reported by the coxswain of the boat and punished for some trivial breach of discipline, had adopted this strange method of revenging himself upon him, and others of the crew, who had given evidence against him. The Captain—after holding an enquiry—made over the culprit to his comrades to be dealt with, and later in the day, from cries we heard proceeding from the fore-part of the ship, it was evident they were taking full advantage of the powers they had been invested with !

The last days of the voyage passed quickly in preparations for landing, and one hot, steamy June morning,

found us proceeding slowly up the Hooghly to Garden-Reach, where we shortly took up our moorings and were boarded immediately by the usual crowd of passengers' relations and friends, agents, touts and peons, etc., etc.

Amongst the latter was a gorgeous individual, dressed in blue and gold, who—having discovered me by some mysterious means—came up and salaaming, enquired in broken English if I was "Gulbari Sahib," and as there seemed none on board with a nearer claim to that name, I replied that "I was."

He then handed me a letter which I found was from my uncle, telling me to put myself in the hands of the bearer—"Golann Ally"—who would transport me and my belongings safely to his house, a task which he set about at once.

Calling up three half-clad boatmen from one of the many boats hovering round the ship, he soon had all my traps into it, and begging that "my worship" would be good enough to follow, we started for the shore. Here my cicerone engaged a "Ticca Gharry"—the "four wheeler" of Calcutta, and putting my traps on top, shut me up inside, and mounting on the box beside the driver, we started at a gallop.

I was received most cordially by my uncle, who seemed much pleased at my having come out so quickly, and told me he had telegraphed as soon as he had secured the promise of an appointment, and that I was to have the first vacancy that occurred, and in the meantime would live with him. I was, therefore, some three months in Calcutta, part of which time I devoted to learning "Hindustani," and was finally appointed to officiate as an assistant Superintendent of police in a vacancy caused by sickness, and posted to Birbhum, a district some three hundred miles up country. I lost no time in making preparations, for I was heartily sick of life in Calcutta—which at that season of the year was neither amusing nor enjoyable—so purchased such articles as uniform, camp kit and a horse, as speedily as I could.

Leaving Calcutta by the night mail, I found myself at five o'clock next morning deposited bag and baggage at a lonely roadside station, twenty miles from my destination.

A " Dak Gharry " (literally mail-carriage) to which two rat-like ponies were attached, was drawn up outside the station.

Seated on the box was a long-haired, weird-looking individual, whose attire left room for much improvement and addition, who seeing me approach jumped off his perch and with a profound " Salaam " handed me a dirty crumpled note which he produced from his waistcloth, the only garment he possessed.

The note, I found, was an invitation from my future chief, to come straight to his house and put up there till I could find one for myself.

This, my first experience of Anglo-Indian hospitality, struck me as remarkable but was none the less acceptable, so—my traps being piled up on the roof—I clambered into the long, Palanquin-like structure, and we prepared to start. I say " prepared " advisedly, for never had I seen anything in horse-flesh so difficult to move—that is in the right direction—as those two caricatures of ponies.

Pigmies as they were, the stubborn resistance offered by these little brutes was positively amazing. The first attempt at progression resulted in a rapid movement to the rear, only checked by the solid wall of the station building. Then came a series of furious plunges ending in a crash. Leaning out of the door I saw one pony standing on its hind legs, pawing the air, while its companion lay at full length on the ground.

As this appeared to me one of those occasions on which an absence of body seemed preferable to presence of mind, I attempted to get out, but warned by the violent gesticulations of my airily clad friend above, I resumed my seat. It was fortunate I did so, for scarcely was I seated, when, with a tug which only the home-made rope harness could have withstood, we were off.

Thrown from side to side and expecting every moment to be capsized, I was borne along for the next mile or so at a pace far exceeding any record ever made on wheels. Fortunately, the road was broad and straight, and the ponies, finally settling down, we reached the end of the stage without mishap.

The rest of the journey was performed without adventure,

and at eight o'clock we pulled up at the Bungalow of my host. He welcomed me with much kindness and hoped I would make myself at home till I could find a house.

The next morning I was up by dawn and after an early "Chota-Hazri" with my hospitable friend, accompanied him to the parade ground to attend the morning drill. As we approached I saw a large body of men, armed with carbine and bayonet, who—clad in the picturesque blue and red uniform of the force—presented a very smart and soldier-like appearance.

In addition, there were some half-a-dozen squads of recruits, in various stages of ignorance and inefficiency, from the last caught agriculturist, still in rustic attire, to the newly fledged constable, resplendent in blue and red. Of the former, one, unmistakably the "Awkward Squad," was being put through the Goose step, but to words of command which sounded strangely to my ears.

For example: "Billing sthop giring grong," were words I had never yet encountered, and "Comenshe laf pot" was equally foreign to my ears, but then I remembered that, to the uninitiated, parade ground language is apt to be obscure at times and, unwilling to betray my ignorance, I asked no questions.

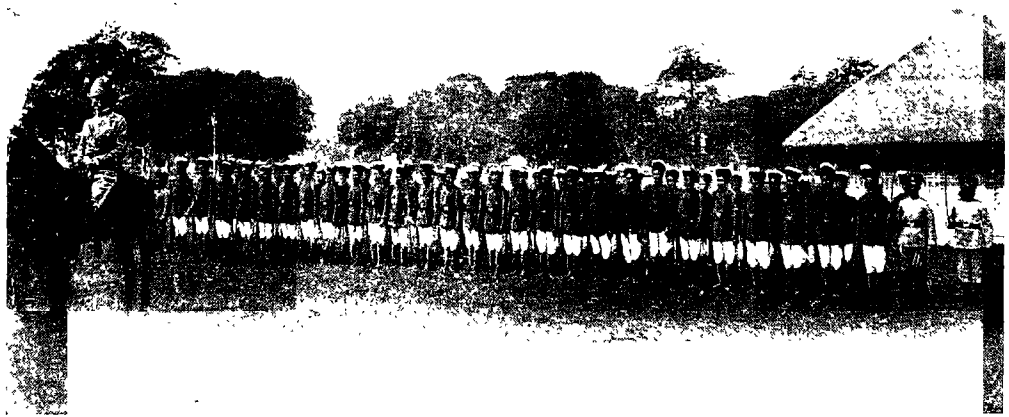
My companion had, however, noticed my bewilderment and, guessing the cause, explained that Drill Instructors, being often illiterate men, learnt their Drill by rote, and the strange words I had heard were intended to represent "Balance step gaining ground," "Commence left foot."

In after years I came across many such curious renderings of English words and phrases, but these if not the quaintest, were certainly the most ingenious.

After an hour spent on the parade ground we returned home to a tub and breakfast.

At twelve o'clock we drove to the police-office where I was duly initiated into the mysteries of police work proper. Knowing little of the language and still less of official routine, I sat lost in amazement at the mass of vernacular papers placed before my chief and the rapidity with which he disposed of them.

Then came the English correspondence, not nearly so voluminous, followed by reports, etc., connected with the



A PARADE OF THE DISTRICT RESERVE FORCE.

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interior economy of the force, and this being the department I was eventually to control, interested me greatly.

At five o'clock we knocked off work and driving home changed into flannels, then hastily swallowing some tea and toast, proceeded to the Judge's house, where we played croquet as long as we could see the balls, then billiards and pool up to 8.30.

Another tub, then dinner and bed brought to a close the most enjoyable day I thought I had ever spent.

The above is a fair specimen of my daily life for the next six months, except an hour or so each day with the "Moonshee"—or language instructor—working for my examination.

After remaining a month with my chief as his guest, we arranged to "chum," as it is called in India, that is sharing all expenses in proportion to our respective incomes. This arrangement was much to my advantage, not only from a pecuniary point of view, but because of the opportunities it afforded me of constantly obtaining the advice and assistance of one so able and experienced as my friend.

A soldier by profession, Major Barnes had done excellent service in the Mutiny. But soldiering in times of peace having no attractions for him, he had joined the new police in the early days of its creation, hoping to find in it a field for his untiring energy and brain.

He had succeeded beyond his expectations and, at the time I write of was considered the best police officer in the Province as well as one of the most popular.

. . . . . .

One dark stormy night, some three weeks after we had started our joint establishment, I was roused up about twelve o'clock by a message from the Jail Guard, reporting that one of the sentries had been struck by lightning.

On arrival at the Jail I found the Guard already turned out, and the officer in command informed me that while on his rounds between eleven and twelve he had received no challenge from the sentry in box No. 4. Thinking he was asleep, he advanced to make quite sure, when he saw the man lying insensible on the floor, with half his clothing burnt off, and his carbine lying beside him.

Following the officer to the box in question, I was relieved to find the man, though still insensible, was alive but apparently severely injured.

His " jumper " was rent from collar to skirt, disclosing the dark skin beneath. The left side of his face, including the eye, was terribly burnt, and from his forehead to the breast bone was a broad red mark, as if seared with a hot iron.

Examining the carbine, I found the stock all charred and split, crumbling away in my hands as I lifted the weapon up. The bayonet, which was fixed, and evidently the cause of the disaster, was twisted and bent beyond recognition.

I had the man removed at once to the police hospital, where, for six weeks or more he hovered between life and death, but eventually recovered, though with the loss of his left eye. He confessed to me subsequently that fearing the carbine with bayonet fixed, would attract the lightning, he had propped it up against the wall—a breach of discipline to which he probably owed his life !

CHAPTER III

SHORTLY after this I met with an adventure which, owing to my own fool-hardiness, came very near to being my last. I had been dining out and on my way home took the opportunity of visiting the Guards. As I approached the sentry at the Treasury Gate, I saw him suddenly reverse his carbine and lunge at something on the ground. Wondering at this strange behaviour, I ran quickly up to find a huge " cobra," apparently just killed.

The district was infested with these deadly snakes, and it so happened at dinner that night, there had been a somewhat heated discussion as to the position and formation of their poison fangs.

I was therefore delighted at this opportunity of gaining information on the subject, and catching hold of the snake by the throat, I forced its jaws open, and putting my finger into its mouth felt along the teeth till I encountered two sharp points, one on either side, which—with the aid of a lantern—I discovered were the fangs.

Satisfied with my examination, I went out of the building to visit the other sentries inside.

On my return, some fifteen minutes later, what was my horror and amazement to see the snake, which I thought dead, coiled up against the wall, and with head erect and hood distended, keeping at bay the sentry and two jail warders, who were making frantic but futile efforts to despatch it.

I joined in the attack, and with the flexible cane I carried had little difficulty in disposing of our enemy. I found then that the wound originally inflicted by the bayonet was only a flesh one, and though it had stunned the snake for a time, had done it no material damage.

I have had many an adventure with snakes and other dangerous beasts since then, but to this day I shudder to think what might have been my fate had the snake come to its senses when my finger was half-way down its throat.

The next few months went uneventfully by. I had passed my examination and was beginning to be of some assistance to my chief when one morning I received orders from "headquarters" posting me to the charge of a sub-district force, many miles away.

My orders being peremptory, I decided to leave the following day, and as the place to which I was appointed was far removed from any railway line, my only means of reaching it was by "Palki Dak," a slow and most unpleasant mode of locomotion.

Journeys by "Palki," or Palanquin, to give this conveyance its Dictionary name, are only tolerable by night; I accordingly arranged to start at nine p.m.

A "Palki" of a superior quality had been specially borrowed for my use, and as the time approached for my departure, I went out to inspect it; the interior, made up into a small but comfortable bed, looked inviting enough; the clean white sheets and pillows suggesting an ease and comfort I had not expected.

But never were appearances more deceptive—as I was soon to learn.

Bidding my chum farewell, I managed with some difficulty to stow my many inches within the limited space at my disposal.

The bearers put their shoulders to the pole, and commending themselves to their goddess "Kali" gave one mighty heave, the Palki swayed from side to side, then righted itself, and they were off.

For the next five miles or so, the discomfort I endured baffles all description.

The quick, jerky motion of the Palki, the weary mournful chant of its bearers as they shuffled along, at a pace that was neither walk nor run, the dust kicked up by their feet, added to the almost stifling heat was bad enough to bear. But worse than them all were the fumes from the "Mussal"—a primitive sort of flare composed of filthy rags, bound round a bamboo stick.

This evil-smelling torch, fed from time to time with dirty, rancid oil, and carried close to the Palki door, was doubtless a very necessary portion of the equipment, but a more sleep-destroying contrivance it is difficult to imagine.

However, like the proverbial eel, I became accustomed to all these miseries in time and at length, strange as it may seem, dropped off to sleep.

I must have slept some time, for I remember dreaming I was being tossed in a blanket by a band of yelling demons, over a cauldron of burning oil, into which I was eventually to be plunged.

Fortunately the dream came abruptly to an end, for just as I was taking my final flight into the air I was awakened by a violent bump.

As my senses returned to me, I found the Palki on the ground with all the "bearers" congregated round it, shouting loudly, and evidently much excited.

It was some time before I could get any one to answer my inquiries, but at last one individual, more collected than the rest, informed me that a tiger had just crossed the road in front of them, and they were afraid to go on. As the road at this point was a mere cutting through a dense jungle, it was quite possible some wild animal might have crossed it, though I was inclined to doubt the fact. The men, however, seemed so completely panic-stricken that, to give them confidence, I fired a shot with my revolver in the direction in which they said the beast had gone.

A loud rustling in the jungle and then a rush of some heavy body through it, followed the shot. Then, as these sounds grew fainter and finally died away, the men gradually recovered from their fright.

Still, half inclined to doubt their story, I examined the spot the animal was said to have crossed; and there, sure enough, deeply impressed in the soft yielding dust, were the footprints of a tiger.

This discovery seemed to renew the terror of the bearers, and it was not until I had emptied the revolver into the jungle that I could induce them to go on.

Our position was certainly a most unpleasant one, for

there were miles of dense jungle yet to be traversed. The tiger might return at any moment, or another one be met with, a Man-Eater perhaps—a contingency by no means improbable in those days.

I need hardly say I slept no more that night, but with the revolver in my hand and eyes and ears strained to their utmost limits, lay longing for the dawn that seemed so long in coming.

The air was full of strange, weird sounds, one in particular seeming to cause considerable commotion amongst the bearers.

They told me it was the cry of the "Pheow," the name given to an animal which is said to precede a tiger in its prowl, and herald its approach. But, as a matter of fact, this beast is an ordinary jackal, which when frightened by the proximity of a tiger, or from any other cause, emits a series of the most blood-curdling yells unlike any other sound.

In the present instance a tiger was evidently the cause of its emotion, for once or twice we heard the unmistakable low, long-drawn moan, which proclaimed the dreaded beast was still in our vicinity.

However, the night passed without further adventure, and shortly after sunrise we reached the "Rest House," where we rested for the day.

The second night's journey was through cultivated country, and by nine o'clock the next morning we reached our destination. I found the man I was to relieve anxiously awaiting my arrival, and his leave being urgently required, I took over charge at once.

That evening, with the rapidity with which events succeed each other in India, he departed *en route* to England.

The only other European in the place was the assistant magistrate, Barclay, whose house I was to share, and we sat up half the night discussing plans for making our future life as tolerable as possible. A thorough sportsman in every sense of the word, he delighted me with his accounts of the good pig-sticking to be had all round us, adding that as the work was light, we should have plenty of leisure for the slaying of the boars.

This information was certainly most accurate for in the twelve months I spent at this place we accounted for a good many of them. The runs were generally exciting, but one in particular deserves special mention.

We had sent the " beaters " one morning into a likely-looking patch of grass, and had taken up our position on the opposite side, about 200 yards or so apart.

Suddenly, without any previous sound or movement in the grass, a huge boar dashed out of cover, and passing close to where I was, galloped off at railway speed across the open.

" Tally ho! there he goes," I shouted to my friend, and giving my eager horse his head, started in pursuit. The pig was going all he could, but he was a heavy, lumbering beast, and I knew my little Arab would outpace him. The boar seemed of the same opinion, for he had hardly gone 200 yards, when, whisking suddenly round, he came charging down upon us.

The horse, evidently anxious to hasten the encounter, seemed to increase his already racing speed. Another stride or two and there was barely ten yards between us and the pig.

I held the spear well forward, to receive him on its point, but in my hurry and excitement I must have raised the blade too high, for the next moment I felt a violent blow upon the ankle which, knocking my foot out of the stirrup, came very near to unseating me.

Recovering myself, however, I found my right boot ripped as if cut open with a knife, while a cold clammy feeling under my foot warned me that something more serious had occurred.

In the meantime the pig continued his career and was making for a cover, half a mile away. My horse was happily untouched, and turning him quickly round, we resumed the chase.

The boar, now about 200 yards in front of me, was going slower than before, and I rapidly gained upon him till I was scarcely six yards behind.

Suddenly he disappeared from view and almost before I had time to wonder where he had gone, I found myself on the brink of a swamp which some bushes had concealed.

My plucky little horse made a gallant effort to clear the gap, but it was too wide for him, and the next moment we went floundering into it.

The shock of the fall separated me from my horse, and I plunged head downwards into the slimy liquid; fortunately it was not deep, and I soon assumed a more dignified position.

But my troubles were by no means over, for as I stood up, half dazed, and immersed to the knees in mud and water, the first object that my eyes encountered was the boar making frantic efforts to climb out.

Happily the animal was too busy with his own affairs just then to notice me, and I had time to recover my senses—and my spear, which lay floating near, and seizing it eagerly, I awaited further developments.

The boar, foiled in his attempts to scale the bank, now turned and came plunging through the ooze towards me. Whether he intended to resume hostilities, or merely cross over to my side, I cannot say, nor had I much time to conjecture, for a moment later he was on to me. I made a desperate lunge at him, but must have struck upon a bone, for the butt of the spear hit me a violent blow upon the chest and hurled me backwards into the mud.

As I fell I saw the boar dash past me, but hardly had I scrambled to my feet when he turned and came thundering down again.

Warned by my late disaster, I now grasped the spear firmly with both hands, and holding the point low, let the maddened brute run on to it.

The lozenge shaped blade, keen as a razor's edge, caught him fairly in the chest, but failed to stop him, and once more I was sent headlong back into the mud. Fortunately, though severely bruised and shaken, my senses did not leave me, and struggling to the surface I saw the boar was lying dead beside me.

The spear, entering at the chest, had traversed the whole length of the body, protruding quite a foot beyond. Death must have been almost instantaneous, happily for me, otherwise I could scarcely have escaped being cut.

I felt too sore to move, and sitting up to the neck

in the liquid mud, was wondering at my fortunate escape when I heard the sound of horse's hoofs approaching. A minute or two later Barclay came galloping up.

From the look of amazement on his face, I could see that he was utterly dumfounded, as well he might be, for I must have presented a most remarkable appearance, but catching sight of the pig, he seemed to grasp the situation and, hooking his bridle to a branch, was soon beside me. He helped me to get up the bank, then calling some villagers, working in a field close by, got the pig up too, and we sent it into camp.

We struck many a boar together after this adventure, but none to equal this in inches or pugnacity!

Except for the "pig-sticking," life at this sub-district was decidedly monotonous, and I was not sorry to see my name in the *Gazette* one morning, posted on famine duty to another district.

Barclay and I parted with mutual regret, and after two days and nights of continuous travel I reached my destination.

The great Bengal Famine of 1873–74 was just commencing, and within forty-eight hours of my arrival I found myself at the lonely police-station of Kusbah Amour, forty miles from the nearest European, in charge of a Relief Circle, 285 square miles in area, with a population of over 14,000 souls.

The nature of my duties would be difficult to describe, for each day brought with it something new to do, but speaking generally, they consisted of distributing rice gratis to all who could not work, and to provide employment for those who could.

My life was necessarily a lonely one, but fortunately the work was hard, and left me little time to feel my solitude.

Occasionally, too, I would meet with some adventure in my daily tours which helped to relieve the monotony of my existence.

One muggy day, for instance, towards the end of the rainy season, I was out inspecting on an elephant, and passing a village saw a crowd assembled on the outskirts of a small jungle adjoining.

As I approached, a man and woman came running up to me, and the latter, throwing herself at the elephant's feet, filled the air with her cries and lamentations, while the man in loud, excited tones related what had happened.

It appeared that his brother, the woman's husband, had just been attacked by a leopard and so severely mauled that he was not expected to recover.

I jumped off the elephant at once and pushing the crowd aside, made my way to where the man was lying. I found him terribly torn about the face and chest and streaming with blood from head to foot.

I attempted to tie up the wounds, but it was a hopeless task, and the man expired before I had well begun.

The leopard, I was told, was still in the jungle, and as I had my shot-gun and some ball cartridge with me, and the men seemed eager to drive out the beast, I resolved to try and shoot it.

I had not the faintest notion what I ought to do, but instinct told me that if a noise was made on this side of the cover, the animal would bolt out at the other. Telling the men, therefore, to keep well together and shout, but on no account to enter the jungle, I posted myself on the further side of it.

From my elevated position I could see the men and that one of them, whom I recognized as my original informant, was there in front of the rest and with a drawn sword in his hand, was jumping about, abusing the leopard in no measured terms and daring it to come out.

I signed to him to keep back but without effect, and was just about to have him forcibly removed, when suddenly there was a savage roar, a mass of black and yellow fur flashed before my eyes. I saw the man go down, then heard a few muffled growls, and something came crashing through the scrub towards me.

Before I had time to think, much less raise my gun, the leopard had seized my elephant by the trunk!

What happened immediately afterwards I never could quite tell, for during the next few moments I was not in a position favourable for observation.

All I can recall is that our movements were extremely

rapid and irregular, bringing me at times into perilous proximity to the leopard which still retained its hold.

The elephant, in its efforts to rid itself of the tenacious brute, was dancing about with an agility strangely at variance with its otherwise solemn and dignified appearance.

In fact, to a spectator, the whole scene would have been ludicrous in the extreme, but to one taking a leading part in the performance the comic side was not so apparent.

Fortunately the tussle was not of long duration, and the next thing I remember was seeing the leopard hurled violently back into the jungle, where it lay, fully exposed to view, and though growling savagely, showing no intention of renewing the struggle.

We were now steady for a moment, and—taking advantage of the situation—I put a bullet through its head, then, forcing the elephant quickly through the scrub, went up to where I had seen the man struck down.

The villagers were all collected round the spot, shouting and gesticulating as natives always do on such occasions; lying in the centre of the jabbering crowd was the body of the man I had warned—at least, so I concluded, for there were no features left by which I could identify him. The top of the skull was smashed in as if with a sledge-hammer, leaving the brain exposed, while the nose and mouth were completely obliterated.

Happily death must have been instantaneous, for no living thing could have survived that first terrific blow. For the moment I was petrified with horror—to think that within the space of two short hours two human lives had been thus wantonly destroyed! It seemed incredible.

It was a piteous sight, too, when later on the two bodies were laid side by side, to see the new-made widows, gazing intently at the mutilated features as if striving to discover which of the two faceless bodies was that of the husband she had lost!

I could bear the scene no longer, so giving each of the two women half of the rupees I had, I hurried from the spot.

A month or two after this tragic episode, the autumn crop was harvested and the famine being now declared over, all relief operations were closed. I was transferred to another district, where, in the performance of my legitimate but more prosaic duties, I passed two uneventful years.

CHAPTER IV

I HAD now been nearly eight years in the police, and—having passed all my examinations—was eligible for promotion to the rank of "Acting" District Superintendent, but a serious outbreak of "Dacoity"—*i.e.* robbery by gangs of armed men—occurring in Seramporc, a very important sub-division of the district of Hughli, I was posted there in charge of the sub-district police.

It was here I really gained my first experience of crime and criminals in Bengal, as the southern portion of my charge was teeming with "Dacoits," who had been gradually increasing in number and efficiency owing to absence of close supervision over the police and bad characters during the last few years.

In most of the larger villages there were, and had been for some time, gangs of these men, either unknown to, or purposely ignored by, the officers in charge of the police-stations, and who had now taken to making depredatory expeditions in large parties, all fully armed with various lethal weapons—including old blunderbusses, horse pistols and even the more modern percussion firearms.

They would select the house of some wealthy person in a village, and in the dead of night, with lighted torches in their hands, and awe-inspiring yells, burst open the door, carrying off all that they could find—sometimes killing the inmates if they resisted, and always subjecting them to ill usage of the most barbarous kind.

As these Dacoits, or robbers, were invariably more or less disguised—generally with their faces coloured and wrapped round with cloths—it was difficult to recognize them, and if by chance any villager happened to identify one, and ventured to declare the fact, he would find his

house some night mysteriously on fire. In fact, the whole country-side was in a state of panic as when some dreaded Man-Eater takes up its abode in a jungle near a village, carrying off from time to time some member of the community, for just as sudden and unlooked for were the depredations of these gangs.

Such, then, was the condition of affairs when I took charge of the sub-district—armed with elaborate instructions from my chief as to the course I should pursue to stamp out these pestilential gangs. But with an effete and —as I soon discovered—wholly untrustworthy police force, I found the task was not an easy one. However—like every workman, who must first put his tools in order before he can expect to do good work—I commenced by reforming my subordinates, and after having one or two dismissed, and others exchanged for better men, I succeeded to some extent, and at the end of a few weeks had a fairly efficient staff.

And now—to make things more intelligible to those who may not be Anglo-Indians—it is perhaps necessary to explain that in India—with the exception of an European at the headquarters of each district—the whole of the police force, from inspectors downwards, is composed entirely of natives.

Every district—for police purposes—is divided into so many sub-districts, each in charge of an inspector, having under him as many sub-inspectors as there were stations and outposts within his charge. In an ordinary sized district there would be perhaps twenty police-stations with an average of one out-post to each. A "District Superintendent"—that is, the European officer in charge of the police—is required to visit and inspect each station and outpost at least twice a year, and as the distances are enormous he can seldom do so oftener. Hence it follows that for the greater part of the year the "station officers"—*i.e.* the sub-inspectors—are necessarily left pretty much to themselves, except for the supervision supposed to be exercised by the inspector in his quarterly inspections. Under these circumstances, and taking into consideration the character of the natives, and the authority with which these men must necessarily be invested, it can

scarcely be wondered at that they should, at times, take advantage of their position to serve their own purposes. A sub-inspector of police within his own jurisdiction is looked upon by the people as an official of very great importance, and his powers of doing good or evil are immense. His word is law, and he would be a bold rustic who dared to dispute it, or appeal to a higher power.

The only remedy for this evil—for evil it still is in spite of police commissions and so-called reformation—is an increase in the number of European officers and consequent closer supervision, for the European—although he may occasionally blunder—can at any rate be relied on to do his best and with an honesty of purpose. Unfortunately this measure—however desirable it may be—is practically impossible, for it would necessitate the doubling, or even trebling, the existing number of European officers—an increase of expenditure which, in the present financial condition of the country, would not be possible.

The above brief sketch of the Indian police system will explain better the difficult position I was in, also tend to make clear any other police matters I may have occasion to refer to later in this narrative, which as a record of an Indian police officer's experiences must necessarily contain much that would be otherwise unintelligible.

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Having, as I have said, worked up my staff to a condition bordering on efficiency, I now set to work collecting information and eventually, with the aid of an "informer"—an ex-convict and "retired" burglar! in the pay of the police—we succeeded in arresting several members of a gang in the act of committing a Dacoity.

Amongst them was an individual who made a full confession, implicating all the others and several more whom we caught later. But—more important than all—divulged the name of a person whom he described as the original organizer and supreme head of all the various gangs.

This individual, whose complicity with these gangs was, my informant implied, known to the police, was a brother of one of the most influential and wealthy landowners in the sub-district, who lived in a village about

fifteen miles from my headquarters. He then went on to tell me that amongst the four "chokidars" (village policemen), there was one—Kali Dass—himself secretly connected with the gang! who, if offered sufficient inducement, would give further information regarding this individual which might lead to his arrest!

It is hardly necessary to say I kept all this information to myself, and early the next morning rode out to the village, where I had a secret interview with my recreant subordinate, and, making full use of my recently acquired knowledge, extracted an undertaking from him to give me timely notice of his "friend's" next visit to his brother!

On my return I had a private audience with the sub-district magistrate—an European recently posted here—and obtained a search warrant from him, to be used at my discretion, and filled in in his own handwriting instead of by his clerk.

Having secured this important document, so necessary for my plans, I spent the next week in visiting the villages in the neighbourhood, quietly collecting evidence against the man I wanted, and managed to obtain sufficient for my purpose. Meanwhile I had issued orders to the rural police of all the neighbouring villages to hold themselves in readiness to assemble at a given point at eight o'clock on a certain night—to be fixed later—on the pretext that I wished to see whether they were all fit and properly equipped for night duty.

About ten days later, I was seated smoking on the verandah, one night after dinner, when my orderly reported that there was some one outside who wished to speak to me, and ordering him to be brought in, a man presently appeared, dressed in the garb of a Faquir, or religious mendicant, and making a low salaam—asked for alms.

Annoyed at his importunity, I was about to order him off the premises when something in his appearance struck me as familiar, and looking at him more carefully—despite the ashes and paint-besmeared exterior—soon recognized the saturnine countenance of the faithless Kali Dass.

Immediately I guessed that he had something important to impart, and sending the orderly away—I asked him what he wanted.

He came closer to me, and looking cautiously around, whispered: "Sahib, the man your honour seeks will come to his brother's house the night after to-morrow, and will stay there for three nights."

"Good! but how am I to know him, for I have never seen the man?" I asked, as this problem suddenly flashed across my mind.

"The 'Huzoor' * forgets that his slave too will be there," replied the wily rogue, adding, "for am I not one of those he has ordered to be present on a certain night! and how can the poor chokidar disobey the order of the 'Hakim'?" †

The marvellous intuition of the man amazed me greatly, for I had said nothing to him of my plans, nor had I breathed a word to any of my officers as to the real object of the night parade I had ordered. But he had evidently guessed its purpose, viz. to collect a sufficient number of police to surround the house during the night, preparatory to commencing the search next morning. This discovery made me somewhat anxious, for since he was evidently acquainted with my plans, what was there to prevent him revealing them to his friend? True, I had promised if he did well in this case, I would endeavour to have his past transgressions pardoned and in future employ him as an "informer," still I felt doubtful whether I ought to trust him further.

However, on thinking the matter over, I decided that I would, believing that the inducement offered plus the hold I had on him would prevent his playing false—and therefore told him the details of my plan, then fixed the night on which the parade was to be held.

Next morning I issued the necessary orders, then rode into headquarters and arranged with my chief for a party of the Reserve Armed Police to be sent to my sub-district, as—in the event of my finding my man—there was every probability of his arrest being resisted.

Shortly after dark, on the night fixed for my expedition, I sent off these men secretly, under a trusted officer, with orders to halt within a mile of the village and to wait there—concealed as far as possible—until I arrived; and,

* Master. † Official.

about an hour later, walked down to the place appointed for the parade.

Here I found assembled some fifty to sixty "chokidars" —all armed with their formidable spears—drawn up with some semblance to military formation—though anything but martial in either dress or appearance. Some—the "acting" ones—were as nature had created them save for a "pugri" and loin cloth round the waist, while others were clad in cast-off soldiers' tunics and, so far as could be seen—nothing else. Amongst this motley crew, resplendent in a bandsman's uniform—minus the nether garments —was my friend Kali Dass, who doubtless recognized me, but his phlegmatic features betrayed no sign of recognition, and who to all appearances seemed as ignorant of the end I had in view as any of his brother "chokidars," who are not as a whole a particularly intelligent body of men.

Nevertheless, the village "chokidar" (literally "one who guards a post") is a most important factor in Indian police administration. Being himself one of the village community, he is, as it were, a link between the people and the regular police, and as he is in a position to know all that goes on in his village, is required to attend the police-station once a week, and report to the station officer not merely the occurrence of any crime but also the movements of bad characters, births, deaths, epidemics, etc.

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As a relic of an ancient Eastern feudal system, the "chokidar," up to a few years ago, was a small landowner himself, in other words was granted plots of "chakron," or service land, to be held in perpetuity, in return for which he gave his services as "watchman" of the village. But in later times these service tenures were gradually absorbed, and as the original holders died their places were filled by men appointed by the district authorities and their services paid for in cash, levied under a special tax. However, except in this respect, the old system still obtains, and the "chokidar" is necessarily one of the village community.

Theoretically, the system is undoubtedly an excellent one, but in practice seldom produces good results, and many

a village warden—like the faithless Kali Dass—employs his leisure moments in criminal enterprises and intrigue, and occasionally figures as the ringleader of a gang!

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Having made a pretence of inspecting the tag-rag and bobtail crowd, I informed them I wished by making a night march to test their walking powers! so—together with some regular police I had collected—we set out for the village, named by Kali Dass.

It was a tedious march, occupying some hours, but about midnight we reached the outskirts of the village, where I picked up the armed police and, now maintaining the strictest silence, went on to the house which we proceeded to surround.

This was a bigger job than I had expected, for "the house" turned out to be a group of several straggling buildings occupying an acre or so of ground, and as it was necessary to make my dispositions before the moon betrayed our presence, the task was not an easy one.

However, all the arrangements were finally completed, and the group of houses so completely fenced around by men that it was impossible for any of the inmates to escape without being seen.

This was all that could be done during the night, for under the provisions of the law, a house-search is illegal, if conducted between the hours of sunset and sunrise. However, I was glad of a few hours' rest after the long march, so taking up my position opposite the main building, made myself as comfortable as I could.

CHAPTER V

ABOUT two hours of our vigil had gone past, and the moon—which had risen shortly after we concluded our arrangements—was now shining brightly, throwing into relief the dark forms of the "chokidars" as they stood like so many statues, their huge broad-bladed spear-heads glistening in the silvery light.

So far there had been no sound or movement in any of the buildings to indicate that our presence was so much as suspected, and I was congratulating myself on the success of our "surround," when I heard some one shouting from a distant corner of the building. I ran at once in this direction, arriving just in time to see a man running quickly up a bamboo ladder—by which he had evidently been attempting to escape. As I approached, he had reached the flat-topped roof, and running along it, disappeared into the building.

It appeared that the chokidar watching here was apparently asleep, and but for the timely arrival of the officer on his rounds—who came up as the man had nearly reached the ground, he would probably have escaped. As things turned out, however, I was glad he had attempted it, for I now felt sure we had trapped our man! Removing the sleepy watchman to a less important post, I returned to my own, and had been there about an hour, when a window, just above me, was suddenly thrown open, disclosing the head and shoulders of a man attired as a native gentleman, and holding a formidable blunderbuss in his hands.

Addressing me in insolent Babu English, he shouted: "Why you making this assemblage in the night time? —Annoying British subject when taking his repose!"—then, pointing the weapon at my head, proceeded to inform me "that it was muzzle-loaded with bullet, which painful

necessity would compel him to discharge unless I removed myself and myrmidons at once."

From the appearance of the man I judged he was the owner of the house and brother of the "gentleman" I wanted, and, taking his threat for what it was worth, I told him that I was the Police Superintendent, armed with a warrant to search the house for one Bama-churon Mukerjee, who was wanted by the police! At the same time removing my civilian overcoat, which I had put over my uniform, showed him the warrant.

However, as he still maintained his threatening attitude, I called up my reserve, and ostentatiously ordering the men to load (with blank cartridge!) informed him that I would commence the search as soon as the sun showed itself above the horizon.

Seeing now that I was evidently in earnest, he retired from the window for a while, presumably to consult his friends, as he shortly reappeared and commenced haranguing me in the quaint, long-worded, dictionary-English so dear to the Babu's ear. Assuming an air of injured innocence, he said, "My tumultuous conduct would be reported to the headquarters and all other proper quarters, not excepting Her Majesty the Queen-Emperor himself, who would no doubt (spelt dought) see with his own hand that such rampacious young police cub was given his desert," and so on.

Happily even Babu eloquence has its limit, so after exhausting himself and his vocabulary he slammed the window to and retired, doubtless to devise some other means for baffling my persistency.

An hour or so later, selecting from the score of villagers now assembled two or three to act as witnesses and accompanied by some police and chokidars, including Kali Dass, I knocked formally at the door of the main building and demanded to be admitted.

After a few minutes' delay the door was opened by the aforesaid voluble vituperator in person, now, strange to say, most obsequious in his manner, who hastened to assure me "that the personage I was in search of was not in the house, otherwise he, as loyal subject in duty bound, would immediately make delivery himself."

I thanked him for his good intentions and, quoting his own words, replied that much as I regretted it, " painful necessity compelled me " to carry out my duty and that I should therefore proceed to search the house, and see for myself if the man was there !

He seemed in no way disconcerted at my decision, from which I concluded the man had been carefully concealed, and that in such a maze of straggling buildings, all probably connected by some passages with each other, I should have some difficulty in finding him.

However, I was determined to succeed, even if my efforts should extend over a week, so commenced my operations by a search of the main building. There we found room after room all apparently unoccupied, though most were furnished with the squalid splendour peculiar to houses of wealthy Eastern magnates.

In one room, for example, we found a valuable " Buhl " table decked with pots of artificial paper plants obtainable in the bazaar at a half-penny a pot, while in another, suspended from the ceiling, was a gorgeous chandelier with crystal, silver-mounted pendants, and hanging from each branch some paltry penny toy ! Cheap German prints too were not wanting, mostly of an extremely questionable character, and hanging side by side with an occasional work of art. All and every other object in the rooms covered with the dirt and dust of ages, and presenting an incongruity of appearance impossible to imagine or describe.

Hour after hour we searched with a patience and perseverance worthy of a better cause and always with negative results, for each building, as I had guessed, being connected with the other, it was impossible with the few men at my disposal, to search them simultaneously. Finally, by mid-day, we had exhausted all the buildings, and there was now nothing left but the women's quarters or " Zenana "—always a troublesome factor in connection with house-searches in India.

True, the law permits such premises to be searched provided time is given for the occupants to turn out, and if at the expiration of this period admittance is refused empowers a police officer to enter forcibly, even to the

extent of breaking a door open. Such extreme measures, however, are generally avoided as far as possible, but on this occasion I had every reason to believe the man we were in search of was concealed in these apartments, for they were situated at the extreme end of all the other buildings, and the only outlet had been guarded throughout the night. Under these circumstances I felt I had no option in the matter, and accordingly, taking out my watch, gave notice that I intended searching these quarters and would commence in half an hour.

This information was received in sullen silence suggestive of coming trouble, which at the end of the time allotted made itself apparent, for when I knocked at the door requesting to be admitted there was no reply. I knocked again, repeating my request, but still there was no answer, and on trying the door I found it was bolted from within—a simple but most significant indication of the attitude intended to be adopted in the event of my proceeding with the search. I realized at once the critical position I was in, for although I knew that in forcing an entrance I should be well within the law, I was equally aware of the scandal and sensation such action would create. However, too intent upon the capture to think much of the risks, I called to those inside that if not immediately admitted I should burst open the door, and as this threat had no effect put my shoulder to it and pushed with all my strength.

A loud, rending crash, followed by piercing shrieks, told me I had succeeded, and the next moment I found myself in a large, rectangular apartment, in the centre of which—clinging to each other—was a group of some twenty apparently terror-stricken women, all yelling with one accord as if assured their last hour had come.

That these were all ladies of the household was apparent from their appearance and attire, most of them being remarkably light complexioned, and all clothed in the costly but somewhat diaphanous garments worn by "Purdanashin" * women. Many of them were extremely beautiful, of a somewhat Grecian type of beauty, and being of a class never seen by Europeans, I could scarcely believe

* Secluded.

they were natives of the country, for the ordinary low-caste Bengali woman is dark and seldom prepossessing in appearance.

My sub-inspector and some men—amongst them Kali Dass—had followed me, and as the latter was, I thought, gazing rather impudently at these ladies, I called him up intending to rebuke him, when he whispered, "Sahib, the man your honour wants is concealed within that group." Pretending to take no notice of this information, I told him sharply to stand back, and addressing the group of shrieking females generally, requested they would be so good as to retire to the room adjoining.

Possibly my Bengali, being of the "kitchen" order, was not intelligible to these "ladies of high degree", or, being too noisily employed, they could not hear me. At any rate my request was not complied with, and as I was about to repeat it, a door beyond was opened by the owner of the house and, presumably, of the ladies.

I had been wondering not without anxiety at his long absence, lest he should be planning some organized resistance, and was therefore much relieved to see him, notwithstanding that his bearing now was anything but pacific. He had evidently been listening, and my scheme to disturb the sheltering group of women having upset his well-laid plans he thought the best way of upsetting mine was to resume his threatening attitude.

Addressing me again in blustering Babu-English he demanded "by what authority I was molesting ladies in secluded state by causing heart-rending anguish," and advanced threateningly towards me, using his whole vocabulary of Bengali abuse.

Doubling my fists I kept my eyes fixed on him, prepared to hit out as soon as he was near enough, when it occurred to me that in the circumstances a less violent and more lawful method of defending myself would be advisable, so calling to a policeman standing near me, I ordered him to arrest this person for obstructing the police "in the execution of their duty."

The constable, a stalwart "Rajput" with the racial hatred and contempt for the "Bengali," was nothing

loath, and springing forward at the order seized the Babu round the shoulders.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the confusion that ensued, some of the women were making towards the inner door, amongst them one who seemed much troubled with her clothing, and in trying to adjust it the head portion slipped off, disclosing a face adorned with a beard and moustache! I rushed forward just in time to seize her —or rather him—as he was passing through the door. He struggled desperately to escape, but a constable coming to my assistance he was finally secured, and as we brought him back into the room I caught a look on the face of Kali Dass which convinced me that our captive was the man we sought.

In the meantime our other prisoner, who since his arrest had abandoned his defiant, threatening attitude, was still in the custody of his captor, and as I took his brother up to him for identification he threw himself at my feet and after the manner of his kind begged to be forgiven. He pleaded with some eloquence, despite his occasional ridiculous phraseology, and when he thought he had said enough about himself, interceded for his brother, who, as he put it, "was a much malignand man, though innocent as babe or suckling yet unborn." Unfortunately, carried away by his anxiety to gain my favour, he finally attempted the usual Eastern method and offered to purchase what he probably considered was not otherwise obtainable.

Suddenly prostrating himself again he clasped me round the legs, and in the commotion caused by this action whispered, "Rupees fifty thousand will make present if brother rendered free."

It was a bold suggestion to make in such a crowd, even in a whisper, especially to an European official in the presence of his subordinates, but I could see the man was temporarily "off his head," so let the insult pass and only warned him "that if he dared to repeat it, I would institute another charge against him."

This brought him to his senses, for he knew that to be charged with attempting to bribe me would be a very serious matter, and apologizing most humbly, begged that

" at any rate I would not so humiliate by putting on him the hand-'coff ! " Here again he was most unfortunate in his request, for I had not intended handcuffing the man, but after what had just occurred I felt bound to do so, and ordered them to be put on at once.

My action may appear Quixotic to the ordinary English reader, but those who know Bengal and the character of her people will understand my motive, for had I acted otherwise there were many there ready to affirm I had done so because of some inducement offered.

. . . . . .

I may here mention that a few years before this a case somewhat similar had occurred to a young European police officer, who, thinking to " catch his man," laid a trap for him. Pretending to accept the bribe, he fixed a time and place for the payment to be made, previously concealing some witnesses in the room. The man came with the money, and as he was paying it, by a pre-concerted signal, the witnesses appeared, and the payer, caught in the act, was duly arrested and sent up for trial. So far all had gone well, but when the case came before the Court, its aspect was quite changed. True the witnesses deposed to having seen the money offered, but added it had also been accepted by the officer and carried off by him in bags upon a cart, naming the cartman whom he had employed.

Fortunately, and as frequently happens in such cases, they tried to prove too much, and the cartman, who was probably an after-thought, not as well tutored as the rest, broke down in cross-examination and finally blurted out the truth. It transpired later, that the friends of the original accused, fearing the evidence against him was conclusive, had bought over the witnesses, and by creating this diversion had hoped to impugn the veracity of the accuser, and thus discredit his accusation !

. . . . . .

Having handed over my prisoner to the escort, and released the other one on bail, we marched back in triumph to my headquarters, arriving there late that evening.

The several charges against the accused were all ultimately proved, and he was duly convicted and sent

across the seas to a penal settlement. His brother was fined heavily for harbouring an offender, and Kali Dass, the chokidar, secretly rewarded and employed as an informer.

He turned out an excellent detective, and through information supplied by him the police succeeded in arresting several members of the different gangs, and in finally dispersing most of them.

CHAPTER VI

SOME months after this I was promoted to act as District Superintendent, and posted to Patna, one of the largest and most troublesome districts in the Province, to officiate for the permanent incumbent, proceeding on three months' leave.

I was informed that on the return of the latter I was to take over charge of the city police of that district, a special force maintained at the chief town and head-quarters, and noted for its fanatical and criminal population, as well as for the prevalence of serious crime. In these circumstances it occurred to me that, as a stranger to these parts and possessing—as I have hinted—considerable detective ability, Kali Dass might prove of some use to me there.

Although a Bengali by birth he spoke the colloquial Hindustani, a kind of Lingua-Franca, common to lower Bengal, with considerable fluency, and with his natural aptitude for adapting himself to the various disguises he could assume was not likely to be easily detected. Accordingly a few days before starting to take up my new appointment, I sent for him one night and told him of my proposal, adding that if he would go, I would take him, ostensibly as one of my servants.

After considering the matter for a while, he replied that he would go, suggesting at the same time an amendment in my plans as to the manner of his going, for with the quick perception of a mind accustomed to planning and intrigue he had detected the weak point in my arrangements.

"If I go as the 'Huzoor's' servant, every one will know me, then what good can I do? No, Sahib," he continued. "Give me my road expenses, and I will find my way myself."



A "MIRSHIKARI."
Professional Bird-Catcher.

[*Page* 41.

I agreed to this suggestion since there was no denying the soundness of his reasoning, and giving him the money he required, not without some misgivings as to whether I should set eyes on him again, told him to resign his present post at once and start as soon as possible.

Ten days later, I joined my new appointment, and for the first week or so was in a condition of absolute bewilderment with the amount and importance of the work I had to get through in the day. From early dawn to sunset—often later—I lived in an atmosphere of fusty papers, perspiring "Mohurrus" * and native ink, the last the most malodorous concoction that native ingenuity has as yet produced.

Amongst the papers were many involving decisions of terrifying importance which I was called upon to give in writing, duly signed, and often I lay awake at night, cold with apprehension, as I recalled some decision I had given, lest it should rise up against me later—conclusive evidence of some illegal thing I had ordered to be done! However, this feeling of responsibility quickly wore away and I soon found myself callously giving orders in matters which in England would probably require a Quarter-Session power, if not the consent of the Home Secretary himself! But such in those days, was a necessary feature in Indian local administration before distances from central authorities had been so reduced by telegraph and rail, thus many important questions had to be decided by the officers on the spot.

Meanwhile my time and thoughts had been so fully occupied with my daily toil that Kali Dass and the plans I had made concerning him had passed out of my mind, when one evening, as I was walking home from office along a lonely path, I was accosted by an individual dressed as a "mirshikari" (or professional bird-catcher), and carrying the pole, leaf screen and basket—instruments of his trade.

"Salaam Sahib," he said, making a low obeisance, "Will not your Highness buy some Ortalons from the poor shikari?" Then—on my answering somewhat angrily—

* Clerks.

he continued: "Has the 'Huzoor' no recollection of his slave, the 'Chokidar,' Kali Dass?"

I gazed at him in amazement, for although I now recognized the voice in which he had uttered his last sentence it was some time before I could reconcile his appearance with what I remembered of the individual he professed to be. True, I had not seen the latter for some weeks, but time, if extended into years, could not have wrought a transformation so complete.

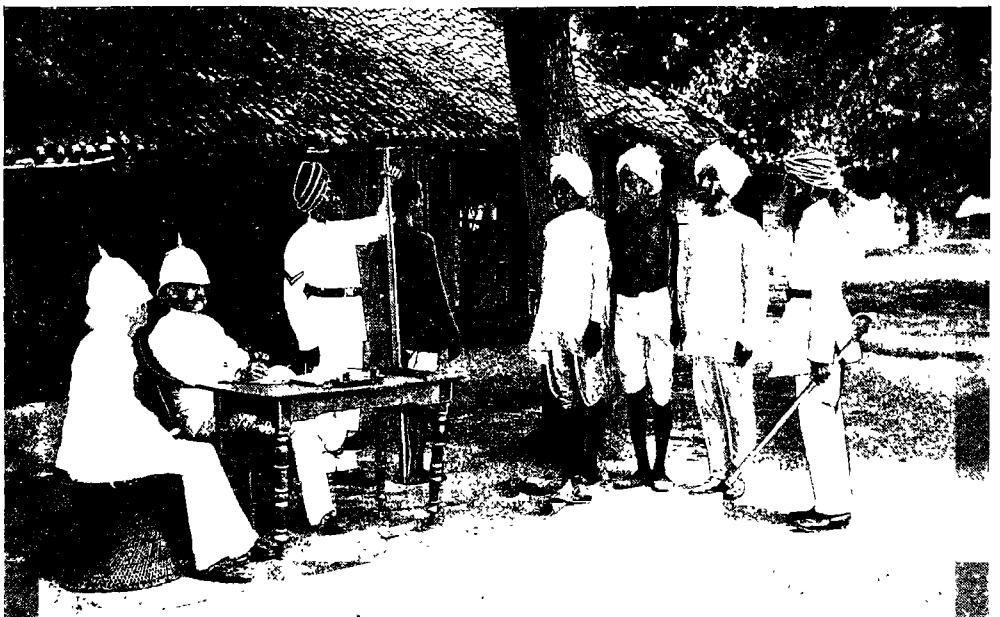
Kali Dass—like most Bengali of low caste—was dark almost to blackness, while the complexion of this man was of the lighter hue found amongst up-country Mohammedans of the class he was representing. His hair, too, which he usually wore concealed under his "pugri," now hung in greasy locks around his neck and ears, surmounted by a skull cap of correct Mussulman design. His body was clothed down to the knees in a dirty white cotton "chapken," * also of the cut worn by the followers of Mohammed, and, with a pair of short "pyjamas" gathered in at the ankles, completed a disguise perfect in every detail.

"Well, Kali Dass," I asked, as soon as I was assured of his identity, "when did you arrive and where are you living?" purposely avoiding any question as to the delay for fear he should think I had entertained any suspicion of his integrity.

"I arrived a month ago, 'Huzoor,' and am staying for the present at a 'Serai' (or native inn) in the bazaar," he replied, and then told me that during this month he had picked up a lot of information, in his wanderings in the back slums of the city and bazaar, which he would give me later!

On my questioning him as to how he had succeeded in so completely changing his complexion he said he had used a pigment made out of a certain jungle plant which produced a lasting dye. He then went on to tell me that in his early youth he had been servant to a "Bairupi," a kind of itinerate, quick-change masquerader, from whom he had learned many of the secrets of the trade, an accomplishment which, with his natural capacity for

* Tunic.



MEASURING A RECRUIT.

[*Page* 42.

intrigue, would render him even more useful than I had imagined.

However, having neither time nor inclination for any extra work just then, I told him to continue his enquiries and report to me occasionally as opportunities offered. Then, giving him some money for his expenses, I dismissed him. As he went slouching off, I could not but admire the marvellous skill with which he had adapted himself to the rôle; together with the clothes, he seemed to have put on the gait and bearing peculiar to men of this profession, even to their mode of carrying the implements of their trade which he imitated as if to the manner born.

I have omitted to mention that in addition to my duties as Superintendent of the district police, I was also responsible for the working of the city force, which was under the control of the senior of my two assistant superintendents, the other being attached to my office at headquarters. Unfortunately, both these young officers, shortly after my arrival, had been taken ill with fever and transferred to more healthy districts, without being replaced by others. Hence the whole burden of the work had been thrown upon my shoulders to the extinction, or at any rate postponement, of my detective schemes.

Hence I was not sorry to hand over the office to the permanent occupant on his return from leave and whom I now met for the first time, his health having necessitated his leaving before I arrived. His name was O'Malley and his nationality as equally unmistakable. Several years my senior in the force, he was a contemporary and friend of my cousin, of whom mention has been made, and like him a keen sportsman and thoroughly "good sort." He was much interested at the relationship and greatly regretted that we should not be able to "chum" together since, under the rules, it would now be necessary for me to live in the city. "By the way," he continued, "how do you like the idea of that appointment? I am afraid you will find the work pretty hard!"

"I like the idea of the appointment well enough," I replied, "and as for the work it could not well be harder than what I have had the last three months, but——"

"Oh, I know," he interrupted, "and I was awfully

sorry when I heard the two youngsters had been transferred, but after all they wouldn't have been much use to you, perhaps, as they were both so inexperienced."

"No, perhaps not; but, as I was going to say, it will be rather a dull life, so far away from the station and with nothing but natives round one, won't it?" I asked.

"I don't think you need worry about that," he replied. "Your house is only four miles from the station, and as you have a trap you can always come in every evening. So long as you sleep always in the city, I shall not object."

I thanked him for this concession, much relieved to find that I should not be so cut off from society as I had feared, and we then went on to the office to make, and take over charge, respectively, and sign the necessary papers.

That night after dinner, while discussing my future duties, I confided to him, as my superior officer, the plans I had formed in conjunction with Kali Dass, for his approval and advice.

He seemed at first to think that the plan, though good enough in theory, was unlikely to be successful, but after questioning me closely about the character and qualifications of my coadjutor, he considered the matter for some time, then said: "Well, perhaps there is something in it; any way try it by all means and I will help you, for if crime is to be checked in the city it must be by some method other than any we have as yet been able to devise."

Accordingly before we parted for the night it was settled that I was to work out the scheme as arranged, and he on his part would see that the police outside the city were not too officious and searching in their enquiries regarding faquirs, bird-catchers and such-like individuals, whom they might find outside the city limits.

The next morning the sun was well up in the heavens before I awoke. Determined to indulge in what officials in India term "an Europe morning," I had given strict orders not to be called, for it was to be a "dies non" for me—a luxury I had not enjoyed for many a day past.

The gliding, ghost-like movement of the "bearer" had not, therefore, disturbed my rest that morning, nor his monotonous repetition "that the hour of five had

sounded and my honor's horse was ready saddled at the door." Nor had he made his presence felt materially by pulling my big toe, as was his wont, when all other means had failed to rouse his sleeping master.

For the first time for three months, I had been permitted to awake without this maddening process, and in nature's pleasing way, and surprised to find the sun so far advanced, jumped hastily out of bed.

I found my above-mentioned tormentor seated at the door—evidently taking advantage of the situation by indulging in some extra sleep himself, and delighted at this opportunity of paying off old scores, I shook him roughly into wakefulness, then, forgetting the orders I had given, abused him for having let me sleep so long!

"It was the 'Sahib's' order before he went to sleep that his slave was not to call him," he replied with characteristic calmness, then informed me that "His Excellency Omali Sahib had left word that he would be back to breakfast at half-past ten."

The rest of the morning was devoted to sending off my heavy luggage, and the few articles of furniture I possessed, to my new abode, and in the evening I drove out and inspected it with O'Malley, prior to taking up my residence next day.

During dinner that night, and afterwards over our pipes, our conversation was mainly on "shop"—the Anglo-Indian's equivalent also for business—for in the giving and taking over charge of a large district there is much to be discussed; the in-coming man being naturally anxious to know the special points requiring his particular attention, many of which, being often of a confidential nature, are not to be gathered from the registers in the office. For example the suspected disloyalty of any of the native landed gentry in the district, or perhaps a suspicion of dishonesty on the part of any of the subordinate officers of the force, and such-like matters which, though undesirable to place officially on record, are nevertheless important for the in-coming officer to know.

In the present instance, however, having been merely O'Malley's "locum tenens," I had little information to impart, but on the contrary much to acquire regarding

my new post, which, as already stated, was one of considerable importance both from a criminal and political point of view, and as my host was only too willing to tell me all he knew, I thus acquired a good deal of useful knowledge.

We sat up talking late into the night, and the next morning early, bidding my host and future "C.O." a temporary adieu, rode out to the city and assumed control of the police from the inspector temporarily in charge. I soon settled down in my new quarters and found the house most comfortable though lonely, from an European's point of view. It was a substantial brick building raised some six feet off the ground, with one long room in the centre and two smaller ones on either side enclosed by verandahs. Its situation, however, left much to be desired, for it was in the very centre of the city, surrounded on all sides by palatial native mansions, floridly magnificent in appearance, but squalid and insanitary in fact, and occupied chiefly by rich bankers, merchants, jewellers and such-like city magnates.

The "city" itself was some seven miles from end to end and about 1½ to 2 in depth. A broad, metalled road ran through the centre, and dotted along this, at intervals of about a mile, were my six police-stations, each with an "outpost" or two in the interior some distance off the road.

The population was enormous and out of all proportion to the area, exceeding, so far as I remember, that of the whole district, and composed, as I have already observed, largely of the criminal caste and classes and sects of turbulent, fanatical Mohammedans.

Under these circumstances it will be understood that the office I held was no sinecure, nor were the number of officers and men under my control sufficient to cope with the work, much less to exercise anything like efficient supervision over the criminals and their numerous organizations.

Thefts and burglaries were of daily occurrence, of the latter often as many as seven or eight a night, but with never a clue to any one of them, till, finding they were apparently impossible to detect, I attempted preventive measures, exhausting myself and my subordinates by my unsuccessful efforts.

This condition of affairs had continued for so long that the police had become callous, and I would probably have followed their example but for the plans I had formed and the encouragement they had met with by so able and experienced an officer as my chief.

One morning, on arrival at my office which was just across the road, I noticed that the man who usually pulled the "punkah" was not there, but, to my amazement, standing in his place behind my chair, with the rope in his hand, was my friend Kali Dass. There was no look of recognition on his face, but merely "salaaming" to me as I came in, he commenced his duties as naturally as if the pulling of an office "punkah" had been his regular means of livelihood all his life. He was not in any way disguised, and except for a stubbly beard and toothbrush-like moustache, was much the same in appearance as when I had first seen him, minus his chokidar's uniform.

Concealing my astonishment as well as I was able, I called in the head constable, who acted as my clerk, and asked him what had become of the regular man.

"He seriously attacked with cholera, your worship, so this man appointed *locum tenens*, pending convalescence of permanent incumbent 'in few days'," replied the young "Behari" * glibly, glad of this opportunity of airing his knowledge of official English.

Meanwhile I had realized the full value of this arrangement, from my point of view, and sincerely hoped the "permanent incumbent" would postpone his convalescence for an indefinite period. At the same time, I was at a loss to understand how Kali Dass—astute though I knew him to be—had succeeded so far in gaining the favour of the clerk as to obtain the post. For the appointment of punkah-puller to the police-office was one much coveted by all persons following this monotonous calling, not so much for the emolument, but in the hope of picking up official secrets, to be subsequently exchanged for pice or rupees, according to their value.

* A native of Behar, a division of Bengal.

CHAPTER VII

For the first day or two following the installation of Kali Dass as punkah-puller, I was most careful never to address him except in the presence of the clerk, when I would occasionally call him angrily to pull—quite unnecessarily I may observe, for he was the best punkah-coolie I had met!

But one day I found my opportunity. My private office was beyond the one used by the clerks, and one morning, on the plea of there being too much noise, I ordered the door between us to be shut, intimating at the same time that I had some important work to do and was not to be disturbed. No sooner were we alone than I turned to my quasi punkah-puller and asked him how he had succeeded in obtaining the appointment.

He seemed anxious to evade the question, but when I repeated it, replied: "How can I tell the Hakim of such things? He would not perhaps believe them, then beat his slave for telling an untruth!"

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed angrily. "If you tell the truth you need not fear a beating."

"Well, if the Huzoor insists, I will tell him,"—and coming up closer, said in a low voice that he had obtained the post in the "usual way."

"What do you mean by the usual way?" I interrupted, failing to catch his meaning.

Then, hesitating for a moment as if wondering how I would receive the information, he went on to tell me that according to "Dustoor" * he had paid certain sums of money to the clerk, and other employees in the office—including the office sweeper! and having offered more than the other candidates—he had been appointed! I

* Custom.

had no reason to doubt his statement, for the mere fact of an outsider being successful was sufficient evidence in itself, such acting "jobs" being generally given to a relative or friend of some one in the office.

Unfortunately, I could take no action in the matter without implicating my informant, which would have been fatal to my plans, for even if he escaped, he would be a marked man from that day, to be hunted down by the police, and consequently useless for the part he had to play. Yet I felt I ought to take some notice of the case, for the offence committed was too serious to pass over. So, after thinking the matter over, decided to report it to O'Malley and ask his advice. Meanwhile I administered a long lecture to Kali Dass, enlarging on the seriousness of his offence, ending with a severe sermon to be more circumspect in future, and after the day's work, drove in to the station to consult with my chief.

It was late when I arrived and found him at the Club, playing Following-Pool. "Hullo, you're just in time to take a ball," he called out as I appeared at the door. So I took the last one, and we finally "divided," much to his surprise, for I was a bad player and usually lost my "lives" early in the game.

We played on till nearly dinner-time, when he took me home to dine, and afterwards, while sitting smoking in the verandah, discussed the business I had come in about, from every point of view. His first impulse, naturally, was to take immediate action, but remembering the assistance the chief culprit was likely to afford us, he decided to let the matter stand over for the present, and to merely transfer my office staff as if in the course of ordinary routine.

An hour or two later, feeling much relieved in mind at having thus transferred the burden of responsibility, I started back for the city, with parting instructions from my host "to keep my eyes open" and to submit a report of the case in writing, confidentially, the next day!

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I have related this incident—of little interest in itself

—only to show how impossible it is for the European police officer in India to know what his subordinates are doing, even when under his own eye, and how much less control the doings of those employed in the interior, many miles away!

. . . . . .

However, after this event I had many opportunities of conferring with Kali Dass, who during his leisure hours collected much valuable information regarding the bad characters of the city, with some of whom he had fraternized as one of their profession. Still the thefts and burglaries continued with unabated frequency, when one morning he informed me he had discovered the principal offenders, and mentioned the names of four persons, already known to the police and borne on the register of bad characters.

"If your honour," he continued, "will deign to follow the advice of his poor slave, the 'Sind choris'* that occur nightly may be stopped to some extent."

"Very well, Kali Dass, if your plan is good I shall be glad to try it, so tell me what it is," I replied, curious to know what this plan could be, yet fearing it might be something too drastic or illegal for adoption.

"It is this, Sahib—quite easy to be done too. The Huzoor has two punkah-pullers at night; let him say these men do not pull well, also that two are not sufficient and he must have four, and make these four the men that I have named!"

"But these men are under supervision and the constables on their beats visit them each night and find them always present! What advantage would it be then to have them at my house?" I observed, failing to see the drift of his suggestion.

"The Huzoor of course knows best," he replied, "but 5 Rs. a month will purchase many favours and makes it easy for the constables to report they found them present, or to mistake the voices of the women, when they answer for their husbands!"

This purposely vague but none the less convincing accusation threw a new light on the subject and I began

* Burglaries.

to see there was something in his scheme, which was as bold as it was unique and, like most good inventions, remarkably simple despite its ingenuity.

But it had yet to be considered how far I should be justified in compulsorily employing these men as private servants, or how I could do so without exciting some suspicion in their minds. I therefore replied that I would think the matter over, and my clerk, knocking for admittance at the moment, ended the conversation.

Later in the day I sent for the register, and looking up the names found to my delight that in all the monthly enquiries made about them, each of the men was reported to be "without any ostensible means of livelihood." This gave me an idea for putting the design into execution without raising any suspicion, and sending for the inspector, I told them that in view of the scarcity then prevailing, and the difficulty of obtaining work, I was willing to give employment in rotation to such men on the register who had no occupation, and that as I required four night punkah-pullers at once I would take on these four men if they would consent to do the work at the usual rate of pay.

As a further inducement I authorized the officer to tell them that if they did their work well during the time they were employed, it was quite possible that the "strict supervision" now exercised over them might be relaxed.

The inspector went off "to make arrangements," loud in his praises of the "generosity and interest manifested in such low-born sons of Satan, unworthy of being noticed by one in my magnificent position"—little suspecting the real reason of my "generosity and interest!"

The next morning he brought these men before me, four truculent looking "Dusadhs"; * they all expressed their willingness to accept my offer—tutored probably by the inspector—also possibly influenced by the fact that they could not well refuse without betraying their secret and more lucrative occupation. Doubtless, too, the chance of escaping police surveillance was an additional inducement.

However, whatever their reasons might have been,

* A low class of Hindu, generally criminals.

they accepted their appointments and that evening were duly installed as my night punkah-pullers and located in my back verandah, the orderlies on night duty being secretly instructed to see that none of them left during the night.

I may here observe " par parentheses " that I never spent a more comfortable night, for the men, accustomed doubtless to keeping awake all night, pulled splendidly, with a vigour and continuity seldom found amongst professional punkah-pullers, many of whom pull lying on their back with the rope tied to the big toes.

I awoke the next day feeling most refreshed, having slept sounder than I had done for days, and went over to the office at once, anxious to learn the result of my singular experiment, yet quite prepared to find that it had failed. Imagine my delight then, when on hearing the reports from all the stations I found that two burglaries only had occurred during the night!

However, as this might easily be due to other causes, I could not come to any definite opinion for a day or two but, when a fortnight had elapsed with one, two, or at most three such cases in a night, I came to the conclusion that Kali Dass had not erred in his detection of the principal offenders!

At the end of a month I totalled up the daily number, and comparing them with the average of the previous six months found to my amazement and delight a decrease of nearly eighty cases!

I scarcely knew which to discredit—the evidences of my eyes, or the accuracy of my arithmetic, and tested the latter again and again always with the same result. I then sent for the inspector, thinking he might possibly suggest some other reason for these extraordinary results.

" Go through these figures, inspector, and tell me what you think of them," I said, handing him the book. " Well," I asked, when he had finished, " what do you make of them ? "

" I am at a loss to understand, Sir, this extraordinary matter, but I surmise that those four ' Budmashes ' *

* Bad characters.

who pull your Honour's punkah have something like concern in it."

"Do you really think so?" I replied, assuming an air of astonishment. "Well in that case, they must go on pulling it until we can find others more deserving of such employment to relieve them."

"Very good, your Honour, they shall be found when wanted," replied the old officer, and from the faint semblance of a smile on his usually solemn features, I could see that he had quite grasped the situation.

However, as the time went on no necessity arose for making any changes, and after a few weeks, I dismissed these men, warning them that if crime increased again, I should know where to look for the cause. The effect of these measures, however, lasted for the whole period I was in charge. As I heard later, the source of my information being unknown, native superstition came to my assistance, and rumour got abroad that the Sahib possessed some supernatural power of discovering the persons who committed these offences!

Meanwhile the decrease of work gave me more time to myself, and I now drove more frequently into the station, after office, for racquets and billiards at the Club, usually dining there with some one and returning late at night. On one of these occasions I had been playing billiards after dinner with Weston—a man I often dined with—and left the Club rather earlier than usual, as he had been out shooting all day and was feeling tired, as he supposed, but we arranged to meet again next evening.

The next day, having some inspection work to do, I left the house, shortly after mid-day, intending to return about four o'clock to dress and drive into the station, but was unexpectedly delayed, and when I had finished, finding I was nearer the station than the house, decided to go in. It was nearly five o'clock, a time when Anglo-Indians usually go out "to eat the air" (Howah Khana), but to my surprise, there was not a rider on the race course, nor a carriage driving round it.

On arrival at the Club, I found it equally deserted, and was informed by the Club Bearer that "the Sahibs had all gone to attend the funeral of a Sahib who had died

early that morning "—mentioning the name of a young "planter" I knew slightly. This news was no surprise to me as he had been seriously ill for several days, still in most Indian civil stations, where the number of Europeans is comparatively small, a death—even if the deceased was merely an acquaintance—induces one to reflect more seriously on the uncertainty of life.

Occupied with such thoughts, I had been sitting for some time, trying to divert them by looking through the illustrated papers, when the sound of approaching wheels and clatter of horses' hoofs on the hard, metalled road attracted my attention. Presently the usual "habitués" of the Club came in in twos and threes, all looking strangely unlike themselves in their unaccustomed black garments, so curiously in contrast with their every-day, unconventional attire. Amongst this sombrely clad assemblage was O'Malley who, evidently surprised to see me ordinarily apparelled, enquired "whether I had not received a notice of the funeral?"

"No," I replied, "I left the house early and have only just heard of it from the bearer."

"Terribly sad, isn't it?" he continued, "and so awfully sudden too. Poor chap, he was quite well an hour or two before he was attacked!"

"Yes," I answered, hesitatingly—wondering what he was referring to—"By the way, was Weston at the funeral? He doesn't seem to have come in with the others, yet he arranged to meet me here this evening?"

"Weston!" he exclaimed, looking at me as if he thought my senses had forsaken me. "Weston! Why, he is the poor fellow I was referring to, and whom we have just buried!"

"Buried!—Weston!" I cried in horror-stricken amazement, as I realized the meaning these two words conveyed. "But surely there must be some mistake! Why, I was playing billiards with him up to eleven o'clock last night, and he was then as well as you or I!"

"Yes, that's the awful part of it—as I was just saying—but an hour after you had left he was attacked with cholera in its most virulent form, and died early this morning!"

"Good heavens, is it possible!" I exclaimed as he concluded, and still unable to realize the fact, questioned him again, but, alas it was too true. The poor fellow had evidently caught a chill out shooting and cholera, being prevalent at the time, had seized this opportunity of securing another victim.

As soon as I had to some extent recovered from the shock, I explained to O'Malley how the bearer had misled me, and we subsequently discovered that the latter, hearing there had been a death in the station, had with characteristic carelessness jumped to the conclusion that it must be the young planter—the only "Sahib" he had heard of as being ill!

. . . . . .

I have related this incident, not with any desire to be sensational or to harrow the feelings of my readers unnecessarily, but only as an illustration of the dangers that beset the European in India, and against which his superior training and physique are of no avail.

Cholera and venomous snakes, to which may be added the equally sudden and fatal sun-stroke, are some of these elements of destruction which, like unexploded bombs, any Englishman in India must be prepared to encounter, not knowing at what moment any one of them may explode.

CHAPTER VIII

THE hot months of the year dragged on their weary length, each day seeming to increase the number of its hours, and the nights likewise interminable. June had succeeded May, bringing with her those cloudless skies so dreaded by Anglo-Indians at that season of the year.

The hot west wind, rising shortly after dawn, continued with increasing violence to blow throughout the day and often long past the hour of sunset, with occasional cyclonic dust storms to complete its irritating effects. Cholera, which had hitherto been more or less sporadic—as is customary in the months of May and June, now suddenly broke out in epidemic form, nearly decimating the city and bazaar, and claiming two other European victims, one of them the civil surgeon of the district! Then, as if satisfied at having vanquished its principal opponent, disappeared as mysteriously as it had come. During the continuance of the scourge, all in the station passed an anxious time, assembling each evening at the Club as usual, and wondering when they parted which amongst them might be missing the next evening!

Living as I was in the heart of the great city, with the pestilence raging round me, and hearing every night the wailing of the women as some member of their household was attacked or expired, I soon became more hardened than the others. Moreover, my duties necessitating my visiting the numerous "Mohullahs," or divisions of the city, to test the reports of my subordinates as to the progress of the disease, I had the benefit derived from being more or less continuously and actively employed.

In the course of my visitations, I came across some curious superstitions held by the natives as to the manner in which the disease originated or was conveyed from house to house, as they supposed, or believed.

On one occasion an old man of whom I had been making some enquiries informed me, with every appearance of sincerity, even shuddering as he recalled the dread incident, " that on the night his son fell ill, a huge green monster of fish-like form, its nostrils emitting fire, had come floating through the door, and hovering a moment over the boy's head, had vanished through the roof ! "

This monster—he declared—had been seen by many others, on similar occasions, and was well known to the people as the " Haiza-Bhut " or cholera fiend—and generally appeared during an epidemic !

I tried to reason with the man, but found it quite impossible to convince him of his error. " He had seen the thing with his own eyes," he persisted, " and had not his son died immediately after it appeared ? "

It is difficult to argue with men so steeped in superstition as to believe in such extraordinary nonsense, probably the teaching of their " Gurus " * with a view to extorting money for the pretended propitiation of " bad spirits " of this kind, and after exhausting all my eloquence and, finally most of my strong language, I gave up the attempt.

The epidemic lasted for a fortnight or three weeks, and then disappeared, as I have observed, as suddenly as it came, but not before we had had the first heavy shower of rain, heralding the advent of the big " Bursalt " as the rainy season is termed. This set in towards the latter end of June, commencing one morning with a thunder-storm of unusual severity, the sky being one continuous blaze of light from the flashes of forked lightning which, succeeding each other with scarce a moment's interval, blended the accompanying peals of thunder into one continued, detonating roar as terrifying to the senses as it was dangerous in fact.

One of the houses adjoining mine was struck and a woman on the verandah, holding an infant in her arms, killed instantly, while the child, strangely enough, escaped without injury and, except for a slight bruise occasioned by its fall, was none the worse for the adventure. The storm, continuing for some time, finally died away,

* Priests.

leaving the clouds behind it from which the rain, no longer diverted by the wind, now descended vertically in one vast column of water, almost opaque in its density and with a force which might be estimated roughly, by the uproar it created on the house tops and the pools it quickly formed upon the earth, baked hard with months of scorching sunshine.

For two days and a night it rained with varying force, but never ceasing for a moment, induing man and beast and plant alike with fresh life, and cleansing the fouler portions of the city and bazaar in a manner no artificial means could possibly have accomplished.

On the third morning the sun again appeared and, as it gained in height and power, soon dispelled the little moisture remaining on the surface of the ground. For heavy as had been the rain, it was as nothing to the thirsty soil beneath, which absorbed it as quickly as it fell, presently to return it in volumes of hot air.

To live in an atmosphere so charged with steamy vapour is not the most enjoyable existence, nor one calculated to improve the constitution or the temper—if we include the accompanying torment from mosquitos and prickly heat! But any change seemed preferable to what one had endured before the coming of the rain and, personally, of the two culinary operations to which the European in India is periodically subjected, I found the boiling process on the whole less uncomfortable than the other!

This steamy condition of the atmosphere continued, with occasional heavy showers of cooling rain, to the middle of July when "the rains" set in in earnest, lasting almost without intermission till September. By this time the country all round the city was practically under water, with here and there an island where the people, from wisdom gained by past experience, had erected their habitations, content to be occasionally submerged rather than live in comfort further from the city. Moreover, being mostly cultivators of "Paddy," the low-lying lands around were best suited to their purpose, as this crop, at a certain period of its growth, requires to be partially submerged.

A DAY'S SPORT

While the heavy rains continued, the days and nights were comparatively cool—consequently life was more enjoyable. My work, too, during this period was considerably lighter, wet dark nights and flooded by-ways making night excursions an uncomfortable amusement. Hence crime, already much reduced, thanks to Kali Dass' ingenuity, was still further decreased, for the town-bred native, even though burgling be his particular occupation, is not partial to working in the wet.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the situation, I passed most of my leisure time in the " Paddy fields " around—up to my knees in mud and water—in quest of the early snipe, which were now coming in in their hundreds.

These birds, wherever they migrate to after the cold weather, generally return about the middle of September, alighting in the Paddy fields, where they rest a day or two, prior to seeking a more permanent abode. The sportsman who chances on a wisp of these new arrivals should, provided he is a fair shot, account for most of them, as the birds, tired after their long flight, are loath to rise, and when they do they fly heavily and straight, and settle down again a few yards ahead.

It was my good fortune to come upon two or three such batches, and though but an indifferent shot the number of birds I picked up on each occasion seemed so incredible that I refrain from mentioning the figure lest I should be credited with the powers of a Munchausen, and the whole of my doings be henceforth regarded with suspicion. It is, nevertheless, a fact known to all Indian sportsmen that soon after the commencement of the season, snipe are often found in such numbers that two " guns " at work in a day of eight to ten hours have at times accounted for as many as a hundred and twenty couples between them !

Encouraged with my success, I went out every afternoon, seldom returning with less than thirty birds, till one unlucky morning—taking advantage of a holiday—I determined to spend the whole day out. It was now early in October. The " rains " were practically over, and the sun, no longer intercepted by continuous passing clouds, shone out in all its power, gradually desiccating the sodden

ground beneath and thus producing a heated atmosphere almost impossible to imagine.

I started after the usual early Indian breakfast, arriving on the ground while the sun was still on the horizon, and for the first hour or two did little execution, for the birds, now comparatively old arrivals, were, as is usual in the morning, somewhat wild and tricky in their flight. However as the day advanced I made up the deficiency.

I had been shooting continuously up to mid-day with the sun beating on my head, which—although protected by a large thick " Solah Topee "—felt like a ball of fire, while from the knees downwards I was immersed in a warm bath of liquid mud, a condition well calculated to produce one, if not all of the various forms of fever known to the medical profession. However, with the birds so plentiful and now rising so lazily, I was too intent on making a good " bag " to think of any such calamities, and had just completed thirty couple when I was suddenly seized with faintness, and a feeling as if the ground was sinking under me. I remember calling to my orderly, who was behind me, to come quickly and take my gun, but he was evidently too late, for the next moment I heard faintly, as if in the distance, the sound of an explosion, followed by strange, buzzing noises in the head, and then apparently became unconscious.

Of what had happened after this I have no personal knowledge, but when my senses eventually returned, I found myself in bed in my room with O'Malley standing on one side of me and a stranger on the other.

" How are you feeling now ? " inquired the latter, taking my wrist between his thumb and finger.

" All right," I replied, and wondering why there should be any doubt about it, attempted to sit up, but as I raised my head a sudden feeling of giddiness overtook me and I fell back on the pillow.

As I lay there, conscious of what was passing round me, yet feeling weak and curiously light-headed, I wondered to myself why I was still in bed for the sun was shining brightly, hence I knew it must be late. Presently I heard O'Malley's voice, speaking in a loud whisper, say : " Well, doctor, what do you think of him now ? He is much

better, is he not ? " and then the reply : " Yes, he is certainly better and, now we have got the fever down, practically out of danger. Give him the draught again, and I will come in and see him later."

As he ceased speaking I heard some one go out, and soon after O'Malley came up to me with a wine-glass in his hand, and asked " if I was awake."

" Yes," I replied, " but tell me what has happened ? and who was that you were talking to just now ? "

" That was the new civil surgeon—but you mustn't talk now. Here, take this stuff, it will send you off to sleep, and when you wake I will tell you all about it."

I tried questioning him again, but it was no use, he had had his instructions and intended carrying them out, so observing laughingly that " I must obey the orders of my superior officer," he administered the nauseous mixture. The conversation I had overheard puzzled me considerably, for up to this time the fact that I had been seriously ill, much less dangerously so, had not occurred to me, nor, except for a headache and extreme weakness, did I feel particularly ill at present !

I tried hard to recall any incident which would account for a condition such as alluded to by the doctor, but in vain; all I could remember was having been out snipe shooting, but beyond this my mind was a perfect blank.

My efforts to regain my lost memory would probably have brought on a return of the fever, if not something more serious, but the doctor, evidently foreseeing such possibilities, had provided for them, and before I had time to do myself much mischief his draught took effect.

Finding the room quite dark when I awoke I concluded I had slept all through the day, but a little later my bearer, coming in to open the venetian doors, informed me it was morning and that the " Doctor Sahib had come ! "

" Nonsense," I exclaimed, " I cannot have been asleep since yesterday afternoon ! "

" Yes, by Jove, you have though ! " replied O'Malley, who, accompanied by the doctor, came in at this moment.

" Well, I needn't ask you how you are to-day," observed the latter, as he felt my pulse.

"No, I am really all right now, and must get back to work. I——"

"Work!" he interrupted. "You are not going to do any of that for many a day to come, and what's more, you have got to stay in bed for another week at least!" He then told me I had had sun-stroke, followed by a sharp attack of fever, which, with one or two short intervals, had lasted a week, and although now convalescent, I must be very careful for some time!

This, then, was the explanation of the mystery which had so puzzled me. Now that my memory had returned, I could remember distinctly all that had occurred up to the moment I had called to the orderly. What happened after this I now learnt from O'Malley, whom my orderly had informed. It appeared that the latter on my calling out had run forward, but too late to seize the gun, which fell out of my hands, and one trigger catching in a twig had gone off, the charge cutting through the brim of my "Solah Topee." I had then fallen backwards into his arms.

Seeing that, although unconscious, I was apparently uninjured, he had laid me under a tree, and going off to the village—which was fortunately quite close, he procured a Palki and bearers and had me carried to the house, when, leaving my bearer to look after me, he mounted one of my ponies and galloped off to fetch the doctor and O'Malley. He had luckily found them both playing billiards at the Club, and they had driven out at once, to find me still unconscious with the native police doctor, whom the bearer had called in, applying cold water to my head, a simple remedy but which had probably saved my life!

Such was the history of my misfortune, to which I must add that O'Malley had never left me for a moment, but, taking up his quarters in the spare room, had nursed me day and night, assisted by the native doctor and my bearer! However, after my long sleep—the first really restful one I had enjoyed since my attack—I gradually improved, but it was two weeks before I left my bed, and a month before the doctor would allow me to go out, and then only on condition I should start as soon as possible for

Calcutta, with a view to a sea-voyage to Colombo and back—giving me a medical certificate recommending a month's leave.

I accordingly forwarded this document with an application for the leave, and a week later was informed that it had been granted, with the further intimation, that on its expiration I was to join the district of Purneah on promotion as Acting Superintendent. I was not sorry to be vacating my present post, not so much for the duties, which though heavy were interesting and absorbing, but I was weary of living in the confinement of a city, and longed for the more extended, open-air life I looked forward to as Superintendent of a district.

My preparations for departure did not occupy me long, but before starting I had an ordeal to undergo which I would willingly have dispensed with—to wit, a reception of the principal native officers assembled to say adieu. First came the old inspector, who in his choicest Babu-English made quite a little speech, wishing me all happiness and prosperity, and with whom, as a special mark of favour, I shook hands on parting. Then the sub-inspectors, in order of seniority, walked up in solemn silence and, standing at attention for a moment before my chair, saluted and passed on; the last, who had been recently promoted, bringing his sword with him that I might touch it—an old "Sepoy" army custom adopted by the police.

The whole affair was quite an impressive ceremony in its way—a small "Durbar" in fact—but I was glad when it was all over, for to an Englishman a function of this kind is somewhat trying, and I felt I looked ridiculous and more inclined to laugh than maintain the solemn appearance befitting the occasion.

Later in the day, while seated alone on the verandah, Kali Dass appeared, also to say farewell but only for a time, for he had decided, as he quaintly expressed it, "to follow his master's shoes wherever they might take him."

This dog-like devotion in persons of his class was not uncommon in those days, but I was glad to find it in one who had proved so exceptionally useful, so telling him

he might come he made a low salaam, and went away quite happy.

I drove down to the railway station early the next morning, where I met O'Malley, the doctor, and some others who had come down to see me off, and two days later found myself one morning on board a P. & O. steaming down the Hugli *en route* for Colombo.

CHAPTER IX

THERE were not many passengers, as was to be expected at that season, but amongst the few on board was a young indigo planter with whom I soon became acquainted. Curiously enough he came from the district to which I had been appointed, and the description he gave of the place filled me with delight.

According to his account, it was a very paradise for the sportsman, teeming with small game of every kind, from quail to the lordly peacock; panthers, too, seemed plentiful, while in the larger jungles tigers even were occasionally heard of, though difficult to obtain.

Of matters connected with my particular duties he could give me little information, except that, so far as he could judge from personal experience, the subordinate police " were the most dishonest set of ruffians he had ever had anything to do with." This was not encouraging, but as I knew that unofficial opinions on this subject are apt to be one-sided, I took the information with the usual pinch of salt, but resolved to bear the fact in mind for my future guidance. His descriptions of social life at my new station interested me greatly, for it appeared that the district was possessed of a local aristocracy, of a lineage almost as ancient as the district itself, many of whom were engaged in indigo cultivation. My new friend not being himself a member of one of these old families, and moreover in a sense an interloper, had seemingly found his position a somewhat difficult one at first, but being apparently of a jovial, rollicking disposition, had evidently outlived it and was now, as he expressed it, an " honorary member " of the community! However, I shall have occasion to return to this subject later on. Meanwhile, the days went

by quite quickly, the mornings and afternoons being devoted to " Bull," " Shovelboard," and such-like innocent amusements, which not only passed the time, but furnished the appetite necessary for the many meals which on board ship seem to succeed each other with such extraordinary rapidity. The sea-air, too, soon restored my health and strength, and by the time we reached Colombo I felt as fit as ever, and quite ready to return.

Holmes—my planter friend—accompanied me ashore, where we lunched at the Hotel and spent the afternoon strolling round the town. We soon exhausted all there was to see, and as the steamer was timed to leave at four my friend returned on board, having promised to put up with me when he came back after his four months' leave at home.

Left to my own resources I found the time hang heavy on my hands, for I knew no one in the place, and on enquiry learnt that I was the sole occupant of the Hotel, which, except on the days a steamer came in, was generally empty.

For two whole days I endured this solitude, then in desperation called on the secretary of the club, and was immediately made a temporary member of that institution, where I passed many a pleasant hour while awaiting a steamer for Calcutta. But when on arrival, so crowded was she with passengers for India, that I had much difficulty in finding accommodation, and was finally packed into a four-berth cabin with three others, much to their disgust and my own discomfort, for on the voyage out I had had a cabin to myself and another for my luggage, from this port. However, the nights were now comparatively cool, and my three companions being all, fortunately, men of less than ordinary dimensions, we managed to fit in and eventually became the best of friends, despite the unpromising introduction.

The voyage, however, was an unpleasant one on the whole, for with such a crowd of passengers, things were generally uncomfortable—the morning tub in particular being always more or less problematical, and exercise of any kind only possible after midnight, when the decks were clear.

On our arrival at Calcutta, I called at the Inspector-General's office, and obtaining permission to cancel the remainder of my leave started the next day to join my new appointment, for it was now the touring season and I was anxious to exploit as much of the district as I could before the hot weather set in. The journey was a long one, but most of it fortunately by rail up to a certain station on the line, where I arrived early the next day, and put up at the "Dak Bungalow," intending to go on that night by "Palki" or any other conveyance I could procure. However, while seated at breakfast, to my surprise a visitor was announced, who, being shown into the room, introduced himself as a Mr. Calvert, an indigo planter in charge of a factory near at hand.

"You are Mr. ——, are you not?" he continued, as we shook hands. "Holmes told me to look out for you, so as soon as you have packed we will go on to my bungalow, for you will put up with me, of course?"

"Thanks very much, but I thought of going on again this evening," I replied, "that is if I can find anything to go in."

But he was not to be put off. "No, no, you must stay the night, and I will send you off comfortably to-morrow. It's only thirty miles and I can 'dak'* you all the way."

Still I hesitated, observing that "I could not think of putting him to such trouble and inconvenience." He looked at me a moment as if wondering what I meant, then, my words apparently recalling to his mind the long forgotten phrase, a quaint amused expression came over his sunburnt features.

"Ah," he said, "I see you have not been in 'planting districts.' Never mind, you will soon get to know us better. Meanwhile, don't worry about 'trouble and inconvenience,' but come along to the Bungalow, for I must see about the horses being sent out."

On our way there he told me that Holmes had written to him from Madras saying when to expect me, and he seemed quite hurt that I had gone to the Dak Bungalow instead of

* A word untranslatable into English, but meaning here to provide horses for the journey.

to him at once! I had often heard of the hospitality of indigo planters as a class, but had never imagined it could be anything like this. My present host was certainly no exception to the rule, and I learnt later that the last Dak Bungalow "Khansamah" * had resigned as he found the business did not pay!

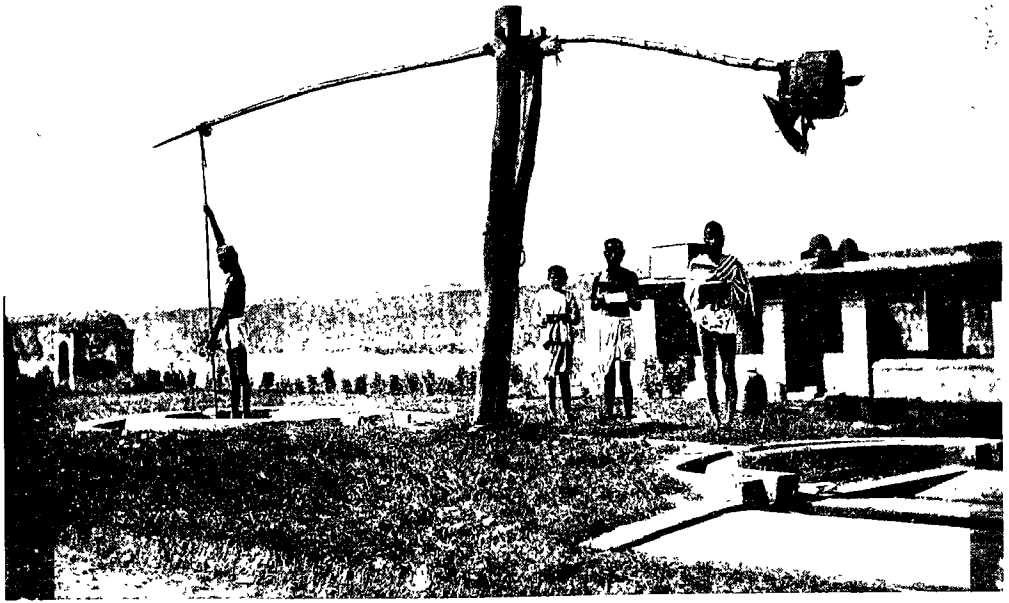
On our arrival at what my friend had been pleased to call "the Bungalow," I found it was an enormous brick building containing many rooms, one of the old indigo palaces in fact, built in the days when indigo planters were "Zemindars," that is, landed proprietors, as well as planters, and lived in princely style.

This "factory" had once been the headquarters of one of the principal "concerns," but was now only an "outwork" and my friend the sole occupant of the huge mansion, though he led no hermit's life, his solitude being shared by frequent week-end guests or passing travellers like myself, rescued from the clutches of his more mercenary rival the "Dak Bungalow Khansamah."

After a brandy and soda and cigar in the verandah, I was shown into my room, an enormous lofty chamber furnished with massive old-fashioned furniture, while suspended from the ceiling was a large mosquito house, enclosing within its ample folds the bed, a chair or two and a table. It was a curious-looking structure consisting of an oblong, wooden frame, hanging by iron rods about twelve feet off the ground. Over this was thrown a large mosquito net of which the four sides descended to the floor, thus making an enclosure, which the most persistent of mosquitoes would find difficult to enter. There was a bar halfway across the frame into which were screwed three strong iron hooks, from which—when necessary—a punkah could be suspended inside the "house," completing as snug and comfortable a sleeping-place as Anglo-Indian ingenuity has as yet devised.

Going into the dining-room later, I might have supposed I was in a Natural History Museum, so numerous were the specimens of wild animals with which the room was crowded. The walls were adorned with the heads of

* Caterer.



AN INDIGO FACTORY WELL.
Purneah District

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various beasts and reptiles, amongst the latter being a gigantic snub-nosed "Mugger," the dreaded man-eating variety of the Indian Crocodile—while the floor was strewn with skins, most of them of the larger carnivora of the jungles. Many of these specimens were obviously of ancient date, as might be judged from their appearance, and the sole records possibly of many a desperate encounter experienced by some by-gone sporting manager, whose exploits had long since been forgotten—probably, too, his name! But to the keen sportsman what a fascination they still possessed—these now prosaic and harmless remnants of the formidable beasts which had once inspired both horror and respect! One marvelled, too, at the skill and courage of these erstwhile sportsmen who, armed with muzzle-loading and otherwise inefficient weapons, had not only ventured to attack but had overcome such foes.

Deeply engrossed in the examination of these interesting trophies, picturing to myself how each had been secured, I had not noticed the entrance of my host whose voice now aroused me from my reverie.

"Hullo, I see you are a sportsman too, as well as a policeman. That's capital. I know they generally go together, but the last man wasn't, and it went rather against him."

"No, I can't say I am a sportsman yet," I answered, modestly disclaiming the reputation, "but I have stuck a pig or two and once shot a leopard, so hope soon to become one."

"That's good enough for a beginner any way, and you will have plenty of opportunity for learning more of the trade here, for there is plenty of game. A good many of these for instance that need shooting," he added, pointing to a leopard skin on the floor.

"Yes, Holmes told me there was good shooting, but I scarcely expected to find a beast like this. Where did you get him?" I asked, looking up at the Mugger's head on the wall.

"Oh, he is one of the old 'Mummies,' as I call them, shot by an ancient member of the family, fifty years ago; but look at the implement he shot him with!" and taking

a gun out of a lot standing in a rack he handed it to me to examine.

It was certainly an extraordinary looking weapon, evidently of very ancient make and of enormous calibre, with a short stumpy barrel and flint locks all fitted to a stock obviously home-made, the whole weighing probably thirty pounds.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked. "A nice handy weapon, isn't it, to carry on a hot day? And look at these!"—pointing to a lot of native jewellery on a bracket below the Mugger's head.

There were about ten of them in all, mostly heavy brass or pewter arm or ankle ornaments such as are usually worn by native women of the lower classes.

"And have these a history too?" I asked, wondering why they were placed amongst the trophies.

"Yes," he replied, "and one you will hardly credit, but it is nevertheless a fact. All these ornaments you see here were found inside that snub-nosed brute—all that was left of five poor women it had eaten within a period of six months." He then went on to tell me how the beast was said to have been a terror to the neighbourhood, appearing suddenly at a bathing-place and carrying off its victim, to seize another a few days later at some other place on the river many miles away.

"But here is another Man-Eater with a curious history too," he continued, drawing my attention to a large tiger skin of an extraordinarily light colour, mounted with the head. "That beast there devoured some twenty people, and although I went after it with elephants every time it killed I had never come across it. The last 'kill' was about five years ago, and I had gone out with one elephant to look for it, intending to watch over it on a tree on the chance of the beggar coming back. We were going slowly through the jungle, examining every likely spot, when the 'Mahout' suddenly stopped the elephant, and pointing to the ground in front, whispered: 'Sahib, there is the tiger, lying down asleep.'

"I looked to where he pointed and there, sure enough, was a tiger stretched out at full length, about fifteen yards in front of us, and, to all appearances, sleeping soundly.

"Ordering the 'Mahout' to move the elephant quietly to one side to obtain a better view of the tiger's head, I raised my rifle slowly, and aiming at a spot an inch below the ear, I fired. The beast made no sound or movement, which was not surprising, for an express bullet behind the ear was likely to have caused instantaneous death. However, to make quite sure, I fired the second barrel into its head. Then, reloading the rifle, got off and walked up to where the animal lay. You may imagine my delight as I gazed upon my prize, so unexpectedly obtained, for that it was the 'Man-Eater' I had no doubt, its massive build and unusually light-coloured skin answering so exactly to the description given me by many natives who had seen it.

"And now comes the strange part of the story. Having often heard that tigers rarely become 'Man-Eaters' until quite old and toothless, I thought I would test this theory by examining this one's teeth, but as I grasped the jaws to open them, they seemed quite cold and set! While trying to force them open, I noticed the bullet hole in the head, but no trace of any blood! I then looked at the other and finding that also bloodless a horrible suspicion crossed my mind, soon to be confirmed, for on passing my hands over the carcase, I found it stiff and icy cold! With the exception of my two bullet holes, there was not a mark upon the animal, which had evidently been poisoned, and I now realized the humiliating fact that instead of having, as I thought, vanquished a live 'Man-Eater,' I had been fool enough to shoot one already dead some hours!

"I need not describe my feelings, for you as a sportsman will understand them, but my first care, when I had to some extent recovered from the shock, was to impress upon the 'Mahout' the necessity of keeping silence, as I knew if the story got abroad I should never hear the end of it! Of course—as I might have known—he promptly told the story to his friends, and for many a day after, whenever I went in to the station, my friends would ask me, with a grin, whether I had shot any more dead 'Man-Eaters,' or if I could tell them 'where they could be found!' and even to this day, 'How Calvert shot the Man-Eater' is one of the stock stories at the Club!"

"But did you find out who poisoned it?" I asked, as my friend concluded his strange tale.

"Yes, I did, but not till long afterwards, when I discovered that a gang of wandering 'Chamars,'* often cattle poisoners, who were encamped near, when collecting fire-wood in the jungle had come upon the 'kill,' and knowing the tiger would return, had placed some arsenic into the corpse, intending to claim the Government reward for the head and skin!

"But I took care they did not get these," he added, smiling grimly, "for there they are as you can see, and that reminds me that I found the 'old toothless' theory was all humbug, for the beast was in his prime, with as firm a set of teeth as any tiger could desire. Just look at them," and as he lifted up the head, I could see they were all perfect and sharp as the point of a French nail.

"What do you think, then, it is that makes tigers take to man-eating?" I asked, anxious for information on a subject I, too, had often heard discussed.

"Why, to my mind the reason is quite simple," he replied; "for any human being, if unarmed, is obviously easier to kill than a buffalo or a bullock with sharp horns! Hence a tiger, having once killed a man or woman, naturally continues to prey on them rather than attack animals protected with such formidable weapons!

"But here comes the 'Tiffin,' so now that we have done with the Man-Eater, let me show you what we poor planters feed on in these wilds where the accommodating chicken is sometimes a beef steak, and our mutton chops are borrowed from the goat."

We sat down to a table which would have seated twenty people, and from the number of covers that were laid it was evident my host seldom lunched alone, in fact we had hardly finished the first course, when there was a sound of horses' hoofs outside, and, presently, two hot and dust-begrimed individuals came tramping into the room.

My friend greeted them with delight. "Hullo, Don! how are you, Bunder?" he shouted, "Come along and sit down, but first let me introduce you! Our new

* A low caste of Hindu.

policeman, Mr. ——." Then addressing me, "Here are two more members of my fraternity, Messrs. Gunn and Thompson, more commonly known amongst us as the 'Bunder' and 'Don Quixote.'"

The origin of these nick-names was not difficult to trace, "Bunder" being the Hindustani equivalent for "Monkey," while he who bore the sobriquet of the "Don" also so closely resembled the pictures of Cervantes' famous hero, that one might almost have imagined he was the original!

This custom of giving nick-names was, I learnt later, one of the traditions of the district, and being usually an indication of the popularity of the recipient, no offence was taken should such names emphasize any personal peculiarities in their manners, appearance, or exploits. As the meal proceeded, I discovered that our host, too, was included in the category, his friends invariably addressing him as "Dead 'un," a name bestowed on him, as he told me afterwards, in allusion to the incident of the dead Man-Eater.

A gruesome name to give a friend, but one under the circumstances only to be expected, for there was no denying that my friend had given himself away.

CHAPTER X

DURING the progress of that long and memorable "tiffin,' I learnt more of the history of the district than I could have acquired in six months under ordinary conditions, for my companions were all old residents of the place, and full of information. Of sport and perilous adventures each had had his share, for they were all passed middle age, and could recall the days when the district was still infested with wild beasts. Many were the thrilling stories they related of their adventures with these beasts, and legends too of earlier days, when—as the first settlers in the land—their ancestors had battled with men as well as beasts, eventually overcoming both.

All three of my companions were members of some of the old families described to me by Holmes, but all public school men; and a nicer and more sporting trio it would have been difficult to find. Nevertheless, I could quite understand that with men of this type—virtually in possession of the district—any outsider coming into it with a view to competition, would naturally be regarded as an interloper and be likely to have a bad time of it at first! With me as only an official of the district, a mere passenger, so to speak, the case was necessarily quite different, and there being no question of rivalry or competition I was received with open arms.

My host, who was evidently a most popular person and a recognized authority on all matters connected with the chase, gave me much valuable information as to the sport to be obtained, showing me on his map some still unbeaten tracts where tigers and other beasts might occasionally be found.

But to come back to where I started: I have said the "tiffin" was "a memorable one," and such it must have been, for to this day I can recall it. It was the first



A TIGER UNEXPECTEDLY ENCOUNTERED

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real Anglo-Indian meal I had seen, and never shall I forget the number and extraordinary variety of the dishes which composed it. To describe them all would be impossible, for many I had never seen before—some of them adorned with models of prehistoric looking animals and birds, apparently made out of potatoes, and all so exquisitely flavoured, yet no two of them alike in taste or in appearance. There was beef-steak too, and mutton chops, both to all appearances derived from natural sources, but so cleverly had their flavour been disguised that I failed to detect in either any trace of fowl or goat. A curry served with "chutnies" in half a dozen little saucers, completed this extraordinary meal, and after sitting smoking for some time, we sauntered round the factory till our visitors departed. They had each some thirty miles to ride, but seemed to think nothing of the distance, and, having relays of horses on the road, would, they informed me, arrive in time for dinner.

After seeing them off we went down to the stables, and on the way met the horses being taken to their stages for my journey the next morning, three of them, each with its harness and carrying its own fodder for the night.

"There's one that will give you some trouble, I am afraid," observed Calvert as they passed, pointing to a big chestnut, a fine upstanding beast but evidently bad tempered. "My friends call him the 'Planter,' a very good name for him, too, as you will find. However, you leave him to the 'syce,' he knows his ways, and all you have to do is to hold on to the reins and sit tight, or as tight as you can."

These instructions seemed to me uncomfortably suggestive, especially as I had often heard of planter's horses and "their ways," but, unwilling to betray any anxiety on the subject, I kept my feelings to myself.

"All right! I don't mind so long as he can go," I answered, as if I had been accustomed to driving wild horses all my life, fully convinced in my own mind the while that I was in for a bad time if not a broken neck!

"Oh, he will go all right, in fact you can't stop him once he has started!" he replied, evidently quite proud

of what to me was another disquieting accomplishment in the animal. Then, looking after them as they were led off down the road, he added, "That grey, too, kicks a bit when starting, but keep her head well up for the first few hundred yards and you will be all right."

The third animal was apparently free from any tricks, for it had passed unnoticed, and as nothing had been said of the one I was to start with, I hoped that it, too, was comparatively tame! However, I came to the conclusion that what with the known vices of the chestnut and the grey, to say nothing of some latent evil in the other two, possibly to be disclosed on the way, my journey was likely to be an exciting one with every probability of its termination in a ditch!

Having seen the horses off, we went back to the house, where we found the "Gomashta," or native factory assistant, waiting with some papers for my host, and while he was in the office attending to them I sat on the verandah smoking, and occasionally wondering to myself how many sound limbs there would be left to me by this time the next day!

A loud clanging of the factory gong, summoning us to dinner, put an end to these melancholy reflections, and we were soon seated at this meal which was quite as sumptuous as the last, and most excellently served. In the table, too, with its snow-white damask cloth, its floral decorations and glittering plate and glass, there was little to suggest the wildness of the jungles, and but for the sable, white-robed attendants and the occasional howling of the jackals, it would have required no very great effort of the imagination to have fancied myself at home!

However, such thoughts were soon dispelled, for presently during an interval in the howling jackal concert, another and more awe-inspiring sound broke suddenly upon our ears, apparently produced by some beast in the verandah! It was a strangely weird sound, as if some dying animal was gasping out its life in short, quick respirations, but loud and terrifying to any one who, like myself, had never heard it before—to my companion, however, it was evidently familiar.

" The leopard again, by Jove ! " he cried, and springing to his feet, seized a gun out of the rack and loading it handed me another with some cartridges. " Come on, we may get a shot at it," he added, as I followed him out to the verandah.

It was a moonlight night, but the broad, sloping roof shaded the verandah, and as we reached the door we found ourselves in darkness. We stood a moment listening, and presently could hear the sound of something moving near us.

Suddenly the same blood-curdling cry was repeated, the more terrifying now from its proximity, and the next instant, a long shadowy form, seeming to rise from under our feet, glided out into the moonlight. Quicker almost than thought, Calvert raised his rifle and long before I realized the situation, he had fired. Simultaneously with the report, the beast sprang high into the air and with a fierce, half-stifled roar, fell backwards on to the grass, practically dead. The bullet had struck the animal in the head, penetrating the brain — a fine example of accurate, quick shooting, compared with which my performance had been, to say the least of it, indifferent. For I, too, had fired as the beast fell back and had also hit it, but in a less important place; to confess the truth, I had shot off twelve inches of its tail ! thus reducing, as my friend ruefully remarked, a nearly record leopard to one of six feet eight—quite an ordinary size !

" Never mind, we can sew it on again," and, picking up the missing portion, he added, laughing, " but we must keep this story to ourselves, or, like that of my wretched tiger, it would soon become an ' endless tale ' in the other sense of the word ! "

Fortunately none of the servants had witnessed my exploit, and when they came up later, seeing one shot only in the body, naturally concluded it had caused the double injury. Nevertheless for many a month after, whenever any one commenced a leopard story, I used to grow quite cold with apprehension lest it should be mine. Calvert now told me that this beast had often come prowling round the bungalow and had once carried off one of his cattle, but as its visits were usually during the dark

phases of the moon, he had not hitherto been able to get a shot at it.

"But we must hang him up somewhere for the night, or the jackals will be at him," he continued; so with the assistance of the servants who were now all gathered round us, we hoisted the carcase on to the lower branches of a tree; then, returning to the dining-room, went on with our dinner!

This unlooked-for interlude in the meal had not improved the latter portion of the menu, but with appetites increased by the excitement of our contest we were not inclined to be fastidious and ate of all the dishes, regardless of the fact that most were overcooked. Personally I was too delighted at the cause to complain of the effect, for the incident had revealed a possible realization of my dream of the wild jungle life I had so often heard of, and it seemed now that I was likely to experience it in reality. The district, if not one of the wildest in the Province, was at any rate more primitive than any I had been in yet, and I could guess that when camping near the jungles, off the beaten track, life would probably be sufficiently exciting and adventurous.

As I was to start early the next morning, I retired to bed shortly after dinner and, thanks to the mosquito house, slept more soundly than I had done for many a long night. It was still dark when I was awakened by the "khitmager" appearing at my bedside with the morning cup of tea, an Anglo-Indian habit and, possibly a pernicious one, but as a spur to the lazy sleeper, infallible in its action. As I swallowed the stimulating mixture, while yet but half awake, the feeling of drowsiness rapidly passed off, and jumping out of bed I dressed myself by lamplight and went out to the verandah, where I was joined shortly by my host. Early as it was I found he had already had his "little breakfast," and while mine was being prepared we walked down to the stables where the leopard had been taken to be skinned.

It looked a much finer beast by daylight, and according to my friend belonged to the larger variety of leopards commonly known as "panthers," and to the natives as the "Gowbagh," or cattle killer, in contradistinction

to the "Neckrabagh" or ordinary leopard. Nevertheless, in assuming the panther to be a variety of the species, my friend was probably incorrect, for it has since, I believe, been definitely ascertained that the so-called panther and leopard are one and the same animal, the difference in size being, as with the tiger, merely incidental. However, be this as it may, the animal before us was an uncommonly fine specimen of its kind whatever it might be, and in again measuring and remeasuring the carcase discussing its various points and attempting to join the severed tail, we spent so much time that on returning to the bungalow, I found I must start at once if I wished to avoid the heat of the day. Accordingly, after making a hurried meal, I bade my hospitable friend adieu, and with many promises to look him up again, and forgetting in my hurry to ask any questions about the horse, mounted the dog-cart and started on my journey.

After the first mile or two, however, I discovered to my relief, that this beast at any rate, except for an unpleasant habit of jamming the reins under its tail, was on the whole fairly well-conducted, and the first stage of the journey was reached without adventure.

Here I found the chestnut, and my heart sank into my boots as I watched him being "put in," for he was no sooner brought up to the shafts than, sniffing at them a moment, reared up straight on end, then turning quickly round, kicked savagely at the trap. However, after much manœuvring and considerable bad language from the "syce," he was finally backed in between the shafts, and being eventually harnessed, I was requested to jump quickly on to the cart. But no sooner did the brute feel my weight upon the step, than crouching for an instant, he sprang forward with a bound, sending me sprawling into the dust. Picking myself up, I tried again and this time succeeded in effecting a lodgment on the seat, where I sat with the reins in my hand, expecting every moment to be violently ejected, yet loath to abandon the position of my own free will lest I might not be able to regain it. However, the horse had evidently no intention of resisting any movement, aggressive or otherwise, just then, having apparently

come to the conclusion that an attitude of passive resistance was preferable to the violence he had recently indulged in. So, remembering my host's instructions, I decided to "sit tight" or as near as I could arrive at that condition perched on a slippery sloping box-seat some eighteen inches high, until the "syce," with his supposed superior knowledge of the animal, had effected some change in the situation. But his powers had evidently been overrated, for after trying many methods known to his profession he appeared to have arrived at the end of his resources, when an idea seemed to strike him. Whether it came as an inspiration or of previous knowledge I am not prepared to say, but suddenly stooping down he picked up a handful of mud, and opening the horse's mouth rubbed it on to the palate!

The application acted like magic, for the horse, which had been standing for close on half an hour with his fore-feet planted firmly in the ground, now suddenly plunged forward and started off as if shot out of a cannon.

The "syce" managed somehow to climb on behind and away we went at racing pace, for the best part of a mile, and during these few minutes my control over the animal was confined to the holding of the reins, for I could make no use of them.

The beast had seized the bit between his teeth and for the time being was under his own control, free to take me where and how he pleased, since I could neither check nor guide him. Fortunately he kept to the middle of the road, indeed behaved with considerable discretion, carefully avoiding a bullock-cart or two and swerving past a group of terrified factory coolies on their way to work. Unfortunately this discretion did not extend to ruts and inequalities in the road, or to such trifles as "metal" heaps piled along the sides, and as we went bumping over such obstructions, I occupied much the same position as the pea does on a drum, and kept wondering to myself how long I should remain.

True, I passed most of this time up in the air descending periodically, sometimes on to the cushion, but as often on to the rails, at least so I concluded from the different sensations I experienced on alighting, for I was



AN INDIGO PLANTER'S HORSE
(A Typical "Planter.")

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too busy to look. Indeed it was the reins alone which kept me within the limits of the trap, for I clung to them with the energy of despair and fortunately so, for presently, as a deeper rut than usual shot me higher up, the extra strain upon the reins released the bit which fell back into its place.

I was now master of the situation and lost no time in applying my new-found power; pulling at the reins with all my strength, I finally reduced our pace from a gallop to the customary trot and so continued our journey under more orderly conditions as befitted the future police officer of the district.

Now that I had leisure to review the situation, I thought to myself what excellent material my involuntary proceedings would have supplied to some local correspondent of one of the more rabid Bengali papers, and could well imagine the gusto with which he would have reported them in the Bengali English of those days. Something possibly to this effect—"We beg to call Government attention to the monstrous conduct of high police official of Purneah District: in driving ferociously and to extreme danger on public highway, no doubt to show his vast importance, knocking down and otherwise causing serious danger to more plebeian but also British subject who for purposes of travel must use the same high-road," and so on.

Such are the amenities of official life in Bengal, and even in those days the actions of Government and its officials, were favourite topics with the native Press and, as at present, invariably discussed in a vituperative spirit and generally with a studied disregard as to the truth of the actual facts reported. Happily Government has, at length, recognized these truths and realized the fact that the liberty of the Press—so far as native papers are concerned—is a privilege which can no longer be allowed. Had it come to this decision forty years ago the general conditions in Bengal might have been less unrestful than they are!

. . . . . .

But to return to my journey. The horse, now brought under control, displayed no inclination to resume its perilous

career, and about half an hour later brought us safely to the end of the stage. Then we parted, never, I firmly resolved, to meet again under similar conditions.

His immediate successor was the animal I have already noticed as being, presumably, free from any marked peculiarities, but after my late experience of my friend's "stable" I felt somewhat doubtful as to whether this presumption was altogether justifiable. Hence when mounting the dog-cart, I was quite prepared to "quit" at short notice and without the formality of descending by the step, should matters render it advisable to leave in a less conventional manner. However, to my surprise the beast actually stood still till I was seated and then started off in quite the ordinary way!

I had now only the grey to reckon with, and, anxious to learn something more of its accomplishments, I questioned the old "syce," who, perched monkey-like behind me, seemed lost in admiration of the performance of his charge, and thinking probably of the "Backsheesh" such "pace and manners" would produce. The information he imparted was not very consoling.

"Ah," said he, "the Sahib will find the 'Sheitan' very different from my mare—using the possessive pronoun, as is common with native servants, when speaking of their masters' property.

"The Sheitan! Why what horse do you mean? Your Sahib said the grey mare's name was Ballet Girl!" I said, interrupting him, not quite understanding what animal he referred to.

"Yes, yes, I know—'Bullygul' that is her 'Belati' * name, but we 'syce-logue' † call her the 'Sheitan'—the 'Subza-Sheitan,' that is the name she is known by in the stables."

Now "Sheitan" being, as everybody knows, the Eastern equivalent for Satan and 'Subza' meaning Grey, the combination was fairly obvious, nor was the inference to be derived therefrom very difficult to arrive at; the grey mare, like her proverbial ancestor, was undoubtedly a shrew, and I with equal certainty was in for a bad time!

* English. † Lit. Syce-people.

A few minutes later we came up to her tethered to the roots of a large tree, under which she had passed the night and was now grazing quietly. She seemed quite pleased to see us, neighing with evident delight at the sight of her companion and during the process of being harnessed was as gentle as a lamb, even permitting me to mount without showing any sign of resentment.

But I had no sooner taken the reins into my hands and, slapping them gently on to her back, evinced my desire to proceed, than, before I had time to think of much less to act on my host's instructions, down went her head and the next instant her heels were playing a tatoo on the dash-board. She continued this performance for some minutes, while I sat on, clinging to the reins, an unwilling but necessarily interested spectator, and with my eyes fixed on the time-worn kicking-strap, expecting momentarily to see it part and to feel the mare's heels against my face. Providentially, though ancient the leather maintained its proverbial reputation, resisting every effort of the mare to raise her quarters sufficiently to reach me with her heels, which was apparently her intention.

Presently, with a bound which nearly hurled me into space, she was off, but after another plunge or two soon steadied down into a trot, and like many of her vicious disposition proved extraordinarily fast.

My troubles were now over, for soon we entered the station limits, but the journey was one to be remembered, and I felt I was fortunate in arriving with my limbs all still complete.

CHAPTER XI

CALVERT had consigned me to a friend of his, a planter, living in the station, by whom I was most cordially received and luxuriously entertained the best part of a month, my host, who was also my future landlord, insisting that this was the shortest period in which the house I had rented from him could possibly be ready! I knew this was merely an excuse to extend his hospitality, at the same time I felt I should offend him if I left, for he was quite one of the old style—a relic of an age when a planter's house was, to all intents and purposes, an hotel, except that the departing guest was not presented with his bill. His establishment still retained much of its ancient splendour despite the fast diminishing rupee which has since wrought many changes in the land, necessitating a study of economy till Anglo-Indian hospitality, once a by-word, is now a mere legend of the past.

The house occupied by my host was, and had been for many years, the headquarters of the principal Indigo "Concern," and quite a palace as to size, while he being the head, and virtually owner of the whole, was a person of considerable wealth and importance in the district, and its chief honorary magistrate. His position as head of the planting community practically necessitated his keeping open house, and the "Burra Kothi," or great house, as it was called, was seldom without a guest or two; indeed during the time I was with him, we never dined or breakfasted alone. In addition to this he gave large dinner parties once or twice a week. Hence I soon became acquainted with the other officials in the station as well as with many of the managers and assistants of the several factories under his control.

The officials, of whom there were five Europeans

besides myself, consisted, in the order of their seniority of the Judge, the District Magistrate, the Civil Surgeon, the Joint Magistrate and the Engineer.

The first, an early product of the competitive system, was a typical, hard-headed Scot, generally absorbed in judgments and decisions, or—when not otherwise engaged, employing his leisure moments in waging war against the magistracy and police, the latter being, apparently, in his opinion, worse than the malefactors he occasionally consigned to penal servitude.

In strong contrast to him was Grenville, the District Magistrate, one of the last of the Hailsbury Civilians and a splendid specimen of his class, loved and respected throughout the district by native and European alike, but a terror to the burglar and " dacoit," and a thoroughly good sportsman in every sense of the more modern meaning of the word.

The Doctor—officially Civil Surgeon—was an Irishman, a rollicking, good-tempered individual who cured more patients by his manner than through the medium of his drugs. His prescriptions, when he gave one, which was seldom, were simple and not always out of the Pharmacopœia, for he would prescribe a mutton chop more often than a mixture, and held that a whisky and soda was the best of all known tonics " to be taken three times a day."

However, in spite of these seemingly professional eccentricities, in serious cases he was most careful and generally successful, both as a surgeon and physician, and his patients soon discovered that when really necessary, the proper remedies would be applied or administered, as the case might be.

Of the remaining two officials Benson, the Joint, was a replica of his superior, the District Magistrate, and a finer example of the " more modern type of ' civilian ' " than his superior the Judge, who came of a period in the service when brains alone were sought for and muscle and physique considered a negligible quantity.

Last, but by no means of the least importance, was the Engineer—an Irishman of the name of Burke, at one time the finest " G.R." in the Province till a " cropper "

in a steeplechase had reduced him to sitting behind a horse instead of on it. This accident, however, had proved a blessing in disguise, so far as his duties were concerned, for, now compelled to drive along the roads he had formerly ridden, the highways of the district were in a condition of perfection seldom found in Indian districts. Since his infliction—being no longer able to indulge in racing, pig-sticking, or polo, and having no other vent for his sporting proclivities, he had taken vigorously to shooting and spent most of his spare moments in prowling round the jungles on an elephant, for, as he used ruefully to observe, "he had still a good seat on a howdah or a pad." He had shot most things to be found near the station, and taken many a long journey to tiger-kills reported—so far—without success, for some time his failures only made him all the keener, till, at length, discouraged by continued disappointment, he had come to the conclusion that so far as this district was concerned, tigers were extinct. How he was destined to alter his opinion, and to regret that he had come to this conclusion, will all be related in due course. Meanwhile, having much in common, we soon became fast friends and, as often as we could arrange to do so, went out in camp together.

I had been about two months in the district and one morning was seated in my office, hearing reports from the different stations, of all that had occurred during the previous day, or day before, according to distance of each post.

Amongst the reports of cattle killed by "wild animals" was one that struck me as peculiar, for in it was stated that a "pariah-dog," or village cur, had been carried off by a tiger, with a footnote, in the sub-inspector's own handwriting, that he had enquired into the matter and found the information was correct.

Now, as it happened, this particular officer was something of a sportsman himself and not likely to be mistaken in a matter of this kind—still for a tiger to carry off a dog was an event so unlikely that I was inclined to believe that the thief in question was probably a leopard. However, as this was one of the outposts I had not as yet inspected, I was glad of an excuse for visiting it,

and accordingly prepared to start next day, meanwhile despatching a mounted constable with orders to the sub-inspector to collect as many elephants as he could.

Burke, with whom I was now "chumming," happening to look in an hour or two later, I had the report read out to him and being anxious he should accompany me, kept my own opinion to myself.

"Here's your chance at last, we are sure to get him as the jungle is quite a small one," I said as the clerk finished reading the report.

"What! do you mean to say you are going fifty miles after a tiger that is supposed to have carried off a dog? Why you must be mad!" he replied, looking at me as if he really believed I was. "Who ever heard of a tiger troubling to catch or eat a dog? It's a leopard, of course, and a mighty small one at that," he added, apparently quite annoyed that I should think him capable of believing anything so absurd.

"Well, I admit it is rather an extraordinary proceeding for a tiger to indulge in, but you see what that Khan Mohamed the sub-inspector says, and as he is a sportsman he is probably right, so you had better come."

"No, thank you," he replied, "I have had enough of mythic tigers and don't care to go fifty miles to seek them. I tell you there is not a tiger in the district, made of flesh and bone, as you will admit yourself some day when you have hunted for as many of 'em as I have."

"Well, perhaps I shall when I have, but I have got to hunt them first before I arrive at this conclusion, so had better begin with this one," I replied, and seeing he was not to be persuaded, I confessed I was fully of opinion that the animal was a leopard.

The next morning I started, long before my friend was awake. It was pitch dark when I left, and likely to be so for some time, hence I had arranged to do the first eight miles on an elephant, having sent ponies out the day before to various stages on the road.

The whole distance, as Burke had said, was close on fifty miles, but the sun had not been up two hours when I had cut this down by half, for the elephant was a fast one and could do her five miles in an hour, bringing me up

to my first pony just as day was breaking. So far the journey had been all that was enjoyable, the first part of it, too, to some extent unique, for during those miles of darkness, we had traversed some heavy forest where, on either side of us, could be heard the strange night noises of the jungles, and once, as the light was making, a leopard had crossed the track in front of us. But now, and for the next twenty miles, my route lay along a broad, white, dusty road as straight as any railway line with fields on each side of it, reaching as far as the eye could see. The heat too was increasing with every mile I rode, and soon the dry dust-laden west wind—hot as from a furnace—arose at its appointed hour, much to my additional discomfort, covering the dripping pony and myself with a coating of grey dust, some of which found its way into my throat, and the pony's too, eliciting strange noises from the beast in its endeavours to eject it. As the sun rose higher in the heavens, so did the wind increase in violence till it was blowing half a gale and bringing with it clouds of dust, sufficiently opaque almost to bar our progress, for at times I could neither see nor breathe, while I would feel the pony under me being swept across the road, powerless to resist the pressure of the wind. How the little animal—for it was barely thirteen hands—contrived to keep upon its legs, is beyond my comprehension, and I can only conclude it was my weight that kept it steady, for later on, when I had been compelled to dismount, as each gust came it would stand with its legs spread wide apart refusing to move until the blast had passed.

For one long hour, which seemed like ten, we battled with the gale, or rather dust-storm for such in fact it was, making but little progress, as half-choked and almost blinded, I dragged rather than led my now trembling pony onwards. At last the violence of the wind gradually abated and when the dust had settled sufficiently to see, I found we had made just half a mile!

The heat was now intense, and the sun's rays growing more vertical, as the day advanced, seemed to penetrate to the brain despite my "Topee" made of solah over one inch thick. However, resting the pony for a while, I

re-mounted and the quick motion through the air soon revived us both.

Fortunately my third pony was but a mile or two ahead when the dust-storm overtook us, and about half an hour later, we came up to it picketed under the shade of a huge mango-tree, where it had slept during the night on a pile of straw supplied by an adjacent village. Here also I found my tiffin-basket, sent on the previous night, with material for breakfast, and more important still, a bottle of Bass's ale which, swathed in wet straw, hung suspended from a branch with the hot wind playing on it—the Anglo-Indian method of making a drink cool where ice is not available. For the last two hours or more my thoughts had been intent upon this drink and now, seeing the syce as I approached, swinging the precious bottle perilously to and fro, my heart sank as I realized that the momentary bliss I had anticipated depended on the strength of that slender piece of string.

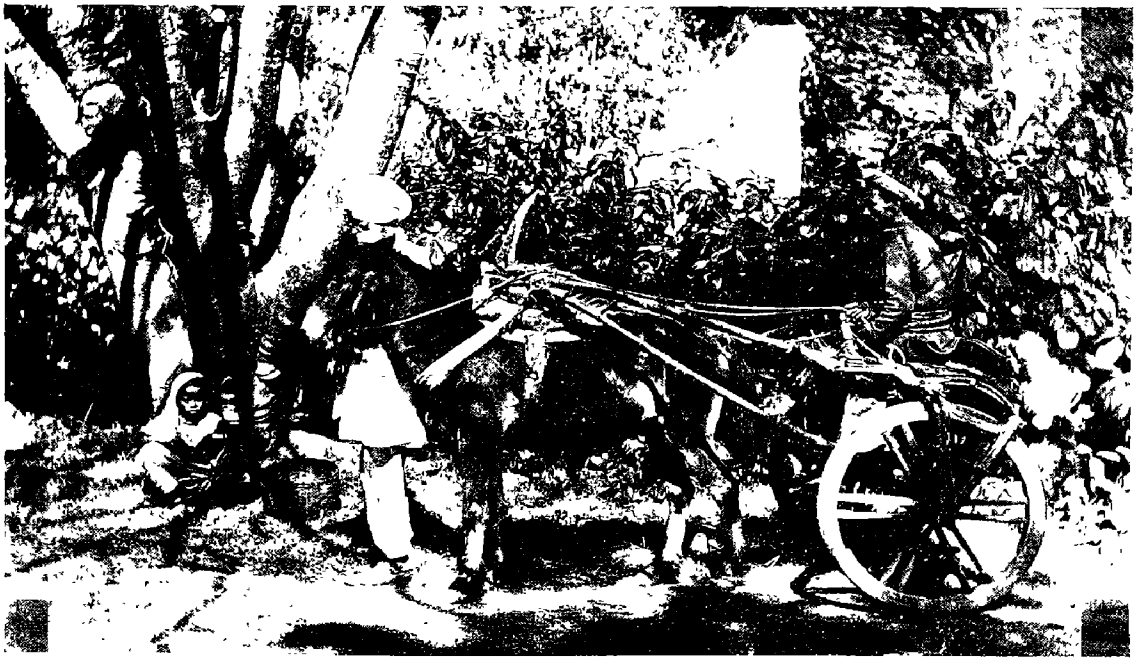
Dismounting quickly, I snatched the bottle from its perilous position and knocking off the neck poured the icy liquid down my throat, acknowledging to myself the while the truth of the old saying " that it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good," for no ice that ever froze could have produced anything colder than had that scorching dry west wind blowing on the damp straw.

Refreshed beyond description by the cold sparkling potion, I now discovered I was hungry, and on an investigation of the basket found sufficient there to satisfy that appetite as well, in fact so sumptuously had my man provided for me that when I had finished I felt a strange disinclination to change the shady shelter I was in for the scorching sun outside. Meanwhile, lighting a pipe, I lay down with my saddle for a pillow, smoking in lazy comfort while I watched the pony being cooled down—a process that had been going on for some time, but so far without any visible results. However, under the combined influences of Bass's beer, a heavy breakfast and tobacco, to say nothing of the equally sleep-inducing atmosphere, the condition of the pony, as of anything else around me, soon ceased to have an interest, and after trying once or twice to keep my pipe alight, I dropped off to sleep.

I had slept for about two hours when a loud pattering overhead suddenly aroused me and I awoke to find the sky one mass of huge black clouds by which the sun, still struggling for existence, was being rapidly obscured, while peals of thunder, accompanied with forked lightning succeeded one another, with scarce a moment's interval till they culminated in one resounding crash as a tree, perilously adjacent to me was struck. Finally the rain, which had been falling lightly for some time, descended in a torrent and with a force which seemed to bore into the earth, converting the dust-laden ground about us into pools of liquid-mud with a rapidity almost inconceivable till the road, as much as we could see of it, resembled a muddy stream.

It was one of the violent thunder-storms which usually precede the early rains, or "Chota-Bursat" as the natives call it, and passed over as suddenly as it had arisen, but leaving behind it, as evidence of its passage, a temperature reduced by many a degree, and a freshness in the air most enjoyable after the late oppressive heat. I was quick to take advantage of this change and mounting the fresh pony—the pick of my small stud—accomplished the next ten miles in an hour and a quarter, the lower temperature enabling us to make more rapid progress. However, I had still twelve miles before me, and having no more ponies of my own had told the sub-inspector to arrange for this portion of my journey as he might think most suitable, with the result that I found awaiting me a small two-wheeled vehicle known in India as an "Ekka."

This extraordinary conveyance merits some description, if only for its remarkable appearance, for a quainter thing in carriages it would be difficult for any European to conceive or have the boldness to construct. The machine, except for its wheels, was built entirely of bamboo, two lengths being used to form each of the shafts which in shape resembled a huge shuttle, with the lower limbs resting on the axle, while the upper were connected by cross-pieces and formed the seat. The superstructure consisted of four upright pieces of bamboo, supporting a canopy rounded off and padded on the top, which was covered with crimson cloth, ending in a green



AN "EKKA" WITH CANOPY REMOVED

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and yellow fringe, the whole having the appearance of a tabernacle more suited to enthrone some heathen god or goddess than a khaki-clad, perspiring Superintendent of police.

Attached to this extraordinary-looking vehicle was what at first sight I took to be a donkey, but which on closer examination I found was a pony, whose height could only be given in inches, for it was below any measurement to be calculated in "hands."

The driver and, presumably, owner, was well in keeping with his remarkable turn-out, for a more weird-looking individual could scarcely be imagined. Built on the same limited scale as his steed, and with a long white beard reaching to his middle, he had more the appearance of a gnome than of a human being. The beard he wore, seemingly, to economize in clothing, for it appeared to be the only covering he possessed, the rest of his attire being represented by a string round his waist supporting a scanty strip of cloth, part of which hung down in front and the remainder tucked into the cord behind. His head was bare, but here again nature had supplied a covering with a crop of hair which even a hairy-Ainu might have envied, so lavishly had she bestowed her gift in this respect. But despite his weird appearance, he was not wanting in politeness. Salaaming low as I walked up to inspect his quaint contrivance, he informed me that he had been sent to convey my noble presence to the confines of the jungle, where an elephant awaited me. The fact that I bulked larger and was probably heavier than his "horse" and trap combined, did not appear to trouble him in the least, as with another low salaam he invited me to get in. I found some difficulty in accepting this invitation for the space between the canopy and seat was barely eighteen inches wide. However, after two or three attempts I succeeded and seated myself with my face towards the pony, stretching my legs over its back. But the old man who, I noticed, had been watching my proceedings somewhat anxiously, now interposed, and under his directions I assumed the orthodox position, that is, sideways with my legs over the wheel.

CHAPTER XII

THE old man now turned his attention to the pony, and pulling at its head fairly dragged the animal into motion, then, with an agility quite remarkable in one of his age and attenuated appearance, suddenly jumped on to the shaft, and we were off!

For a time all went well enough—especially the pony, which for its size and shape proved as great a wonder as its master, but presently the limited dimensions of the trap began to tell upon my limbs and, added to the fact that my legs were resting on the tyre of the wheel—a piece of jagged iron hooping by the way—soon rendered my position quite intolerable.

This was my first experience of travel on an "ekka," and, with heartfelt gratitude I say it, also my last, for never has human ingenuity devised a means of locomotion so thoroughly uncomfortable to the ordinary European from every point of view, though to the supple-jointed native it is quite a vehicle "de luxe," the thinness of his legs enabling him to avoid contact with the tyre.

For four long painful miles I maintained my position, changing it every moment in the hope of obtaining some relief, but finally dismounted, preferring to walk the last two miles rather than prolong the agony I endured.

Accordingly, divesting myself of as much clothing as I could decently dispense with, I put them into the "ekka" and telling the driver to hurry on and send the elephant to meet me, I set out on my tramp.

But, to use an old familiar phrase, I soon found I had "jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire," and in an unpleasantly literal sense, for the heat I now experienced was worse than the pain I had endured, to say nothing of the added misery of walking in top-boots.

However, my powers of endurance fortunately proved

equal to the strain, but when an hour later, I saw the elephant approaching, I sat down on the road, for now the necessity was over, I felt I could not have walked another yard in that awful, broiling heat.

Riding in front of the elephant on a prancing, pink-nosed "country-bred" was a portly individual clad in skin-tight uniform, evidently the sporting sub-inspector, who, at the unwonted sight of his superior sitting in the mud, rolled off his pink-nosed charger, and with many maledictions on all "ekkas" and their inventors in English and Hindustani, begged I would forgive him and condescend to mount the elephant he had brought. I would have preferred mounting his horse—in fact was walking up to it to get on, when the brute came at me open-mouthed, and but for a handy tree, round which I slipped, would have seized me by the shoulder.

I made one or two more attempts, but with no better success and at last, finding the exertion too fatiguing in the heat, I decided on the elephant as a less troublesome and possibly more certain mode of finishing my journey than the other. I accordingly climbed on to the elephant, though not without some difficulty, for it was a monster even amongst its kind, a long-legged, wall-sided beast nearly ten feet high and of evident antiquity as could be seen from its hollow temples and the mottled-pink appearance of the forehead and the ears. Its backbone, shaped like the knife-board of an obsolete London 'bus, protruded half a foot above the pad, showing traces of many an old scar of sore-backs the patient beast had suffered in its earlier days, when carrying the ponderous howdahs used in ancient times. The "guddi" or pad being in keeping with the animal's proportions, and cunningly contrived with a slit down the centre, sat squarely and firmly on its back, affording sufficient accommodation for half a dozen persons, hence I could change my position as I pleased.

Whilst waiting to start, I was much interested in watching the sub-inspector preparing to mount his fiery steed, expecting to witness a repetition of the contest in which I had been so ignominiously defeated, and secretly hoping, I confess, to see the horse again victorious. But to my

intense surprise, not to say mortification, the animal stood as quiet as a lamb, while the rider, too unwieldy to get on alone, was helped into the saddle by the "syce," the whole proceedings occupying quite an appreciable length of time.

I mention this incident merely as an example of the extraordinary antipathy occasionally displayed by native-bred horses to persons attired in European clothing, more especially if wearing a "Solah-Topee." The explanation of this seemingly unreasonable animosity probably is that these animals, unused to seeing human beings so completely clothed, possibly imagine them to be some unknown monster of the jungles—about to attack them and with the instinct of self-preservation, assume the offensive.

Be this as it may, a native horse or pony, especially if a stallion, is an animal to be avoided by Europeans as a rule, nor are they safe even if successfully mounted, for should the luckless rider happen to come off during the journey he would probably be savaged by the beast.

. . . . . .

The sub-inspector, having finally bestowed his huge body comfortably in the saddle, leisurely gathered up the reins and leading the way, we followed, my ponderous animal starting with a jerk that nearly sent me off the pad. We soon reached the borders of the forest, which extended for about three miles, and having traversed it, passed through a smaller jungle three miles further on, in which, the sub-inspector informed me, the tiger was said to be lying up, this jungle being within a short distance of the out-post and village whence it had carried off the dog.

On arrival at the out-post shortly afterwards, I found, in addition to the usual line of constables drawn up for my inspection, a crowd of elephants of all shapes and sizes, which had been collected for my tiger-hunt from various villages in the neighbourhood. After inspecting the men, somewhat perfunctorily I am afraid, I turned my attention to the animals, examining them more critically, for on their quality depended the success or failure of my enterprise.

The result of my examination was far from encouraging, for limited as was my experience in such matters at the time, I possessed sufficient knowledge to perceive that the lot of animals before me were not of a class to take out tiger-shooting with any prospect of a successful issue.

With the exception of the giant I have described, they were mostly an undersized, weakly, timid-looking crowd as unlikely to withstand the rush of a raging tiger as they would be to oppose a battery of artillery galloping down upon them. However, they were the best that could be had, so comforting myself with the reflection that perhaps one or two out of the ten might prove stauncher than the others I dismissed them, with orders to their drivers to be ready at daybreak the next morning.

The rest of the day and till late into the night I devoted to my inspection duties so as to have the whole of the next day free, for I knew that next to holding one's rifle straight, time is the most important factor when engaged in tiger shooting.

My arrangements for the night were simple and rapidly completed. An elephant pad spread on the floor forming my bed and mattress, while my Solah-Topee, with a coat on it, did duty for a pillow, and under the influence of this luxurious combination, plus the weariness born of my long journey, I soon dropped off to sleep.

I had been asleep some hours, when I was awakened by a sound as of a peal of thunder in the distance, and calling to the sentry on the verandah, enquired if it was raining ?

" No, Sahib," replied the man, seemingly astonished at the question.

" What is that rumbling then ? " I asked as another peal louder than the last again disturbed the silent night. But before there was time for a reply, I had recognized those awe-inspiring tones, the same I had once heard when travelling by palki at night.

It was the tiger prowling round the village as I guessed from the change in the distance and direction of the sound which, continuing at intervals for some time finally died away. I listened for a while but all was still once more, so concluding that the beast had now gone back to its lair I again composed myself to sleep, but had hardly

closed my eyes when suddenly out of the death-like stillness there arose a roar so appalling in volume and ferocity that for the moment I was overcome with terror. Almost simultaneously there came a loud bellowing of cattle, followed a few seconds later, by yells and shrieks from the village as the terrified inhabitants realized that the tiger was amongst them.

Hastily putting on some clothes, I seized my rifle and some cartridges and slipping two into the chamber, ran towards the spot whence the sound proceeded, to find a crowd of excited, shouting villagers, assembled round the village cattle pound. After some difficulty I ascertained at length that the tiger, which had apparently approached the village unperceived, had made its way stealthily to the pound and jumping the bamboo fence had seized a small "Para," or buffalo calf, and springing out again with its victim in its mouth, carried it off into the jungle. Further, that of the villagers who had come out of their houses on hearing the disturbance, two had been knocked down by the tiger as it made off, but beyond a few bruises were fortunately untouched.

Such was the story, so far as I could gather from the excited, jabbering crowd of villagers around me, each eager to tell his own version of the tale and to cap one another as to the size of the beast, which was eventually represented as being over twenty feet in length. One important fact, however, established beyond a doubt, was that the tiger had carried off the calf; the importance of this being that with this substantial addition to its larder, the animal would now be more likely to lie up and so prove a surer find.

With this comforting reflection, which I found was shared by many of the less excited villagers, I left them still discussing the situation and went back to bed, resolved to make a third attempt to get some sleep that night. This time I was more successful and was still sleeping heavily when aroused by my servant with the unwelcome information that it was nearly five o'clock, also that my breakfast was awaiting me, and the elephants all ready.

My toilet did not occupy me long and as I donned the

time-worn khaki suit, which with a pair of tennis shoes as ancient, completed my attire, I wondered to myself what the leather-shouldered, begaitered sporting exquisite of the Moors would have thought of my get-up! Though doubtless, unless merely a sportsman in appearance, he would gladly have exchanged with me, if only for a glimpse of the quarry I was after!

Less than twenty minutes from the time I was aroused found me once more on my Goliath *en route* for the tiger's lair, while some feet below me, astride the smallest of the elephants, was my sporting, fat subordinate with his legs, as I thought, perilously near the ground, should a scrimmage with the tiger form part of the coming entertainment.

Now, as sporting sub-inspectors are somewhat scarce and consequently valuable, I was unwilling he should run any unnecessary risks and accordingly suggested he would be safer on a larger mount, but I found he had already grasped the situation and had selected this particular animal as the one best qualified to deal with it.

"Yes, sir, the elephant is small, as your worship observes," he replied in his quaint English, "but he is also very swift and if the tiger should make onslaught he will not await attack, but fly from the ferocious beast."

But although like a skilful general he had, as he thought, thus secured his retreat, he was evidently ready to take his full share of any fighting there might be, for in addition to a police carbine, he carried a "khukri" and horse-pistol in his belt.

Meanwhile we arrived at the jungle, which proved to be much larger than I had expected, but fortunately was divided into two nearly equal portions by a cart-track running through the centre.

It was impossible to tell into which of these two bits the tiger had dragged its victim, but the nearest or southern portion seeming to be the densest, I decided on beating this one first. In consultation with the sub-inspector and two of the local, self-styled shikaris a spot was now selected, within the opposite cover, a few feet behind the cart-track, in which to conceal my elephant and myself. The other elephants, with the sub-inspector in command,

were then sent round to beat the jungle up towards me, while I employed myself in improving my view by cutting down all superfluous twigs and branches, then, loading my gun and rifle, waited in patient silence for the beat to commence.

My position commanded a nullah or bed of some streamlet now dry, along which the animal was expected to come down, for its sides were clothed with bushes affording just the kind of outlet a tiger would be likely to make use of if forced to quit its lair. Unfortunately in tiger-shooting there are no hard and fast rules as to what the beast will do under any given condition, and, as frequently as not, it is the improbable that occurs.

I had been waiting about an hour, scanning the silent jungle to my front and either side till my eyes ached with the effort to pierce its gloomy depths, when suddenly a sound resembling the purring of a cat came from the nullah, followed by a slight rustling of the bushes as if some animal was moving stealthily beneath their sheltering foliage.

These sounds continuing for some seconds ceased abruptly, but for fully a half-hour longer I sat with my eyes riveted on that nullah and my rifle ready for instant use, expecting every moment to see the animal appear, for that it was the tiger we had heard, I had not the slightest doubt.

The Mahout, too, was of the same opinion, as was also, very evidently, the elephant, judging from the uneasiness it had shown while the animal was moving in the bushes close below us.

CHAPTER XIII

About half an hour after the incident just related, the sound of the elephants crashing through the jungle in the distance, warned me that the beat had now commenced and that I might expect the tiger any moment.

In reply to my enquiries, the Mahout informed me that he thought the beast, with its keener sense of smell, had already scented the elephants and was trying to sneak out when we heard it in the nullah, but catching sight of us, had gone back and would now probably come out with a rush. This was not encouraging, for the rush would, in all probability, be heralded by a roar—a combination sufficiently terrifying, I felt sure, to cause my elephant to seek safety in flight—possibly through the tree jungle behind me—in which case my position on the pad would be decidedly precarious.

It was not a pleasing prospect, but there was no way of avoiding it, except by abandoning my post, and that was out of the question, for in spite of its danger, the situation was fascinating beyond the power of language to describe. It was one of those thrilling moments which give to tiger-shooting the extraordinary charm it possesses for all sportsmen, for there is something in the mere knowledge, or even suspicion, of a tiger's presence, a mysterious, awe-inspiring feeling, which, while it makes the heart beat faster with a sense of the coming danger, yet creates a determination to meet it at all costs.

Such, at any rate, were the feelings that possessed me as I listened to the elephants gradually approaching, knowing it could not be long before they had driven the beast out of its lair, in fact they seemed to have scented it already, judging from their loud trumpeting and squeals and the cries and execrations of the drivers as they urged their frightened animals to advance.

With my eyes again fixed on the nullah and my ears on the alert to catch the faintest sound, I was watching in breathless expectation, when I thought I heard a slight rustling in the jungle some distance to my left. I turned my head quickly in this direction, grudging even this momentary interruption to my supervision of the nullah on which all my hopes were centred, but quickly as I had turned, I was too late, for the tiger was already half-way across the track before I had time to realize it was there. I brought my rifle to the shoulder, but all I could now see of the beast was its tail, so, swinging the muzzle forward, I fired off both barrels almost simultaneously, trusting one of the bullets might find a fatal spot.

A loud roar in response encouraged me to hope the animal was hit, but the next moment I heard it crashing through the jungle at a pace which did not admit of any such comforting hypothesis, and I was forced to the conclusion that even if hit the wound was but a slight one. A few minutes later, the elephants emerged on to the track, their drivers all keen to learn whether the tiger had been wounded, for they had heard the shots and from the roar that followed had concluded, as I did, that the animal was hit. Ordering them to remain where they were until I had posted myself at some convenient spot on the other side of the new cover, I went out by the cart track, and skirting the jungle for half a mile, finally reached the end of it, to find a large tract of open country stretching as far as the eye could see. I had brought the sub-inspector with me, in order that he might see where I was posted and arrange to beat in that direction, and we commenced at once to search for a likely spot. It was difficult to find one, for there was not a tree or bush outside the jungle where the elephant could be concealed, and as to stand out in the open would be obviously quite useless, I decided to take up my position inside, if possible near some nullah or other natural outlet, along which the tiger would be likely to come.

Skirting along the face of the jungle, we soon came upon a place likely to suit and, turning our elephants, had advanced a pace or two towards it, when suddenly without a sound or note of warning, the tiger was upon us.

With a roar, more terrifying than any I had ever heard before, it rushed directly at me, open-mouthed, from a distance scarcely over twenty yards and in another moment would have sprung on my elephant's head. Fortunately I had my rifle loaded, and as we turned towards the jungle, had placed the hammers at full cock. My elephant had swerved, but luckily to its right, thus enabling me to fire with some semblance of an aim, and I let off both barrels as quickly as I could.

The next moment both our elephants had turned completely round and were careering across the open at a speed which, had it been continued, must eventually have ended in disaster, at any rate in my case, for such rapid movement in a huge, unwieldy animal like mine, gave to its enormous frame a motion much resembling that of a small boat in a rough sea. Seated as I was on the flat surface of the pad, I could only maintain my seat by clinging on to the ropes—a poor support at best, for these too, eventually worked loose, and I was thrown from side to side expecting momentarily to roll off and be seized by the tiger, for though I could not look behind me, I assumed the beast was still in pursuit of us.

The sub-inspector's condition, if more secure than mine, would probably have appeared more ludicrous to the spectator, for, as I have already mentioned, he had the misfortune of being remarkably stout, and his tightly-clad figure bobbing up and down on the back of the little animal not much larger than himself and somewhat similar in build, presented a most ridiculous appearance. He was riding practically astride, and in the excitement of the moment, evidently imagined it was a horse that he was on, for I could see his heels working against the animal's side in his frantic efforts to increase its already racing speed.

Above the din created by the squealing and trumpeting of the elephants, I could occasionally hear his voice, in an agonized falsetto, pouring out vollies of abuse, alternately in Bengali and English, his knowledge of the unparliamentary portion of both languages seeming to be practically inexhaustible. For like the doubtless much-maligned naval officer in the story—he never repeated himself once!

Meanwhile, having continued our mad career for close on half a mile without being overhauled by our pursuer, the elephants, evidently concluding it had abandoned the pursuit, gradually slowed down to a walk and finally were brought under control.

We now decided to return to the scene of action, but soon found this decision was more easy to arrive at than to carry out, for both the elephants refused to make one step in that direction and planting their fore-feet firmly in the ground, stubbornly declined to move. Entreaties had no effect on them and blows only produced an exhibition of temper likely to prove dangerous if continued, hence stratagem was finally resorted to and by making a long detour we eventually succeeded in accomplishing our object. Proceeding in a zig-zag, crab-like manner, we had reached within a short distance of the jungle when we saw a large crowd assembled there and amongst them the remainder of our elephants, and could hear the hum of human voices, raised in evident excitement.

Our elephants, on catching sight of the others, now willingly advanced, and we were soon amongst the crowd, shouldering our way towards the centre of attraction, for from the excited, chattering villagers I could learn nothing as to what all this excitement was about. Imagine then the measure of my amazement and delight on gaining the inner circle to find our late assailant lying stretched out at full length and evidently, from the gaping crowd close round, as dead as Julius Cæsar, or any contemporary celebrity! Too impatient to wait for the elephant to kneel, I slid down by its tail, eager to examine the beast more closely and enjoy the indescribable fascination of measuring a tiger I had actually killed myself—the first, be it remembered, that I had shot or so much as seen, outside a Zoo. I found my bullets had both taken effect, one through the shoulder and the other in the neck. Searching further I discovered yet another wound far back on the left side of the body, which from the position must have been one of the first shots I fired.

Order being to some extent restored, I questioned the "Mahouts" and learnt that on hearing my two shots they had hurried their elephants through the jungle and

as they came out found the tiger lying dead, death having been apparently instantaneous, as well it might be, with two such fatal wounds.

Our next job was to load the carcase on to a pad, and a difficult one it proved in the excited condition the elephants were in. None of them, except the one I was on, had ever seen a tiger—dead or alive—before, and the beast now lying at their feet was perhaps more terrifying in appearance than many others of its kind. Measuring nine feet ten inches from the tip of nose to end of tail and bulky in proportion, this evil-smelling monster, with its jaws set open, exhibiting a formidable row of teeth, was just the kind of object calculated to strike terror into the heart of an animal so timid by nature as are most elephants till trained.

One by one each driver attempted to induce his animal to kneel beside the carcase, but without success, some resisting passively, but with stubborn determination; others, when pressed, tried to shake their driver off their necks, while the smaller and more timid ones fled squealing from the spot and were with difficulty brought back.

At length, when all had been tried but one—an old, ragged-looking beast, seemingly the most nervous of the lot—its driver, who had been watching the proceedings with evident contempt, now brought his animal forward and walking it close up to the carcase, ordered it to "baith," the elephant's word of command to sit down, whereon the beast, to our amazement, sank quietly down upon its knees!

Meanwhile the Mahout, an old grey-bearded veteran who was evidently something of a wag, called on the villagers to help, and as some of them reluctantly came forward, he threw them down a rope's-end to make fast to the body, then pulling while they raised it, kept up a running fire of witticism and chaff something in this strain:

"Now then, brothers," he began, "lift up his sleeping highness, but take care not to wake him or he might bite you. Gently, now gently, my brave brothers, for if you drop him he may be angry," and so on till the men, falling in with his humour, worked away with a will and

soon the carcase was laid across the pad. The old man then, with one foot on the elephant's head, and an occasional muttered imprecation to prevent the beast from rising, passed the long rope quickly round the body and making it, as he thought, secure, ordered the patient animal to get up.

Throughout these proceedings the animal might have been a statue cast in bronze, so little did it notice what was going on, nor even now did it seem to resent the presence of the carcase on its back, or the strongly tainted odour it gave out. Wondering greatly what could be the explanation for its extraordinary indifference to all that an elephant holds most in terror, I questioned the old man, jokingly enquiring what potent "Jadu," or spell, he had used to bring about this remarkable condition in his charge.

"Protector of the poor, his slave is no magician able to cast a spell, but only a humble driver of the elephant, unworthy to speak in such a presence," he replied with well-acted humility, though I thought I could detect a lurking twinkle in his eye as he turned to his companions.

"Well, well, never mind all that, but go on and tell me how is it your elephant behaved so differently to the rest and showed no signs of fear," I reiterated somewhat angrily. The man, seeing I was in earnest, now obeyed.

"My elephant is old, Sahib," he began, pointing to the hollow temples of the beast, "and blind of both eyes, also from a sickness has lost the power of smell. I can therefore take him where other elephants will not go."

This then was the explanation of the mystery and undoubtedly the true one, as the whole demeanour of the animal showed plainly, but that it still possessed the sense of touch and hearing, we were presently to discover. The tiger being loaded, I distributed some rupees amongst the villagers for the assistance they had given, then, with the other elephants following in single file, headed the procession on our way back to the outpost, the tiger-laden beast a long way in the rear, lest its strongly scented burden should upset the other animals.

We had proceeded about a mile, the Mahouts all jabbering away together in a wild state of delight at the

success of our adventure and thinking doubtless of the enormous " backsheesh " the achievement would be likely to produce. Suddenly, a terrible uproar rose behind us, followed by a regular stampede of the elephants, evidently flying from some common enemy in pursuit, and before I had time to wonder what had caused this sudden panic, the old tiger-laden animal, with trunk uplifted and its tail at right angles to its body—dashed past me at a pace almost inconceivable in one so old and feeble in appearance. I now discovered the cause of the alarm, for as the beast flashed by me, squealing and trumpeting in its terror, I saw that more than half the carcase of the tiger was trailing on the ground, while the rest of it, held by a portion of the rope still round the loins, was banging against the elephant's side with every step it took.

Now if there is one thing these animals are more sensitive to than another it is being touched by any person or object unknown, in fact cases are on record of elephants, when going through high jungles, bolting suddenly without any apparent reason, simply because a hare happened to brush against their feet. In this present case, the animal being blind and without the sense of smell, the terror inspired by the huge object knocking against its body may therefore be easily imagined. What had actually happened was this. The body of the tiger, hurriedly secured, had gradually worked loose with the motion of the elephant, till its head and shoulders, being the heavier portion, finally slipped off the pad, and the elephant, feeling the sudden shock against its body, had started off at once. The others, hearing the terror-stricken beast behind and winding the carcase as it drew nearer, probably imagined it was another tiger in pursuit, and becoming utterly demoralized in consequence, fled with one accord. The Mahouts possibly for the moment as terrified as their charges, made no attempt to check them, nor would they have succeeded had they tried, for the animals I could see were in a state of abject terror and for the time quite beyond control.

What followed now I will describe as briefly as I can, for I fear I have already devoted more space than I intended to give to this adventure.

I had hardly time to take in the situation when my own elephant, suddenly seeming to realize the generally disordered condition of affairs, started off too, and for the next few minutes my position was not one favourable for observation, all my time and energy being devoted to maintaining my seat upon the pad. However the huge unwieldy beast, incapable of enduring two such violent efforts within so short a period of each other soon pulled up, and I was thus able to watch the proceedings of the others. The elephant with the tiger's body partially suspended from the pad was still going, but owing probably to its blindness had wisely left the direction of the flight in the hands of the "Mahout," who, though unable to check its speed, was cleverly steering it in a circle, and finally as the animal slowed down for a moment, he scrambled backwards on to the pad and undoing the rope which held it, let the carcase slide off on to the ground. Falling with a thud, it alarmed the elephant afresh, but only for the time, for soon—finding itself freed from the encumbrance—it quickly quieted down again and eventually pulled up. Meanwhile all the other animals were either out of sight or showing here and there as mere specks on different points of the horizon, except the sub-inspector's little mount which, to my surprise, was standing some distance off, seemingly wondering what all the commotion was about!

The process of re-padding the tiger—rendered doubly difficult now—had to be gone through, but the old man proved equal to the job, and with the assistance of the villagers, who had followed in the procession, the carcase was hauled on to the pad again, and well secured this time, it eventually reached the outpost without further adventures.



"ROUGH ON THE TERRIER!"

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CHAPTER XIV

THE news of our success had evidently preceded us, judging from the crowd awaiting our arrival—men, women and children, all eager to catch the first glimpse of the dread beast; and the roar of acclamation with which they greeted it expressed more eloquently than words their feelings of relief. And well might they be thankful—unarmed and defenceless as they were—especially during the long dark hours of night when asleep within their flimsy, mat-walled huts, which would have afforded no protection had this cattle-killing beast suddenly taken to preying on human beings, as is sometimes the case.

No sooner was the carcase thrown off the pad, than it was surrounded by the noisy, excited throng, all crowding round it and yelling with delight, down to the smallest naked urchin perched astride its father's hips, and joining in a shrill treble with the rest, as it gazed in round-eyed wonder at the crowd. Later on, after the novelty of the spectacle had to some extent worn off, the excitement was renewed when, the skin being removed, the dissection of the carcase was commenced, this operation seeming to possess the greatest fascination for all present. The reason soon became apparent, for presently the crowd pressed closer round the body, then, as each particle of flesh was detached, swept down on it like vultures, fighting with each other to secure the loathsome object. It was an extraordinary scene, none the less remarkable for the fact that all these people were Hindus, and of a fairly high degree, to whom the mere contact with a dead body was a defilement sufficient to out-cast them.

However, the mystery was soon explained, for on questioning one of the men who had just secured his portion, I learnt that it was the fat adhering to the flesh that they were so eager to secure, " tiger-grease ;' being, he informed

me, a certain cure for all diseases—particularly rheumatism, an ailment almost always prevalent in that damp climate. Whether this faith in the remedy has ever been justified by results I am not prepared to say, but that it is universal throughout Bengal my subsequent experiences have proved, for in after years with any tiger that was shot there was always this demand for its fat.

Being personally interested only in the skin and head, I had these trophies carefully removed lest they, too, should possess some hidden virtue and so mysteriously disappear during the night, and thus deprive me of the sole evidence I had of my achievement. For, unfortunately in those early days of my apprenticeship, I had not as yet discovered that in addition to its skin and head, a tiger owns some other trophies, equally coveted by the sportsman, and—according to native superstition—infinitely more valuable. For, buried deep within the flesh and muscles of each shoulder, and unconnected with any other bones, lies a thin, flat, bony membrane, said to bestow on the individual fortunate enough to possess one, every kind of luck possible to be obtained in life, provided he carries it continually on his person.

These floating, or "Lucky Bones," as they are now called, in shape very much resemble a hockey stick in miniature, and vary in length from about two to three inches, according to the size of the animal to which they belong. They are, so far as I am aware, a comparatively recent discovery to European sportsmen, since I can find no mention made of them in the earlier books on Indian sport, nor, indeed, in any of the more recent ones that I have read, but to the natives they have apparently been known for generations and looked upon as charms. However, being at that time in blissful ignorance of the existence of such treasures, I was quite happy in the possession of the head and skin and, above all, in the knowledge that I had at length attained the long-coveted position of having shot my first tiger.

Early the next morning, even before the noisy jungle cock had proclaimed the coming dawn, I was on my way back to the station, mounted this time on one of the smaller elephants which was reputed to be fast, and easier—as it

well might be—than the Mammoth I had travelled on before. The pace of my new mount had not been overrated and, when about half-way through the forest, it suddenly broke into a rapid kind of jog-trot, due, the " Mahout " informed me, to its having scented a tiger or leopard in the jungle. It was impossible to tell which of these two the animal might be, for although dawn was now approaching, within the forest it was still as dark as night—this uncertainty adding much to the interest of the situation, as may be imagined. But the suspense was not of long duration, for presently out of the gloomy depths, there suddenly arose the harsh, guttural, unmusical cry of a leopard, evidently prowling near us, though possibly unaware of our proximity. Fortunately the beast was behind us, for had it been in front the elephant would probably have now turned tail and bolted, but with the enemy in its rear, was only too anxious to run the other way, which it did, and with considerable rapidity for about three-quarters of a mile. Meanwhile the leopard continued its awe-inspiring solo at intervals for some time, the sounds gradually growing fainter as we sped along the track, till, having finally died away in the distance, the elephant resumed its ordinary pace.

The remainder of our passage through the forest was uneventful, but fascinating to a degree, if only for the novelty of the situation, for I had never before traversed a heavy Indian jungle at this hour, where, and when, nature is to be seen at her very best.

Day had broken soon after we passed the leopard, and as the sun rose higher, occasional beams of light would come flashing through the trees on to our path, where every now and then a covey of jungle fowl or partridge, or a stately peacock could be seen, crossing from one side to the other. Occasionally too, we could hear a rustling in the jungle as some larger beast—a pig or deer most likely —lurking near the edge, moved further in, alarmed at our approach. Our elephant had doubtless heard them too, but betrayed no emotion and, beyond turning its trunk in the direction of the sounds, took no further notice, evidently satisfied that these movements were not of any animals dangerous to itself.

The morning was well advanced before we had passed out of the forest, and our route now lay along the broad, white road, on which the sun, no longer obstructed by any foliage, shone down with momentarily increasing power, vapourizing the heavy dew which had fallen in the night till it rose round us like steam from a Turkish bath. This uncomfortable condition continued for two long, steamy hours during which time we underwent much the same process as a piece of beef or mutton put to bake inside an oven, but with the added luxury of being roasted as well under the broiling sun.

The elephant, except for the fact that it was burdened, came off best of all, for nature with her usual forethought in all that she creates, has filled the interior of these animals with what may be described as reservoir, and portable shower-bath combined, of which the beast made frequent use. Inserting its proboscis half-way down its capacious throat, it would draw up from this occult receptacle a gallon or two of water at a time, then withdrawing its trunk, gently squirt the cooling liquid all over its steaming body, repeating the operation with a frequency that suggested an inexhaustible supply. Thus, continuously refreshed with this self-contained, cooling apparatus, it kept up a rapid pace, and at the end of the time stated, brought us to the spot where I had so confidingly exchanged my pony for the "ekka."

Here, while the pony was being saddled, I took the opportunity of making a scratch lunch off some bread and a bottle of milk I had brought with me, and while munching the former made a strange discovery which added considerably to the enjoyment of the meal, for bread already two days old and exposed for hours to the sun, when eaten without butter is not a very interesting repast. So, thinking to render it more palatable, I made a hole in the centre of the loaf intending to fill up the cavity with milk, but, to my surprise, found I could not pour the liquid out.

Holding the bottle up to the light I examined it more closely, when imagine my astonishment and subsequent delight to find it full of yellow pellets floating in the milk, some of them as large as a good-sized marble, which

on tasting I found to be little balls of butter as good as any I have eaten.

The bottle filled with fresh milk and tightly corked had been slung on to the pad, where the continuous rapid motion of the elephant had produced this inestimable result, and without any apparent diminution in the quantity of the milk. But what was still more remarkable, the milk had not suffered from the heat, but was as pure as when taken from the cow. This extraordinary phenomenon—though easily explainable—was yet so curiously brought about that I feel some diffidence in recording it lest the reader should suspect that, like a certain well-known Baron before 'mentioned, I had allowed my pen to wander into the realms of romance. However, encouraged by the knowledge that truth is occasionally as strange as fiction—sometimes even stranger! —I venture to relate it.

I have said that the bottle wrapped in straw had been slung on to the pad, and here, hanging by a cord some way below the edge, it had received the full force of the shower-baths indulged in by the elephant, hence being alternately exposed to wet and heat, was constantly undergoing a process of evaporation which had kept its contents as cold as if in a refrigerator and consequently sweet.

Now to make butter in a bottle and cool liquid by evaporation are both methods well known to Anglo-Indians, most of whom have probably witnessed these operations, but there are few who could imagine it possible for an elephant to perform them, and will doubtless think I am telling a traveller's tale.

. . . . . .

Having demolished half the loaf with considerable relish, I gave the remainder to the pony, then, mounting the grateful beast, commenced my long ride into the station under a blazing sun.

The day was of the "another fine morning, Colonel," kind, to quote a remark once made by a newly joined young subaltern one sweltering April morning on parade—eliciting a reply more forcible than polite from his long-suffering superior, who for thirty years had witnessed these

" fine mornings " with an ever-growing longing for the clime of his native land.

It was late when I reached my bungalow, and found my friend Burke seated smoking in the verandah. He knew I was expected, and longing to hear how I had fared, had come over after tiffin and was eagerly awaiting my arrival.

" Have you got him ? " he shouted, without any preliminary greeting, as I cantered up to the door, " the leopard, I mean," he added, evidently anxious to make the question clear.

" No," I replied, truthfully enough, but in a despondent tone of voice, while secretly rejoicing at the opening it had given me for carrying out the little drama I had concocted during my long ride.

" What, not even a leopard," he exclaimed. " Well, I am blowed ! One hundred miles there and back and nothing at the end of it ! No wonder you look glum. Never mind, old man, better luck next time ! "

It was as much as I could do to keep my countenance, but while longing to undeceive him, was determined not to give the show away, until the arrival of the skin which was coming in on an elephant with my things.

" But how about the dog ? Did you find any remains of it ? " continued Burke, with embarrassing persistency in his eagerness to discover all I had done.

" No, I saw nothing of them," I replied, " nor of the cow, said to have been killed later, which—— "

" A cow ! " he interrupted. " Why then, perhaps it was a tiger after all ! "

" Perhaps it was, but I must be off to office now. When I come back to-night I will tell you all about it." And thus evading further questioning I left him still deploring my bad luck.

We did not meet till dinner-time, when he again reverted to the subject, pressing me with questions I found some difficulty in answering. Fortunately the arrival of the elephant created a diversion for the moment. But a minute or two later, my servant suddenly appearing at the door with a bundle in his hand, soon brought matters to a head, for with a native's capacity for

always doing the wrong thing—he asked me where he was to put the skin!

"Hullo! What have you got there?" asked Burke, his suspicions instantly aroused, but before the man had time to answer, I ordered him to take it away and lay it out on the verandah, and replying to my friend's enquiry, told him it was the skin of a rare animal I had shot, and one very rare in the district, as he would admit when he saw it. That the skin might be that of a tiger did not seem to strike him even now, for he had apparently forgotten all he had said as to their non-existence in the district, so when later on we went out on to the verandah with the lamp and saw it lying there, spread out in all its length and beauty, the situation will not be difficult to imagine!

Over what followed after this, it is best to draw a veil, for my friend's language was somewhat too lurid to be recorded here; not that he was annoyed at having been taken in, for this, he admitted, he had deserved for not guessing the truth, but that he should have been five years trying to shoot a tiger, whereas I had got one on my first attempt, and the biggest hitherto shot in the district, was, he declared, more than human nature could be expected to put up with.

CHAPTER XV

THE next few weeks went by with the usual monotony of life in an Indian station where each successive day is an exact counterpart of the one preceding, even to the weather, which, except during the monsoon, affords no speculative interest.

My old friend Kali Dass, true to his promise, had arrived. One day, shortly after my tiger-shooting expedition, I had suddenly come upon him when out for my morning ride, trudging wearily along the dusty road with all his goods and chattels slung on to a bamboo. Being on this occasion in his ordinary attire, our recognition had been mutual. He told me he had obtained a promise of some employment in the town, but could arrange to place himself at my disposal before taking it up, should I require his services for any little police job that might happen to be on hand just then.

This meeting was most opportune, for as it happened my mind was much exercised at the time with a murder case of more than ordinary difficulty which had hitherto baffled the local police, and all my own efforts to detect. The murder had been committed in a village consisting of two factions, one infinitely more numerous and influential than the other, and the crime, being evidently the work of one or more members of the former, evidence was difficult to obtain in the ordinary way.

It was just one of those cases in which an individual unconnected with either party, and possessed of some detective ability, like Kali Dass, would be likely to obtain a clue which might subsequently be followed up by the police and lead to the discovery of the murderers.

After some further conversation on the subject, I put him in possession of the facts, so far as had yet been ascertained, and it was finally arranged that he should

take up his quarters in the village—suitably disguised—and report personally from time to time how he was progressing. Meanwhile, to further his chances of success, I told him I would order the official enquiry to be closed and withdraw the police from the village, so as to give the impression they had failed, and abandoned the investigation. Then, giving him some money for his expenses, I rode back to the station.

Our next interview had been fixed for a date some three weeks later at the same place. Accordingly, on the day appointed, I rode out again and found my amateur detective, admirably disguised in the garb of a "Faquir," awaiting my arrival. He was full of information, in fact within this comparatively short period, had not only found a clue, but practically discovered who were the persons actually concerned in the murder together with a full history of the crime, and the reasons which had led to its commission. His extraordinary success on this occasion—one probably hitherto unequalled in the annals of detective work—was not, however, due this time entirely to his own skill, but rather to his good fortune in finding himself accidentally in a position of all others the most favourable for his purpose.

It seems that on arrival at the village, he had, in his rôle of a religious mendicant, been invited to take up his quarters in the house of an old blacksmith, who happened to be a relative of the victim of the crime. Here he had come across an old acquaintance in the person of a deaf and dumb dwarf, with whom he had been formerly associated when wandering round the country with the "Barupi" and his band of whom the little deaf mute was a member, as one of the side-shows of the performances. He had struck up a great friendship with his diminutive companion, and, by dint of constant practice, had become thoroughly conversant with a peculiar kind of sign-language used by the latter. Conversing with him now, by means of this same language, he had ascertained from his old comrade that for some months past he had been a *protégé* of the murdered man and had lived with him and his wife as a servant, in the house in which the murder had been committed, till the morning on which the crime was discovered.

On the night of the murder he was sleeping as usual in a room connected by a passage with the one occupied by the couple, but feeling chilly had crept quietly into the passage, and wrapping himself up in some gunny-bags kept there, went off to sleep. Although the passage was in darkness, there was a light in his master's room, and happening to awake in the middle of the night, he saw the wife get out of bed and, after looking cautiously around, unfasten the front door, letting in four men, one of whom he recognized as her reputed lover and the other three as his brothers, all belonging to the village, and sons of one of the most influential persons in it. Two of the four were armed, one, the lover, with a dagger, and another carrying a short club. Standing listening for a while, they crept stealthily towards the bed, then, of the two who were unarmed, one thrust a cloth into the mouth of the sleeping man, at the same time as the other seized him by the arms. The other two then set upon him, striking savagely with knife and club, as he struggled to get free, and continuing their blows till satisfied that life was quite extinct; then they broke open a big chest, and scattering its contents went out as they had entered, taking their weapons with them, little thinking they had left behind an eye-witness of their crime.

The woman, who during the awful tragedy had been standing with her back against the door, now rebolted it, and picking up some of the jewellery and small valuables which had been thrown out of the chest, buried them in a hole which she dug in a corner of the floor, evidently to add to the impression that robbery had been the motive for the crime, then with one last careful survey of the room, forced open the door and ran shrieking into the road that her husband had been murdered.

Meanwhile the wretched deaf mute, half-paralyzed with terror at the scene he had witnessed, lay shivering in his gunny-bags enclosure, till realizing that if found there he might be suspected or summoned to give evidence —which with most natives is almost as much dreaded— had crept back to his room, where he lay pretending to be asleep till roused by the police. He had been questioned by the latter, but here his affliction stood him in good

stead, and when finally made to understand by signs the purport of the questions, replied by the same means that he had been asleep all night and knew nothing of what had occurred! He had been detained on suspicion for some hours and kept under observation during the course of the enquiry, but there being no evidence against him, was finally released, and had since lived with his present master, to whom he had not divulged his secret.

Such was the substance of the story which Kali Dass, with commendable ingenuity, had extracted from the dwarf, most of which, he told me, the latter had acted in dumb show, and was willing to repeat to me, provided there were no "red-puggree" men (meaning the police) present, by no means an unusual proviso in those days when the rank and file of the new police force were regarded by most villagers with feelings of distrust.

The description of the manner in which the murder had been committed tallied so completely with the medical testimony—based on the post-mortem—both as to the nature of the injuries and weapons believed to have been used, as to give a semblance of reality to a story otherwise somewhat suspiciously circumstantial. I accordingly determined to visit the village at once and question this dwarf myself, so telling Kali Dass of my intention to do so the next day, and warning him of the necessity of keeping the matter secret, I hurried home to make my preparations.

The village was some fifteen miles from my head-quarters, and was also the police-station, to which I despatched an officer and ten men in plain clothes, timing their despatch so that they should arrive about the same time as myself, and be available in case any arrests had to be made, but said nothing to them of the duty they were sent on.

The next morning I started early, catching up the party within a few miles of their destination, and rode on to the station, where I awaited their arrival, meanwhile informing the station-officer of the purport of my visit, I told him to be in readiness to accompany me in plain clothes. About a couple of hours later, on the arrival of the others—it being now nearly twelve o'clock—most of the

villagers were preparing or eating their mid-day meal, amongst them Kali Dass, or the "Baba-Jee," as they called him, and a weird-looking individual whom I concluded was the dwarf. Standing scarcely three feet six inches in height, he might at first sight have been mistaken for a boy but for his abnormally large head added to a strangely wizened face and long orang-outang-like arms, all of which suggested an ancestry not altogether human.

Catching sight of me, he pushed his way excitedly through the crowd, and making a low salaam, first pointed to himself, giving utterance to some sounds, doubtless intended to convey his meaning, but which were wholly unintelligible, then beckoning for me to follow him, started off in the direction of a hut a little distance off. His intention was evidently to take me to the hut in which the murder had been committed, and where the surroundings would enable him more easily to re-construct the crime, but as it was not advisable that this should be done before the men suspected had been secured, I determined to arrest them first if possible. Accordingly, pretending I did not understand, I signed to him to wait, and appealing to the villagers crowding round, asked whether any of them could question him in some way as to his "strange conduct!"

None of them seemed able or willing to do so, till at last the "Baba-Jee," alias Kali Dass, taking advantage of the situation, as I had intended he should, pushed his way to the front and without a sign of recognition on his ash-besmeared countenance, said that "if the Huzoor would permit, he thought he might perhaps be able to make the inflicted one understand him."

I answered him in Bengali—a language I knew the others would not be likely to know—saying that I wished to have the suspected persons identified at once, at the same time telling my sub-inspector in English to have his men ready to arrest any one the dwarf might point out, and to see that none of those present left till this was done. Meanwhile all eyes were turned on the strangely assorted pair who, without the use of words, seemed to be conversing without difficulty, and in a manner apparently mutually intelligible. Most of this silent talking, however,

was being done by Kali Dass, whose conversational powers were evidently not to be impeded by any such trifling difficulty as a privation of speech, his many strange and varied gestures being clearly as eloquent as words; for that his companion fully understood the purport of these pantomimic proceedings was evident from the look of intelligence on his face, and an occasional nodding of the head as he grasped their meaning. The strange conference did not last many minutes and at its conclusion, the dwarf, showing his approval by several nods of approbation, now slowly pushed his way through the crowd of wondering rustics looking fixedly at each one as he passed, till he came to two stalwart young men of superior bearing who were standing side by side. Pointing excitedly to them he made desperate attempts to speak, but in vain, his efforts resulting merely in some incoherent sounds, and immediately afterwards pointed out two more, all of whom at a sign from the sub-inspector were promptly taken charge of by his plain-clothes police.

There was now only the woman left to be identified and as I knew we should probably find her at the hut, I went on there with my prisoners, whom, I noticed, seemed much taken aback, in fact, were apparently too surprised at the turn events had taken even to ask for any explanation.

On arrival at the hut, we found two women outside employed husking "Paddy," one of them quite young and of remarkably prepossessing appearance, who on seeing us attempted to get away, but the dwarf was too quick for her and running forward, seized her by the wrist and, half-leading, half-dragging the struggling woman, brought her up to me. Pointing alternately at this woman and to one of the two prisoners first arrested, a rather good-looking youth, he was evidently trying to inform me that he and the woman were the chief offenders, hence I concluded that the youth must be the lover already mentioned.

The woman having been handed over to the police, I now went inside the hut, taking with me the five prisoners duly guarded, the head-men of the village, the dwarf and Kali Dass, in his capacity of interpreter, and commenced my enquiry into the case. With practically the whole

village shielding the accused, and a deaf mute as the only witness for the Crown, the prospects of a successful issue were not encouraging. However, having embarked on the undertaking I was determined to proceed with it.

We had no sooner entered the hut than the dwarf, walking over to one corner of it, indicated by signs that one of the constables should lie down there, evidently to represent the murdered man, and this being done, he took the woman by the arm and made her lie beside him. Then going into a dark passage leading from the room, took up some gunny-bags, and wrapping one or two round him, lay down himself. Then, in an admirably enacted dumb show, interpreted here and there by Kali Dass, he described the subsequent proceedings, from the time the woman had opened the door and let in the four prisoners, up to the actual commission of the crime itself.

CHAPTER XVI

So far the history of the murder was revealed, and there now remained only to discover what particular part in it had been taken by each of the male accused—a problem under the circumstances somewhat difficult to solve. But here again the resources of the deaf mute were not found wanting, for on the difficulty being explained to him by Kali Dass, he soon hit upon a plan for overcoming it. Signing to the constable to lie down again, he selected two of the prisoners and took them up to him, then, pointing to one of them, rolled up a piece of his own clothing into a ball, and before the unsuspecting representative of the law had time to object, forced it into his mouth, following up this attack by seizing hold of his arms as he indicated the other prisoner. He then led up the other two accused and again in well-acted dumb show, too realistic to be misunderstood, represented how one of them had stabbed the prostrate figure, while the other, with some weapon grasped in both hands, showered down blows upon the head.

At the close of this very vivid representation, the constable got up, and looking about him in terror-stricken wonder, seemed quite relieved at finding himself alive and uninjured, as was not unnatural, considering the verisemblance of the performance.

The five suspected persons were now formally charged with the offence and emphatically repudiated all knowledge of the matter, especially the woman, who, not satisfied with protesting her own innocence, made a counter charge against the dwarf, accusing him of having committed the crime himself!

"There is the man who killed my poor husband," she exclaimed, "that misshapen, evil-minded monster, who now to save himself has made up this false story," she

went on, pointing to the dwarf. Then, thinking to strengthen the accusation, she asked Kali Dass to question him as to "what he had done with the jewellery he had stolen," thus playing her last trump, so to speak, little guessing that she was thereby supplying another link in the chain of evidence against herself. For, as it so happened, the dwarf in his anxiety to describe the manner in which the murder had been actually committed, had—on this occasion—omitted to represent her subsequent concealment of the jewellery—an incident I also had forgotten. But now that I was reminded of it, I realized how important the finding of this jewellery would be, so, procuring a spear from one of the "chokidars" outside, ordered one of my men to dig up the floor, the dwarf, quick to guess our purpose, indicating the exact spot.

The plinth on which the hut was built being, as is usual, of mud, was easy of excavation, and the man had hardly dug six inches down when he came upon a bundle, which, on being opened, was found to contain several articles of gold and silver—mostly jewellery of the kind worn by native women.

From the look of surprise on the faces of the male prisoners, it was evident they knew nothing of this matter—the woman, on the other hand, seemed utterly dumfounded and though still protesting she was innocent, I could see she thought the game was nearly up. The case against the prisoners might now be considered as complete, and, by the ordinary individual, to have been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, still the "oral evidence" (?) was of such an extraordinary nature that it was quite possible the Court might refuse to admit it.

However, I decided to send them up for trial, and as soon as possible, for there were already symptoms of a hostile demonstration which might lead to an attempt at a rescue by their friends who, as I have said before, belonged to the more powerful faction in the village.

Accordingly, strengthening the party already guarding the prisoners with some constables taken from the station, I dispatched the four men at once to headquarters, in charge of the sub-inspector, but the woman I ordered

to be lodged in the lock-up for the night, intending to question her again the next morning.

My next care was to find a lodging for myself and something in the way of food; the first I found in a "Boitok-Khana," a kind of outer building, roofed but minus walls, belonging to the head-man, which I preferred to the station office-room with its cockroaches and odour of fusty papers combined with native ink.

Food, however, was a much more serious problem, for intending to be back in time for dinner I had only brought some sandwiches which I had already consumed.

Finally, after a long and mysterious conference of all the station staff, an old china slop-basin and a willow pattern plate were produced and placed on the office table, followed shortly by two pewter platters, one containing curry and the other a pyramid of rice. The contents of these two platters were then transferred into the bowl and plate respectively by the self-constituted waiter—otherwise the head constable—a Mohammedan, who now "begged that my Highness would condescend to partake of the meal specially prepared by his wife."

I was not slow to accept the invitation, and requesting him to thank the lady for her kindness drew my chair up to the table, only to find that there was neither spoon nor fork nor any other implement with which I might convey the food into my mouth. Like Tantalus of old I sat for some moments gazing at the banquet so temptingly displayed, my longing to partake of it increasing every moment as the fumes of the savoury mixture ascended from the bowl. At length, no longer able to resist the appetizing odour, I seized upon the bowl, and emptying its contents over the rice, mixed the two together with my fingers into portable consistency, then, following the custom of the country, disposed of it by handfuls.

Now, whether due to my long fast, or the super-excellence of the compound, I cannot say, but when I had finished —which was not until the plate was quite empty—I came to the conclusion that of all the wondrous dishes, I had eaten since I came to India, never had I tasted anything so good. True, the primitiveness of the method employed for its consumption necessitated subsequent ablutionary

proceedings of a somewhat more elaborate description than that afforded by the ordinary finger-bowl of civilization, but this had been provided for in the shape of a large earthenware jar of water. A plantain or two and some native sweetmeats, prepared by the same fair lady's hands, completed the repast and, after smoking two long, contemplative pipes, during which period I reviewed the whole of the day's proceedings, I retired to my airy chamber, where, fanned by an ever-handy "chokidar," I soon dropped off to sleep.

I awoke to find my room bathed in a flood of sunshine very agreeable to the eye, but in the absence of protecting walls somewhat overpowering, for early as was the hour the sun had already gathered power enough to make his presence felt.

Forgetting for the moment where I was, I called out as usual for my early morning tea—such slaves are we to habit—then, realizing the situation, with a sigh of resignation sprang out of my string bed and consoled myself with a cold refreshing wash.

Happily, while I was dressing, the head constable appeared with a bowl of milk in one hand and, to my indescribable amazement and delight, a mug of hot tea in the other! It appeared that this fairy-godmother in police uniform had, when in the ranks, once served as orderly to one of my predecessors, and with the usual native perspicuity had noted the white man's general weakness for this beverage.

Being like most Mohammedans somewhat partial to this delicacy himself, he generally kept a small quantity in stock, and knowing it was the first thing Sahibs clamour for in the morning had brewed the welcome jug-full. It was not quite Orange-Pekoe, or any other such choice product of the plant, but it was tea, made with boiling water and reasonably strong, which when mixed with milk hot and frothy from the cow and accompanied by "Chuppattes," an unleavened kind of bread, provided as delectable a meal as the heart of man could wish for.

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The incidents just related may be taken as a fair

specimen of the kindliness and good feeling which existed between natives and Europeans before discontent and sedition—the products possibly of a supererogatory education system—had laid their baneful hold upon the people, creating in their minds envy and distrust of those they had previously esteemed and regarded with feelings of affection.

Space does not admit of any lengthy discussion of this subject, nor is it one perhaps to be discussed in a record of adventure; but it must be evident to any one with lengthened experience of the country, that, apart from the spirit of anarchy and socialism, now generally prevalent, the condition of unrest in Bengal is due in a great measure to over-education. For it stands to reason that to educate a people up to a standard far exceeding their ordinary requirements—thus qualifying them to hold the highest official positions and appointments in the land—without giving them a full share of such appointments, must necessarily create discontent, which the very education they have received enables them to voice through the Press in language sufficiently eloquent to be convincing to the masses who, no longer illiterate, can read and digest these inflammatory effusions.

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But now—with my apologies to the reader for this digression—I will continue. Having disposed of my "little breakfast" with a relish which those accustomed to this early meal will easily understand, I went over to the police-station, my brain full of the many questions I intended asking the prisoner. But no sooner had she been brought out of the cells for my interrogation than she fell down at my feet and clasping them with both hands burst into a flood of tears. Then, rising to a sitting posture, and now beating her head, now tearing at her clothing, as is the manner of native females when under the influence of grief, cried out between her sobs that providing her life was spared, she would tell me all she knew about the crime!

Waiting till she was somewhat more composed, I told her that if she wished to make any statement, I would record it, adding the usual warning that it might be used

against her, but that if her statement was accepted it was possible she might be made Queen's evidence, the meaning of which I explained to her.

"Let it be as his Highness may decide. His slave will put her life into his hands," she replied, after some moments' pause, then, wiping her tears away with a corner of her cloth, she commenced telling her story. Word for word I put it down as she repeated them, in the presence of two head-men of the village, and when she had made an ending read them out to her as the law requires. It was a long statement, a full confession in fact, incriminating herself as well as her four male accomplices, all of whom she named, specifying the two—her lover and another—who had actually dealt the blows and the weapons they had used.

Her story, almost in every detail, was the same as the one so ably told already in dumb-show by the dwarf, with one addition only, viz. that it was the lover who had suggested her husband should be killed, and had forced her to assist in the commission of the crime—a statement possibly untrue and merely added to save herself. However, be this as it might, the confession she had made was sufficient for my purpose, so placing this valuable record in a cover addressed to the district officer, I despatched it, together with the woman, requesting him to have her statement recorded by a magistrate and admitted as Queen's evidence.

Having now done all that was possible, I went out into the village, ostensibly for a stroll but really in search of Kali Dass to tell him his services might be required as an interpreter in Court, and presently came upon him the centre of a respectful crowd to whom he was describing some imaginary pilgrimage he had made to "Kasi-Jee," the holy city of Benares!

I stood listening to him a while, lost in admiration of his marvellous powers of invention—for I knew he had never been near the place—till, finding an opportunity, I told him to be in Court when the dwarf was being examined, as an ordinary spectator, and that I would arrange he should be selected to interpret if required. Hurriedly whispering these instructions I left him, and

passing through the crowd was on my way back to the station when he overtook me, and holding out his cocoa-nut shell, as if asking for alms, enquired in an undertone, "whether I had now discovered all I wished to know?"

"Yes," I replied, "and now that the woman has confessed, the evidence against the four men is very strong."

"It might be stronger still, Sahib, if the houses of the two principal ones were searched," he observed.

"But they have been searched already by the police, when making their first enquiry, and——"

"Yes, so I have heard," he interrupted, "but the eyes of the police are sometimes blind—as no doubt his Honour is aware—and it would be best to search again, in the thatching of the roof possibly something may be found—who knows?"

He had doubtless more to tell me, but at this moment seeing some men approaching he passed on, clinking his iron tongs and loudly invoking the several deities in the jargon peculiar to these wandering, indigent followers of Brahma, and as if to the manner born.

Meanwhile I lost no time in acting on the hints he had thrown out. Hurrying on to the station I took the head constable and some men, and proceeded at once to the house lately occupied by the two men indicated, and after the usual formalities commenced my search. The house, or hut, was typical of an ordinary native rustic dwelling-place, consisting of but one fair-sized apartment enclosed with walls of bamboo matting, raised on a two-foot plinth of hardened mud and surmounted by a heavily thatched gable roof. A large string bedstead, or "Charpoi," occupied one side of the room and, with the exception of a wooden chest in the corner, was all the furniture it contained, while on the other side was the usual "chula," or native cooking-range, built in the floor against the wall.

The sole visible occupants of this dwelling at the moment were a centipede and some cockroaches, but doubtless many smaller members of the insect tribe lay concealed in the interstices of those walls, which, begrimed with the smoke and dust of ages, would be likely to shelter the most objectionable of their kind.

The search of the premises proper did not occupy many

minutes, for besides the chest which merely contained some brass utensils there was no other closed receptacle in the room; but there still remained the ceiling or rather inner portion of the roof, and to this I now directed the head constable's attention. It was not an easy task, but with the assistance of the bedstead finally accomplished, and resulted in the discovery, not only of the knife and bludgeon described by the deaf mute and the woman, but also some blood-stained clothing which had evidently been worn by the two men at the time. The chain of evidence was now indeed complete, these last silent, yet most eloquent witnesses of the crime, being the only links which had hitherto been missing. Wrapping them up carefully in a parcel, which was sealed in the presence of the witnesses to the search, I fastened the precious packet on to my saddle and half an hour later started on my way back to headquarters.

CHAPTER XVII

THE case came on for trial in due course, before my friend Benson, the joint magistrate, who, when the deaf mute was produced as a witness, was much puzzled as to how he should proceed; for, while thoroughly realizing the importance of his evidence and prepared to record it through the medium of an interpreter, as suggested by the prosecuting counsel, he was confronted at the start with the seemingly insolvable problem as to how the oath was to be administered to the witness!

The leader for the defence seeing the difficulty he was in, and only too eager to add to it, was not slow to take advantage of a situation so calculated to hamper the proceedings. Rising to his feet with all the importance of a counsel retained at a thousand rupees a day, he addressed the Court in flowery language, dwelling on the enormity of the crime, not of the accused, but of his "learned friend on the other side" in attempting to fix so grave a charge upon his clients by the evidence of a witness who could neither speak nor hear, and to whom the nature of an oath could not possibly be explained.

Following up this flow of eloquence with various quotations from the Evidence Act, he proceeded to point out their special application to the case, till I could see that the unhappy Benson—to whom the Law of Evidence was now merely an unpleasant vision of past examination days—was nearly driven mad, and no wonder, for of all the legal volumes in existence it is perhaps the one best calculated to upset one's mental equilibrium.

Fortunately for the ends of justice the advocate for the Crown was equal to the occasion, and unexpectedly produced some more recent High Court Ruling also bearing on the subject, resulting in a lengthy and somewhat acrimonious discussion between the two learned

exponents of the law. Finally Benson, who was really clever, and for one outside the profession an exceedingly good lawyer now, with his memory refreshed soon discovering the Crown prosecutor was in the right, overruled the objections of the other.

The "Baba-Jee," otherwise Kali Dass, who formed one of the crowd of interested spectators, was now called up and being duly sworn was told to explain the process to the dwarf, which he did by a series of strange gestures, so cleverly conceived as to leave little doubt as to their meaning. First pointing to his tongue, then upwards—evidently to indicate the sky—he went through a form of prayer or invocation as if calling upon heaven to witness what he was about to do, then placing the palms of his hands together in the usual attitude of a witness giving evidence, turned towards the Court.

The dwarf, following these movements with considerable interest, was apparently somewhat non-plussed at first, but gradually, their meaning seeming to dawn upon him, a look of intelligence spread over his face, and nodding his head in token of having understood stepped into the witness-box.

The Court was now cleared of all but those immediately concerned in the proceedings, and one of the peons having been selected to take the part of the murdered man, the deaf mute once more described in dumb show how the crime had been committed. His story, if such it might be called, differed in no way from the one already recorded, indeed, so similar was it in every detail that both parties agreed to waive cross-examination, which was just as well, for even with the assistance of so clever an interpreter as the Baba-Jee, the task would have been well-nigh impossible.

The woman was next examined and also adhered to her statement, and on being shown the weapons and clothing, identified them as belonging to the men in whose house they had been found. Several other witnesses having also deposed to this effect, the four accused persons were charged with the murder and denied all knowledge of the crime, calling several witnesses, all of whom were eventually examined, but failing to establish their innocence, the four

prisoners were finally committed to take their trial at the Sessions.

There was an interval of some weeks between the committal of the men and the final trial, during which time Benson often discussed the case with me, which, as his connection with it was now over, he was at liberty to do. He seemed very doubtful as to whether the Judge would convict the men on the sole evidence of an accomplice, for, as he observed, "Old M'Tavish is sure to find some legal reason for refusing to admit the dwarf's."

"You know our friend's opinion of the police, and he's bound to think this deaf mute business is another example of their 'iniquitous methods' for procuring a conviction."

His fears, I knew, were not altogether groundless, for as a judge, M'Tavish really was impossible, his unreasoning antipathy to the police blinding his eyes to any skill or virtue they might occasionally exhibit.

"Yes, but as this particular 'iniquity' happens to have been initiated by myself, let's hope he will level his wrath at me this time, and give the police a rest," I replied laughing, though really in earnest, for I did not wish the sub-inspector who had acted under my orders to be blamed unjustly.

However, when the case eventually came on, to our surprise the deaf mute's evidence, taken in the same manner as before, was not only admitted, but evidently credited, for a couple of days later, when present in the Court, I had the satisfaction of hearing all the men found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. But with this conclusion of the case, and subsequent confirmation of the sentence by the High Court, came trouble, which, to some extent, had been anticipated. For on the night before the execution, I received information that a large body of men—friends of the condemned—had come in from their village, intending, it was said, to attempt their rescue.

I reported this at once to Granville, the district officer, who, with characteristic promptitude, directed me to send down a strong force of armed police, immediately to the jail, in front of which the scaffold had been erected, and having done this, I informed Benson, who was

charged with the duty of seeing the sentence carried out.

The execution was fixed for 6 a.m., but long before this hour Benson and myself had arrived at the jail to find an enormous crowd assembled, most of them armed with "lathis," or long bamboo staves, and all in a most dangerous state of excitement, calling out loudly for the prisoners to be released. There were five hundred of them, perhaps more, a number quite sufficient to have overpowered the ordinary guard, and they would possibly have attempted it had it not been for the presence of the extra force sent down.

But this double line of resolute-looking men, many of them of the fighting "Rajput" caste, drawn up across the gate, had evidently presented too formidable an appearance; still as the time drew near, the excitement became proportionately intense, till I realized that something must be done. Assuming command, I gave the order for the men to fix bayonets, then, with both ranks facing outwards, formed a line up to the scaffold, the effect of this movement being to split up the crowd, thereby creating a diversion for the moment, which, as it turned out, proved of much advantage; for, most fortunately, during this temporary confusion, the small wicket gate was opened, and the four prisoners, pinioned and strongly guarded by jail warders, were brought out and led through the double line of armed police and reached the scaffold unperceived.

In view of this disturbance taking place, the jailer, an Irishman and old sailor, had been instructed to shorten the proceedings as far as it was possible to do, and with the ingenuity born of his early training had so arranged that all four executions should be simultaneous, by enlarging the drop platform and strengthening the cross-beam with bamboos to take the extra strain.

Up to this moment the condemned men were not aware of the presence of their friends, and had seemed comparatively resigned to their fate, but, when being led up the sloping stage on to the drop, they saw them and realized why they had come, all their composure left them, and struggling frantically to get free, implored them to come to their assistance. The effects of this appeal upon

a crowd already almost beyond the bounds of control, may easily be imagined. Brandishing their lathis and shouting to each other to tear the scaffold down, they made a rush towards it. However, anticipating some such demonstration, I had already consulted Benson, and now ordered the men to load with ball-cartridge, repeating the order loudly in Hindustani, lest they should imagine blank ammunition was to be used.

Now, whether it was the act of loading—a somewhat impressive process in those days of muzzle-loaders—or the glistening line of bayonets pointing in their faces, I cannot say, but as the three-score rods went home in one loud ringing clank, and the men at the next order came up to the "Ready," the advancing crowd, with one accord, stopped dead.* For quite an appreciable period, the two opposing forces stood facing each other—those of law and order, grim, silent but determined—the others, still brandishing their sticks and giving expression to their feelings in loud cries and execrations against the police and all their methods.

Meanwhile overhead the jailer who, by a clever ruse, had succeeded in pacifying those on the scaffold, rapidly completed the last grim preparations and presently, while the crowd were still vituperating the police, the loud crash of the heavy platform as it fell, announced the close of the dread tragedy.

It seems that the old sailor, quick to take advantage of the commotion down below, had persuaded the hapless victims to allow the final preparations to be made, under the impression they would be permitted to address their friends later, but no sooner had the nooses been adjusted than, obtaining Benson's order, the bolt was withdrawn. The deception was no doubt justifiable under the peculiar circumstances of the case, for any prolongation of the proceedings would not only have added to the mental anguish of the culprits, but might also have led to a serious disturbance probably ending in the loss of many lives.

The mob, taken completely by surprise at this *coup d'état*, for so the jailer's action may be best described,

* The arming of the Indian police with breech-loaders is of comparatively recent date.

seemed paralyzed for the moment, and by the time they had realized what had happened the object for which they had assembled no longer existed. With shouts and cries, now changed from threats to mournful wailings, they stood there for a while, gazing at the scaffold, whence all that was left of their late comrades now depended. Then, with the exception of some relatives, gradually dispersed, eventually returning to their village, here, probably to concoct some scheme of vengeance to be applied as opportunity offered, against the police.

Thus ended what was perhaps one of the most curiously detected and extraordinarily proved cases ever tried in any law court; one of those mysterious Indian crimes which baffle all ordinary police methods to discover, not always because such methods are not honestly applied, as is the common outcry, but as often due to causes such as I have attempted to describe, when the people themselves combine to shield the real offenders and obstruct, instead of aiding, the police! *

In this particular instance, although every enquiry possible was subsequently made, nothing transpired to indicate that the station officer concerned had not used every effort in his power to detect the crime, but with practically the whole village leagued against him it was not surprising that he had failed.

The rôle assumed by Kali Dass was a happy inspiration, for only in such guise was it possible for an outsider to have taken up his residence in the village without suspicion, but he, too, with all his talent for intrigue, might not have succeeded had the deaf mute been a stranger, instead of an old acquaintance.

Immediately after the final trial was concluded the "Baba-Jee" vanished from the district as completely as if he had been the ghost of the Faquir he represented, leaving no trace behind him of his temporary visitation. His sudden disappearance, however, passed unnoticed, for these religious mendicants are somewhat peripatetic in their habits—seldom staying longer than a week or two in one place—so that, when a few days later, a certain Gopi Lall Hulwai, who had been expected, took up his

* The case was, so far as I remember, quoted in the Law Report.

duties as salesman to the chief sweetmeat maker in the town, no one except Benson, Granville and myself were aware that the individual hawking the greasy condiments in the street, had been once the much revered Baba-Jee Faquir! However, this was his last performance as an amateur detective, for he told me later that his original criminal associates, having discovered that he was aiding the police, had threatened to kill him should he be found assisting them again.

CHAPTER XVIII

For some months after these events, nothing of any interest or importance occurred either to disturb, or in any way enliven our peaceful, but distinctly monotonous existence, which the subsequent advent of the rainy season with all its accompanying discomforts had not tended to improve.

At length, one day in the first week of September, a time when, owing to the continuous heavy rain, many of the rivers were in flood and all the low-lying portions of the district consequently submerged, one of my chokidars came in to report that a tiger, driven from its ordinary habitation, had sought refuge in a small jungle-clad plateau, which the still rising waters had since converted into an island.

Burke, who was present, on hearing the man's story, at once proposed that we should go.

"The place is only twenty miles off, I see," he added, consulting the map hanging on the wall, "and we can easily drop down to it in a boat."

"But how about the elephants?" I objected. "We can't well take them in boats, and the jungle is sure to be too thick at this time of the year to go after the beast on foot!"

These were little difficulties he had apparently overlooked, but they in no wise damped his ardour. Moreover, being of a resourceful disposition, he presently suggested a way by which they might be overcome. For it so happened that within a mile or two of this jungle was a village belonging to a petty Rajah, who was said to possess some elephants of sorts, for ceremonial purposes. Burke had, it appeared, in the course of his various peregrinations, made the acquaintance of this magnate, and he now proposed that we should write, inviting him to honour

us with his presence at the shoot, an invitation he could not well refuse, and would not be likely to detract from the pomp and splendour of his coming by leaving his elephants behind. The suggestion was no sooner made than adopted. Having indited and dispatched the all-important invitation, couched in the flowery language of the East, we set to work at once on our preparations for the voyage. The first and most important consideration was, necessarily, the boat, which was not only required to take us to the village, but also to reside in for the next two or three days, tents being out of the question at this time of the year. There were several good-sized vessels plying up and down the rivers at this season, and we soon found one amongst them suitable for our purpose, which we hired for the occasion together with a smaller boat or dinghey to serve as a kitchen and shelter for our servants. Both these vessels were fitted with bamboo matting cabins extending over half their length, the one in the larger boat being quite a substantial structure with a thatched roof and two windows, giving the boat something of the appearance of a house-boat on the Thames.

Burke and myself, like most Indian officials, being always in a condition of preparedness, ready to start on the shortest notice for anywhere in the district no matter how far off, no time was lost in completing our arrangements; hence in less than three hours after we had decided on the expedition, we were off, but when, some five hours later, we tied up to an island for the night, found to our disgust that although we had actually travelled over twenty miles we had only made good ten, this seemingly paradoxical result being due to the many windings of the river.

However, cheered by the information that our course would be a less tortuous one next day, we lit the large lantern we had suspended from the ceiling, intending to fill up the time before we could reasonably order dinner, in overhauling our arms and ammunition so as to be ready to take the field immediately on arrival. Unfortunately we had overlooked the fact that we were moored close up to the banks of the island, which though small was rank with rotted vegetation, the home of myriads of insects of

every shape and size, but more especially that pest, the flying white ant. These, attracted by the bright light of our lantern, immediately invaded us, flying through the open doors and windows in their thousands, and, hovering round the lantern for a while, would drop on to the flooring which in an incredibly short time was carpeted with hundreds of pairs of wings, each insect shedding these appendages as soon as it alighted. Of the other winged invaders the most objectionable were the "Gundis," a diminutive black beetle, closely resembling a lady-bird in shape, but possessed of a most evil-smelling odour, which they emitted, as they buzzed noisily around us, in concentrated doses till the atmosphere of the cabin was well-nigh intolerable.

Presently too by way of improving the situation the residential insect population, also attracted by the light and possibly resenting the intrusion of outsiders, issued from their various tenements in the roof and matting of the cabin where they had hitherto lain concealed. These were mostly cockroaches, but of a size I had never seen before, some of them being quite two inches long and in admirable condition, which was not surprising as we learned later that the last cargo carried by the boat had been jars of oil, the staple food of the cockroach or "Tailchutter," its native equivalent, and signifying "Oil-licker."

Now as it happened both Burke and myself had a particular aversion for the insect tribe in any shape or form, and finding after a time that the new-comers had no intention of returning to their places of concealment, nor the others back to their jungle, we decided to leave them in possession and pass the night ashore, a most unwise and perilous proceeding in the height of the rains, but it was a case of Hobson's choice, and, as Burke observed, it was better to expose ourselves to the risk of catching fever than to the certainty of being eaten up alive by cockroaches and white ants, hundreds of which, now wingless, were crawling about the floor. Being myself quite of the same opinion as my chum, we lost no time in carrying out our project. Selecting a spot comparatively free of jungle, we ordered the crew to collect all the

oars, punting poles, sails and tarpaulins available and set to work to construct a tent or shelter for the night. Fortunately the native "Mullah" or boatman is generally a handy individual, quick to grasp and carry out any idea, and in a very short space of time, these, working under our direction, ran up a small platform some five feet off the ground; an upright pole at each end of it, connected by a third, formed the superstructure, over which was thrown one of the tarpaulins, and with another spread on the flooring the interior of our hut was rendered as nearly damp-proof as was possible considering its situation.

We now entered into possession, but profiting by our late experience hung the lantern up outside before we ordered dinner to be served, preferring to dine alone, although in semi-darkness, to being troubled by any uninvited guests.

Probably, although in blissful ignorance, we consumed some of the "natives" with our meal, for we had seen them flying in thousands round the stove in the kitchen boat, and it would have been impossible to prevent some from tumbling into the pot. However, the dishes tasted none the worse, and having devoured all that was put before us, with appetites increased by the delay, we lit our pipes and sat up for some time, thoroughly enjoying the situation, which prejudicial as it might be to health yet possessed a certain fascination if only as an out-of-the-way experience. It rained heavily during the night, but thanks to our tarpaulin roof we only heard the rain, and although the sound of it awoke us not a drop came through, for the tarred canvas was fortunately new and being set at a sharp angle prevented any accumulation.

However, we were not destined to pass the night without adventure, and one which might have ended seriously but for my friend being fortunately an exceptionally light sleeper. We had both dropped off to sleep again and had been asleep some time when Burke, whose bed was at the end furthest from the light, feeling a weight upon his chest, started up at once; at the same moment something fell or jumped on to the ground. Instinctively he knew it was some animal, and afraid to speak lest it

should attack him, he stretched across the space between us, and shook me gently till I woke.

"Get up, quick, but don't speak loud. There is a leopard, I think, below," he whispered, as he fumbled for his rifle in the semi-darkness. At first but partially awake, the last few words were all I heard, or fairly understood, but they were quite sufficient to rouse me into action, and in an instant I was on my hands and knees, also groping for my gun, which, loaded with ball, was lying near my bed. A moment or two later both of us, with our respective weapons ready for instant use, were kneeling on the platform, peering out into the darkness and listening intently for any sound that might betray the whereabouts of the beast. The rain had ceased, and except for an occasional croaking of the frogs, there was not a sound to break the stillness of the night which was now intensely dark, the dim light from the lantern on the other side only serving to accentuate the gloom.

Presently, however, having gradually become accustomed to the darkness, we perceived an object a few yards to our right, a long, low, shadowy shape it seemed and motionless, I thought, till Burke, keener sighted than myself, drew my attention to what looked to me like something moving close behind it.

"Look," he whispered, "there's its tail, it is a leopard, as I thought, and evidently not in the best of tempers!" And he was right, for I could now make out the beast distinctly as it lay facing us with its head between its forepaws and the tail waving to and fro with that quick sinuous movement which, in all the cat-tribe, is indicative of anger. In its present threatening attitude, it seemed as if the brute might attack us any moment. Fearing this, I suggested we should fire, but Burke would not agree.

"No," he said, "we might miss or only wound it. Wait till we can get a broadside shot, which will give us a better chance of killing it outright."

This was doubtless sound advice, for in the position it was lying, the head was the only fatal spot exposed, a target too small to make certain of in that uncertain light, and yet had we fired and missed it would have charged us to a certainty. Thus, for perhaps a minute, but which

seemed to us an hour, we remained as we were, motionless as statues, staring at our foe, while the latter, equally immovable except for a continuous movement of the tail, seemed to have its eyes fixed on us, also as if waiting an opportunity to attack. Suddenly, seeming to realize that we could see it too, it rose quickly to its feet and before we had time to bring our weapons to the shoulder had bounded off into the jungle out of sight.

Afraid to leave our post lest it might appear again, we continued watching for a while, scanning the fringe of jungle to our front and on either side, as far as we could see, but in vain, nor were there any sounds of movement in the jungle to indicate the presence of any animal within, near enough for us to hear it.

Finally, concluding that the beast finding itself discovered, had gone off altogether, I mentioned this to Burke, adding that " it was a pity now we had not risked the charge and fired when we had the chance." But he, with his greater knowledge of leopards and their ways, had by no means given up all hope as yet.

" Don't you make too sure," he said. " Leopards are cunning beasts and rarely act as one expects them to. I remember once—— "

This possibly interesting reminiscence, however, remained unrelated, for at this moment, and seemingly from a clump of bamboo close beside us, there came the same unearthly sound I had heard that night in Calvert's bungalow.

" There ! " cried Burke irascibly, " do you hear that ? What did I tell you ? The wily brute, confound it, has been lying there, foxing all this time." But while my friend was thus wrathfully giving expression to his feelings, the object of his resentment had evidently left its shelter, for I could hear it now moving stealthily through the jungle; indeed so cautious were its movements and so careful was the animal to conceal itself entirely from our view, that it might easily have passed by us unnoticed had it not proclaimed its presence by its cries, which, curiously enough, it continued to emit at intervals all the time. This extraordinary inconsistency in its behaviour, however, has its explanation in the fact that leopards,

when they find themselves in a dangerous situation, invariably give utterance to these terrifying cries in order to intimidate the object, whatever it may be, whence the danger threatens. Such at any rate is the opinion held by native " shikaris " and others who have studied the habits of these animals. Be this as it may, it sometimes happens as was the case on this occasion, that the animal is, so to speak, " hoist on its own petard " by betraying its presence to the sportsman.

Having drawn Burke's attention to the movements in the jungle, we followed the sounds carefully, till finding they tended towards an opening to our left, we kept our eyes fixed upon this spot ready to fire directly the leopard showed itself. These sounds gradually came nearer and soon the same long, shadowy shape we had seen emerged slowly from the jungle, but before it had fully cleared it we had fired, the two shots in combination producing a report as of a field-piece, seeming all the louder for the intensity of the silence all around us; but louder almost was the cry of the stricken beast as with one convulsive bound it gained the opposite cover, where it stood on end a moment pawing the empty air, ere it fell back with a crash into the jungle and lay struggling for a while roaring loudly in its agony and rage. Finally its cries and struggles ceased, but whether the beast was dead or merely wounded we could not tell. Anxious to know for certain, I suggested we should follow up at once and ascertain this fact by closer observation, but Burke wisely refused.

" No," he said, " it is still too dark to risk encountering a leopard possibly only wounded, and perhaps lying up in wait ! " We argued the matter hotly for some time, but finally yielding to his superior knowledge of these beasts, I reluctantly gave in, and fortunately so as the sequel proved.

CHAPTER XIX

MEANWHILE our shots together with the leopard's noisy roaring had roused those sleeping in the boats, and jumping to the conclusion it was a tiger we had fired at and wounded, a panic seized upon them, imagining in the extremity of their terror that it would now attack them in the boat. In fact, judging from the shouts and yells that reached our ears, we might have imagined such a catastrophe was imminent, for we could hear some one shouting that he could see the animal in the jungle, another that it was rushing down towards them, while others, more practical than imaginative, were calling out to cut the boats adrift. This last suggestion, seeming to be received with unanimous approval, was evidently about to be carried into effect, when presently above the monkey-like chattering of the others we heard the voice of my orderly, a huge up-country Mohammedan, protesting loudly in authoritative tones.

"What!" he cried, "you would take the boats away and leave my Sahib and the 'Inginere' Sahib to be eaten by the tiger? Wah! wah! what a fine arrangement! but do you think I am a woman—or a fool? Tie up those ropes again, you sons of pigs, at once, or I will make you tiger's meat yourselves!"

Then came the sounds of a violent scuffle, followed by sundry splashes in the water as of men being thrown, or jumping overboard. All was then quiet for a while, but about a quarter of an hour later, the orderly walked up to the platform dragging the two "Manghis," or head boat-men, with him, tied together with their cloths.

"Preserver of the poor," he said, bringing his hand to the salute, "these two are thieves whom I have caught, and who with the others were trying to run off with the boats of the Sahibs." He then went on to tell me what

had happened, concluding with the suggestion that they should be awarded some form of corporal castigation on the spot. However, as it was now nearly daylight, and there would soon be light enough to investigate the jungle, we decided to make the men accompany us in our search as being the most suitable kind of punishment for their offence.

Their prosecutor was delighted with what he considered was a most Solomon-like judgment, and while we were waiting the coming of the dawn we could hear him below us enlarging on the dangers they were likely to encounter, evidently determined they should have the full benefit of the sentence. Consequently, when half an hour later, we started on our quest, the men were in such a terror-stricken condition that we were afraid to take them with us lest, in the event of our finding the leopard still alive, they might hamper our proceedings. Leaving them, therefore, in charge of the orderly, much to his disgust, for like most of his class he was a sportsman by nature and eager for the fray, we went on alone.

Walking shoulder to shoulder, holding our weapons at the ready with the hammers at full-cock, we advanced cautiously, step by step till we reached the spot where we had seen the beast fall, but here, except for the trampled jungle and a splash or two of blood, there was nothing to be seen. However, after a careful examination we found a fresh track leading further into the jungle, and following this up for about five-and-twenty yards came upon another trampled, blood-stained space, where the animal had again evidently fallen ; beyond this the jungle was much denser, but following the still-continuing track, we bored our way through, and advancing slowly and laboriously had made good a yard or two when we suddenly came upon our quarry lying all doubled up in a heap, and fortunately, dead, for we had almost stepped upon the carcase before we were aware that it was there.

It was a leopard sure enough, and a fairly big one too so far as we could judge, but what interested us more was the fact that the body was still warm ! thus proving beyond a doubt that the animal must have lived for a considerable time after it was hit. The position of the

bullet-holes, of which there were two, also favoured this belief, for both shots were badly placed, one being far behind the shoulder, and the other in the loins, neither likely to cause instantaneous death, nor even to cripple the beast at once.

"Well, perhaps you will admit now that 'discretion is the better part of valour'—sometimes," said Burke, as we finished examining the wounds, deftly quoting the old proverb, which was certainly most applicable to the case, for had we done as I had suggested, one or both of us perhaps, would undoubtedly have been mauled.

We had already shouted to the orderly, telling him of our find and the latter, presently arriving with the two "Manghis," we contrived, between us, to carry the carcase back, much surprised, as we retraced our steps, to find how far we had come. On measuring our prize we found we had not over-estimated its size, for it proved just over seven feet in length but in miserable condition, the animal having probably existed without food since driven on to the island by the floods.

The skinning of the carcase proved a difficulty, none of our men having any knowledge of the process; finally the task was entrusted to the cook, as being likely to do the least amount of damage, a supposition based on the somewhat illogical conclusion that being a cook he must necessarily know something of the business! This unfortunate individual, however, born and bred in the suburbs of Calcutta, had never seen a wild animal in his life, and on being told to commence the operation protested vehemently, declaring that nothing would induce him to approach, much less touch the dreaded beast. Finally, on the promise of much "backsheesh" from ourselves and a little "gentle persuasion" from the others, he was induced to take up the job and managed to get through it, apparently in more senses than one, for when we examined the skin later it seemed a remarkably transparent one!

In the meantime the crew had dismantled our little shanty and the sails and oars, etc., being restored to their places, we resumed our voyage, making much better progress now that the river was less winding in its course.

Later in the day, taking advantage of a favourable breeze, they hoisted the sail, an enormous "expanse of canvas," otherwise bits of gunny-bags of various shades and texture ingeniously pieced together and out of all proportion to the size and stability of the boat. Under the influence of this masterpiece in patch-work we were carried along, with perilous celerity, for had the wind shifted for one moment to our beam, we must assuredly have capsized. However, speed being the chief consideration at the time, we put up with the peril rather than risk another day's delay. The boatmen, too, with characteristic thoughtlessness, had made the sheets and halliards fast, but finding the wind increasing we substituted slip-knots and placed a man at each, ready to let go at once should the necessity arise, and with this, the only precaution possible, we were forced to be content. Fortunately we experienced no such variation, nevertheless our fears were by no means groundless, for these squalls are not infrequent, and native boats being flat-bottomed and unballasted are in such circumstances notoriously unsafe when under canvas.

But dangerous as was the situation, it had yet that charm about it which comes of rapid motion, no matter how produced, and is usually accompanied by a desire to go still faster till all sense of danger is forgotten, however imminent it may be. Such, so far as I can remember, was the condition of my feelings, shared to all appearances by my chum as aided by wind and current we bowled along at a pace which could not have been under ten miles an hour, judging from the rapidity with which we passed the trees and bushes on the banks. Proceeding at this speed we were not long in reaching our destination, where we arrived about two in the afternoon, and were immediately surrounded by a large and excited crowd of villagers to whom the object of our coming was evidently known.

We soon learnt the cause of their excitement, for it appeared that the jungle in which the tiger had sought refuge was within half a mile of the village, and only separated from it by a narrow strip of water affording no impediment to the beast should the pangs of hunger prompt it to make an incursion on the village. Under these circumstances, the advent of two Sahibs, bent on

slaying this dreaded monster and armed with the necessary weapons of destruction, was naturally hailed with delight, and soon trays of native sweetmeats, vegetables, fruit, etc., were sent down by the head men to our boat, as the usual token of their respect and, in this instance possibly, gratitude for coming to their relief.

Amongst these offerings, or " Dollies," as they are termed, were three items strangely in contrast with the nature of the rest, to wit, two bottles of Scotch whisky and one of soda-water, which the donor in the fulness of his heart, but with a quaint sense of proportion, had placed amongst the native products ! How these familiar objects, so unmistakably European in appearance and contents, had reached this distant village was a mystery we never solved ; but in accordance with regulations prohibiting officers receiving as " Dollies " anything except the produce of the land, we returned them, much to the mortification of the giver, who had doubtless hoped to have gained credit for the munificence of his offering.

While still engaged in receiving these deputations, an individual dressed in a kind of burlesque military uniform arrived with a message from Burke's friend, the Rajah, intimating " that his Highness being desirous of placing himself at our feet, begged that of our great condescension we would permit him to convey himself into our august presence as speedily as might be." This, in plain English, being a request for an interview, we sent back a suitable reply to the effect " that nothing we could think of at the moment could give us so much pleasure as a ' Mulakat,' or meeting, with the Rajah Sahib, and that we were therefore prepared to receive his Highness at any time he might deign to honour us with his presence."

Having delivered ourselves of this laboriously concocted message in our best " higher-standard " Hindustani, we told the messenger, in plainer language, to be sure to ask his master to bring his elephants with him, hinting that their presence would add much to the dignity of his visit.

About an hour later, having meanwhile borrowed some chairs and a drugget from the local school-house and prepared our cabin for the reception, we heard the discordant

sound of tom-toms in the distance, accompanied by what seemed to be the shrill notes of a bagpipe out of tune. Presently a large crowd was seen approaching headed by the man producing these weird sounds, and behind them a huge gaily caparisoned elephant bearing a "charjama," a kind of sideless howdah, covered with crimson cloth, and followed, to our delight, by three more fair-sized animals.

Seated tailor-wise on the "charjama" was a huge figure which on first appearance might have been mistaken for the fractional portion of a rainbow, but subsequently proved to be our royal visitor, clad in raiment of which the prevailing hues were purple, green and yellow, and surmounted by a cap heavily gold-braided. Bringing up the rear of this procession was a band of about twenty armed retainers dressed in cast-off British uniforms representing nearly every branch of the Service from the horse-artillery jacket to the coats of the native infantry of many years ago, with here and there a battered helmet, worn, in some cases, hinder part before. Apart from the "cortège" proper, yet forming a large part of it, was the usual crowd of men, women, and children of all ages, all shouting and gesticulating in approval of the proceedings after the manner of their kind. Lastly, and more noisily demonstrative than them all, were the ubiquitous village mongrels, some howling to the accompaniment of the music (?), whilst others took this opportunity of settling their little differences with each other in the usual noisy fashion peculiar to their species.

We stood awhile watching this quaint procession from the bank before retiring to the cabin, where etiquette required we should be seated in readiness to receive the great man, and presently, through the window, witnessed his arrival at the landing-place and the manner of his descent from the huge animal he was riding.

It was one of the most comical sights I have ever seen, and we had as much as we could do to keep our countenance when, receiving our visitor some minutes later, we tried to assume the grave demeanour necessary for the occasion.

The elephant being ordered to kneel, a ladder carried by one of the attendants was placed against the edge of

the "charjama," and while two men steadied it below a third mounted half-way up; the figure we had seen now uncoiled itself, and turning slowly on its perch, stuck out two enormous legs which were promptly seized by the attendant on the ladder, who placed the two feet carefully on the topmost rung.

Being now in a favourable position to descend, the man already on the ladder was assisted by another; each laid hold of one leg, and with others assisting from below the huge jelly-bag-like carcase of the potentate was slowly, rung by rung, brought safely to the ground. Blowing like a grampus from the effects of this unwonted exercise the great man stood still some moments, revealing his large proportions and extraordinary attire, while we gazed at him in open-mouthed amazement, as well we might, for never was man so strangely shaped or clothed.

Built on a scale even the claimant would not rival, he stood about five feet two inches in height with a form as rotund in full and profile as it is possible for the human frame to be, and arrayed, as I have said, in garments of startling hue. His coat was of pea-green satin with stripes of yellow and purple, worn over trousers of crimson silk sprinkled with gold stars and fitting closely to the legs, giving the impression of bolsters such as are sometimes seen on an ottoman of Oriental design; while on his head was a cap, so profusely embroidered that it seemed to be entirely made of gold. Such gorgeous apparel might possibly have added dignity to a figure of ordinary build, but displayed on the porpoise-like proportions of our visitor was ludicrous in the extreme, and more calculated to excite ridicule than respect in the minds of Europeans.

CHAPTER XX

To those who have only seen the modern Indian Potentate as he appears in the playing fields of Eton in his youth, or as the finished article on the golf links or the moors, the individual I have attempted to describe may seem to be chimerical, or at best a caricature of the original; but to the Anglo-Indian the type will be familiar, for even to this day in parts of India still off the beaten track his prototype may be met with in the persons of courtesy-titled Rajahs, who though not officially recognized nor entitled to the much-coveted salutes are nevertheless styled Rajahs by their people, and treated with some deference by the officials of the district. Of such class was the individual we were now about to interview, and a very fair specimen he was too of his kind; for strange as it may be it is none the less a fact that natives in this position are generally obese, a condition due to the sensual, inactive lives they lead.

The one we were concerned with was, perhaps, somewhat above the average in obesity, and as we watched him waddling across the slender plank connecting us with the bank, we trembled to think what might be the consequences should the frail fabric suddenly give way. However, he passed over in safety, and with a tread that shook the boat from stem to stern walked up to the door, but only to find his progress barred, for although the doorway was nearly two feet wide he unfortunately was wider. In vain he struggled to get through, but the sides of the opening were formed of stout bamboos and, struggle as he might, resisted all his efforts. He now tried to pass through sideways, but like the old woman of the 'bus story soon discovered this attitude gave him no advantage, being unfortunately spherical in shape. Meanwhile, seated in solemn state, we could only watch his struggles with

assumed indifference, for etiquette forbade us to notice his discomfiture, hence we were compelled to feign ignorance of its existence, though the fact was plainly visible in the agonized expression of his fat, perspiring countenance.

"He will burst as sure as fate," I said in a whisper to Burke, seriously thinking that such a calamity was possible, for his balloon-like body was assuming perilously strange shapes in his wild attempts to force it through an opening obviously too small. At length, making a final effort, assisted by a little pressure, more judicious than respectful from his attendant behind, he came through like a huge football, landing almost on his nose. Recovering himself, however, by a dexterous movement of the body, little to be expected from one so unwieldy in appearance, he walked up to us smiling, seemingly in no way disconcerted but with a self-satisfied air as if to be projected headlong through a doorway was a fashionable method of entering a room.

We rose to receive him, and looking as grave as was possible under the circumstances shook hands and enquired after his health, to which he replied in the usual Eastern formula, that "thanks to our favourable influence, it was good," which sentiment, seeing how near we had just been to being the death of him, was not very appropriate. He took the chair we offered him, after eyeing it suspiciously as if doubtful whether once in he could get out of it in a manner consistent with his dignity, an uncertainty evidently born of his recent experience with the doorway, for we noticed he was careful to sit on the extreme edge of it.

After the exchange of a few more complimentary phrases we came to business, and were much gratified to find that not only was he willing to place his elephants at our disposal but that two of the animals were excellent shikaris; also that the tiger was undoubtedly in the jungle and ought easily to be found. Before taking his leave he promised everything should be in readiness early the next morning, and suggested that in the meantime we should transfer ourselves and our belongings to his "Budgerow," or house-boat, which was moored near us.

We were not slow to take advantage of his offer, and moved over at once, to find ourselves in a vessel which,

compared with the one that we had left, might have been likened to a yacht, so roomy, clean and comfortable did she seem to us after our cramped and dingy quarters. She had been recently repainted and done up, after being submerged for some time during the hot season, as is often done, not only to preserve the timbers but to clear a boat of cockroaches and other insects, which, in spite of all precautions, find their way on board, and cannot otherwise be got rid of. The cabin, or deck-house, a solid wooden structure, consisted of two good-sized apartments of which the sides were all windows, each closeable at will with either glass, venetian, or mosquito-net framed slides, thus affording absolute protection both from cold and heat and also from all the flying insects with which we had been so pestered the night before. In addition to these luxuries there was what might be called the poop-deck overhead, on which, seated in long cane chairs, we spent the remainder of the day till summoned to dinner in the cabin. Here, with all the windows open but guarded by the netting, we ate our meal in comfort, fanned by the cool night wind, a stray white ant here and there merely serving to accentuate the luxury we now enjoyed as compared with the discomfort we had endured.

The night passed without adventure, but unfortunately the greater part of it also without sleep, for so terrified were the villagers at the close proximity of the tiger that from 9 p.m. till sunrise parties of them by turns kept up a loud tom-tomming throughout the long dark hours, hoping by this means to keep the beast away.

We were up and dressed shortly after dawn, and while seated on the poop enjoying our early morning meal, the elephants arrived, two of them, presumably the " shikaris," carrying " charjamas " in addition to their pads. Seated on one of these was a curious-looking individual dressed in semi-European costume of which the most characteristic feature was an enormous solah-topee, so completely covering his face that we could not tell whether he was a white man or of a hue more in keeping with the rest of his attire ; but when he came nearer and, seeing us, took off his hat and bowed, there was a something in the air with which he did it that proclaimed his nationality

at once as plainly as if he had been labelled. Hence when a moment later he came on board and introduced himself in broken English as Monsieur Le Croix, the Rajah's manager, we had no difficulty in fixing him as a native of Chandarnagar, that strangely isolated little French colony situated within a few miles of Calcutta. He brought us a message from the Rajah begging we would excuse him from attending the shoot in person, " as he was feeling somewhat painful within his body," which, considering the rough treatment it had been lately subjected to, was not surprising.

Meanwhile, having finished our " little breakfast," we mounted the elephants, Burke on the smaller of the two " shikaris," while I clambered on to the other, a huge beast standing nearly ten feet high, and with the little Frenchman clinging on monkey-like behind me, we started for the jungle.

We had formed no regular plan of attack, but learning that the jungle was only about three-quarters of a mile in length and surrounded on three sides with deep water, we decided on beating through it in line till we put the tiger up, and then to be guided by its movements. Accordingly, crossing the narrow strip of water about half a mile from the village we advanced slowly in extended order, Burke and myself on either flank with the two pad-elephants between us.

Our line being necessarily limited in length we could not cover more than a hundred yards at a time, and as the jungle, composed of trees and dense undergrowth, was about four hundred in breadth, it took four drives to beat completely. Almost immediately after we had entered it the elephants began to show signs of uneasiness, rumbling and trumpeting at intervals all the time, and continued doing so to the end, but beyond a somewhat more decided demonstration towards the close of the last drive there was nothing to indicate the presence of any animal in the jungle. To make quite sure, however, we repeated the drives, but with no better success, then, as a last resource, we resolved to beat along the edge of the cover only, where we noticed the undergrowth was much denser and the trees nearer together. In order to do this thoroughly

we packed the line closer, reducing the intervals between each animal to a little over its own length, and in this formation, commencing where we had left off, proceeded to circumambulate the island. This was a formidable undertaking and would have probably occupied some hours, the jungle being so dense; however, we had hardly accomplished a quarter of the task when my elephant, which was on the edge nearest to the water, stopped suddenly, and kicking at the ground with its fore feet, refused to advance. At the same moment there was a quick movement in the jungle immediately in front of us as if some large animal, suddenly disturbed, was rapidly making off, but whether it was the tiger or any other heavy beast, such as a pig, I could not tell. The Mahouts declared it was the former. The other elephants, having also heard or scented the animal, had pulled up too, and all four of them, already in a highly excitable condition, now became thoroughly demoralized, resisting all the efforts of their drivers to induce them to go on. However, after much abusive language and a free use of their driving-hooks, the Mahouts eventually gained the day, and in spite of their noisy expostulations, expressed in loud trumpeting and squeals, forced the animals to advance. From this moment and for the next half-hour the situation was sufficiently exciting to all concerned, for we were following what we now knew to be the tiger, our progress guided by the track that it had made, as we could see from the twigs and slender branches still bending slowly back into position, and expecting any moment to view the beast itself or to be suddenly attacked.

Packed closely together, as if deriving courage from contact with each other, the elephants advanced like a living wall, rumbling and trumpeting all the time as they trod down the obstructing jungle unwillingly with their feet, while with their trunks they searched the air endeavouring to locate their hidden foe. Proceeding thus cautiously, following the windings of the track, we had covered perhaps fifty yards when it suddenly came to an end close to a large tree standing within a foot or two of the water, with one huge branch, growing almost at right angles, extending over it. This puzzled us considerably, for it was scarcely

likely that an animal which had taken refuge from the flood would voluntarily again take to the water! Meanwhile, however, my Mahout, standing on the elephant's neck, had been peering over the jungle, and presently I saw him pointing to something on the bank below.

Thinking he had seen the tiger I stood up too, and resting my hand upon his head looked over where upon a strip of muddy beach were the foot-prints of the beast, seemingly quite fresh, and leading close up to the water; but here the animal had turned and re-entered the jungle, as was evident from the impressions continuing in this direction. We concluded from this that the tiger was still on the island, and were accordingly about to resume the beat when Burke, who was nearest to the tree I have mentioned, drew my attention to some scratches on the trunk about four feet from the ground and apparently made recently.

"They are the marks of a tiger's claw, I am sure!" he said excitedly; "and look, there are more!" pointing to some others, equally distinct, a good way lower down.

The Mahouts, too, seemed of the same opinion, though differing somewhat as to how the marks came there, one of them, a youth anxious to air his little knowledge, suggesting they were made by the beast cleaning its claws upon the bark. This seemed to incense an old grey-beard seated on one of the pad-elephants. "What?" he exclaimed, turning to the speaker; "have you such little sense as to suppose that a tiger escaping from the elephants would tarry on the way to polish up its toe-nails?"

"Then how did those marks come there?" asked the other. The old man, who was evidently considered an authority on such subjects, looked him contemptuously up and down.

"Well," he said, "there are some people who know nothing! Does not a tiger which is being pursued sometimes stand up and look back, and would it be possible for it to do so without leaning up against a tree?"

"True, true," chimed in the other two, "the 'Burah-Meah'* is quite right. He is a cunning one is this tiger;

* Old sage.

he looked and seeing the ' sahiblague ' with their guns has now hidden himself away."

Meanwhile Burke and I, although not supposed to hear this discussion which had been carried on in an undertone, had, nevertheless been interested listeners all the time, for often in this way one picks up information, scraps of jungle lore and woodcraft, not easily obtainable by any other means.

Unfortunately in tiger-shooting there are no precedents sufficiently established as to determine what a tiger may or may not do another time under exactly similar conditions, and on this occasion as it happened our animal had acted contrary to all known traditions as we were presently to learn.

CHAPTER XXI

We had hitherto been standing in a group at some little distance from the tree, but now thinking it advisable to examine the marks more closely before proceeding with the beat I ordered my Mahout to take the elephant up nearer. The animal at first seemed reluctant to advance, backing and shaking its massive head when urged to go on, then, as if impelled by some sudden emotion, dashed furiously forward, and crashing through the intervening jungle charged right up to the tree. At the same moment apparently from amongst its lower branches there rose a loud, appalling roar, followed by a violent movement of the foliage, a glimpse of yellow fur, and then with another terrific roar the tiger, springing high into the air, landed about a yard or two in front of us.

I fired at once, getting off both barrels, and evidently with effect, as the beast rolled over and seemed badly hit, which was fortunate as it was crouching for a spring and might probably have seized the elephant by the trunk, or worse still, sprung on to its head; but in thinking I had escaped these dangers I was much mistaken, for I was now to experience one of those incidental perils to which every sportsman hunting tigers off an elephant is liable, and, as on this occasion, are often caused by the very animal intended to protect him.

Ejecting the used cartridges, I had reloaded and was about to fire again, when suddenly without any further provocation, the elephant, screaming with rage, rushed furiously at the tiger, and going down upon its knees tried to gore it with its tusk. This very sudden change in its position from the horizontal to the almost perpendicular came perilously near to closing my career, for had not the iron bar across the end of the " charjama " providentially

arrested my further progress, I must inevitably have plunged head-foremost into the tiger's jaws.

My companion was less fortunate. Being considerably lighter than myself, and somewhat spherical in build, he came rolling down on top of me, and rebounding like a football, fell headlong into the jungle, but fortunately at some distance from the tiger.

Meanwhile the very danger I imagined we had avoided was now staring us literally in the face, for the elephant had failed in its attempt to kill the tiger, with the result that the latter had seized it by the head and now clung there, growling and biting savagely in turn within a few feet of my face. But perilous as was my position, that of the Mahout was infinitely greater. Seated a foot lower, he was on the same level with the tiger, and barely twice that distance from the huge gaping mouth which, with the lips drawn back, displayed the formidable fangs, some of them as thick as a man's thumb, and about three inches in length. It was indeed a desperate situation for the man, and one that might well have paralyzed his senses for the time; but, as sometimes happens in such cases, the very imminence of the danger he was in stirred him into action.

With the instinct of self-preservation, he seemed to realize at once that something must be done. Grasping his heavy driving-hook firmly with both hands, he bent his body forward till within striking distance, then, swinging the murderous instrument aloft, brought it point downwards on to the tiger's skull. The first blow or two, crushing though they were, seemed merely to stimulate the fury of the beast as now, roaring with rage and pain combined, it made frantic efforts to get at its assailant; the latter, nothing daunted, continued his attack, and aided by the violent movements of the elephant finally succeeded in dislodging the vicious brute. The elephant, relieved of its unwelcome burden, seemed disinclined to renew the struggle, and backing a pace or two, stood trembling with excitement, while the tiger, evidently as unwilling to carry on the combat, went back into cover before I had time to fire again.

Such was the position of affairs when Burke, who had been vainly trying to come to my assistance during the

progress of the contest, now arrived upon the scene, with the other two elephants following unwillingly behind him.

"Have you seen the Frenchman?" I asked, anxiously, for now that my mind was free to think of the matter I realized with horror his perilous position should he, if still wandering in the jungle, suddenly come upon the wounded beast. Happily Burke's reply relieved my apprehensions.

"Seen the Frenchman?" he exclaimed excitedly. "I rather think I have, considering I very nearly shot him about ten minutes ago! He ran past me, crashing through the jungle, and thinking he was the tiger I was just about to fire when I caught a glimpse of his clothing; however, he is all right now, for I saw him soon after climbing on to a tree."

He had hardly finished speaking when there was a violent commotion in the jungle into which the wounded beast had crawled, and forcing our elephants through it we were just in time to witness its dying struggles, which Burke quickly put an end to with a merciful bullet through the head.

"There, at last I can say I have shot a tiger, though it was only a half-dead one," he exclaimed, laughing as he brought his rifle down, but I could see that while affecting to treat the matter as a joke, he was in reality much pleased at his exploit, as was only natural considering how often he had been out without so much as seeing a tiger, much less getting a shot!

"Yes, and you might add you got it with one shot," I replied in the same vein as, moving the elephants up closer we looked down at the beast lying all in a heap and evidently as dead as the proverbial door-nail!

Our natural inclination was to get off and measure our prize at once, but politeness required that we should first rescue our officiating host from his uncomfortable position; so, resisting the temptation, we proceeded in search of him. But we soon found that to identify one particular tree out of the hundreds in a jungle is no easy matter, especially when that jungle happens to be well over one's head; however, by shouting at intervals, we finally elicited a reply, and making in this direction eventually came upon

the tree with our friend perched on its topmost branches, a picture of terror-stricken manhood. From his position it was evident, too, that this terror, if it had not actually lent him wings, had at any rate temporarily bestowed on him the skill and energy of the quadrumana, for not otherwise could he possibly have attained the dizzy eminence he had reached. His face and clothing too bore evidence of the haste with which he had fled incontinently through the jungle, for the first was scratched and bleeding, while the latter, torn to ribbons, would have graced a rag-man's bag. Moreover, in making his involuntary descent from the elephant he had seemingly landed on his head, or rather the crown of his "solah-topee," and had manifestly gone through it, for of that late conspicuous portion of his attire there was nothing now remaining but the brim, reposing gracefully round his neck after the manner of an Elizabethan ruff. He seemed still under the impression there was danger down below, and declined at first to quit his aerial refuge; at length, being satisfied that the tiger was really dead, he proceeded to descend, a process we watched with considerable misgivings, for it was no easy task. However, he accomplished it in safety, and on our way back to pick up the tiger had sufficiently recovered from his fright to tell us the story of his adventure in his quaint, would-be-colloquial English.

"Ah, *ma foie, Messieurs,*" he began, "I have what you call had narrow squeak of life. When I came from falling, I felt nothing for some moments, then to myself I said, the tiger if he gets smell will go for me. So I raised myself, and ran off like one shot, as if the devil he was after me, and then I come to that big tree, and again to myself I said: 'Behold, my boy! This is your chance, if you can get on top the beast cannot there arrive,' so I shinned myself up till I can go no more, and *voilà*, I am here with whole skin and bone."

This graphic, if not very grammatical description of his escapade, related with many a gesticulation and much shrugging of the shoulders, amused us greatly, but not to hurt the little man's feelings we listened with becoming gravity, and when he concluded complimented him on the courage (!) and address he had displayed! However,

he seemed quite proud of his exploit, and later when we were examining the dead tiger, one might have supposed from the interest he took in the proceedings, and his remarks, that he had played the most important part in accomplishing its destruction. It proved to be a good-sized beast, about nine feet four inches in length, but, like the leopard we had shot the previous day, in miserable condition, which no doubt accounted in a manner for its un-tigerlike behaviour in attacking us before it was wounded. True, with the water on one side of it and the elephant on the other, the beast had been, so to speak, somewhat cornered; but even then, for a tiger to charge practically unprovoked was a very exceptional occurrence unless in the case of a tigress with cubs. But, as already hinted, this particular animal was evidently a law unto itself, as further proved by the fact of its having climbed into the tree, a performance probably without precedent in the annals and traditions of tigers and their habits. However, there is this to be said about it, that the tree in question was on a lower level than the rest of the jungle, and, owing to the action of the water on the roots, considerably out of the perpendicular, thus presenting an inclined plane comparatively easy of ascent.

What had probably happened then, was this: the tiger which had already been hustled up and down the island for some time now, finding itself hard pressed with no other chance of escaping, had run up the sloping trunk and on to the huge branch extending horizontally over the water, thinking to conceal itself within the dense foliage till we had passed. The device would probably have succeeded but for the superior cunning of the elephant in discovering the retreat, for it had not occurred to any of us to suppose that a tiger would seek refuge in the branches of a tree! However, be this as it might, we had now actually witnessed this phenomenon, thus adding another item to my list of out-of-the-way incidents which I seemed destined to experience in these wilds. The "padding" of the tiger on to one of the pad-elephants proved no easy task, and but for the animal being lean, hence comparatively light, we should have been obliged to skin the carcase where it lay. There was much rejoicing in the village when we appeared,

and as we marched triumphantly through it with the body of the tiger showing conspicuously across the rearmost elephant, the villagers joined in the procession, yelling with delight and calling down blessings on our heads for having rid them of the pest.

The Frenchman dined with us that night, after being re-clothed from head to foot in a suit borrowed from Burke, several sizes too big for him, and later in the night, under the influence of Bass's ale, followed by sundry brandies and soda, became exceedingly communicative, not to say confidential. It seemed that his grandfather, on the father's side we presumed, had come out to India on board a French ship as cook, and had finally married and settled down at Chandarnagar, where his father had been born, and in due course of time had drifted into British territory, where he had found employment under a Rajah. He also, presumably, had married, or had entered into some kindred relationship, resulting in the appearance of our guest, whose information regarding this portion of his parentage seemed somewhat vague, at any rate he bore his father's name and was, as he expressed it, " Frenchman to the end of nails." He had never visited " La Belle France," nor its gay capital, but, as with the similarly bred *soi-disant* Englishmen, spoke of both as if he had. His career had evidently been a chequered one, for he seemed to be familiar with every large city in Bengal, but now, as he said, he was permanently installed as manager, secretary and factotum to his Highness the Rajah of Bungown, where he hoped to end his days !

It was past midnight when he left, having, as he had kept telling us at intervals, " enjoyed himself immensely," a fact sufficiently obvious from his speech and the difficulty with which he maintained his equilibrium as he stood up, each time he made these little speeches, with a solemnity of expression ludicrously in contrast with his condition. He insisted, before leaving, on resuming his own attire till he came to the solah-topee, which seemed to puzzle his fuddled senses for a while, then, as if suddenly realizing that the seemingly incomplete appearance of the hat might be an hallucination, due to his own perverted senses, solemnly put it on, and with the self-satisfied air of one not

to be put out with any such imaginary difficulties, proceeded to mount his elephant. But by the light of a lantern held by an attendant seated behind, we could see him making futile efforts to raise his hat in a parting salutation till the elephant went out of sight.

"A real case of *in vino veritas*," quoted Burke, laughing, as we walked back to the boat, and appropriately enough, for in our friend's present condition no one but a Frenchman would have thought of taking off his hat, or rather what remained of it.

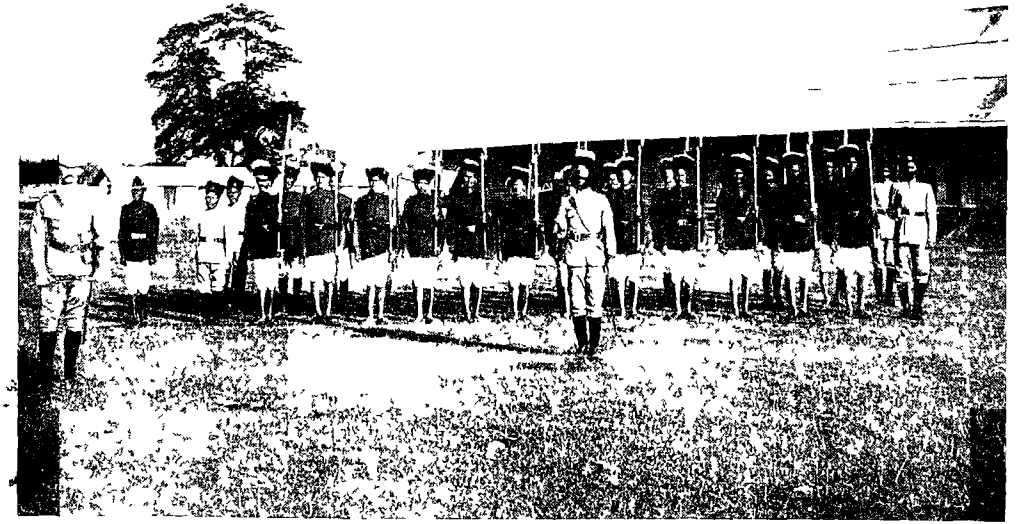
This was the last we saw of our strange acquaintance, for we left early the next morning, while he was still probably in bed, sleeping off the effects of the hilarious evening he had passed.

Our journey back occupied three long, weary days, for it was now up-stream all the way, and our progress consequently no faster than the crew could walk, towing the boat behind them as a horse in England tows a river barge. However, thanks to the Rajah's kindness, in lending us his boat, we travelled in much comfort, but on our arrival at the station I found an important report awaiting me which necessitated my visiting a village situated in the southern extremity of the district, where a disturbance was said to be impending, and which if not checked at once might lead to a serious riot and probable loss of life; thus the matter was too important to admit of any delay in proceeding to the spot. Fortunately the distance was only thirty miles, so sending out ponies and camp equipage at once, I decided to start at daybreak the next day with Burke, who, having nothing particular on hand, volunteered to accompany me, but ever on the look-out for something to shoot had stipulated beforehand to send our guns and rifles with our traps.

CHAPTER XXII

THE village in question was one of the largest in the district, possessed of a police-station, post-office and a dispensary as well. Proceeding on arrival to the scene of the disturbance we found the contending factions both assembled near a field of ripe corn, the reaping of which was the subject of dispute. Both parties were armed with various lethal weapons, and but for the presence of the sub-inspector and small body of police would possibly ere this have come to blows, indeed would probably soon have done so in spite of the police but for our unexpected appearance on the scene. But no sooner had they learned that I was the "Police Sahib" come to enquire into the matter, than, abandoning their hostile attitude for the moment, the leaders of each party all came crowding round me, urging their respective claims, though apparently quite willing to abide by my decision. However, the matter being one which could only be decided in the Law Courts, I ordered the sub-inspector to arrange for guarding the crop pending the order of the Court and advised both parties to go there at once, warning the leaders that any disturbance in the meantime would lead to their arrest.

These orders were received with sullen silence, and for a time it seemed as if hostilities would begin; but this threat, coupled with the hint of a special force of police being, if deemed necessary, quartered in the village, finally produced the effect I had anticipated, for presently, after consulting amongst themselves, both parties agreed to my proposal and about an hour later I had the satisfaction of seeing a deputation from each side start for headquarters. Meanwhile, lest there should be any recurrence of the disturbance, I decided to remain here for a day or two,



A SQUAD AT RIOT DRILL

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putting up at the Rest House, a small thatched-roof bungalow, pleasantly situated on a plain just outside the village.

When that well-known ex-Indian-civilian poet in his happily conceived description, referred to India as "The land of Regrets," he might as truthfully have added that it was also a land of continual surprises, for events seem certainly to succeed each other there with marvellous rapidity, though sometimes with a suddenness more startling than agreeable. Still, after the excitement we had just experienced, we hardly expected to be provided with another quite so soon.

Nevertheless, a couple of hours later, while resting after our day's exertions, trying to snatch an hour's sleep, we were suddenly aroused by a sound as of several horses galloping towards the bungalow, and running on to the verandah beheld a herd of buffalo which with their hideous heads uplifted went lumbering past us at a gallop, a pace so unusual in these generally stolid animals that we guessed something was amiss. Following closely on their heels were three small urchins, obviously their guardians, the scared expression on their faces indicating the terror they were in, shouting and brandishing their sticks as they urged their unwieldy charges on. We called to them, enquiring what had happened, but these puny herdsmen, ordinarily so fearless as a class, seemed now fairly panic-stricken and unable to express themselves in words, merely pointed behind as they continued their headlong flight which soon took them out of hearing.

We stood watching for a while waiting to see whether any animal was following in pursuit, having in the meantime fetched out our rifles, but nothing came, nor so far as we could see across the plain was there any beast in sight that would account for the stampede we had witnessed.

Presently, however, we observed a small object in the distance which seemed to be moving and apparently coming towards us. The old bungalow chokidar who, despite the handicap of years, was still evidently as keen-eyed as a hawk, pronounced it to be a human being. "It is one of the village boys, I think," he said, "and yet it

can't be," he continued musingly, "for he walks more like an old man."

However, as the object approached nearer, a closer examination revealed the face and figure of a boy, from ten to twelve years old but strangely decrepit in appearance and evidently walking with much difficulty. Seeing this, we were hurrying to his assistance when he suddenly collapsed and fell heavily to the ground. He had fainted when we reached him, and no wonder, for we found his only garment, a loin cloth round the waist, saturated with blood, still flowing from a deep gash in his thigh, extending down to the bone, apparently caused by some sharp instrument or the tusk of a wild boar. He recovered consciousness after a time, and while we were attempting to staunch the bleeding told us how as he and his three companions were watching their herd of buffalo, a wild boar had suddenly come out of the jungle and attacked them and how he had tried to escape with the others but being younger could not run as fast, hence had been caught by the beast and knocked down; what happened after this he couldn't say, but after a time finding himself alone he had got up and followed the others.

Such was the substance of his story, told in short disjointed sentences between intervals of agonizing pain borne with extraordinary fortitude for one so young in years. We bandaged up the wound as well as we were able and sending the chokidar off to warn the native doctor, Burke and myself carrying the lad in turn took him to the hospital where we found his parents.

Having seen that the patient was being properly attended to, we went on to the village to which the buffaloes belonged, where we found the people in a state of wild excitement, hurriedly organizing one of their periodical hunting expeditions, which, although not due for some days, was, in view of the recent outrage, to take place that day.

But here it is perhaps necessary to explain that amongst the inhabitants of the jungle villages, in common with others inhabited by descendants from the aboriginal races of Bengal, it has long been the custom, indeed, practically a part of their religion, to hold a kind of hunting festival once or twice a year, when every man and boy turns out

armed with various weapons, from a rusty flint-lock musket to bows and arrows or only a stick, and forming into line often half a mile in length, to beat through the neighbouring jungles, driving the animals before them and killing as many as they can or, as sometimes happens, having one or more of their own number killed should a tiger, boar, or leopard be encountered in the drive. The particular village we are concerned with, however, having always been a large buffalo-herding centre, it had occurred to some ingenious sporting individual in the past to utilize the animals in these hunting festivals, and many years of training had therefore produced, so to speak, a special herd of buffalo, with hereditary hunting instincts that had gradually come to be employed much in the same way as elephants are used in tiger-shooting, both as beaters and to ride on, though in the last capacity only when hunting the wild boar.

In the present expedition, four of these trained animals were to be employed, and their riders, four stalwart, athletic young herdsmen, were already busy preparing themselves and their animals for the fray; the latter, too, were formidable-looking beasts and evidently as truculent as they looked, judging from the caution with which the men approached them. Finally we interviewed the head man of the village, and telling him we wished to witness the hunt he seemed quite pleased, suggesting that the best way of doing so would be for us to accompany the beaters on two elephants which he could procure as we should then not only see the whole performance but be of some protection to the men employed in the beat.

As the hunting party was about to set out shortly we hurriedly made our preparation, and after talking the matter over we decided, in view of the large crowd likely to be present, to confine ourselves to watching the proceedings but, as it was advisable that we should be armed in case any of the beaters were attacked, to take our rifles with us and use them should the necessity arise.

While discussing these possible eventualities the elephants were announced, equipped with pads, howdahs being neither available nor necessary for the present

expedition, and an hour later we arrived at the jungle to find the hunt just about to commence.

The crowd was enormous, all the neighbouring villages having contributed their quota of beaters and spectators; amongst the latter many women and young children, brown tadpole-shaped urchins, most of them as nude as the day they first saw light, while others, more particular, wore a string round their middle, supporting a rusty key. Standing apart from the others and now armed with long spears were the four buffalo-riders, each holding his animal by a cord which, run through the nostrils of his steed, served the purposes of reins and bit combined, also furnishing a support for the rider, as will presently be seen.

We had not been many minutes at the rendezvous when there was a sudden stir amongst the multitude as each party of beaters, led by their respective shikaris, went off to take up their position on the far side of the jungle whence the beat was to be made. This was also the signal for the spectators to retire from the arena and seek some safer spot from which to witness the proceedings, and soon all non-effectives, viz. the old and infirm, including all women and younger children, were scattered across the plain, some posted on trees and others on the numerous ant-hills with which the plain was studded.

Presently the space fronting the jungle was cleared of all but the four hunters, who now mounted their strange chargers, but instead of sitting astride them stood up upon their backs and with their feet planted firmly in the hollow above the animal's hips and balancing themselves by the cord which served as reins, seemed to be as completely at their ease as if standing on the ground. This attitude, though peculiar, was obviously the best suited for their purpose, as besides affording a better view it would enable them to use their spears with more effect and also prevent the boar, should it charge home, from ripping the rider's legs, a danger always present even when pig-sticking on horseback. Managing their steeds with marvellous dexterity, these strangely mounted sportsmen, after a few trial movements to test their control over their beasts, ranged themselves at intervals in a line facing the jungle and about thirty yards from the edge.

All the arrangements being completed, we now followed the beaters to the jungle where we found them drawn up in crescent-shaped formation, embracing the whole length of the cover so that, as the line advanced, no animal within could break out at the sides. The beaters, who must have numbered quite four hundred, were a strangely constituted crowd, men and youths of all ages from hoary-headed, toothless veterans to boys of ten and twelve, most of them armed with diverse implements of destruction, including battle-axes of primeval pattern, while others, trusting more to noise than lethal weapon, carried the inevitable "tom-toms" or "Nakras," the last a kind of kettle-drum, emitting when struck most awe-inspiring sounds.

The men being evidently impatient to begin, we took up our position in the line, one of us on each flank, and no sooner were we posted than from the serried ranks of beaters there rose a deafening roar, invoking the goddess Kali to bless their undertaking. The next moment, with the drums and "tom-toms" sounding the advance, the line was set in motion.

The jungle was not a very large one and, being composed entirely of grass, it did not take us long to beat; but in spite of the shouting of the men and the incessant, maddening rat-a-tat of the drums and "tom-toms," the advanced horns of the line had nearly reached the end of the cover before we discovered any signs of the pig. Nevertheless, from the behaviour of the elephants, we knew they must be in the jungle, and that, after the manner of their kind, they had been probably advancing silently in front of the beaters all the time; and so it proved, for presently as the chest of the line approached the open, two huge black boars, followed by some half a dozen sows, dashed out on to the plain immediately in front of the hunters. The sows, unwilling to face the formidable-looking phalanx, swerved sharply to one side and, galloping across the right front of the line, made off to a distant jungle, but not so the two boars which, with the dogged courage characteristic of these beasts, had apparently made up their minds to fight, seeming only to be in doubt as to whether they should attack the buffalo or the beaters.

While still apparently considering the question they

stood there for a time, a picture of savage fury and literally foaming with rage as they champed their massive jaws, exposing to view their formidable tusks, sharp as a razor's edge, then suddenly, each seeming to select an opponent, they charged furiously down upon the buffalo.

The two attacked showed no inclination to avoid the charge. On the contrary moving forward to meet it as if of their own accord, they lowered their heads to receive the attack. A cloud of dust partially obstructed my vision for the moment, but the next instant I heard a crash and one of the boars turned a somersault in the air whence it presently descended with a thud. One of the hunters, too, I noticed, had now dismounted from his steed and, as the heavy body came hurtling to the ground, he plunged his spear into it again and again, continuing the operation till life seemed quite extinct. The other rider, however, had evidently not come off so well, for although still mounted he was covered with dust, and had seemingly lost his spear, while his charger displayed a huge gash in its side from which the blood was pouring out in torrents.

But before I had time to realize what had happened, much less to enquire, two shots rang out in quick succession, and looking round I saw the other boar lying kicking on the ground, and a yard or two beyond it a group of terror-stricken women, clinging to each other and calling out that they were killed. The rest of the spectators and the beaters who had now come out of the jungle were standing at a respectful distance round the struggling pig, all jabbering and gesticulating, as is the way with natives, but none, though some were armed with guns and spears, thinking to put the poor beast out of pain. Seeing this, the old chokidar sitting behind me who, whether by nature or long contact with Europeans, seemed, for a native, singularly humane, slid down the elephant's tail and pushing through the crowd snatched a sword from a gaping rustic and, regardless of all danger to himself, stabbed the suffering animal through the heart.

The people, now satisfied that both the boars were dead, order was presently to some extent restored, and we were

able, by questioning the two hunters, to ascertain what had actually occurred. It seemed that the boar first killed had, as it charged, been received by the buffalo on its horns, and being tossed, as I had seen, was finally disposed of in the manner I have described. The second beast, however, had swerved as it got home and thus avoided the horns of its opponent, but quickly closing in again had gored it as it passed. The buffalo, maddened with the pain of the wound, turned round to attack its assailant, and with the suddenness of the movement, the rider, losing his balance and his spear, fell off, but retaining hold of the cord quickly scrambled on again. Nevertheless but for Burke's prompt and accurate shooting the boar would probably have turned and killed him during the few moments he lay helpless on the ground.

While the two hunters were relating their experiences the crowd had not been idle, but under the directions of their respective head-men had cut up the two carcases into as many portions as there were villages concerned, and with the exception of the heads, which our old man had claimed on our behalf, were now fighting amongst themselves as to which should have the choicest morsels. Swarming like vultures round some carrion, the people, hitherto seemingly so stolid and apathetic, were now, as it were, suddenly transformed into ravening beasts of prey, snarling at one another with all the savage instincts of a pack of starving wolves, as the stronger, pushing the weaker ones aside, pressed forward to seize the reeking joints; and yet these people were not starving, probably not even hungry, for a better nourished, more prosperous-looking crowd it would have been difficult to find. What then had produced this extraordinary craving to possess the meat, more especially as the people were all by caste Hindus, and thus practically vegetarians? However, the explanation of this seeming paradox proved to be quite simple, for it appeared that with the sect of Hindus to whom these villagers belonged, the flesh of all domestic animals was prohibited as food, hence it was only on such rare occasions as the slaughter of some denizen of the jungles that they were permitted to indulge their taste for meat. For although, like most natives of India, strict in their observance

of the ordinances of caste, they were not, willingly, abstainers; on the contrary, in common with all primitive races, were carnivorous by nature, and it was probably this craving for flesh diet that had initiated the periodical hunting festivals, of which mention has been made.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE incident whiled away what would otherwise have proved a weary afternoon, for in an Indian village there is little for an European to do once he has accomplished the object of his visit, as we found the next day while patiently awaiting the return of the deputation. To make matters worse, Burke, whose energy seemed absolutely untiring, roused me at daybreak to hunt up a leopard said to inhabit a jungle close at hand, by way, as he explained, of shortening the day! Unfortunately the animal existed only in the imagination of his informant, hence after a fruitless search through acres of dew-laden tiger-grass we returned to the bungalow, wet to the skin, a couple of hours earlier than we should otherwise have been awake. Next morning I interviewed the deputation, which had returned during the night, and finding the parties had now agreed to await the decision of the Court there was no longer any necessity for my remaining at the village; so, after administering another warning to the people, we returned to the station.

. . . . . .

One of the supposed drawbacks to life in the Indian police is the liability to sudden transfer from one district to another, and from the married officer's point of view, such frequent changes of domicile are doubtless most inconvenient. But to the bachelor, with nothing but himself and his few belongings to transport, such constant flittings, though possibly detrimental to police administration, are often hailed with joy if only as a break in the dull monotony of ordinary station life.

Such at any rate were my feelings when at the end of three years' continual residence in the district I saw myself one day in the *Gazette* transferred to Jalpaigori, a wild and somewhat out-of-the-way district bordering on Bhutan and considered a paradise from the sportsman's

point of view. The next day I received my formal orders and within a week had made all my preparations for departure, which included the disposal of my furniture, etc., by the quaint, but old-established Indian method of sending a price-list round the station. Of the many curious Anglo-Indian customs that strike the young civil or military officer on first arrival in the country, this probably appears to him the strangest of them all, since, to all intents and purposes, the individual sending round the list is for the time being in the position of a tradesman advertising his wares. For in all cases, whenever an officer is either retiring, proceeding on transfer, or on leave, he prepares a list of all he wishes to dispose of, pricing each article according to what he considers to be its value, and sends the list round to every European in the station, irrespective of rank or status. Nevertheless the custom is an excellent one, convenient to seller and purchaser alike, for on the one hand the carriage of heavy furniture in India is prohibitively expensive, while on the other it affords an opportunity of purchasing, and often at half their real value, articles actually necessary for ordinary use not to be otherwise procured.

In my case, however, not having set myself up very extravagantly, the list was but a small one and its contents easily disposed of; so with my sole remaining possessions, consisting of my horse, a gun and rifle, three large portmanteaux, a roll of bedding, and my dog, I was soon ready to start.

There was a farewell dinner given by the District Magistrate, who together with my friends Benson and Burke, being all three keen sportsmen, were wild with envy at my good fortune, and each made me promise to give him a week's shooting as soon as I was settled and they could obtain the necessary leave. I left that night by "Palki-Dak," a most convenient, albeit somewhat unpleasant mode of travel which has been described in a previous chapter, but rendered necessary on this occasion by the station of Purneah being then off the line of rail.

The journey was not a formidable one as to distance, but difficult at that season of the year owing to the numerous rivers all more or less in flood, and, except on the more

important ones, furnished with ferry-boats of very primitive description.

We crossed several of these rivers during the night, happily without accident, and at sunrise, having dropped off to sleep an hour or two before, I was awakened by a sudden cessation of movement to find the Palki deposited on the ground with the bearers standing round it, clamouring for " backsheesh ! " It seemed they had arrived at the end of their stage, where a fresh set were now waiting to take me on. Getting out of the Palki I found we had just crossed the large river near the eastern boundary of Purneah and were now in the Jalpaigori district, though still some thirty miles distant from the station.

From the constable in charge of the new bearers I learnt that they were to take me about twenty miles further on, where a couple of elephants were waiting to vary the monotony of journeying the whole way in a Palki.

Making a hurried meal off some hard-boiled eggs I had brought with me and milk procured from the adjoining village I started off again, walking the first few miles till the rapidly increasing heat compelled me to seek refuge in the Palki, only to find that as the sun gained power the atmosphere within was almost as intolerable. Fortunately, however, a passing shower of rain lasting for some minutes cooled the air a little, and freshening up the almost exhausted bearers we made more rapid progress and finally reached the end of their stage. Here we found the elephants, one a small " Sowari," or riding elephant carrying a light comfortable-looking charjama for myself, and the other, the ordinary pad, across which the Mahouts soon slung my belongings made into two packages of equal size and weight.

My servant, who had so far accompanied me on a pony, occupied the vacant space between the luggage next to the Mahout, and with the constable behind facing the opposite way, and the dog between the two, the loading of the elephant was complete. Meanwhile, taking this opportunity of satisfying my thirst and hunger, so far as was possible with a warm brandy and soda and two exceedingly dry biscuits, all that were left, I mounted the

little "Makhna," or tuskless male elephant, and with my gun conveniently to hand started on my way.

I had noticed while in the Palki that after we had come some ten miles from the river the country was gradually assuming a much wilder appearance, and we had passed through several patches of jungle increasing in size and density as we approached nearer to the forest; so far, however, there had been villages and cultivation between. Our way now lay through comparatively open country studded here and there with villages inhabited by a semi-civilized race of people, owning enormous herds of buffalo which in appearance and bearing seemed as uncivilized as themselves, and as a fact were only partially domesticated. It was curious to see groups of these huge truculent-looking animals grazing round the villages seemingly at large, but stranger still to find as we came nearer each lot in charge of a nude urchin who, seated astride one of these monsters, seemed as completely at his ease as if minding a brood of harmless ducklings, guiding the animal with a stick in and out amongst the others, all of whom apparently were as subservient to his will. This seemingly incomprehensible phenomenon was not, however, due as might have been imagined to any supposed superiority of the human race over the brute creation, but more probably to the fact that these animals being generally tended during their calf-hood by the children of the family gradually became accustomed to obeying them.

As we proceeded the villages assumed a more civilized appearance, the rudely-constructed, roughly thatched huts giving place to more neatly built dwellings with here and there one of sun-dried bricks and roof of tin, marking the residence of some local magnate, more wealthy than his neighbours. These villages, too, were larger and more densely populated, but obviously by people of a class quite different to those we had met nearer the borders of the district—descendants, doubtless, of some alien race which had squatted here some centuries before and still retained the language and habits of their lineage. Passing through several of these villages we finally arrived at the outskirts of Jalpaigori, and traversing the bazaar and

native quarters, emerged on to a small river on the banks of which were built the residences of the European community, constituting the " station."

Proceeding direct to the bungalow occupied by the officer I was to succeed, I found him anxiously awaiting my arrival, and there, according to the unwritten rules of Indian hospitality, I was duly received as his guest.

The next morning, however, on my assuming charge of his office the position was reversed, for in addition to the assumption of his duties I also took over the bungalow and all that it contained in the way of furniture, etc., that he had not already disposed of, and for the next day or two, while making his final preparations for departure, my host remained on as my guest.

Such rapid exchanges of hospitalities between men of the same service are, however, but part of the amenities of socio-official life in India, where hotels, except in the big cities, are unknown, and " Dak Bungalows," or Rest Houses, seldom resorted to by officials under the circumstances referred to.

My predecessor had been over three years in the district and was thus able to give me much useful information, amongst other matters that serious crime, in the sense that I had been accustomed to, was rare, and dacoity, that bug-bear of Indian police-officers, practically unknown. This news was satisfactory but not altogether unexpected, for I had already discussed this subject before leaving my last district with one of my inspectors who had once been stationed here. A few days before I started I had sent for this old officer and held a conversation with him which is perhaps worth recording if only to show the views held by an educated native on the effects of general education on the masses. I told him I had been transferred to Jalpaigori, and hearing that he had once been stationed there, wished to know something about the district, and whether I should find the work any lighter there.

" The district is very wild one, your Worship, but his Honour will have much ease there for it is backward place, and the peoples not being in advanced education state there is not much work for police, but of hunting there is plenty no doubt, especially royal tiger."

Puzzled at this somewhat cryptic reply I questioned him again.

"But why should all this affect the work of the police? There are men who commit dacoity, burglary and other crimes there like in any other district, I suppose?"

"No, your Worship, there is no such important crimes, for the people are yet like barbarian rustic, and cannot read and write, but," he added naïvely, "when there are more schools they will become intelligent no doubt, and make organization of criminal nature like in more advanced districts."

"Oh, I see; the people are not clever enough as yet, you mean, for the organization of criminal enterprises," I observed with becoming gravity, though much amused the while at this novel method of estimating the progress of education.

However, quaint as were his views as to the cause, he was, nevertheless, correct as to his facts as now confirmed by my predecessor and subsequently from examination of the records, for I found that with the exception of murders, mostly from motives of jealousy or revenge, and riots arising out of land disputes, the district was wonderfully free from crime.

In many other respects, too, it was as I found later, quite different to an ordinary Bengal district, everything about it seeming to savour of the jungles, even to the clerks and other official under-strappers, whom I had been accustomed to see white robed and clean shaven, were here bearded and clothed in strange garments of local cloth and make. The buildings, too, including the public offices, were of peculiar construction and well in keeping with the place, being all built on piles with bamboo matting walls and boarded flooring, comfortable enough during the hot and rainy seasons, but cold and draughty in the winter. The station was quite a small one, consisting of but four Europeans besides myself, to wit, the District Magistrate, here styled a Deputy Commissioner, a Civil Surgeon, the Deputy Conservator of Forests, and a District Engineer—all bachelors except the first, and he was what is termed in India a grass-widower, his wife being in England at the time. Fortunately, three out of the four were men with

tastes similar to my own, all keen sportsmen, and none of us being overburdened with the duties of our respective offices we could generally devote the afternoon to tennis and polo, or partridge-shooting in the smaller scrub jungles round the station where, during the season, partridges were to be found in numbers, with occasionally a leopard as a pleasing variation. For I soon discovered that the accounts I had heard of this district—as being a sportsman's paradise—had not been overrated, for hardly a week passed without one or two informations coming in of "kills," usually ascribed to a tiger, but more often proving to be the work of a leopard.

Occasionally these "khubburs," to use the Indian sporting term, were vague and unreliable, but we seldom let one pass unnoticed, one or more of us generally going out on the chance, for here, unlike in other districts, we had elephants always at our command, a most invaluable asset as can easily be imagined, and the possession of which added much to our enjoyment.

CHAPTER XXIV

I HAD not been many weeks in the district when one night, while seated at dinner with the District Magistrate, an urgent report, brought by a constable from one of my most out-lying outposts, was handed to me by the orderly on duty. The report, technically styled a " First Information Report of Crime," was in Bengali, but accompanying it was another in English from the sub-inspector to the effect that a native tea-planter of an isolated tea-garden situated on the confines of the district bordering on Bhutan, had been discovered two days previously lying dead in bed with his head all but severed from the body, and that up to the time of despatching the report no clue had been obtained.

The place of occurrence was some fifty miles from the station, but of more consequence than distance was the fact that miles of forest lay between, negotiable on elephants alone, a mode of travel both uncomfortable and slow. However, the case was too important to be left in the hands of a sub-inspector, for the crime, committed so near the frontier, might have some political significance, hence it was necessary it should be enquired into by a superior officer. I therefore decided to start at daybreak, sending out a pony and two elephants overnight, the latter, with a servant and camp requisites to await me on the borders of the forest, where I found them on arrival about 6 a.m. next morning.

Leaving my pony here, I mounted the smaller of the two elephants, and with my servant and belongings, including a shot gun, on the other, led the way into the forest. For the first five hundred yards or so the track lay through thick, but comparatively low tiger-grass, but this gradually increased in height and when we had

come about a mile it was higher than the elephants, and finally merged into tree jungle when, mingling with its undergrowth of brushwood, it seemed to obliterate all vestige of the track. The Mahouts, however, with the marvellous instinct of their class, appeared to know exactly the course that should be steered and, never at fault for a moment, drove their animals through the dense entanglement as confidently as if we were proceeding along a broad high-road. Doubtless to their experienced eyes the track was still as visible as before, for to men accustomed as these were to travelling through the forest there are many finger-posts which by those with less experience would be passed unnoticed. Yet, to thus travel without a compass, through this seemingly endless sea of jungle, with not even the sun to guide one's course, seemed to be a hopeless undertaking, and such in the end it proved.

We had been travelling for three hours and had possibly accomplished half the journey when we came to a savanna, or stretch of treeless jungle, occasionally met with in the very heart of a forest, and usually clothed, as was this one, with dense, high reed-grass almost as impenetrable as the jungle we had left. Like most of these savannas, it was on a lower level than the forest proper and about a quarter of a mile in width. Emerging from it we had mounted its opposite shore and were again crashing our way through tree-jungle, when my Mahout suddenly halted the elephant, and for the first time since we started seemed thoroughly perplexed. It turned out the track he had hitherto been following with such rare and unerring skill had suddenly come to an end, or rather had become mixed up with some others, evidently of wild elephants, hence it was practically impossible to decide which was the right one. Both the men, dismounting from their animals, examined the ground carefully, but unable to arrive at any definite conclusion, hit upon an ingenious, but somewhat roundabout method of solving the difficulty, by taking their own elephants for some distance along each of these tracks, trusting to their keen sense of scent to discover those of their wild brethren and then, eventually come to the one made by Forest Department animals, which we had hitherto been following.

It was a well-conceived idea and one not without some promise of success for, strange as it may seem, the domesticated elephant, while showing no emotion on scenting a fellow-captive, if it happens to come upon the scent of a wild one, exhibits the greatest terror, and immediately proclaims the fact in a manner too demonstrative to be mistaken. In the present instance this theory, or rather fact, was proved beyond a doubt. Unfortunately, however, for the purposes of our experiment, the scent left by the wild elephants on this occasion was evidently too strong, and after investigating several of the tracks our animals became so thoroughly demoralized that we were at length compelled to abandon the investigation.

We now held a consultation and finally selected one of the tracks which in the opinion of the Mahouts seemed to lead in the direction we should take, and following this for a mile or two presently found ourselves in a perfect labyrinth of channels made by various animals, many of them apparently quite fresh. To add to our difficulties it was now becoming dark, so that on the whole, the situation we were in was anything but a pleasant one, for the Mahouts now confessed themselves at fault, and with no one to guide us out of the maze there seemed every prospect of our passing the night within the forest, without food or sleep, and exposed to all the dangers of a malaria-laden atmosphere.

There was another danger also, and one the Mahouts now made no attempt to conceal, a danger too, which we could do nothing to avert since the very animals we were mounted on were the most likely to produce it, a fact they were evidently aware of themselves, and had shown it in their demeanour ever since we had come upon the tracks of the wild herds.

The Mahouts, with their greater knowledge and experience of such matters, knew full well that should the presence of our elephants be detected by the wild ones, the tuskers in the herd would very probably attack them, in which case our position would indeed be a perilous one, for exposed as we were, any resistance we attempted would be absolutely futile. On the other hand, to seek

safety in flight would be equally out of the question, for our elephants, hampered with the weight of their trappings and ourselves, would be no match for their pursuers either as to pace or in the ease which wild elephants seem able to force their way through the densest jungles. However, there was nothing to be gained by staying where we were, and there being still an hour or two of daylight left, we made another start, trusting to find our way again before it was quite dark, or, at any rate, to put some distance between us and the herd which were evidently near us. This indeed was our chief object for the moment, but to accomplish it required some care, lest we might unwittingly travel in their direction. However, after another careful examination, the men discovered a track obviously less recent than any of the others and, fortunately, going the right way.

We lost no time in taking advantage of this discovery, but we had hardly gone two hundred yards when suddenly we heard the shrill trumpeting of an elephant, followed by another, then after a short interval some more, providentially, however, all coming from a direction opposite to the one in which we were travelling. Happily, too, except for a low rumbling our animals made no sound, for had they trumpeted in reply, we must inevitably have been discovered. Instinctively they seemed to know that it was necessary to keep silent, also that it was advisable to quicken their pace, for before their drivers had time to urge them on they were hurrying along as fast as the nature of the jungle would allow them. The sounds continued for some time, but we were relieved to find them gradually growing fainter, and soon, as we increased our distance, they finally died away, but still our elephants hurried on, rumbling from time to time and searching the air behind them with their trunks, a if to make sure they were not being pursued.

The pathway we were following eventually led us into what had evidently once been one of the forest fire-lines, and proceeding along this with comparative facility for some distance, we finally came upon a forest look-out post, a small hut built on the summit of one of the tallest trees. Here we found its occupant, a young forest guard,

seated at the foot cooking his evening meal as unconcernedly as if the forest contained no animals more dangerous than tame cats; even the suddenness of our approach seemed to have no effect upon his nerves, so callous do these men become to the dangers of the jungle. In reply to our enquiries he informed us that although proceeding in the right direction we should have to make a long detour to avoid a strip of " Fussan " or bog, which lay between us and the point for which we were making, but that there was a bungalow about two miles from his post where I could put up for the night. The eagerness with which my men seconded this proposal, added to the approaching darkness, made me decide on accepting this suggestion, and, the guard volunteering to show us the way, I took him up behind me, and proceeding under his guidance, we soon came upon a large clearing with a small and somewhat rickety-looking bungalow at one end of it, erected upon piles some eight feet in height.

We were received by the chokidar, or caretaker, in charge of the building, an old and curious-looking individual very different, it struck me, both in manner and appearance from the type of men usually holding these positions, who, as a rule, belong to the lowest class of the civilized population of a district, whereas this one had obviously been, at one time, a kind of wild man of the woods, in other words an aboriginal, tribes of whom are still to be found in jungle districts. Nevertheless, semi-savage though he might be by origin and in appearance, I soon discovered him to be extraordinarily intelligent and apparently well accustomed to " Sahibs " and their ways, for I had hardly been ten minutes in the bungalow before he had unloaded all my luggage and ranged it round my room. Then, unlocking a large wooden chest, he produced half a bottle of brandy and two of soda-water, which, with a tin of mixed biscuits and a glass, he placed upon the table, explaining in reply to my enquiry, " that they had been left there by his master who was coming back next week, but as he felt sure that the Sahib would like me to make use of them, he begged that I would do so."

Leaving me to enjoy these unlooked-for luxuries, which no pampered, white-chokered butler dispensing his master's

hospitality could have offered with more grace, he went off muttering something about kerosine tins and water, while I gulped down the fizzing liquid and blessed him in my thoughts. Presently, as I sat wondering to myself how this, seemingly half-tamed, wild creature had acquired these courteous habits, I had a further proof of his solicitude on my behalf, for my servant now appeared with the welcome intimation that a hot tub awaited me in the bath-room.

It seemed that the old man, with his intimate knowledge of a Sahib's requirements, had placed two tins of water on the fire shortly after my arrival, and having seen to my refreshments, had now sent them up together with a towel and cake of soap, presumably also the property of my unconscious host. But I was destined to have some more surprises in this seemingly enchanted bungalow, to which my good angel, in the form of the young forest guard, had so happily guided my footsteps.

CHAPTER XXV

On emerging from my tub I found my servant busy laying the cloth for dinner, though how he intended supplying the materials necessary for the meal was beyond my comprehension, still my late experience encouraged me to hope these too might be forthcoming. My interest in the subject was not perhaps unnatural, seeing that since six o'clock that morning I had had no solid food. However, my suspense was not of long duration, for soon two smoking, savoury-smelling dishes were placed upon the table, promising a sufficiently satisfying meal. The first contained what was obviously tinned Mulligatawny soup, mixed with freshly-boiled rice; but the contents of the other baffled both my sense of taste and smell to discover, for it was a mysterious-looking compound of which meat of some kind formed the principal ingredient.

Later I learned from my servant that it was the flesh of a barking deer which the old man had shot the day before and given him to make into a stew for me, probably trusting to my mistaking it for mutton or, at any rate, and not unreasonably under the circumstances, to my not reporting him for shooting in the forest, which, for natives, is an offence under the rules of the department. To confess the truth, however, so far from any intention of taking notice of his transgression, the fact of the old man proving to be a sportsman as well, had not only raised him further in my estimation, but increased my curiosity to learn something as to his antecedents. Accordingly, during the course of the meal I questioned my servant, but he could tell me nothing except that the man was an old pensioner of the forest service who had been given this job of caretaker as an additional income for his past services. However, after dinner as I was sitting smoking in the verandah the old man came up himself



THE OLD SHIKARI.

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with a packet of faded-looking papers in his hand, and making a low salaam, stood in front of me in the attitude usually assumed by natives when desirous of presenting a petition.

"Well, 'budha,'* what have you got there?" I said encouragingly, holding my hand out for the papers. He salaamed again, evidently reassured by my manner, and seeking carefully through the packet selected an envelope yellow with time and handling, which he handed to me reverentially with both hands, begging "that my greatness would condescend to read what was within."

I took the grimy cover and carefully extracted the contents which seemed equally antiquarian. Two signatures on the outer fold of the paper immediately caught my eye, for both were names I knew quite well. The paper appeared to be a "chit," or certificate, signed by these two men testifying to the good services rendered by the bearer as a shikari, and how on one occasion in an encounter with a rogue elephant he had practically saved their lives.

Questioning the old man further I ascertained that his name was Kamsin Mech, and after some persuasion induced him to recount the tale of the exploit referred to in the "chit," which when once he had started he told with considerable skill, improvising by gesture the attitude of the elephant as it charged and how he, by diverting its attention, had given time for the sahibs to seek refuge in a tree.

All this and much more he told me of his experiences and adventures during his long service as a forest guard, adventures so varied and exciting that they might have filled a volume of themselves, for the old man was, in his own quaint fashion, an excellent raconteur; but I was fain at length to seek my well-earned rest, so rewarding the narrator with a tot of neat brandy, which he swallowed with much relish, I dismissed him.

But tired as I was with the long, weary journey, I could not sleep, partly no doubt because of the excitement produced by the stories I had heard but more for fear lest I should miss seeing, or at least hearing, the various wild

* Old man.

animals which, in my ignorance of their habits, I imagined would come prowling round the bungalow later on when all was quiet. As I lay awake I listened intently, ready to jump up at the least sound of any movement in the dense jungle close behind the bungalow, but hour after hour went by without so much as the stirring of a leaf to break the death-like stillness of the night, till one might easily have supposed that the forest was devoid of anything with life. At length, the intensity of this silence acting as a soporific, I dropped off to sleep and was dreaming that I was being chased by a rogue elephant when I was awakened by a loud crashing of the jungle seemingly all round me, and mingled with these sounds shrill trumpetings and squeals as if all the elephants in the forest were gathered round the bungalow.

I jumped out of bed at once and seizing my rifle and some cartridges rushed into the back verandah which overhung the jungle, but could see nothing for the night was dark as pitch. Nevertheless, it was evident that this was the spot whence the sounds proceeded, and presently, as my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I saw that the jungle was alive with huge objects moving to and fro. Meanwhile, from the servants' quarters and elephant shed on the other side of the bungalow there rose the shouts from human voices, amongst which I recognized the chokidar, yelling to the Mahouts to put extra chains on to their elephants, and to others to assist him in making up a fire.

The men apparently realizing the imminence of their danger and knowing well that a fire was their only chance of avoiding it, quickly set to work and soon a huge pile of straw, fed with leaves and branches, was blazing in the centre of the clearing, revealing the perilous situation they were in. For now it was apparent that not only behind the bungalow, but all round it, the jungle bordering on the open space was filled with the monstrous forms of elephants breaking down huge branches and young trees and slowly advancing nearer to the edge.

In another moment or two, one lot must have emerged into the open, but fortunately the fire had checked them for the time, and seeing this, old Kamsin seized a brand

from it, and calling on others to do the same, rushed towards the threatened quarter, brandishing his flaming weapon and shouting loudly. Quick to guess his object, the young forest guard, my orderly and some hangers on of the establishment, carrying out his instructions, made similar demonstrations at various points of the jungle, till from my elevated position I could see that the elephants, completely dumfounded at this unwonted display of fireworks in the forest, were evidently meditating a retreat. With their cries now changed from their tones of rage and defiance to the low rumbling kind of sound with which all elephants give expression to their feelings when alarmed, they gradually retired and eventually, led by the chief tusker of the herd, went off in one long line. In the meantime our own animals, terrified out of their wits, had been straining at their chains and making every effort to escape, for they knew full well that they were the objects of the attack; but their drivers, fearing they might succeed, had mounted their respective charges early in the proceedings and now soon soothed them down.

Thus ended an incident which apart from the excitement it had offered, might well have terminated in a disaster of some kind, for there must have been some thirty elephants in the herd, and had they once gained the opening it is not difficult to imagine the havoc they might have wrought.

The male portion of the community would doubtless have found refuge in the bungalow, but there were women and children in the huts, and in the confusion of the moment it is improbable that all these could have escaped. Moreover, the bungalow though well raised above the ground and well-constructed had been standing many years, exposed, as all wooden buildings in India are, to the ravages of white ants, many of the posts on which it stood being partially demolished by these destructive insects. But while it was unlikely that the elephants, bent solely on attacking their captive brethren, would have made any attempt to pull down the building, yet they might easily have done so, in the rickety condition it was in, for wild elephants are by nature of a destructive disposition, often knocking down trees and telegraph and sign-posts, and

occasionally native huts, for no apparent reason other than that they happen to be standing up. In fact the mischievous propensities of these animals were so well known in the district as to be officially admitted, though I was hardly prepared to find them financially provided for in my budget estimate of contingencies.

Looking through the accounts a few days after I had taken charge I had come upon this curious entry: Rs. 150 for the reconstruction of three Frontier police-posts destroyed by wild elephants," and on enquiry found that this sum was a regular annual grant, solemnly sanctioned by the Inspector-general of police. As this seemed to be a gross waste of money due probably, I imagined, to the absence of proper precautionary measures, I went into the matter with all the zeal of a new broom, but only to find that this grant was an absolute necessity, and, so far from being excessive, was hardly sufficient for the purpose; for it appeared that these posts were points of observation placed at intervals along the line of forest frontier, and having to be abandoned during the rainy season, were invariably destroyed by wild elephants of which there were herds without number in that portion of the district.

Even in the dry season when these posts were manned they were occasionally attacked by the animals and the men compelled to fire off blank cartridges to scare them away, as happened on one occasion when I was inspecting one, it being part of my duty to visit these guards from time to time.

Although we had succeeded for the time in driving the elephants away we kept the fire burning for the remainder of the night as we could still hear them occasionally in the distance, and it was not until the day had fairly broken that they finally departed.* But with some ten miles still to travel I was up before the sun, and by the light of a solitary candle had already made a hurried toilette, the art of dressing quickly, and often in the dark, being one of the accomplishments an Indian police-officer very soon acquires.

* A year or two later some 250 wild elephants were captured in this district by the Government Kheddah Department.

A capacity for eating a solid breakfast too before the sun has risen is another useful habit though one not quite so easily contracted, but here too I was fortunately efficient and did full justice to the meal I found laid out in the verandah.

Meanwhile the elephants, still rumbling and uneasy after this night experience, were being "padded" and half an hour later we were once more *en route*, with the young forest guard seated behind me, to pilot us through the jungle. Bestowing a substantial backsheesh on "mine host" before mounting, I told him I would inform his master of the hospitality he had shown me, also that I intended passing another night here on my return.

"His Highness will be welcome," he replied salaaming low; then, as he secreted the money in his waist-cloth I heard him muttering to himself what was evidently a prayer to his gods, "that the elephants might not again disturb the 'Huzoor's' rest."

Guided by the young guardian of the forest, whose knowledge of its topography, though perhaps not surprising in one of his profession, was yet so marvellously accurate that we made quite rapid progress and three hours later came to comparatively open country and were soon amongst the tea-bushes of the garden we were bound for. Presently the bungalow hove in sight, its whitewashed walls and corrugated iron roof standing out conspicuously from the acres of green, closely-trimmed tea-bushes by which it was surrounded, and treading our way very carefully through the latter by narrow paths running at right-angles to each other, we eventually reached the building. Here I found the Divisional-inspector, who had arrived the day before, and had already held the inquest, a duty which in rural India is performed by the police. He had also made an exhaustive enquiry and discovered one most important fact, to wit a thumb-impression, presumably of the murderer, left in blood on the stiff cover of an almanac found lying on the floor.

Apart from this, however, no other evidence was forthcoming, nor could the only two servants on the premises

or any of the garden coolies living near form any idea as to the identity of the individual who had left this blood-stained clue.

That robbery had been the sole motive for the crime was doubtful, the amount of property stolen being of comparatively small value, and possibly taken merely as a blind. In these circumstances the inspector had come to the conclusion that revenge was probably the object of the murderer, and on this hypothesis had since conducted his enquiry.

Meanwhile he had forwarded the blood-stained almanac to headquarters, whence it was sent on in due course to the Inspector-general's office in Calcutta for comparison with the many thousand thumb-impressions of criminals already recorded in the Thumb-impression Bureau, then recently established in that office.*

Taking up my quarters with the European-manager of a tea-garden some little distance off, I continued the enquiry for two days, when, having exhausted every possible source of information, I returned to the bungalow in the forest on my way back to the station.

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As this case created some sensation in Bengal at the time, being the first detected in that province by the system of thumb-print identification, recently introduced into India by the then Inspector-general of police, Bengal,† a résume of the enquiry may possibly interest the reader. The thumb-impression sent to Calcutta, being enlarged by photography and compared with those recorded, proved to be those of one Kangali Choron Mukujee, who had been convicted some six months previously and released from jail a few days prior to the murder.

On this information being communicated to the inspector it was ascertained that this same Kangali had once been a servant of the murdered man, and having stolen some of his property had been prosecuted by him and convicted. Further enquiry also elicited the fact

* In the early days of the "finger-print" system of identification, thumb impressions only were taken, finger prints being added later as the system developed.

† Sir Edward Henry, now Chief Commissioner Metropolitan Police.

that he had been seen in the neighbourhood a few days before the murder. With so strong a *prima facie* case against him steps were at once taken for his arrest, which after much difficulty was finally effected in a village some three hundred miles distant from the scene of the murder. He denied all knowledge of the crime, but on being searched was found to be wearing a cloth, the counterpart of which was one of a pair belonging to the deceased and of which one was missing when the inventory of his property was made by the police.

The identity of the cloth was so clearly established that it left little doubt as to the guilt of the accused, for it so happened that both pieces bore an indelible mark made by the " Dhoby " or washerman, but in the one found on the prisoner the corner of the cloth where the mark should be had been either cut or bitten out and apparently quite recently. When asked to explain the reason of this hole the prisoner replied that it had been caused by an accidental burn, but of this there was no sign, although in cross-examination he admitted that the cloth had not been washed since the alleged accident !

After his arrest his thumb-impression was again carefully taken and found to agree in every detail with that on the cover of the almanac, and the one recorded in the bureau, the markings as it happened being of a very rare order in that they had what is technically termed an " island " in the middle, in other words a dot with a break in the cobweb-like lines on either side of it. The accused seeing the chain of evidence against him being thus gradually completed, now attempted to prove an alibi, but succeeded only in adding another link to the chain, for the witnesses denied all knowledge of his whereabouts on the night of the crime !

Thus the charges being now considered proved by the police he was sent up for trial and eventually committed to the Sessions, charged with robbery and murder, and was finally convicted, but of robbery only, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The finding and sentence gave rise to some comment at the time, for it was held by the prosecution that as he was found guilty of the robbery he must necessarily, according to the evidence, have also

committed the murder! But the latter being a capital offence, it is quite conceivable that a native jury, while prepared to accept the then novel method of identification as regards the lesser crime, would not be inclined to rely on it as conclusive evidence of guilt in the case of an offence involving a sentence of death.

CHAPTER XXVI

To all classes of individuals, whether sportsman, naturalist or the ordinary traveller whom necessity has compelled to adopt that line of route, a journey through an Indian forest must always possess a certain charm if only for the solitude and mysterious silence by which he is surrounded, or perhaps because he knows that within those seemingly uninhabited acres of gigantic trees and dense undergrowth lies concealed many a dangerous animal, one or more of which might at any moment cross the path before him, or unseen and unheard, be following stealthily, sheltered by the masses of thick tiger-grass usually found on each side of the track. Even when travelling thus by day, and in comparative security on an elephant, such thoughts are ever present; but as the hour of sunset gradually approaches the fascination of the situation soon changes to one, if not of terror, at best to a feeling of uncomfortable apprehension, and not without good reason, for at this eerie hour the denizens of the jungle are wont to start on their nightly wanderings, the larger carnivora on their way to the open in search of village cattle grazing near the borders of the forest, the rhinoceri to their feeding ground on the plains, and elephants to wander, in their seemingly aimless fashion, from one portion of the forest to another.

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I had left the tea garden late in the afternoon and when the hour of sunset was approaching, was still some distance from the bungalow which I had hoped to reach in daylight. Soon the brief eastern twilight, shortened yet further by the gloom within the forest, merged into total darkness, and but for the marvellous instinct of our guide, the forest guard, we must inevitably have wandered from the track,

For one long, anxious hour we plodded blindly through those three miles of silent, awe-inspiring gloom, our elephants evidently as anxious as ourselves lest any of their wild brethren be encountered on the way. Happily the herd we feared to meet, the same that had beset us in the bungalow, probably alarmed at the reception they had met with, had apparently left this portion of the forest for the time, for we heard no sound of them, nor of any other beast more dangerous than a sambhur. At length, out of the inky darkness, a light, seeming by contrast as brilliant as if from an electric lamp, suddenly appeared some hundred yards in front of us, followed by another, then a third, conveying the welcome intimation that we had arrived at our destination. It was the old bungalow chokidar, whose practised ears had caught the sound of elephants approaching, and fearing lest in the darkness we should miss the small entrance to the clearing, had, with his solitary lantern and some straw, hurriedly prepared these useful beacons, without which we might possibly have continued on our way along the track.

A belated dinner off one of the old man's laying-hens, which in the ordinary course of nature might have pursued her useful occupation for some years, a pipe or two, enjoyed in the combined luxury of a long chair and pyjamas, and then to bed, concluded this long tiring day. But as I laid my weary head upon the pillow, I had the satisfaction of feeling that, to misquote " The Village Blacksmith," " something had been attempted, something done," for I now knew that the last two days of hard work and discomfort had not been spent in vain, as was subsequently proved.

With the first appearance of the dawn the forest had awakened into life, and in the jungle immediately around us could be heard the loud notes of birds of various kinds from the shrill " chichira-chichiri "-like call of the black partridge to that peculiar, half-stifled crow with which the jungle cock salutes the coming day. Presently, as I stood on the verandah, watching the growing light, I saw two of these gorgeously plumed chanticleers emerge cautiously from the jungle in a secluded corner of the clearing and, soon joined by the ladies of their respective

harems, comparatively dowdy in appearance, begin to feed along the edge.

With the natural instincts of a sportsman, combined, I confess, with the desire to procure a jungle fowl for breakfast, I took up my gun and loading with No. 5, ran quickly down the steps and across the open, then forced my way into the jungle some distance below the birds, and, regardless of what I might encounter, started to stalk them. It was not an easy process, for the undergrowth was dense. However, in due course having, as I thought, arrived within range, I made my way towards the edge, and peeping out found myself within ten yards of the birds, still busy feeding and evidently unconscious of my presence.

Ignoring, I confess to my shame, the very unsportsman-like nature of the proceeding, I fired off a right and left into the "brown," but before I had time to see what damage I had done a loud "hough-hough," seemingly close beside me, sent my heart into my boots, and the next moment I was making a bee-line for the bungalow, instinctively aware that there was some animal in pursuit. Fortunately the beast, apparently alarmed at finding itself so completely in the open, had soon pulled up, and looking round as I gained the bungalow steps I saw a huge black bear waddling back into the forest, grunting as if with disgust at having been aroused from its sleep, and put to all this unnecessary trouble and annoyance. To go after the beast with any hope of finding it again in that huge forest was, I knew, useless; but later on, accompanied by my orderly, I returned to the scene of my onslaught on the fowls, to find I had slain a cock and two hens, the former a splendid specimen, but only from a naturalist's point of view, as I discovered when attempting to make my breakfast off it later.

After breakfast, as I sat smoking and thinking over the incidents which had signalized my entry into the district, I felt I had certainly no reason to complain of the absence of excitement, for to be lost in a forest, attacked by wild elephants, and finally to be chased by a bear, all within a period of eight and forty hours, was a fairly good record of adventures. Congratulating myself then at being now quite off the beaten track and in a land

where the monotony of Indian official life was likely to be occasionally relieved by such experiences, I sent for the old forester, with a view to seeking his assistance to find me some local hunter whom I could employ as a "shikari." Soon, in obedience to my summons, he came up accompanied by the young forest guard, and, as the two, after making their obeisance, stood before me, I was surprised to find how closely they resembled one another, indeed, but for the difference in their ages, they might easily have been taken for twin brothers. In their clothing, too, the likeness was repeated, for each had on a skin-tight khaki suit with putties wound tightly round their shapeless shanks and ending in huge ammunition boots, the whole turn-out differing, like their wearers, only in point of age, the older man's attire being archaic to a degree bordering on dissolution.

Taking his companion by the hand, he led him up to me and, salaaming again, formally introduced him as his son, and "owing to the clemency of the Sirkir,* also his successor, the present forest guard," he added, looking proudly at his offspring. The latter nervously acknowledged this last statement with an involuntary grin, quite out of keeping with the intended solemnity of the proceedings, a fact he seemed to realize, for he quickly changed the grimace for an expression he considered more suitable to the occasion. Noticing his confusion, I tried to put him at his ease by saying that I was glad to see he was following his father's calling and hoped that he might eventually make as great a name for himself in the department as had the other.

"He has a greater name already, Huzoor," interrupted the sire, taking my meaning literally, "for he is called Duntal Sing after the big tusker that had killed so many people, because on the day that he was born my Sahib shot this mighty beast which we had been hunting for some days."

He then went on to relate how on that eventful day he had been out with his master, following the beast on foot, when it had suddenly charged them, and how they had only just escaped by swarming up a tree, whence the

* Government.

Sahib, with well-directed aim, had sent a bullet through its brain, killing it on the spot.

Now, as it happened, I had heard this tale before, and how the old man had on this occasion saved his master's life at the risk of his own, by distracting the elephant's attention, but there was no word of this in his recital of the incident, nor when I referred to it did it seem to strike him that he had done anything out of the way. Meanwhile, the son, evidently a true chip of the old block, forgetting his shyness, had been listening with all the sportsman's interest to the tale, though he had doubtless heard it before, for it was one of many to his parent's credit which my cousin had mentioned in his earlier letters to me when a boy.

I now broached the subject of the shikari, but the old man's reply to my enquiries was not encouraging, though as I learnt later, perfectly true.

"The Huzoor will find many in the district, all calling themselves shikaris because they know how to fire a gun, but none who have any knowledge of the jungle or of the animals that live in it."

"But," he continued, after a pause, "why does the Huzoor seek to employ any other when he can command the services of his servant? Can these strangers serve him any better than one who has grown old in the service of the Sahiblogue?"

"What?" I exclaimed, amazed at his suggestion, "an old man like you do the hard work of a shikari?"

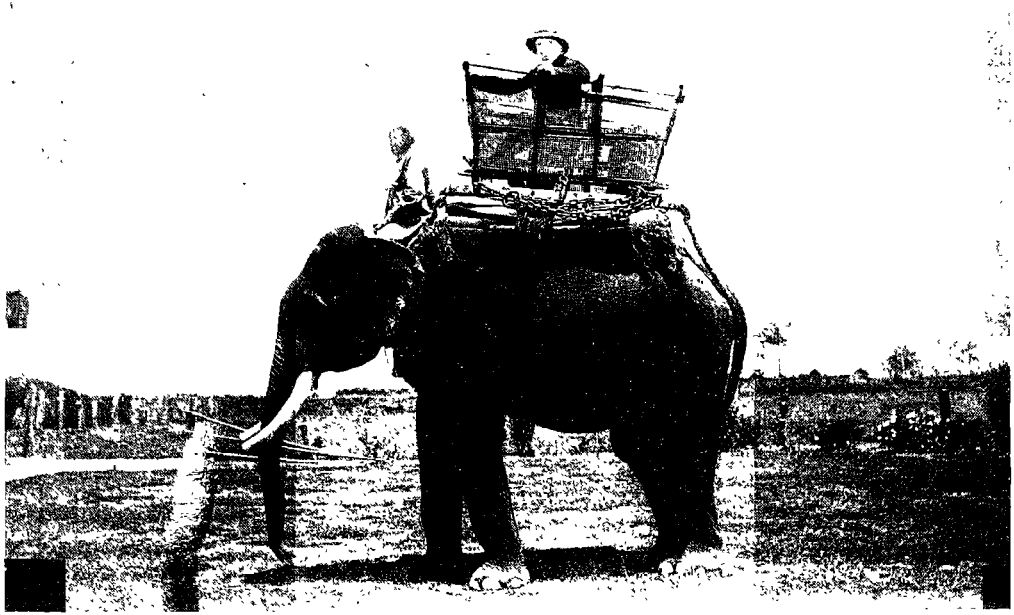
"Why not, Sahib? My arms and legs are strong and I still can see and hear. How then could a younger man with no knowledge of the jungles serve the Sahib so well?"

His argument was convincing, for despite the burden of his years, he still seemed full of energy and strength, while, for knowledge of wild animals and wood-craft, I knew he could not be surpassed by any shikari in Bengal. Hence, ignoring his longevity, I closed with his offer without further delay. He seemed much pleased at my decision, and going off to his hut presently returned with a double-barrelled gun, which he handed me, pointing to a silver plate let into the stock. Reading the inscription on the plate I found the gun had been purchased out of

a money reward paid to him by the Government for assisting the police. He told me all about it, but the story is too long to relate; however, it seemed that on one occasion, utilizing his gift for tracking wild animals, he had tracked and finally hunted down a receiver of stolen property and had thus been the means of the whole gang being discovered and eventually brought to justice. His reason for showing me the gun being that it was one of my predecessors, the police officer of the district at the time who had recommended the reward and subsequently expended it in the purchase of this weapon, together with the plate and inscription.

"Yes, it was by grace of the Huzoor, him who was afterwards, I hear, the Police-general Sahib, that I received this," he added presently, and taking the weapon from me, lifted it reverently to his forehead in token of his gratitude and respect.

Finally the question of remuneration, arrangements for resigning his present post, and all such other details having been settled, it was decided he should enter my service as a shikari after the ensuing rains when the camping season would commence. Later in the day I started on my return to the station, and, being accompanied by the young forest guard, who guided us to the entrance of the forest, accomplished the journey much more rapidly than before and without any adventures by the way.



"BHALLOO PERSHĀD."

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CHAPTER XXVII

MANY years before, when this district was created, Government, on the representation of the first district officers pointing out the difficulties of locomotion through the then trackless forests, had provided them with elephants, and although their numbers had been gradually reduced there were still three attached to the office of the Deputy Commissioner and two to mine. All these five animals had been in the district for some time, being part of the lot originally provided, but by years of training under successive sporting officers had long been converted from mere beasts of burden to Shikari elephants of more than ordinary excellence, and were now seldom employed in any meaner capacity. Amongst them was one renowned throughout the district for its courage and intelligence, a single tusker or " Gonesh " as such animals are termed by the natives, and much reverenced as being symbolical of the deity of that name. This animal, which bore the high-sounding name of " Bagh-Bahadur," signifying broadly " His Majesty the tiger," happened, fortunately, to be one of the two attached to my office, a fortuity to which I owed many a victory in my subsequent encounters with tigers and other dangerous beasts.

There was another animal belonging to the Deputy Commissioner, which, but for its years, might have rivalled mine in excellence, a huge, up-standing beast nearly ten feet in height, called " Bhalloo-Pershad," the first meaning Bear and the other an eulogic suffix having no English equivalent.

Most elephants are given these high-sounding names, but I mention these two in particular since they had been bestowed for special acts of valour, performed by these animals respectively, many years before.

The first had attacked a charging tiger and, meeting it

half-way, had driven its tusk through it, then trampling it with the feet had finally killed the beast, alone and unaided by the sportsman who had been thrown out of the Howdah and lay at the mercy of the brute, which would otherwise have killed him to a certainty.

The other had earned its title for the extraordinary courage it had displayed in an encounter with a bear, an animal feared by elephants as a rule, which it had chased through the jungle with extraordinary persistency, and finally coming up to it had pounded the beast to death.

In addition to these five, the forest officer had several of which two or three were usually at headquarters, hence, on receiving information of a " kill," we could always get together half a dozen which generally proved sufficient, for these " kills " were, as a rule, of goats or calves, killed in the smaller jungles round the village near the station. We made several of these expeditions, averaging probably one a week, and shot many a leopard, sometimes a pair in one jungle, and occasionally a tiger, but it must not be supposed we were always successful, far from it, for as often as not we returned empty-handed.

Sometimes we would find the " kill " totally demolished and the leopard gone off to some other jungle, or, worse still, that the " kill " had died a natural death and, devoured by jackals, had been reported as killed by a tiger or leopard as the case might be. At other times we would perhaps put up the animal only to lose sight of it again, and after beating for several hours, finally discover that it had quietly sneaked away; or again, after hunting all the afternoon, perhaps come upon our quarry when it was too dark to take advantage of the find, and, while knowing it was there, be compelled to abandon the pursuit. But these occasional disappointments so far from damping our ardour, only increased our appetite for the sport, and we would set out again next time, hopeful and keen as ever, and if successful forget all our previous failures and think only of what we had just achieved. A detailed account of some of these expeditions would doubtless prove of interest to the sportsman, and I might be tempted to relate them, but that there are adventures more curious and exciting still to come.

Before proceeding, however, it is necessary that I should introduce my new companions, so far only indicated by their official status in the district, as some of them are connected with the incidents and adventures I met with during the exciting and adventurous period I passed in the district.

"Seniores Prioris" then, both in rank and age, was Miles, the Deputy Commissioner, an old-style civilian of the rule of thumb order, who, but for his unconventional methods, and independent spirit, would long since have attained the highest rung of the ladder leading to promotion, for as an executive and administrative official there was probably none more efficient in his service. Unfortunately, however, in the matter of rules and regulations he had views and ideas of his own, and, equally unfortunately, the courage of his opinions, which often brought him into violent conflict with the authorities at headquarters. In his judicial capacity, moreover, he had often scandalized that august and time-honoured assemblage of learned prætors known as the High Court, by his extraordinary decisions, as no doubt they were from the legal point of view, for in his anxiety to do justice, he frequently ignored the niceties of the law, of which he appeared to have much the same opinion as that said to have been once expressed by Mr. Bumble. Nevertheless, his knowledge of it was undeniable, for despite his occasionally strange interpretations, his judgments were sound and generally upheld. He had joined the service during the last years of the East India Company's administration, and, like many of this old type of Indian Civil Servants, he believed in rough and ready justice as being more suitable to the people than the new elaborated judicial system, based on a Western civilization, which they could not understand. On the other hand, with his long experience of the country and thorough knowledge of the native character, there were few district officers in the province who, either in their judicial or executive capacities, could better unravel the tangled mass of lying evidence so often produced before them, or arrive more nearly at the truth of a case as it is possible to do when dealing with Indian witnesses.

The next in order of seniority was McFarlane, our cheery and most efficient medico, a Scotsman who had come out as a ship's surgeon and eventually joined the local medical service. He was a very sporting individual, and having little else to occupy his time except the jail, of which he was in charge, was always available for our shooting expeditions.

The forest officer, appropriately named Woods, who, if dominion over the jungles counted for power, should have held the highest position in the district, since close on two-thirds of it was virtually under his control. Assisted by an army of rangers, foresters and guards, he ruled this huge domain and, excepting for the four months' rainy season, lived practically in his jungle kingdom, moving from one forest bungalow to another in a ceaseless round of supervision and inspection. He was an enthusiast as regarded his profession, as indeed all forest officers have need to be, for despite its fascination the life is necessarily a lonely one. Nevertheless, given a sound constitution and a love of sport, it is a very tolerable existence. Woods was gifted with a large share of both these qualities and, moreover, was not often alone, for he was hospitably inclined, and there were always willing guests in the station only too delighted to spend a week-end, or a week with him in his forest home.

Finally there was Rhodes, the District Engineer, but one of a very different pattern to my old friend Burke of Purneah. Moreover, unlike most Anglo-Indians, he had a most extraordinary aversion to games or sport in any shape or form, hence was as much out of his element in the district as the fish of the old proverb.

We tried to improve him by once taking him out shooting, but the experiment so nearly ended in disaster that we came to the conclusion it would be safer to leave him as he was, but as the threatened tragedy I refer to had a somewhat comical finale, an account of it may interest the reader.

Thinking it safer to impart the preliminary instruction with shot guns, we had taken our pupil out after partridge, and were beating through some grass, when, at the first bird that rose, which, by the way, happened to be a crow,

he let off both barrels, the contents of one lodging in the body of one of the beating elephants, while with some pellets of the other, he peppered its Mahout. The latter, more frightened than hurt, reeling for a moment in his seat, slid down to the ground, and, as is usual with natives on such occasions, crying out that he was dead, went off apparently into a swoon. Our friend who, to give him his due, was a most kind-hearted individual, swarming down his elephant's tail with an agility he had never before displayed, rushed up to the prostrate man, and kneeling down beside him, made every effort to restore him, but without any success. Meanwhile Miles, the doctor and myself, who were some distance away, had also dismounted from our respective animals, and as we approached the scene of the disaster, we could hear the distracted author of the calamity, imploring his victim in Hindustani "to show some sign of life," promising him "backsheesh" if he would exhibit some evidence of vitality.

"I will give you ten rupees to get up," he began, but there was no response. "Twenty!" he added, the reward increasing in proportion to his anxiety, still the man gave no sign of reanimation. Then, driven to desperation, he yelled out: "Fifty rupees—I will give you fifty rupees!"

Now, whether only a coincidence or part of his well-laid plan, we could not tell just then, but at the mention of this sum the "dead man" came to life in the twinkling of an eye, and looking round him, in real or feigned surprise he exclaimed, "*Ab tora accha hye Sahib*," which, rendered into English, meant that "he was now feeling somewhat better."

Rhodes, in his excitement and delight at this sudden resurrection, would, I believe, have embraced him on the spot, but the doctor, with professional prerogative, pushed him aside, and taking the man's hand placed his fingers on his pulse, a test which presently confirmed the suspicions he had formed, for he found the man had been shamming all the time and, except for a few pellets hardly through the skin, was not hurt at all. Nevertheless, the unhappy Rhodes had to pay the "backsheesh" he had

promised, which he did willingly enough, only too pleased to have escaped being had up for manslaughter, but nothing would induce him to touch a gun again, for with this, his first and last attempt to learn the use of fire-arms, he came to the conclusion that Nature had not intended him for a sportsman.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HAVING joined my new district at the height of the rainy season, it was some weeks before I was able to explore it, hence, except for the shooting expeditions already mentioned and an occasional visit to some neighbouring village on investigation duty, had hitherto seen but little of it. But with the breaking up of the rains, I extended my explorations, inspecting such police posts as were not still cut off by flooded rivers, or those to which the roads and bridges now afforded easier access, preparatory to that more serious undertaking known officially as "the cold weather tour."

In anticipation of this, the most enjoyable of an Anglo-Indian official duties, all the tents and camp equipage which had been stored away at the end of the last cold season, were now all erected in various open places to be aired, overhauled and repaired in readiness for the general exodus, to take place on or about the 15th of November. For, with the red-tapism that characterizes all official events in India, this is the date fixed "by order" for the cold weather tour to begin, as if climate and temperature were commodities like beer in a cask, to be turned on and off at will. Nevertheless, such is the order, and though more often observed in the breach, is occasionally the cause of considerable discomfort in other ways, as for example, in a particularly warm November, for the hot weather having ceased officially on the fifteenth, all office punkah-pullers are discharged on that date, leaving the unhappy victims of this bureaucratic sophistry to stew in their offices for the remainder of the month.

However, in this particular year, the cold season happened to set in exceptionally early, and Miles and myself, having previously arranged to camp together, we

commenced our preparations soon after the first of November, for a month's tour in the northern portion of the district. Our camp was to be a large one, for we intended travelling in comfort, an end only to be accomplished by taking a double set of tents, one lot in occupation, and the other always on ahead, ready for use on arrival at the next encampment, each set comprising two personal and one mess tent and their respective furniture. In addition to the above, there were some half a dozen small tents or " sholdaris " for the servants and police guard, the whole, plus our personal belongings, kitchen utensils, provisions, etc., when loaded on some twenty dilapidated looking bullock carts, presented a most disorderly appearance. Indeed, later on, as these creaking crazy-looking vehicles went off, accompanied by a crowd of servants, all dressed in camp attire, each carrying some forgotten article pertaining to his department, the whole outfit might well have been mistaken for a band of strolling gipsies, proceeding, bag and baggage, to some fair. Amongst this motley retinue was Miles's old khansamah, who invariably attired in flowing robes of snowy whiteness, with a long white beard to match, had always presented a most dignified appearance, reminding me of the pictures I had seen of Aaron in my youth, was now so completely metamorphized as to be scarcely recognizable. Instead of his flowing snow-white garments, this venerable individual was now clothed in one of his master's cast-off Norfolk jackets with a " kummerbund " girt tightly round the waist, while his nether limbs were clad in riding breeches, also inherited, and putties, ending in a pair of old tennis shoes. But it was not only his clothing which had undergone this extraordinary transformation, for as I stood gazing at him in wonder, I missed the long white beard, and finally discovered it adorning each side of his face, this seemingly miraculous transposition having, apparently, been effected by dividing it down the centre and tying the two portions round the head, where it was secured under his pugri made of a woollen comforter, of colours as varied as Joseph's coat. Seeing me looking at him, he turned off after the carts evidently much distressed that I should have seen him thus attired, for by the best class of native servants



A SHOOTING CAMP IN ALPAIGORI, 1898.

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to appear before their masters improperly costumed, is considered a mark of disrespect.

The distance to our first encampment was nearly twenty miles, and as the ordinary pace of a bullock cart is two miles an hour, we calculated on their arriving that night, and the tents being erected and ready for us early the next morning, but as delays are sometimes unavoidable, we did not start till the afternoon.

We had sent out riding-horses for the last stage of the journey and, driving the first twelve miles, came up to them when the sun had lost some of its power, and after an hour's pleasant ride in the cool of the evening, arrived in camp shortly before dark, to find the tents all pitched and furnished, and the old "khansamah" reclothed in conventional attire, waiting to give us tea. As we dismounted and entered the mess tent, which, with the sides open to admit the evening breeze, was pitched between the other two, it seemed almost impossible to believe that this spacious and most comfortably furnished apartment was but a canvas structure, erected in an hour and to be presently as speedily demolished and removed.

My camping experiences, hitherto, had been of the rough and ready order, as I had not as yet adopted the more luxurious mode of travel which comes with years, and, more particularly promotion, hence, to find a tea-table with china cups and a tea-pot, arm-chairs and table covers, to say nothing of a stove, were luxuries I had not been accustomed to in the jungle. But Miles, as has been already stated, being one of the old school of civilians, had retained many of the traditions of this class and acquired some of their ways, amongst others that of travelling in comfort which, with the old Company's servants, had been brought to a fine art.

After tea we wandered round the camp and finally on to where the elephants were tethered, or picketed, to be more accurate, for this was literally the method of attachment, though somewhat curiously carried out. Each animal had a chain attached to one of its hind legs and about six feet in length, the other end being fastened to a stake or picket which was buried horizontally deep into the ground and the earth thrown in again and rammed

well down. All the animals were secured in this strange fashion, and though some were straining heavily at their chains, the strain being in an horizontal direction seemed to have no effect on the fastening. It was an ingenious contrivance as well as a good illustration of the old proverb, for it had doubtless been an invention born of necessity on some such occasion as the absence of trees, or any other means of tethering elephants for the night.

In the encampment of the Mahouts, too, which we passed on our way back to the tents, we found another product of this *force-majeure* in the general shelter they had constructed for themselves, for not being supplied with tents, they had placed all the elephant pads up edge-ways in the form of a quadrangle, and with the tarpaulins as a ceiling had made quite a comfortable abode. Amongst its occupants was my old shikari, Kamsin, who, true to his promise, had come to me a few days before, and finding himself somewhat out of his element amongst the more civilized members of the establishment, had taken up his quarters with the Mahouts. We found him full of information as to the sport likely to be obtainable in the neighbourhood, and he had already marked down a leopard in an adjacent jungle, hinting also that there was the possibility of a tiger-killing in a day or two, as one had attacked a buffalo near the village the day before, but had only clawed it, being driven off by the rest of the herd. That he could have obtained all this information within so short a period seemed almost inconceivable, hence, despite his well-known skill in jungle craft, we were inclined to be somewhat sceptical, thinking that, like most natives, he was only telling us what he knew we would like to hear. However, the jungle said to hold the leopard, being quite close, we decided to exploit it, so, ordering the elephants to be ready early in the morning, we strolled back to the tents, in front of which a huge camp fire was now burning. We sat smoking round it for some time, discussing the old man's information and wondering how much of it was true. Miles, who although a keen sportsman was somewhat of a pessimist, had just observed that " since he had been in the district, he had never heard of there being any game in the jungle mentioned," when suddenly from this



A GIANT AMONG ITS KIND.
Camp in Jalpaigori District, 1898.

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very direction there came the harsh, short, rasping cry of a leopard. The beast seemed to be so near that running to the tent we seized our rifles and some cartridges and stood listening beside the fire, expecting every moment to see the animal emerge from the outer darkness into the circle of light within which we were standing, but evidently the beast was further off than we imagined. It continued calling, however, at intervals for some time, and until dinner was announced, when, concluding that it was the fire that prevented its coming nearer, we finally retired to the mess tent and went on with our meal.

We dined as comfortably and sumptuously that night as if still in the station, and none the less enjoyably, for the weird music that went on at intervals throughout the meal lending an extraordinary fascination to the situation, from the knowledge that between us and this dangerous performer there was nothing but a flimsy canvas wall, for the animal, though still invisible, was now prowling round the camp, coming perilously near at times, as it passed behind the tent on the side opposite to the fire. Happily, intent on its own business, whatever this might have been, it made no attempt to break through. Finally, and much to our relief, it went back into the jungle, when its cries, becoming gradually less frequent, ceased for the time, but we ordered another fire to be lit behind the tents, and both were kept burning throughout the night.

Up the next morning before sunrise, and breakfasting by lamp-light, we mounted our howdahs and started for the jungle, which we reached just as day was breaking, and taking up our position at one end of it sent the beating elephants round to the other.

The jungle being a comparatively small one and principally composed of grass, it did not take the elephants very long to beat through it, but although it was evident from their behaviour that some animal had recently been in it, the beat proved a blank. However, we put them in again and accompanying the line ourselves, searched the jungle thoroughly, but with no better result. Kamsin now dismounted and, like a hound at fault, went carefully round the outskirts of the grass, finally coming on to some fresh "pugs." Following these foot-prints, we found they

led in the direction of a larger jungle about a mile away, to which the beast had probably retired after its fruitless visit to our camp, or on hearing the noise made by the Mahouts when putting on the howdahs. Be this as it might, there seemed every probability of our finding the beast there, hence we resolved to investigate this jungle as speedily as possible, for we knew it was a large one, and consequently would take some time to beat. But when we reached it, and saw the enormous extent of ground it covered, we were half inclined to give up the attempt. Fortunately, however, the old shikari was of a more sagacious and persevering disposition. Mounting one of the smaller elephants he started off alone on a voyage of discovery, and in about an hour's time returned with the welcome information that there was a clearing in the middle of the jungle where the howdahs could be posted. Leaving the beating elephants outside, we returned with him along the path he had made, proceeding in single file and as noiselessly as possible, till we came to a comparatively open space about eighty yards by ten, where for some unknown reason, the trees were fewer and the undergrowth less dense. This opening, being across the length of the jungle, practically, at this spot, divided it in two, so, posting ourselves one at each end of the clearing with the elephants and howdahs carefully concealed within the jungle, we commanded the whole space.

The shikari, having satisfied himself that we were perfectly invisible, now returned to marshal the beat, and about an hour later we heard the elephants crashing through the jungle, the sounds gradually approaching nearer till, so far as we could judge, the animals appeared to be within two hundred yards of our position. Suddenly they seemed to come to a standstill, a supposition soon confirmed by the drivers, whose voices could now be heard, as in terms of endearment mingled with abuse they attempted to urge their unwilling animals to advance, but only to be met with noisy expostulations expressed in loud trumpetings and squeals. Presently, above the uproar thus created, was heard the shrill treble of our old shikari, proclaiming the discovery of the carcase of a buffalo which he had apparently just found, and almost simultaneously there

came a sound as of some heavy animal crashing through the jungle close to Miles' post. The next instant a huge tiger broke into the open and galloping across it, had almost reached the opposite cover, when two shots rang out in quick succession, but with what effect I could not tell, as the smoke from the old black powder of those days obstructed my vision for the time. However, when it had cleared off, there was nothing to be seen, so concluding that Miles, in the excitement of the moment, had either missed the beast entirely or merely wounded it, I was about to join him, when my attention was attracted to a tree, standing high above the jungle about a hundred and fifty yards in front of us. It was a "simul" or cotton tree, of very considerable height, but, like most of its kind, with branches only commencing near its summit, where they extended horizontally and were thickly clothed with leaves. Hanging across one of the lowest of these branches, and partially concealed by the thick foliage, was an object resembling a coloured rug or carpet, and dangling from this, what looked to be a thick piece of rope, about three feet in length, which was moving to and fro as though with the wind. Wondering what this strange thing could be, and, if a rug, how it had been placed in this extraordinary position, I put up my glasses, when what was my amazement to find that the object I had imagined to be a rug was the spotted skin of a leopard covering the living animal, which, lying all limp and doubled up across the branch, and with its tail hanging down, had given it the appearance I have described.

How the beast had climbed up to this height, some thirty feet at least, without a branch or any projection to assist it, or why it had done so at all, were questions I left for subsequent investigation, being more concerned, just then, lest it should descend before I had time to get a shot.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE tree which the leopard had selected for its perch was, as I have mentioned, about a hundred and fifty yards from where I stood, but the intervening space being densely clothed with jungle, it was necessary to observe some caution in traversing it, since any excessive disturbance of the jungle might alarm the wary beast. Making our way, therefore, as silently as possible, we finally arrived at the foot of the tree, apparently unseen and unheard, but only to find that from this position there was but little of the leopard to be seen except the head, and of this only the under portion of the jaw and throat.

I deliberated for some moments whether to fire at once or wait a more favourable opportunity, but finally decided to risk the shot, hoping the bullet might continue its direction after impact, and ultimately reach the brain, but, to make more certain, I fired both barrels almost simultaneously.

The smoke prevented my witnessing the immediate effect of my performance, but from the loud crashing overhead, followed by a heavy thud upon the ground a yard or two in front, I was satisfied I had succeeded in my object, for even supposing both bullets had missed, a fall from such a height was sufficient to kill any animal of this weight. But, as it turned out, both bullets had hit, one penetrating to the brain and the other in the centre of the gullet, hence the animal was probably dead before it reached the ground, where it now lay doubled up and considerably damaged by the fall.

Having thus satisfactorily disposed of the leopard, I left the carcase where it lay and hurried after Miles, who had by this time disappeared into the opposite jungle, where I soon found him busy, but exceedingly jubilant, measuring his tiger! He, too, it seemed, had been as

fortunate as myself, but had made infinitely better shooting, having hit the tiger, going at full gallop, through the head and shoulder, and had found it lying dead in the jungle, within a yard or two of where it had entered.

Old Kamsin, delighted at our success, now proceeded to explain what had hitherto been a mystery to us both, viz. the sudden appearance of the tiger and the extraordinary performance of a leopard climbing up a tree, thirty feet in height, and smooth as a telegraph pole.

It appeared that the crafty and secretive old shikari had heard a rumour that a buffalo had been killed, but not being sure of his information had kept it to himself till he had come across the carcase in the jungle, when he had intended to warn us, but the tiger showed itself before he had time. His theory, and probably the correct one, was that the tiger had killed early the previous night, and, as often happens, had gone away to drink. Meanwhile, the leopard, after visiting our camp, while prowling through this jungle, had found the dead buffalo, and was making a meal off it when the tiger suddenly returned, and catching the thief *flagrante delicto*, the latter, in its terror, had swarmed up the tree standing close at hand, instinctively aware that its more powerful but less active antagonist could not follow in pursuit.

Such was the old man's explanation of the incident which had led to our extraordinary success, but, while admitting it was correct, the fact still remained that the leopard in climbing to such a height up a perfectly plain surface, had accomplished a most remarkable feat, and one probably unequalled by any of its kind.

The tiger proved to be as huge as it had looked, while the other, though but an ordinary sized beast, also measured big owing to an abnormally long tail, so that on the whole our performance for the day was most satisfactory all round.

The next three days were entirely given up to work, Miles trying cases previously fixed for trial at this camp, while I was as busily engaged, inspecting one of my police stations about ten miles from our camp; for it must not be supposed that the Indian official, when in camp, devotes all his time to sport, on the contrary, he has more work

to do, for in addition to the ordinary papers and reports which are sent out to him daily from the station, he has his inspection and other out-of-door duties to attend to. Nevertheless, the life is a most enjoyable one, especially in a "jungle district" such as we were in, where tiger and leopard shooting is as much an official's duty as his pastime, for complaints were constantly being received of cattle killed by one or other of these beasts, to rid them of which the people seemed to think was part of our day's work. Many were the leopards we disposed of, through information brought us in this way, during our tour, and a tiger, too, occasionally, for as we advanced further from the station, we came to wilder country and often our camp was pitched close to dense jungles where these animals abounded and were continually preying on the cattle of the villages scattered along the borders of these jungles.

Unfortunately as the people came to know us better, and saw how ready we were to accept, and act on any "Khubbur" that was brought, they took to bringing in false information of "kills," not with any deliberate intention to deceive, but because, having perhaps heard a tiger or leopard calling near their village, they knew that by scouring the jungle with our elephants, we might come across it, at any rate drive the beast away. However, after two or three of these wild-goose chases in which we spent hours searching the jungles for these imaginary "kills," we grew wiser, and finally adopted the better plan of sending our shikari to test the information before going out ourselves, and it was in connection with one of his investigations that an incident occurred which is probably without parallel in the annals of Indian sport.

We had been about a fortnight out in camp, and were encamped, at the time, some ten miles from the range of hills which divide British territory from that mysterious and unexplored country shown in the maps as Bhutan, but of which little is known, even to the British officials employed, as we were, in the district nearest to its borders.

Our camp was pitched on a comparatively open plain near a village inhabited by some "Mechis," one of the aboriginal tribes before mentioned, but surrounded on all sides by dense jungle infested with wild animals of every

kind, from elephants to the small rare creature known to naturalists as the pigmy-hog. Yet, curiously enough, as we found on inquiry, the number of village cattle killed annually here was considerably less than in many other places we had visited, where the jungles were far smaller and more remote from the villages, but, consulting our oracle, we learnt that this seeming anomaly was due to the fact that in these larger jungles, the larger carnivora find sufficient sustenance by preying on the other animals, such as pig and deer, not usually found in the smaller jungles. Consequently, although we had been four days in this camp, and had frequently heard leopards calling in the night, there had been so far no news of any " kills." However, one morning, after breakfast, one of our semi-savage neighbours came running to the camp to report that he had seen a tiger early that morning, going into a cave at the end of a ravine about a mile from his village. His information was most circumstantial, ending with the statement that he had left his brother perched up on a tree, watching the entrance to the cave. Nevertheless, our recent experiences having made us somewhat sceptical, we decided on sending the old shikari to test the man's story. A couple of hours later he returned accompanied by our informant, or " Khubburriah," the latter bathed in tears and piteously appealing, alternately to his god and to ourselves, to assist him in his trouble, from which we inferred that his information had probably turned out to be false, and that the old man, who on such occasions was inclined to be irascible, had been correcting him.

" Well, Kamsin, and so you have been sold again, I see," said Miles, in colloquial Hindustani, which he spoke as fluently as a native. The old shikari did not reply at once, but shaking his head solemnly, we could tell from the expression on his face that he had some serious information to impart.

" No, Sahib," he replied at length. " The ' Khubbur ' is true enough, this time, for we heard the tiger in the cave, eating the ' Khubburriah's ' brother ! " Then, having delivered himself of this startling information, none the less appalling for the brevity with which it was imparted, he proceeded to relate the rest of the story.

It appeared that on arrival at the tree indicated by his companion they had found it untenanted, but scattered all about were fragments of clothing, and splashes of blood on a recently made track leading to the cave. They were following these up, when a low growl from within, followed by a sound as of the crunching of bones, warned them to desist, and knowing that what they had suspected had actually occurred, also that the tiger might come out at any moment and attack them, they had hurriedly retreated from the spot, the old shikari quite satisfied that " this time," as he had just so laconically observed, " the Khubbur was correct." With this evidence, as gruesome as it was conclusive, of the tiger's presence in the cave, we lost no time in making arrangements to attack it, for, apart from the natural inclination to avenge the poor man's death, we felt that, unless destroyed at once, the brute would now probably become a man-eater, as very often happens when once a tiger has tasted human flesh.

Unfortunately, from the description Kamsin gave us, the nature of the country and jungle round the cave was such that elephants could not be employed, hence we had no option but to try and shoot the beast on foot, an extremely hazardous undertaking, or, as Miles suggested, climb on to a tree and watch the entrance of the cave till the animal came out.

The last seeming to be the plan most likely to succeed, we adopted it at once, and set out for the cave, accompanied by the shikari, carrying a spare rifle and a lantern, as it would probably be dark before we could get back. The rifle we took in case it might be wanted, but we intended using our shot guns, which were made to carry ball, such weapons being more handy and quite as effective against soft-skinned animals as a rifle when used at close quarters, as we knew would be the case in the present instance.

We started on an elephant, but after passing the village, were compelled to abandon it, for the country beyond was intersected with ravines and " nullahs," or dry water courses, too broad for the animal to step over, and too deep to be negotiated by elephants in any other way. However, we had not far to go on foot, and finally reached the cave about two hours before sunset.

We approached the place cautiously, and concealing ourselves carefully behind some thick bushes, listened intently for some time; finally, hearing no sounds within the cave, Kamsin crept up to the entrance, where he found some footprints of the tiger, leading back into the jungle. These he pronounced to be quite fresh, and hence was of opinion that the animal, having satisfied its hunger for the time, had gone out to drink and was unlikely to return for some hours, but advised our selecting a tree and climbing into it at once to avoid unnecessary risks.

Our choice was soon made, for the only tree of any size growing near the cave was the one already mentioned, and into this we climbed as speedily as we could, for, to confess the truth, neither of us were inclined to remain down below with the chance of the tiger returning any moment. Selecting two of the lower branches, about eight feet off the ground, we took up our positions, facing the jungle and entrance to the cave, while the old shikari, who was lighter, and wonderfully active for his age, climbed higher up into the tree. Here, in comparative security, as we thought, we proceeded to examine our surroundings, presently to make the disquieting discovery that so far from being safe, we were in a more dangerous position than the man who had been killed, for on a branch *above* our heads, we now found remnants of his clothing and some deep scratches on the bark evidently made by the tiger's claws.

From these facts then, it was alarmingly evident that, seated where we were, the tiger, if disposed to be aggressive, could pluck us off our perches much more easily than it had taken its late victim, especially if it should return after dark and steal up to the tree unseen. On the other hand, there was unfortunately no way of bettering our position, for the branches higher up were, as I have already hinted, too light to support our weight, and there was no other tree standing sufficiently near to command the entrance to the cave. In these circumstances the only alternative was to abandon the undertaking and return to the tents, while there was still sufficient light; but this we were, naturally, not inclined to do, for however perilous the enterprise might be, the destruction of this beast was,

for reasons already stated, imperatively necessary. There being no question, then, of giving up the attempt, it only remained for us to protect ourselves as well as we could and, above all, to provide against any possibility of being taken unawares, and for this we trusted entirely to our old man, knowing well that with his keen sense of hearing, no animal would be likely to approach us unheard.

So long as the daylight lasted we felt comparatively safe, but after we had been watching for an hour the light began to fail, and soon—with the rapidity with which night comes on in the East—we were buried in a darkness so profound that I could not even see the gun I held. True we had the lantern, but, for obvious reasons, dared not light it, hence for two long hours we sat as in a vault, vainly trying to pierce the gloomy depths around us, and imagining every moment that we had heard some movement in the jungle.

It was a terrible ordeal, rendered none the easier for the knowledge, that though we could not see it, the tiger was possibly close at hand and might at any instant detect our presence and attack us, for we knew that these animals can see as well by night as day.

CHAPTER XXX

At length, to our indescribable relief, the moon, whose appearance we had been eagerly awaiting, rose slowly above the distant tree-tops, and presently broad beams of silvery light lit up the space between us and the cave, gradually extending till they had reached the belt of heavy jungle to our front, whose impenetrable gloom not even the moon had power to illumine. This jungle, growing in a horse-shoe like formation, now resembled a wall of coal black foliage, and seated, as we were, in the centre of an imaginary line, connecting its extremities, we commanded every portion of the curve. Hence, we had no longer any fear of being taken by surprise. Nevertheless, it was still necessary to be on the alert, since between us and the jungle there lay a broad band of inky darkness, as impenetrable as the depths beyond, by which the tiger might approach perilously near before coming under the influence of the moonlight. However, relying on the old shikari to detect any such stealthy movements, we confined our attention to watching for the beast, ready to fire the moment it emerged into the light, trusting thus to kill the brute outright, or at any rate to cripple it and so prevent its charging.

We had sat thus about an hour, with our eyes fixed upon the jungle, scanning it continuously from one end to the other, when I felt a touch upon my shoulder, and looking quickly up, saw the old man pointing with his finger to the centre of the jungle.

"Take care, the tiger is coming, Sahib," he said in a low whisper. And looking in the direction he was pointing, I thought I heard a faint rustling in the jungle. Miles had evidently heard it too, for he had slightly altered his position and brought his gun up to the shoulder.

Presently we heard another movement in the jungle,

then a sound as of the footsteps of some heavy animal, treading softly and cautiously, but evidently coming slowly in our direction, as we could tell by the sounds, drawing nearer every moment and by the breathing, or rather cat-like purring of the beast, which was now distinctly to be heard.

Suddenly these sounds and movements ceased, from which I inferred that the animal had emerged from the jungle and now, concealed within the deep shadow that it cast, was probably reconnoitring before advancing towards the cave; or that it had perhaps already seen us, and imagining itself discovered, was contemplating a retreat. But, as the sequel proved, I was wrong in both these suppositions, for while with my eyes still fixed on the spot whence last I had heard its movements, my attention was again attracted by Kamsin, who, leaning eagerly forward, with one hand clasped tightly round a branch, was pointing with the other to a distant portion of the jungle.

I looked in this direction when there, to my amazement, was the tiger, which, with lowered head and stealthy steps, was creeping along the left extremity of the horse-shoe, partially concealed by the dark shadow, and evidently attempting to gain the cave unnoticed through a piece of detached jungle on our left.

The beast, as I had imagined, had apparently detected us on the tree, and finding its direct passage thus intercepted had, with the cunning of its race, adopted this circuitous but seemingly safe route, and but for the sharp eyes of the shikari would probably have succeeded in passing us unseen.

We waited till it had come well within range and to a small strip of moonlight in the open between the two jungles where, for a moment, it would be fully exposed to our view. As it reached this opening, it broke into a gallop, but we had anticipated this manœuvre and both fired at once, the two shots sounding like a cannon on the stillness of the night. The beast fell on to its head and partially rolled over, but picking itself up quickly, came charging furiously down upon us with a roar, which shook the ground and the tree on which we were seated to its very roots. We fired again, but apparently without any

effect, and were hurriedly attempting to reload when another shot rang out overhead, and to our infinite relief we saw the beast roll over, this time sorely wounded, as we could tell by its futile efforts to get up.

It was, of course, the old shikari who had fired so opportunely, and had thus probably saved our lives, or at least a severe mauling from the infuriated beast, which in another moment would have swept us off our perches, for, with our guns still unloaded, we were helpless to resist.

We discovered now that with the forethought so characteristic of the man, he had guessed there might be trouble; so, having previously loaded the weapon, the old man had been carefully watching the proceedings, ready to assist us the moment the necessity arose, and quick to grasp it when it came, had fired just in the nick of time.

Meanwhile Miles, with a bullet through its brain, had mercifully put an end to the tiger's struggles, and when we got down to examine it, we found the last bullet had struck the animal in the chest and breaking up inside had shattered the heart and lungs.

It was a remarkably fine shot, considering the pace the beast was going, and as compared with our last two, one of which had missed completely, and the other merely grazed. The two first were, however, better placed, though neither well enough to stop the beast.

The tiger proved to be an exceptionally fine one, measuring nearly nine feet ten in length and massively proportioned, and we shuddered to think of the number of human beings it might, and probably would, have killed and eaten, had we not so fortunately cut short its career. However, while discussing this gruesome subject, and congratulating ourselves on having secured a proved man-eater as a trophy, it suddenly occurred to us that as we had neither elephants nor men to carry the carcase to the camp, we must either watch by it all night, or leave it where it lay with the chance of its being eaten up by jackals, or some other beast that should happen to come that way. In this dilemma we appealed as usual to the old shikari, thinking he might have something to suggest, but he was evidently as much puzzled as ourselves. However, after considering for a while, an idea seemed to strike him, but

before replying, he walked up to the cave, where we saw him examining the entrance. He had taken the lantern with him, and now lighting it, disappeared through the opening and was apparently inspecting the interior, as we could hear him moving round it, and caught occasional glimpses of the light. Presently he came out again, carrying a "Dao," or kind of chopper, used by natives for cutting jungle, and from the satisfied look on his face, we knew he had solved the problem as to the disposal of the tiger.

"There is plenty of room in there, Sahib, for the carcase," he said, pointing to the cave, "and with this 'Dao' that I found there we can cut branches to close the entrance." The "Dao," he told us later, he had found still grasped in the hand of the man whose remains were scattered all about the cave.

"And now, if the Sahibs can help me," he continued, "we will drag the body there." But to move this ponderous mass of flesh, we had first to fashion two stout poles, then, using these as levers, we rolled it gradually to the entrance, whence, with our united efforts, dragged it inch by inch inside.

The interior was about twelve feet in diameter, apparently a natural excavation with a rough, uneven floor, made up of rock and sand, on which, strewed here and there, were the ghastly, dismembered portions of what had once been a human being. The head and face, though severed from the body, were intact, with an agonized expression on the features which haunted me for days, telling, as they did more eloquently than in words, of the agony and terror the man must have endured when seized and dragged inside the cave. The sight was not one to linger over, neither to be easily forgotten, and even the old shikari—to whom such sights were possibly more familiar—was visibly moved, and we could hear him muttering under his breath, cursing the dead beast for the evil it had wrought.

Having dragged the tiger in, as far as we were able, we left it surrounded by the ghastly wreckage it had caused, little thinking at the time—if to the brute creation is given the power to think—how quickly retribution was to follow.

Such, at any rate, was the thought that flashed across my brain as we hurried from the spot, anxious to quit a scene so harrowing to the mind, and softened only by the fact that we had so promptly avenged the cruel deed.

The closing of the entrance proved a longer task than we had imagined, and while assisting in the work we wondered why the fence was being so solidly constructed, since, as we supposed at the time, it was intended only to keep out any jackals that might scent the carcase within. But we were presently enlightened, for as the old shikari put in the last stake, a good-sized branch, sharpened at one end and driven into the ground, we heard him murmuring his approval of the job. His comments, mingled as they were with every abusive epithet he could think of, against all tigers as a class, and this one in particular, are not fit for reproduction, but the gist of his remarks was to the effect that no tiger, however hungry or powerful it might be, could break through this enclosure.

"What," I exclaimed, as the drift of this soliloquy, stripped of its vituperative embroideries, dawned upon my mind, "would one tiger eat another?" My question producing a similar one from Miles, who, despite his long experience of the jungles, seemed equally amazed.

The old man looked at us a moment as if in commiseration of our ignorance, then repeating his apprehension as to the danger of our trophy being devoured by a tiger, went on to tell us how when once out shooting with a former master, he had seen this very thing being done.

"The Sahib and I were out on a small elephant in the forest," he began, "and came suddenly upon a tiger which gave us much trouble, but after it had eaten many bullets, it was killed, and as the camp was close at hand we left it lying there and hurrying back sent out another elephant and some coolies to bring the carcase home. Presently the elephant returned and the Mahout told the Sahib that the tiger had come to life again, and was at that moment eating some animal it had killed. The Sahib was much annoyed, thinking the man had made up this story because he was afraid of going into the jungle, and mounting the elephant, said he would go himself. I got up behind him with the cartridges and rifle and we started off at once,

but when we came near the place where we left the carcase, the Sahib and I got down, and walking very carefully along the track made by the elephants, we saw a tiger, as the Mahout had said, bending over something it was eating. The animal was standing sideways, and being too busy with its meal had not seen us, and so the Sahib, putting up his rifle quickly, fired two bullets through its head. It fell at once, without a sound, on to the carcase below it, and lay quite still, but we remained concealed in the jungle till quite certain it was dead. After a few minutes, seeing it did not move, we walked up to it, the Sahib in front holding his loaded rifle ready; but the animal was now dead, and lying hidden beneath it was the half-eaten body of the other tiger we had killed."

This story, told in the old man's quaint vernacular, with many a gesticulation, was the first we had either of us heard of a tiger eating its own kind, though I have since come to learn that such instances of cannibalism amongst tigers have occasionally been heard of.

However, with the strong barricade we had constructed, there seemed little danger this time of any such attempt being successfully accomplished, and as there was nothing now to keep us in the jungle, we set out on our homeward journey.

The moon, now well up in the heavens, was of little use to us as a luminant, for the most part of our route lay through a tangled jungle meeting overhead where, except for the light shed by our lantern, the darkness was as dense as in a tunnel.

The manner of our going was ordered by Kamson, whose long experience of night-travel in the forests had taught him how best to make use of our useful and most protective weapon, to wit, the lighted lantern. Carrying this himself he marched a step or two in front, swinging it continually like a pendulum to increase the compass of its rays, so that any animal in our path might take it for an advancing forest fire and keep out of our way. To add to the deception he had improvised a kind of rattle out of a bamboo, split into four quarters, and rattling this from time to time as he proceeded, produced a sound not unlike the crackling noise a jungle fire would make.

This combined precaution, so ingeniously conceived, while doubtless tending greatly to diminish the dangers to which we were exposed, considerably increased our confidence in our guide, to whom there was, seemingly, no difficulty too impossible for his ingenuity to master.

Walking, as I have said, a pace or two behind him, with our guns loaded and ready for instant use, we kept a sharp look-out on either side, for, wild elephants excepted, this portion of the jungle was infested with dangerous beasts of every kind from tigers to wild boar and bear. Of these, the latter was the animal we had most reason to fear, being admittedly the most dangerous and aggressive of them all, and had we been so unfortunate as to have met one on the path, no make-believe jungle fire or crackling noises would have prevented it attacking us. Happily we were spared any such perilous encounter, and finally reached the tents shortly after midnight, to find a gang of villagers and our servants, headed by my orderly, preparing to come in search of us.

Next morning, on awaking, we found that our untiring old shikari had already started for the jungle with a large party of villagers, to fetch the tiger home, and while seated at breakfast they returned with the carcase slung on to a bamboo, and followed by the whole village, men, women and children, all shouting with delight and showering blessings on the Sahibs for having avenged their comrade's death.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE next day we moved a portion of our camp further in the direction of the hills, to one of the frontier outposts or stockades already mentioned which I had come out to inspect. The journey was a short one, barely ten miles in length, but being through the densest jungle in the district, occupied as many hours, for after the first mile or two there was neither path nor track, and as we were now outside forest limits there were no fire-lines we could follow: thus the elephants had to advance as best they could, boring a passage for themselves and occasionally breaking down young trees when such stood in their way. As we plunged deeper into this seeming endless jungle, our difficulties gradually increased, necessitating frequent deviations to avoid some impenetrable barrier across our line of march, till we marvelled how the Mahouts could regain the right direction. This jungle, though composed of much the same materials as others I have described, was different in that it was considerably higher and infinitely denser than any we had yet been in, the trees being larger and the undergrowth and grass heavier in proportion.

Bordering on this remote and sparsely populated portion of the district, this jungle had probably never been traversed by man, for the ordinary route to the outpost was by a longer and more open path, skirting the borders of the forest some distance to our right. Later on we came across some paths, or tracks, worn by constant use to the smoothness of a road made by human hands, but these highways of the jungle were the work of the huge denizens of these wilds, elephants and rhinoceri, in their seemingly aimless wanderings, in which such animals appear to spend their nights. Some of these tracks were fresh, but most of them had apparently not

The unloading of the elephants being completed and with marvellous celerity considering how carefully each package had been secured, the tents were soon erected, for we had brought only two, both "shuldaris" easy of erection, one for ourselves and the other for our attendants.

Within a couple of hours of our arrival, every peg had been driven home, the guy ropes and scores of lesser fastenings all properly secured, and the tents ready for occupation, even to the bedsteads which with the bedding were made up for the night, and, an hour later, we were seated in cosy comfort round a table by the camp fire, discussing the appetizing dishes before mentioned.

Meanwhile the men who had thus loyally ministered to our comforts, though tired and hungry as ourselves, were without rest or food, and with no prospect of either till late into the night and then only a scanty meal off rice and the hard ground for a bed was all that they could look for. But this aptitude for rising to the occasion, so to speak, is one of the good qualities possessed by Indian servants as a class who, though often troublesome and annoying in their performance of ordinary duties, can generally be relied on in moments of emergency, when the comfort of their masters depends upon their zeal.

Our camp on this occasion situated as it was in the heart of that huge forest, far removed from any highway leading to civilization, was as wild and weird a one as the most adventurously-minded traveller or sportsman could desire. But it was not till late in the night, while seated round the fire surrounded on all sides by a wall of dense jungle some twenty feet in height that we fully realized our position and how perilous it would be should a herd of elephants, attracted by our own, come tramping through the camp as was not improbable.

The bare possibility of such a catastrophe kept us awake for half the night, not so much on account of the danger to ourselves, for we should probably have time to take refuge in the outpost close at hand, but for our elephants, which though secured to trees with chains would be sure to make desperate efforts to break loose, and should any succeed in escaping into the forest would be lost to us for ever. Fortunately, however, the night went by without

any such disaster taking place, and although some of the Mahouts declared they had heard the sound of elephants trumpeting in the distance, none came sufficiently near the camp to cause any panic amongst our beasts. Nevertheless, our fears had not been groundless, for on inspecting the outpost later, I was told that shortly before our arrival it had been twice raided by these animals on two successive nights, and it was only after much trouble and expenditure of blank cartridges, that the men had succeeded in driving them away. As some proof of the accuracy of this statement, I may add that this was one of the buildings referred to in a previous chapter as being annually destroyed by wild elephants in the rainy seasons, and having to be reconstructed every year as provided for in the "budget grants" I had seen. However, on the last occasion of their visit the means employed to drive the beasts away had evidently had some effect, if not corporally, at any rate on their minds, for during our three days' halt at this camp we saw nothing of these animals either by night or day.

With the migratory habits of these beasts, they had probably deserted this portion of the country altogether for the time, otherwise we must have come across them in our various journeys through the surrounding jungles to inspect the frontier pillars, which formed part of our duties, while halting at this camp. These duties left us little time for sport, nor would it have been easy to obtain any, for notwithstanding the abundancy of game, the jungle was far too extensive and too dense to admit of its being beaten with the small number of elephants we possessed.

In the meantime our main camp with the old shikari in charge was being conveyed on rough, local buffalo carts to a military post at another point on the frontier, where a "Durbar" was shortly to be held, at which Miles, as political officer, was to present the annual subsidy to a representative of the Rajah of Bhutan. Our journey through the forest to this spot occupied the whole of one day, being somewhat longer than the previous one and with even denser jungles to traverse. Moreover, we had to make a long detour when half-way to avoid a herd of elephants which our animals scented fortunately just in time.

It was late when we arrived at our destination, the last mile of the journey being made in almost total darkness, which seemed to increase the terror our elephants had shown since scenting the wild herd, for we could feel the one we rode trembling from time to time as, in concert with the others, it gave expression to its feelings in sounds like low thunder rumbling in the distance. Not that we were in any better case ourselves, for during the last mile of this perilous and long-to-be-remembered journey, the suspense and anxiety we endured were not to be expressed in words, and when at length we emerged from the jungle and saw the lights of the cantonment twinkling in the distance and our own camp fire blazing cheerfully close at hand, we gave vent to our pent-up feelings in a cheer, which so startled the elephants that they finished the remainder of the journey at a run.

Nor were we disposed to curb the exuberance of our spirits on arrival at the camp, so different in appearance to the one we had arrived at a few days before, for here, instead of a bare patch of ground were our three comfortable tents all ready, erected and furnished, and servants awaiting our pleasure, amongst them, the most important functionary at the moment, the "Khonsamah," with the welcome information that dinner was prepared and would be served in ten minutes. This was a pleasing change after our recent uncomfortable experiences, as well as an excellent example of the smooth and seamy sides of Indian official life, which has to be taken as it comes, but to men with properly balanced minds can be made equally enjoyable in whichever aspect it presents itself.

The next day we visited the cantonment which was on an elevated plateau about a mile from our camp, a strategetic position held by the wing of a native regiment in the event of any disturbance arising on the frontier, and where the Durbar was to take place the following afternoon. This function, the object of which has been already briefly stated, is probably the quaintest existent ceremony that any officials of the Empire are required to perform, hence some explanation of its origin will doubtless be of interest to the reader.

Though officially styled a "Durbar," to give some



THE "ZIMPEN" AND MEMBERS OF HIS SUITE.
Buxa Duars Durbar.

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dignity to the proceedings, it is, in fact, a mere meeting of two state officials one of whom, the British, hands over to the other, the representative of Bhutan, a sum of 50,000 rupees * ostensibly as compensation for territory acquired but practically as a reward for good behaviour during the past year, that is to say for having abstained from raiding across the frontier, which in former years was a favourite pastime with the Bhutanese. This grant, or subsidy as it is called, is received by an official termed a "Zimpen" or chamberlain of the Rajah, or rather "Deb" Rajah of Bhutan, for this extraordinary country is governed nominally by two rulers termed respectively the "Deb" and "Dhurrum" Rajahs. The latter, however, is only a ruler in name, so far as temporal power is concerned, being really the head "Lama" or Pope and as such head of the church, consequently held in much reverence by the people and believed by them to be of Divine origin. At the present moment the office happens to be vacant, the last incumbent being defunct and no one of sufficient sanctity having as yet been found to take his place.

. . . . . .

With this necessary, though I fear, somewhat dry digression, I will now endeavour to describe the strange proceedings, which in my capacity of a kind of police A.D.C. to Miles, I took part in on the day.

Some hours before the time appointed, the treasure, consisting of fifty wooden boxes containing one thousand rupees each, were arranged as ornamentally as rough wooden cases hooped with rusty iron bands could be, within a Shamianah or "Durbar tent" carpeted with red cloth, while behind them, less conspicuously displayed, were two cases of Scotch whisky, which tradition had ordained should form part of the presentation, but of a less formal nature. In the open space before the Shamianah and forming a broad lane, was a company of the regiment, drawn up in two lines, facing inwards, and beyond them, the police guard, similarly aligned, their dark blue jumpers and white "Dhotis" † blending pleasantly with the

* This sum has, I believe, been recently doubled.

† The loin cloth worn by natives of all classes, and adopted as part of the uniform of the native police.

scarlet tunics of the sepoys. Behind these rows of glittering bayonets came the usual rabble, amongst them various hangers-on of the " Zimpen," clad in strange parti-coloured clothing made of blanketing, who, looking on in open-mouthed amazement seemed much interested in the proceedings. Further inside the Shamianah, behind the artistic array of treasure boxes and whisky were placed a row of chairs, two of these in the centre, gaudy fauteuils borrowed for the occasion being reserved for Miles and the honoured guest, while the rest were to be occupied by the commanding and other officers, the native magistrate, the interpreter and myself. Meanwhile, the Envoy, who with his following had arrived the night before, was housed in the " Bhutia-Busti," a village situated on a hill overlooking the cantonment with which it was connected by a steep and winding path, the whole of which was visible from below.



AFTER THE DURBAR.

Soldiers, Musicians, "Jackals," and the Crowd.

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CHAPTER XXXII

THE ceremony was fixed for two o'clock and all preliminary arrangements being completed we were awaiting the arrival of our visitor, when in the direction of the village there arose a sound so closely resembling the cries of a pack of jackals, that for a moment believing it had emanated from these animals, I questioned the interpreter. The latter, himself a Bhutanese but speaking English fluently however, soon enlightened me.

"It is the Zimpen's followers," he replied, "who are howling like jackals to show how he, as the representative of the Rajah, is as powerful and terrifying to them as the tiger is to the beasts, whose cries they are imitating."

This extraordinary method of expressing their appreciation of the awe-inspiring qualities of their sovereign, was, nevertheless well in keeping with the nature and appearance of these semi-savage people, for presently as the procession came into view, looking at it through the glasses, I came to the conclusion that a more barbarous retinue it would be difficult to imagine.

The cortège was headed by a score or two of soldiers (?), armed with bows and arrows and clothed in striped dressing-gown-like garments called "Bokus," reaching to the knee, surmounted by a headdress seemingly made of iron somewhat resembling in appearance a Balaclava cap. Following these fantastically-arrayed soldiery came the "Jackals," a hundred or more blanket-clad savages, each seemingly trying to out-howl his neighbour and all dancing or rather capering, presumably, to a measure played by some musicians in their midst, but without regard as to its time or tune. Occasionally some of them would stop in their mad caperings to make a low obeisance, apparently intended for some person or object in their rear, then howling and jumping more frenziedly than before, run on

to resume their places in the pack. But soon as the procession came more fully into view we discerned the object of this veneration, for about the centre of this elongated crowd, zig-zagging down the hill, was a figure seated on a mule, seemingly cross-legged and held up in that position by men on each side of it. As they approached nearer, I could see that the rider who was no less a personage than the Zimpen himself, had no control over his steed, nor was it intended that he should, for, as I learnt later, to guide the beast himself would have been considered quite beneath the dignity of one of such exalted rank.

When the head of the procession had reached the lane, or guard of honour formed by the troops and police, it was halted by the interpreter, acting as Master of the Ceremonies who, dividing the men composing it into two bodies, ranged them on either side, leaving the way clear for the great man to advance. Presently the latter, still seated on the mule and marshalled by the interpreter, was led solemnly down the lane, the guard standing at attention as he passed, and till he had reached the "Shamianah," where he was received by Miles, and then a strange thing happened, which though considered a very necessary detail, seemed to our Western notions a somewhat extraordinary proceeding.

We had all risen to do honour to this Envoy; Miles, with head uncovered, was advancing to greet our august visitor, when suddenly the men supporting him seized the venerable representative of their sovereign by the arms and legs and whisking him off the mule deposited their burden on the seat reserved for him, to howls of acclamation from his followers without. Meanwhile the victim of this summary transhipment had uttered no sound except a grunt, possibly involuntarily elicited, and after adjusting his official head-gear, which his rapid transit through the air had tilted rakishly to one side, sat staring stolidly before him as if the subsequent proceedings interested him not at all.

We saw now that he was a man considerably over middle age and corpulent, with the strongly marked Mongolian type of features common to his race, in fact, as to personal appearances there was little to distinguish him from the

scores of his countrymen around except his attire, which would need a Worth or Paquin to depict with the accuracy it deserves. The reader must therefore picture to himself this corpulent old gentleman, clothed in a long Kimona-shaped garment of green and rose-pink silk, confined at the waist by some invisible contrivance supporting a long two-edged sword with silver hilt and scabbard, both thickly set with turquoise and other precious stones. Another garment, also of silk, but peculiar as to cut, encased his lower limbs and over these were drawn a pair of white-felt moccassin-boots, such as worn by Chinese magnates, and profusely ornamented with many-coloured embroideries. But the most extraordinary portion of his attire, inclusive of the quaint gold and turquoise chaplets and other strange jewellery he wore, was his hat, which though seemingly fulfilling its proper functions in that it occupied the usual place, had apparently no concavity for the head, but merely rested on it as a juggler balances a dinner-plate on a stick, and kept in position only by a thong tied round the chin. Its shape, too, was unique, the brim being some eighteen inches in diameter and quite flat with a conical erection in the centre to represent the crown, the whole composed of wicker-work, trimmed and lined with silk of gaudy hue.

But to proceed, the stolid silence maintained by our visitor not being conducive to the progress of business, the interpreter now approached him, and after much "kow-towing," ventured to suggest that the ceremony should commence, finally eliciting another grunt or two evidently intended for approval, for Miles and the rest of us were now formally introduced. After these formalities, the proceedings took more active shape, beginning with the distribution of silken scarves which an attendant, or A.D.C. of the Silent One, produced from some mysterious hiding-place within his ample "Boku." These scarves being placed over our shoulders in number and quality according to our respective rank and importance, the treasure boxes were now formally presented, and the contents of one having been counted, carried off by some of the following to the temporary residence of the Envoy.

Several baskets of oranges and a few squares of coloured

silks were now brought in and set down in front of us, thus completing the strictly official portion of the proceedings, these offerings being presumably intended as symbolical of the *quid pro quo* element usually considered necessary on such occasions.

The two cases of whisky, up to this moment purposely ignored or only casually referred to, were now produced, and with remarkable effect on the hitherto impassive countenance of the Envoy, who, having officiated in this capacity before, was evidently acquainted with the nature of the contents. Bending eagerly forward he seemed, as Miles observed in a whisper, "to be examining the brand" on the cases, then turning to one of his attendants, delivered himself of quite a long oration, obviously expressive of his approval and of the excellence and valuable nature of the offering, as we could tell from the pleased expression on his features, and the care with which the individual addressed handled the precious cases, while cording them for transit up the hill. Having seen them carefully bestowed on the backs of two stalwart Bhutias, the whilom silent plenipotentiary now waxed exceedingly loquacious, not to say inquisitive, asking many questions as to our names and rank, and the number of children we respectively possessed, the fact that some of us might be single being evidently outside his calculations. However, as question and answer had both to be interpreted, it took some time to explain these little details. At length finding his questions becoming somewhat embarrassing, Miles, as politely as was possible, brought the interview to a close and the great man, shaking hands with each of us in turn finally departed, going as he had come, accompanied by the jackals and the "band." The latter, during the interview, had been standing crowding round, thus giving us an opportunity of examining their instruments, which were as extraordinary in shape as in the sounds they produced, and on closer inspection proved to be made of human arm and thigh bones, but how obtained we were unable to discover.

The next morning our friend, less gorgeously apparelled and accompanied by the interpreter and the usual attendants, paid us an informal visit at our camp, where, after



THE GREAT MAN AND HIS ESCORT.
(In undress.)

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the usual greetings, we regaled him with some excellent but extremely potent Marischino, of which Miles possessed a special brand. However, his hospitality cost him somewhat dear, for so marked was our guest's appreciation of the beverage, that it was not until the bottle was what in naval parlance is termed a "dead marine," that he showed any inclination to depart. He was also much interested in my Winchester repeater, and had I risen to the occasion, would have probably offered half the "subsidy" to become its proud possessor. As it was, I had to promise to procure one for him when I next went to Calcutta. His visit lasted quite an hour and when, at length, forgetful of his dignity, he rose to take his leave, the two attendant satellites, horrified at his temporary forgetfulness in placing his feet upon the ground, a lapse possibly due to the Marischino, promptly seized and bore him to the mule.

This was the last we saw of the potentate, for early the next morning we left for Alipur, the headquarters of this portion of the district, and journeying along a broad highroad, through miles of dense jungle, finally reached the half-way Rest House, where we halted for the night. Although in the very heart of this huge forest, this spot was, and had been for generations, inhabited by men whose ancestors had doubtless when they conquered it, fought many a desperate battle with the original possessors, the four-footed tenants of these wilds and were even now frequently exposed to their incursions. This settlement or village, for such it had now grown to be, had originally borne the somewhat curious sounding name of Rajah-bhatkhowa. Three separate words, which as time went on were eventually reduced to two and the whole converted to "Bhatkhowa," the name by which the place is known to this day. The circumstances, however, to which it owed its name and origin are so exceedingly curious that I am tempted to relate them, even at the risk of being suspected of inventing though as a fact the story is one well known in the district and generally admitted to be true.

It appears that in days gone by, the then reigning Rajah of the territory now known as Cooch-Behar, at that

period apparently abutting on to Bhutan, was on one occasion captured by these people and retained a prisoner for some years. Finally, however, he had managed to escape and after wandering many days in the dense jungles had eventually reached the spot referred to, where he came upon a large body of his subjects, out on a hunting expedition. This joyful and wholly unexpected event was celebrated with much pomp on the spot, the festivities ending, as is customary with natives, in a feast consisting chiefly of rice, the favourite food of the people of Bengal, but which at that period was practically unknown in Bhutan. The people, fully aware of this fact, and now seeing their restored monarch thoroughly enjoying this long unaccustomed food, were delighted. "Dekhen, Dekhen Rajah bhat khowa," (Look, look the Rajah has eaten rice again), they shouted with one accord, till the forest resounded with their cries. And thus it came about that this spot, being ever after referred to in these terms, finally became known as Rahjabhatkhowa. The legend gave an added interest to a spot already full of fascination from its situation, and as we sat listening to this story told us by Kamsin we pictured to ourselves how infinitely wilder must have been the scene of this sylvan banquet compared with the comfort almost amounting to luxury of the present surroundings, and yet, beyond the limits of the village scarce two square acres in extent, the forest was probably still as wild as in those long gone days. The night, however, passed without any sound or movement in the forest, which, except for the occasional bell-like note of a sambhur calling to its mate, might have been as devoid of anything with life as the depths of the Dead Sea. With the first blush of dawn, we left this interesting spot, reaching our destination shortly after mid-day.

It was now the height of the touring season, when not only the officials of the district are on tour, but also heads of all departments, the latter, not infrequently accompanied by some sporting notability in search of big game, or that more dangerous and usually less agreeable individual, the collector of material for one of those instructive volumes embodying the author's views after six weeks' experience of the country, as to how India and its people should be

governed. Hence we were not surprised on arrival to find two of these wandering magnates in possession of half the Rest House, one of these, however, proved to be a man named Keenan, the new conservator of forests, an old chum of my friend Miles. The other was an annual cold weather visitor to the district in the shape of a globe-trotting enthusiast, one of whose objects in life seemed to be the education and development of the natives, which had earned for him the nickname of " the Professor," of whom more anon.

The first two had not met since they had served together as youngsters in the district many years before, for the conservator, after a long period of service in Assam, had only recently joined his present post. Both being keen sportsmen, they had done much big-game shooting here in days gone by, and consequently had many reminiscences in common which they now recalled with all the keenness of old sportsmen, discussing past achievements.

Meanwhile, Woods and myself, the latter as in duty bound, being in attendance on his chief, listened with much interest, not unmixed with envy, to these reminiscences of a period when the district was evidently one vast menagerie stocked with every kind of animal to be found in the Indian jungles. Even the " Professor," who, despite his most unsportsmanlike appearance, seemed quite fascinated with these stories, and to have temporarily forgotten the object of his visit, for leaving the village Pundit with whom he had been discussing " Primary Education " standing in the sun, he was now listening with wrapt attention to these wondrous tales of sport. However, as I learnt later, this learned individual was in fact a most enthusiastic sportsman, or rather trophy-hunter, and, albeit an exceedingly bad shot, had nevertheless managed to secure many good heads and skins of animals which he claimed to have slain himself, but most of which, according to traditions of the district, had been shot by his friends. Such extraordinary generosity puzzled me considerably at the time, for Indian sportsmen as a class are no less tenacious of their trophies than their confrères in other portions of the globe, and it was not until I had been out shooting in his company myself, that I discovered

how he had actually acquired them. His method was a simple but exceedingly ingenious one, and though not to be commended from a sportsman's point of view, yet merits a description if only for the cleverness with which it was conceived, as exemplified in the incident which occurred a few days later.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE village, or town of Alipur, as its inhabitants preferred to call it, where we were encamped, apart from its importance officially, had long been famous as the best sporting centre in the district, by reason of its situation, being far removed from civilization and on the borders of a forest many miles in area. Less than twenty years before, the site on which it stood had been a part of this huge jungle, which covered in those days all the eastern portion of the district lying between two mighty mountain torrents, which, during the rainy season, were often impossible to cross. Hence the denizens of these wilds having up to recent years suffered little molestation from man, their natural foe, had not only lived out their natural term of life, but increasing and multiplying in proportion, were still in countless numbers. However, as time went on, the "Mechis" and "Garos," two tribes of restless, wandering aborigines invaded this jungle kingdom, and despite the resistance offered by its wild inhabitants, involving much loss of life and cattle, gradually advanced into its depths, making clearings for their temporary villages at each fresh spot they moved to as they progressed.

The result of this continuous emigration was to leave patches of isolated jungle, round which in after years the "Koches" and other races with less nomadic tendencies built their villages and eventually settled down, rearing large herds of cattle and engaging in agricultural pursuits. It was the presence of these seemingly isolated patches, but which were in fact connected with the larger jungle, that made this neighbourhood so exceptionally favourable to sport, especially with regard to the carnivora, which, attracted by the village cattle, would leave their unassailable forest strongholds, and take up their quarters in these

patches, whence when they "killed," they could be beaten out with comparative facility.

. . . . . .

Hence, when one morning Kamsin, who for the last day or two, had been prowling round the villages in search of information brought in the welcome news that a bullock had been killed during the night, and dragged into a jungle close at hand, we ordered the elephants at once in joyful expectation of bagging a "forest tiger," which, according to the traditions of the place, were supposed to be as huge as they were fierce. On arrival at the jungle, we found it was of considerable size and, as we expected, connected with the forest, but fortunately only by an isthmus of high grass about one hundred yards in width, across which the elephants soon trampled down a lane or vista for the howdahs, which were placed, concealed as much as possible, within the portions left untouched.

The "Professor," as the honoured guest was given the best place in the centre, with Miles and myself on one side of him and Woods and Keenan on the other, each of us having a howdah to ourselves. The beat was a long one as the jungle was nearly a mile in length and apparently very dense, thus a couple of hours passed before we heard the elephants approaching, but their sounds had barely reached us when I saw a slight movement in the jungle immediately in front of me, followed a moment or two later by three shots fired in quick succession, the first two evidently "a right and left." From the position of the smoke I could see that these shots had apparently been fired from the central howdah, but they produced no visible effects beyond a quicker movement of the jungle in a direction at right angles to the first, as the animal, finding its exit barred, now galloped across the cover, seeking some other outlet. The Professor fired again, but evidently with no better success, as the animal continued its career till it had reached a spot opposite the last howdah, occupied by Keenan, where it seemed to stop so far as I could judge from the sudden cessation of all movement.

Meanwhile the beating elephants had advanced more than half-way through the jungle and were now noisily proclaiming their discovery of the tiger. Yet the beast



A "LINE" CROSSING THE TORSA RIVER.
Jalpaigori District.

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lay close, giving no indication of its presence, till the beat was nearly over, when suddenly I caught a glimpse of its long, low body emerging stealthily from the extreme end of the cover. The next moment two shots were fired from Keenan's howdah, followed by a single one from Woods, and then a regular fusilade by the Professor, who seemed to let off every weapon he carried in his howdah. The tiger spoke to Keenan's shots, but in the smoke that followed it was impossible to tell what had actually occurred. However, when this cleared, I could see the beast lying doubled up in the trampled grass apparently quite dead, as well it might be after all this heavy firing. Nevertheless, when examining the carcase, two bullet holes were all that we could find.

We examined the body again and again, for it seemed almost inconceivable that of the ten shots fired in all, two only had hit, but search as we might, except for these two holes, there was not even a graze upon the skin, hence it now became a question as to which of the three sportsmen the trophies should be given. The Professor, however, having fired the first four shots himself, declared he had been the first to hit the beast, and now claimed the head and skin, which, under the circumstances, seemed reasonable enough. Unfortunately the other two had been out with him before and knew he seldom hit anything he fired at. Moreover, being apparently acquainted with his methods they objected, suggesting that the bullets should first be cut out and examined. To this the man of learning readily agreed, little dreaming of the countermine, which Keenan had secretly prepared for him, and was presently to explode to the annihilation of his well-laid plan, by which he had hitherto secured so many trophies.

In the meantime, the Mahouts having loaded the subject of dispute on to one of the pad-elephants, we started on our way back to the bungalow, where, after the animal had been skinned, we held a post-mortem on the carcase. The wily old Professor, knowing he had fired off every weapon he possessed, which included rifles of all bores likely to have been used by the others, looked on smilingly, for in these circumstances, he knew that his

claim would not be easily disproved. But he had overlooked a little weapon which Keenan had recently acquired, to wit, a ·303 Lee-Metford sporting carbine, carrying a nickel-coated bullet, quite different to any other projectile then in use, hence easily identified not only by its size and shape, but for the metal sheathing.

We had all seen and examined this new rifle a day or two before and were generally of opinion that the bore was far too small for dangerous game, the Professor in particular being loudest in his condemnation, referring to it contemptuously as a pop-gun, which no sportsman would be rash enough to use against a tiger. His feelings may therefore be imagined when the old shikari, who was operating on the carcase, extracted one bullet, then the other, both with the base of their metal cases quite intact, and still adhering to the lead, while the upper portions, stripped from the bullet, and sharp as a razor's edge, stuck out at right angles like the blades of a propeller.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed at length, when he had recovered from the shock. "It is impossible, I say," he repeated, "for two such little bullets to have killed an animal of this size," and declaring there must be another wound told Kamsin to search again.

The old man did as he was ordered, but in an half-hearted kind of way, as if he thought it was quite useless, for we could hear him muttering to himself, "How can there be three holes in the body when in the skin there are but two?" However, our friend was not to be put off, and ignoring this very logical conclusion, now joined in the investigation himself. The search, however, so far from discovering any other wound, merely revealed the nature of the other two, for in following the course of the two bullets, it was found that they had evidently expanded on striking, and, while still under the influence of the rifling, had passed, revolving through the flesh, the razor-like edges of the nickel, boring tunnels each almost two inches in diameter.

With such conclusive evidence against him our trophy-hunter could not well substantiate his claim, and to do him justice, gave in with good grace, now extolling the new weapon as loudly as he had recently condemned it, though



BEATING WITH THE LINE

Jalpaigori Jungles.

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seemingly still ignorant of the purpose with which it had been used. But apparently this had dawned upon him later, for the next day when we were out after a leopard, we noticed that he was more sparing of his ammunition and moreover had only one gun and rifle in his howdah instead of the huge battery he usually took out. However, on this occasion, favoured by Dame Fortune, he made a remarkably lucky shot; for, firing in his usual hasty and promiscuous fashion, one of his erratic missiles glancing off a tree lodged in the leopard's brain, though but for the tree being in the way it would probably have struck Woods, who being in the original line of fire should, under ordinary circumstances, have been perfectly safe.

After this further development of his methods therefore, we were more disinclined than ever to encourage the Professor's taste for sport; so pleading press of work as our excuse we confined ourselves to partridge-shooting in the evenings in the smaller grass jungles round the bungalow, as being under the circumstances a less perilous pastime. But here our friend again managed to distinguish himself, and, as Woods observed, went near to "making a record bag," for on one occasion, when firing at a partridge which rose at the extreme end of the line, he missed the bird completely and instead peppered a beating elephant and its Mahout with a charge of No. 6, most of it, providentially, expending itself on the tough hide of the animal.

This last performance following so quickly on the other, however, created quite a panic amongst the Mahouts, for callous as these men are, as a rule, to all ordinary risks attending their dangerous profession, they are apt to be easily demoralized by any incidents of the nature just described, and not unreasonably so, since it is to the sportsmen in the howdah, that they look to protect them. Thus we deemed it wiser to abandon all shooting for the time, but unwilling to hurt his feelings told our dangerous companion that there was nothing left to shoot. He probably guessed the truth, but seemingly in no way disconcerted resumed his old pursuit, which though less dangerous to life did more damage in the end. From early dawn to breakfast time and then again till sunset he now occupied his time visiting the town and adjacent

villages, lecturing to the people on the inestimable benefits to be derived from education, and explaining how, by following his advice, the untutored rustic of to-day would in course of time live to see his son occupying high positions in the land, and so on, thus inculcating into the minds of an hitherto contented people doctrines which could not fail to be pernicious in effect. Fortunately, owing to his limited knowledge of the language, not all he said was understood, yet the salient points were doubtless taken in, and with the mysterious wireless-like telegraphy of the East would soon spread throughout the district to form a subject for discussion and to sow the seeds of discontent. Finally, led on by his ill-conceived enthusiasm, the misguided philanthropist, not content with discoursing to the villagers, extended his discourses to our servants and camp followers, resulting in a somewhat amusing controversy with our old man of the woods at which I happened to be present.

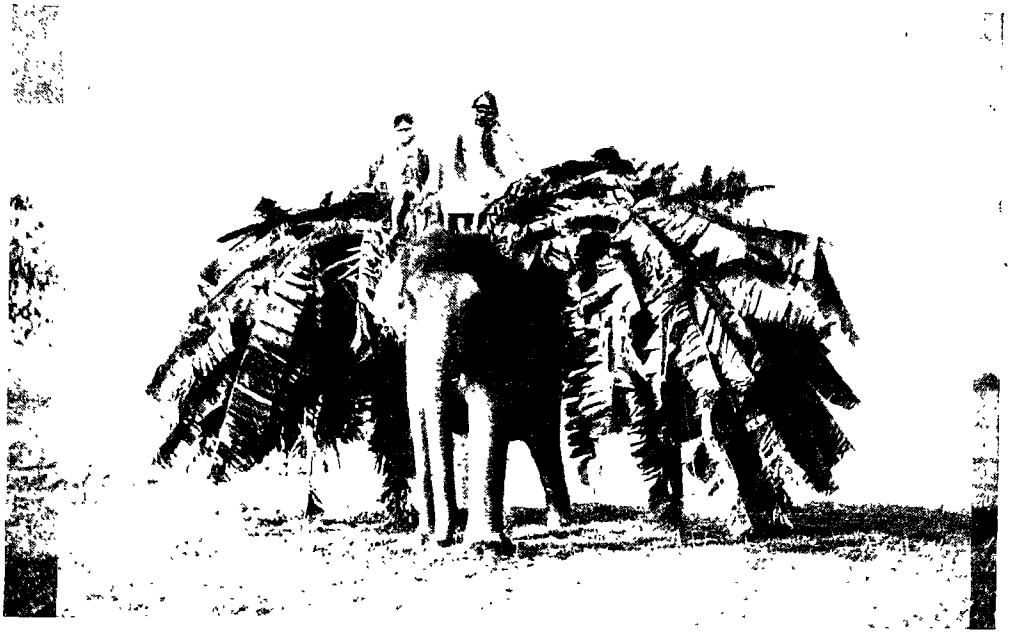
One morning after breakfast, I had strolled down to the far end of the compound, where the tiger and leopard skins were pegged out to dry, and while discussing their condition with Kamsin we were joined by the "Professor." Presently, as we were returning to the bungalow, the latter began on his pet topic, and suddenly turning to the old man who was following us asked him whether he knew how to read and write?

"No, Sahib," replied the astonished veteran, to whom such knowledge was as foreign as Euclid or the classics to a coster, and who, moreover, looked on such accomplishments as fit only for the intriguing, effeminate Babu, a class which he, in common with his kind, regarded with suspicion and contempt.

"But your son, for I hear you have one," continued the other, "he has, I presume, been taught?"

"My son, Duntal Sing!" replied the old man, still more astonished. "Why he is a forest guard, Sahib; always in the jungles! Of what use would it be to him then to learn to read and write?"

However, this argument, conclusive as he deemed it, so far from convincing his opponent, provided him with just the material he most needed for strengthening his



BRINGING IN THE "CHÁRÁ" (FODDER).

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contention, and quick to make use of it, he returned to the charge.

"True, a forest guard needs no education," he continued, "but why should he remain in that position, when by learning to read and write he might become a 'Muktiar' or even a 'Vakil,' * and thus make much money?"

The old man gazed at the speaker in mute amazement for a while as if wondering to himself whether he was quite right in his mind, then, evidently struggling to control his feelings, he replied with ill-assumed humility, "that such a calling was far too high for the sons of jungle men."

"No, Sahib," he continued, with much dignity of manner, "I have been a forest guard myself, as my father was before me, and my son must be the same. The jackal's cub does not become a leopard, nor the young leopard ever grow into a tiger. Then, how can I, who am also of the jungles, change what the 'Pormessur' has ordained, for man and beast alike."

This reasoning, expressed in the old forester's quaint phraseology, if not strictly logical, was at any rate too much for the Professor, who, to use the school-boy phrase, was absolutely "stumped," and, for once, seemed at a loss for a reply. How he would eventually have combated this argument would have been interesting to hear. Unfortunately, though perhaps, happily for his polemic reputation, at this moment a diversion was created by the arrival of a Mahout with the startling information that one of the elephants sent out to fetch fodder had blundered into a quicksand and was already nearly totally submerged. All the other elephants in camp were immediately sent out to its rescue, but by the time they arrived the unfortunate animal had almost disappeared beneath the surface, but with its trunk yet some feet above the mud was unhappily still alive.

In this terrible situation, with head and trunk uplifted and emitting agonizing cries, it lingered for some hours, for with the irony of fate, its feet had reached the solid

* Signifying different grades of attorneys—a profession much favoured by educated natives, being a congenial occupation and comparatively lucrative.

ground below; but this availed it nothing, for the quicksand was of the dry and more dangerous variety, often found near forests, in contradistinction to the liquid quagmires to be met with in crossing rivers, when the generally strong currents tend to destroy the adhesive elements of which they are composed. Finally after many hours suffering the animal died from exhaustion, accelerated possibly by the mental anguish it must undoubtedly have endured.



ELEPHANT IN A QUICKSAND.
Jalpaigori.

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CHAPTER XXXIV

A DAY or two after the incidents just related our camp was broken up, Keenan and Woods proceeding to a distant portion of the forest on inspection, and Miles to head-quarters to meet the Commissioner of the division, who was shortly expected there. The Professor, too, finding his efforts to educate the "Aryan brother" as represented in these parts were not likely to be successful, accompanied my friend *en route* to Calcutta, there to devise some fresh scheme for carrying out his pet hobby.

I was thus left to my own devices, and took this opportunity to finish off my inspection work, which the exciting events of the last few days had sadly interfered with. Hence my time was now fully occupied, though less agreeably than I could have wished. Seated for many hours daily in the stuffy station office, wading through endless musty volumes in the almost hopeless effort to discover errors in fact or figures which, if they existed, would, I knew, be too cunningly concealed to be detected without the closest scrutiny. The weariness of the task was well-nigh past endurance, and yet it had to be performed, for it is by these periodical inspections alone that station officers in charge of out-lying posts can be kept up to the mark. By the end of the second day, however, I had got over the worst of it, and the next morning inspected the men on parade, usually a somewhat more amusing function from the extraordinary ignorance of drill generally displayed by the officer in command, which often leads to quite comical situations not contemplated in the drill book. However, on this particular occasion the sub-inspector happened to be an exceptionally smart officer, one of the new regime trained at the police depôt recently established, and having a thorough knowledge of his drill, put the squad

through a few simple movements as smartly as any regimental drill instructor, the men too, acquitted themselves exceptionally well. Indeed, amongst the latter there was but one man who showed any signs of slackness, a high-caste Brahmin constable, and on this individual the officer's wrath descended in a torrent of abuse in English and Hindustani combined, his knowledge of both languages in this respect seeming to be quite extraordinarily extensive.

Now, knowing that the sub-inspector was himself a Hindu, and moreover of very low caste, it rather surprised me to hear him address a Brahmin, albeit a subordinate, in such opprobrious terms; however, being pleased to find that in matters of discipline he was no respecter of persons, I merely made a mental note of it in his favour. But there was another side to the picture, as I presently discovered, depicting a scene so extraordinary that, with all my knowledge of natives and their ways, I found it difficult to believe the evidence of my eyes.

I had concluded my inspection and, dismissing the parade, was walking away when, happening to turn round to ask a question, what was my amazement to see my smart young sub-inspector down on his knees before the aforesaid Brahmin, embracing both his feet in the attitude of one doing homage to an effigy of some much venerated deity. Following on what had so recently occurred, it was obvious that he was making a silent but most abject act of self-abnegation for having had the audacity to address a representative of a sect so sacred and august in the language he had used, and from the condescending manner of the other it was equally evident that such an apology was expected.

The situation would have been most embarrassing, no less for myself than for the two delinquents themselves. Fortunately, they had not observed that I had witnessed it; so, pretending I had not noticed their behaviour, which in the interests of discipline I could not otherwise have ignored, I turned quickly away and left the ground.

A more striking example of the potency of caste, that semi-religious but wholly mysterious ordinance peculiar to India, it would be impossible to imagine, for in the

matter of rank the two men bore much the same relation to each other as would a subaltern and private in the army, where no power of the imagination could conceive anything approaching such a situation. Fortunately, however, there are times when this powerful and all-important factor in the administration of the country, as evidenced by the great Mutiny of 1857, serves a useful purpose, and may be advantageously made use of in police work. As an instance of this I may quote the following incident which occurred to a friend in a neighbouring district, when a serious crime was brought to light after the ordinary police methods had all failed. It is told as related by him.

"A burglary, attended with murder, had been committed in an out-lying village, which had completely baffled the police to detect or even to obtain the smallest clue, for, although suspicion pointed to a local bad character, a 'Dusadh' or low-caste Hindu, no evidence could be found to connect him with the crime. The divisional inspector had finally taken up the case himself, but with no better success, and at length, on his recommendation, an officer from a neighbouring station, who had on one or two occasions shown some detective ability, was placed in charge of the investigation.

"A week or ten days passed, but as from the reports he had sent me daily of his doings he seemed to have made no progress, I went out to this village myself to look into his work, but on arrival was informed that he was laid up with a severe attack of malarial fever and unable to come and pay his respects. As this malady was raging in the village at the time, I had no reason for doubting this information, so, making some enquiries on my own account, returned next morning to the station, half inclined to close the investigation as it seemed useless to continue it. However, some four days later, to my surprise the sub-inspector suddenly turned up at my office with the astonishing information that he had arrested the individual originally suspected, who had made a full confession, as well as two other persons whom the latter had denounced as accomplices.

"But now comes the strange part of the story which, however, I did not learn until some days after the three

accused had been duly tried, convicted and sentenced, for the details of their arrest were not mentioned in the police records nor, consequently, did they come out at the trial, and it was only when discussing the case later with the sub-inspector, that I came to learn how they had been effected.

"It seemed that on taking charge of the case, the officer, finding that the suspected man knew he was suspected, had assiduously set to work to remove this impression, and having thus gained the man's confidence, gradually entrapped him into making certain admissions, showing that he had some knowledge of the facts. This being all he wanted for the development of his plan, he now treated his unsuspecting victim with all the consideration due to one supposed to be assisting the police, eliciting further admissions from him daily, till he was completely in his power, when, suddenly rounding on him, played, as it were, the last trump in his hand. But to understand what follows, it is necessary to explain that the officer in question was a man of exceptionally high caste, being a 'Coolin-Brahmin,' the highest grade of that priestly and most exclusive order, and as such, held in the deepest veneration by Hindus of all classes, high or low. Taking full advantage of this, he now accused the man publicly, before the whole village, of wilfully concealing information and gave out that, such being the case, he, a high-caste Brahmin though he was, would strip himself of his clothing and neither eat nor drink nor clothe himself again until this individual had revealed all, knowing full well that, the village being composed entirely of Hindus, they would bring pressure to bear rather than see a Brahmin suffer such discomfort.

"Apart from its morality the scheme was certainly an ingenious one, and from that point of view, met with the success that it deserved, for although the wretched victim held out for a day the position was untenable. Conscious of his guilt and reviled unceasingly by his fellow villagers, his life was made a burden to him. Thus, at the end of four and twenty hours he fell at the sub-inspector's feet, and confessed to the crime, implicating the two others as already mentioned.



A GOOD DAY'S WORK.
Jalpaigori, 1898.

[*Page* 255.

"My unexpected visit had, however, come perilously near to wrecking this deep-laid plot, for I now learnt that the officer was actually undergoing his self-inflicted penance at the time, and it was only his readiness of invention, characteristic of all natives, whether followers of Brahma or Mohammed, which had saved the situation. For he could not well have appeared before me unclothed, and yet to have donned his clothing, even temporarily, would have been fatal to his project.

"But ingenious as was his scheme, and successful as it had proved, the fact that it had induced the man to confess made his action illegal, hence, much as I admired his zeal and ingenuity, I was reluctantly compelled to suspend him, pending further enquiry into the matter. Eventually, however, in consultation with the magistrate, it was decided that, in consideration of the motive and the excellent character hitherto borne by the officer, his transgression might be regarded as an error of judgment. He was accordingly merely severely reprimanded and warned to be more careful in future, a punishment which, it is needless to say, was only formal and not intended to injure his career."

. . . . . .

My inspection duties being completed and feeling the fascination of the jungle calling me again, after this long spell of comparative civilization, I resolved, instead of returning homewards by road, to strike across the very heart of the forest to a station on its further border which had to be inspected. The distance was roughly about five and twenty miles, which, at the rate of forest travel, meant three marches, for with the exception of an occasional friendly fire line there was neither road nor track other than what the elephants could make, as one following in the footsteps of the other forced their tedious passage through the mass of trees and creepers.

From dawn till long past mid-day we plodded wearily along, making little more than one mile in the hour, and every now and then disturbing some unknown animal, of whose size and species we could only judge by the movement in the jungle as it rushed through it, scared at our approach. Finally, about two in the afternoon, but

already as dark as sun-down, we reached our destination, a forest guard look-out post, known to Kamsin, being one in which in days gone by he had spent many a lonely vigil, and, being larger than most of these airy structures, he had suggested it as my lodging for that night. Here we unloaded the tired elephants, and while their drivers took them down to drink at a jungle stream close by, the old forester, assisted by the present incumbent of the post, prepared the hut for my occupation by the very summary process of turning everything it contained out on to the ground.

I found the hut was quite a roomy one, being built over several spreading branches of the tree on a fairly level platform made of thick bamboos, about twelve feet from the ground. Its walls were of bamboo matting, surmounted by a roof of thatching grass and, for a native dwelling, was extraordinarily clean, probably due to its having been recently repaired. A low maichan, or platform, also of bamboo, occupied one corner of the hut and, with an elephant's quilt spread over it, served later as a bedstead after it had done duty as a table; so on the whole I had no reason to complain of my accommodation nor with its situation, for being so high above ground it was comparatively cool.

The tree, which stood close to a fire-line, was one of the largest I have ever seen, with huge branches growing almost at right angles, and above those which supported the hut was another's platform, or crow's nest, considerably higher up, used as a look-out in the day time by the guard.

Having thoroughly inspected my quarters and arranged the few necessaries I carried conveniently to hand, I amused myself watching the culinary operations going on below, part of which were evidently intended for my benefit, for amongst the raw material displayed I recognized the carcase of a gaudy plumaged jungle cock which I had shot on the way. While some of the men were thus engaged, others were as busily employed constructing a shelter for the night with pads and tarpaulins, in the manner I have already once described, except that on this occasion, the position being a more dangerous one, they used branches in addition,

placing them outside the pads in the form of a zareba. The elephants, too, were more securely tethered, each animal being fastened to a tree with ropes in addition to their chains, and hobbled as well, to prevent a stampede should they scent or hear any animals in the jungle ; these precautions being quite necessary, for, as the guard informed us, tigers and bears often, and occasionally wild elephants, came past the tree at nights.

Long before all these arrangements were completed darkness had set in, and the final preparations had consequently to be made by the light of our only lantern, which, although of many candle-power, showed but as a taper in the inky blackness by which we were surrounded, proving how helpless we should be if attacked by any animal of the cat-tribe gifted with night-sight. The usual camp-fire was out of the question here, for the undergrowth was mostly of grass, inflammable as tinder, and if once ignited would be impossible to extinguish, hence even the cooking fires had to be put out. With the light of the lantern, then, as our sole protection against possible invasion of the camp, we retired to our respective shelters, trusting to Providence and luck to escape the perils of the night.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE novelty of the situation, plus the fact that I had gone to bed some three hours earlier than usual, kept me awake for some time, but except for the continuous tearing and munching sounds made by the elephants as they devoured the leafy branches provided for their use, the forest seemed as silent as if uninhabited by anything possessed of life and faculty of movement. Possibly in our immediate neighbourhood the unwonted sound of human voices had scared the beasts away, but now that the camp was hushed in slumber I might at any moment hear some animal close at hand, for the jungle, except for the narrow strip of fire-line, grew close up to the tree. However, the strain of keeping my attention fixed finally sent me off to sleep, and I must have slept some hours, for when I awoke I found the interior of the hut bathed in brilliant moonlight, and, standing by the bedstead, with his hand on my shoulder, the khaki-clad figure of Kamsin, who had evidently been trying to shake me into consciousness.

"Hullo, what has happened?" I cried, starting up excitedly, as it suddenly occurred to me that one of the elephants, perhaps, had broken loose.

"Get up quickly, Sahib," he whispered, "and bring the 'ikspris.' There is some large animal moving in the jungle close to the fire-line, and if the Sahib is quick he will perhaps get a shot at it."

My smooth-bore, loaded with ball, was lying close beside me, and the "ikspris," otherwise my ·500 express resting against the wall, but, taking the old man's sound advice, I seized the latter and, hurriedly slipping in two cartridges, followed him to the doorway overlooking the fire-line.

Stepping on to the small verandah, I found that—owing to the moon being directly overhead—this track was now

brilliantly lit up, the dark wall of the jungle on each side giving to it the appearance of some silvery mountain torrent flowing through a rift; but I had little time to admire the beauty of the scene, for the next moment two black furry creatures, suddenly emerging out of the darkness, appeared upon the track.

"Bhallook, Sahib," whispered my attendant, "and look! they are coming down this way." And so they proved to be, for, presently, as they came nearer, I could see that they were bears—one an enormous animal, and closely following it, another—evidently a nearly full-grown cub.

With the quaint, waddling gait and manner peculiar to the bear tribe, they walked leisurely down the path—now stopping to sniff at something that attracted them, or—like spoiled children—suddenly bursting into a paroxysm of rage, for no apparent reason, except that they had failed perhaps to find what they were seeking—a white ant-heap, most likely, or some particularly favourite root. I was so absorbed in watching their whimsical proceedings, that I had almost let them pass me without firing when I was reminded of my omission by the more practically minded shikari, to whom the bears' antics afforded no amusement.

"Shoot, Sahib, shoot, or they will get away into the jungle!" he whispered excitedly, evidently at a loss to understand my inaction; but as he spoke I had brought the rifle to my shoulder, and selecting the larger animal, fired quickly, aiming at its head, or as nearly in that direction as was possible in a light so dazzling to the eyes.

Almost simultaneously with the report, there was a quick movement in the jungle below, and the next moment, with a loud reverberating roar, some heavy animal went crashing through it to our left, seeming to pass within a foot or two behind the tree.

Meanwhile a curious and most laughable comedy was being enacted to our front, where the bear, wounded, but evidently not seriously, had turned on its companion and in a manner ridiculously human in its action, was literally punching its head, obviously under the impression that the innocent victim of its wrath had inflicted the injury. As

the luckless object of its fury fell under the blows, the furious beast stood watching it, and no sooner had it risen to its feet, promptly knocked it down again, this performance being repeated several times, till, waiting an opportunity, for I did not wish to hurt the cub, I fired again at its assailant, and this time with evident success, for with a savage cry of rage it dashed into the jungle, followed by the other.

But now again, a few seconds after I had fired, there was another loud, appalling roar, and before I had time to insert fresh cartridges a tiger sprang out of the cover to our left, and clearing the cutting at a bound, landed with a crash into the cover opposite. The beast had undoubtedly been stalking the bears when the first shot was fired, and on hearing another came to the conclusion, no doubt, that it would be dangerous to remain.

The old man was much put out at the sudden appearance of the animal, or rather its sudden disappearance, blaming himself for his stupidity in failing to warn me, and, as we stood listening to it crashing through the jungle in its flight I could hear him muttering curses on the beast for having thus outwitted him. Thinking to console him, I said, "It did not matter, as I should probably have missed, and that at any rate we had probably got a bear," but my attempt to minimize our misfortune was not very successful, for to him, as an old shikari, the blunder was apparently quite unforgiveable.

"Yes, Sahib, the bear has eaten two bullets * and must die during the night, but of what good is a bear when we might have got the tiger, and such a big one too," he added, almost weeping as the recollection of the huge body poised for a second in the air, almost spanning the width of the cutting, came back to his mind.

It was certainly most tantalizing to think how near I had been to securing what would possibly have proved a record tiger, for from the glimpse I had caught of it the beast had seemed a very giant amongst its kind. It was just one of those occasional disappointments which give to big-game shooting the extraordinary fascination it

* A native sporting idiom to express that the animal has been hit.

possesses for the sportsman, a precept I tried to impress on my old henchman. But this view of the question was evidently beyond the sphere of his philosophy, and still reviling himself, and the tiger as being the first beast of any kind that had succeeded in besting him, he descended to his quarters while I retired to bed.

The rest of the night passed uneventfully, and with the first streak of dawn we set out in quest of the bear, taking an elephant with us, but only to bring back the carcase should we be so fortunate as to find it, for it was necessary for us to be on foot as the track left by the animals was difficult to see; in fact, to me, they were not visible at all. But tracking was the old shikari's strongest point, and it was interesting to watch the marvellous skill with which, amongst the many old trails, he picked out the latest, following it as one might a road marked with sign-posts every yard, till we came to a heavy bit of grass exhibiting a tunnel-like passage through it.

Here he paused a moment, and warning me to have my rifle ready, advanced again, but more cautiously, looking constantly to his right and left and as far ahead as he could see, for the passage was tortuous in its course. I followed closely with both my hammers at full cock, and holding the rifle ready for instant use, but, to confess the truth, feeling far less truculent than my attitude might have suggested. Our position was unquestionably a very dangerous one, since the bear, if there and only wounded, might attack us at any moment, and from any quarter; and cramped as we were for room, it would have been difficult to have turned quickly enough to fire with any certainty of killing the beast outright. Fortunately, however, the last bullet, to resume the Indian idiom, had proved an all-sufficient meal, for, presently the passage suddenly widened to some ten feet in diameter, showing a space evidently recently trodden down, and crouched in one corner was the bear, to all appearances alive, though, happily for us, dead as a mummy.

The animal proved to be a she-bear, as we had guessed, but an unusually large one. We found two bullet holes, one through the nose, and this being obviously the first shot, accounted for the onslaught on her cub, the second,

though behind the shoulder, was too far back to be immediately fatal. The cub was nowhere to be seen, having probably gone off on its own account after the rough handling it had been subjected to. While we were examining the carcase the elephant came up, and hoisting the body on to the pad we returned to the hut, whence, after a scratch breakfast eaten while the bear was being skinned by Kamsin, we resumed our journey.

The travelling was much the same as we had experienced the day before, but when we had gone a mile or two we suddenly came upon a track which for a time puzzled even the astute shikari to decipher, till at length his old instincts as a forest guard coming to his assistance he pronounced it to be a path made by some villagers coming to steal firewood from the forest.

"Look, Sahib, you can see where they have cut it," pointing to some axe marks on a tree which were distinctly to be seen and evidently quite fresh. "But where can they have come from?" he continued, suddenly remembering that the nearest village was nearly ten miles distant from this place. However, as the pathway seemed to lead in the direction we were going, we resolved to follow it and solve the mystery if we could, and had proceeded about two hundred yards, when, to our amazement, we heard the barking of a dog, unmistakably an ordinary "pariah," or native cur.

This additional evidence of man's presence, proving beyond a doubt that there must be some unknown village near, or perhaps a temporary encampment, fired my curiosity, and hurrying on the elephants, soon reached what appeared to be a small savannah, from which the grass had either been removed or trampled down. Occupying this clearing were several small, rudely shaped huts, or shelters, made of branches, and moving amongst them, a score or two of strange-looking, scantily attired beings, men, women and children, the last absolutely nude, sturdy little urchins, very different to the sickly, pot-bellied bantlings ordinarily to be seen in Bengal villages.

"They are 'Garos,' Sahib," replied Kamsin, in answer to my enquiry; and such they proved to be, a gang of this strange, nomadic tribe about one hundred in number, who,

as discovered later from their head-man, had left their native hills some months before and, wandering through the western forests of Assam had recently arrived here, to halt, maybe a month, and then move on again, according to their custom. With their strongly marked Mongolian cast of countenance, short, stumpy legs and long bodies, they were, as I have said, a strange looking people, somewhat resembling the " Bhutias " I had seen at the Durbar, but of a type even lower and less human than that semi-savage race. Indeed, both from their appearance and demeanour, they might well have been mistaken for a part of the jungle animal population.

On our arrival, I had noticed that the village, if such it could be called, was seemingly in a wild state of excitement, the cause of which we soon ascertained through Kamsin, who most unfortunately, as it turned out, knew something of their language. It appeared that one of the men, who had gone into the jungle to collect firewood late the evening before, had not returned, and searching for him early that morning, they had discovered that he had evidently been seized and carried off by a tiger. They had found the trail and followed it, till the sound of bones being crunched, interrupted for the moment by a low, muffled growl, warned them to go no further.

This was the substance of their story, repeated by my shikari.

" And there, Sahib," he continued, pointing to a tree about two hundred yards off, " that is where they heard the tiger growling, less than two hours ago ! So, if the Sahib will come at once, we may find him there still ! "

Without waiting for my reply, for he knew I was not likely to refuse, he set to work at once, and the Mahouts, under his directions, quickly divesting their elephants of a portion of their loads, we proceeded up the glade to the spot where the man was said to have been seized. Here we found amply evidence of the tragedy in splashes of blood and fragments of clothing in the foliage through which the man had been dragged. It was evident, too, that he must have been killed instantaneously, otherwise, the " village " being so near, his screams would have been heard.

Meanwhile, Kamsin, who was on foot, had been making a more searching examination, with a view to further proceedings, now unfolded his plan of attack.

"We must beat from this side," he began, "but I must first place the Sahib in position," and, mounting one of the pad elephants, he told my Mahout to follow him. Proceeding along the glade to some distance, we entered the forest, and making a long detour through it, to avoid scaring the tiger, eventually worked round till we came to a comparatively open space, a hundred yards or so beyond the tree. Here, directing my Mahout to conceal his elephant, and carefully noting its position with reference to the tree, he returned to the beaters. Placed as I was, the clearing, scarce thirty feet in width, lay to my front and beyond it, all was dense jungle, extending apparently right up to the glade, which, so far as I could judge, was about three hundred yards from where we stood. About half an hour later, I heard the crashing of the jungle as the elephants commenced to beat; but, contrary to their usual custom, the Mahouts were absolutely silent, this being a part of the old man's plan in order that the tiger, mistaking the elephants for wild ones, might retreat quietly, instead of with a rush, as was likely, should it hear the sound of human voices. In his management of the beat, too, he displayed an ingenuity worthy of his reputation, for as soon as the tiger was afoot, I could see from the movements in the jungle that the direction of the line was being constantly changed so as to induce the animal to break in front of my position, which in such heavy jungle was a feat exceedingly difficult to accomplish. Nevertheless, it was most interesting to watch, for one moment the line could be seen, advancing directly towards me, the next it had turned sharply to the right, to be moved almost immediately in the opposite direction, which it pursued for a while, then, suddenly changing front, rushed back for several yards, and, wheeling round again, continued to advance.

These manœuvres occupied a considerable time and till the elephants had almost reached the end of the cover, when I noticed a slow, sinuous movement in the jungle to my left. The next moment, cleaving the fringe of tangled

undergrowth, a tiger's head appeared and, with a quick yet stealthy tread, the beast emerged on to the clearing. I fired at once, a right and left, as one would at a hare, and the brute, evidently hard hit, acknowledged the first shot with a roar, while the second brought it down on to its knees; but, recovering itself immediately, with one mighty bound, cleared the intervening space, and roaring savagely the while, disappeared into the jungle before I could re-load.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE tiger had hardly ceased roaring in the jungle behind me when the elephants emerged from the cover. The Mahouts now shouted loudly to scare the beast away, for, having heard its roars, they guessed it must be wounded, and, if lying up near, feared it might charge on seeing the line advancing. The old shikari, however, with his keener sense of hearing, had probably heard the beast, as I had, being nearer, making off through the jungle, at any rate, ignoring their fears, he slipped off his elephant and set to work at once, searching for the track to see if he could find any traces of blood.

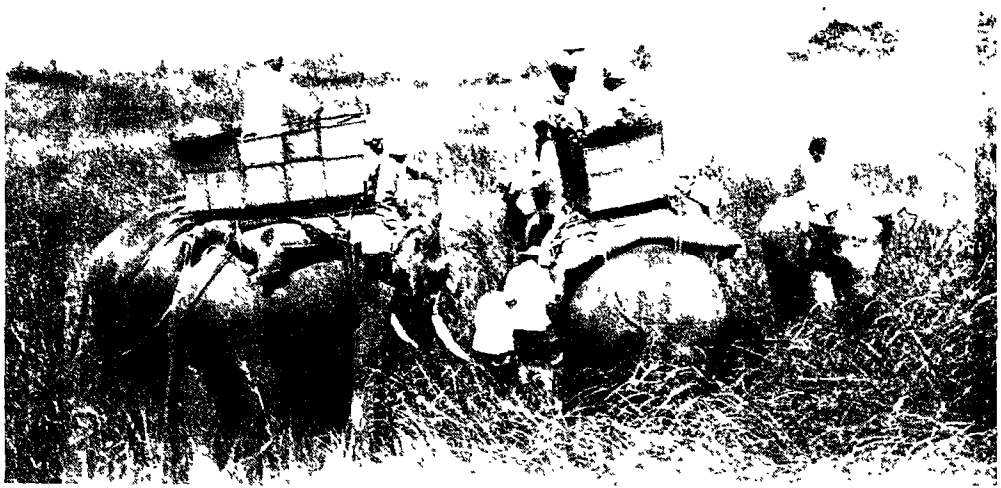
"Wait a moment," I cried, getting off too. "I will show you where the beast came out," but he had already found it.

"Here it is, Sahib," he said, as I joined him, pointing to a slight break in the undergrowth, hardly discernible; then, following what he declared were the animal's foot-prints, which to me were quite invisible, we came to where I had fired the last shot.

Here he paused a while and, examining the spot closely, exclaimed—

"This is where he must have 'eaten the bullets,' for, look, Sahib! here are some marks which show that he fell!" and looking to where he pointed, I could see there were two slight depressions in the ground. "But," he went on, muttering to himself, "how did he reach the jungle? The foot-prints end here, and a tiger is not a bird that he can fly." Then, as I was about to explain, the truth seemed suddenly to dawn on him, and, measuring the distance with his eye, he cried out in amazement, "Kali Mai,* he must have sprung from here!" His

* Kali (goddess), "Mother," and, as made use of here, equivalent to an Englishman's "By Jove!"



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remark was met with loud cries of derision from the Mahouts, who, on their respective elephants, were crowded round us.

"Impossible, it cannot be," said one, an old grey-beard, always somewhat jealous of Kamsin. "Who has ever heard of a tiger jumping more than twelve cubits? If this one can so do, it must be a 'Bhooth.'" *

This suggestion seemed to make some impression on his credulous companions. I thought it was time to interfere, for I knew that once they got this notion into their heads, they might possibly object to following up the beast. Accordingly, ordering the old man "to hold his tongue and not talk such nonsense, as I had myself seen the tiger take the leap," we walked on to where it had plunged into the jungle and there, to my delight, found the leaves and branches smeared and splashed with blood.

"Look!" cried Kamsin, excitedly, turning to the Mahouts, and holding up a blood-stained leaf, "Old Meajan there has told us this tiger is a 'Bhooth;' if so, he must be made of flesh and blood, which is impossible. Bah! he talks like an old woman; but are we, who are men, to be frightened with his nonsense?"

This speech, quite a long one for him, had just the effect that he intended, and the men, who had already evinced some reluctance to follow up the tiger, now seemed keen to do so. For, like most of their dangerous calling, cowardice formed no part of their nature, and once assured there was nothing supernatural about the animal, were quite prepared to take all ordinary risks. But although the old shikari's specious arguments had overcome their scruples, I could not be blind to the fact that we were embarking on a very dangerous undertaking, yet little did I guess what the old man's successful oration was to cost him, or how the events of the next half-hour were to influence my own life for many a year to come; but I must not anticipate.

My intrepid old attendant, having gained his point, now suggested that he should precede my elephant on foot along the tiger's track; but this I declined absolutely to permit.

* Ghost, or Spirit of Evil.

"No," I said, "the track is clear enough for my Mahout to see it," and, ordering the old man to mount and follow my elephant closely, we started, the line extended to the right and left following behind us.

We had been proceeding in this manner for about three hundred yards, when we came to another little clearing, but whether the tiger had crossed this, or, skirting the jungle, had gone to the right or left, was difficult to discover without closer examination, as the track seemed to have come to an end.

Spreading out the elephants, we were carefully examining the ground, hoping to find something to guide us, when I heard Kamsin, as I thought, on the elephant behind me, talking to his Mahout.

"Very strange," he was saying, "I wonder where he can have gone to?" Then, sarcastically, with a laugh, "Perhaps, old Meajan was right and the tiger was a 'Bhooth' after all—eh, brother?"

I turned quickly round to speak to him, but only to find that there was no one on the pad and the next moment, to my horror, saw that he had dismounted, and now down on his hands and knees, was calmly examining the ground in front of a small clump, about twelve feet away.

I called to him angrily to get on to his elephant at once, yelling loudly in my excitement and anxiety for his safety, but the words were hardly out of my mouth, when, with a roar doubly appalling from the proximity of the sound, the tiger was upon him, bearing him to the ground with the impetuosity of its charge.

Fortunately the old man had risen to his feet, presumably to obey my order, and in falling backwards broke, to some extent, the force of the impact. Happily, too, he was carrying his gun, which, with a presence of mind characteristic of the old sportsman, he held across his face, and as the tiger bore him down, managed to thrust it between its jaws, thus, for a time, practically gagging the furious beast.

Lying flat on his back, with the tiger half standing, half-crouched over him, he still stuck manfully to his gun, thrusting it forward to the full length of his arms, while the beast, thus prevented from using its teeth, struck

furiously at him with its claws, at the same time making savage efforts to close its jaws on the weapon, as if under the impression it was a part of its victim.

Meanwhile I watched the desperate struggle with mind and body both paralyzed with horror for the moment at the old man's terrible situation, which I felt must soon end in his death, for he had been already severely clawed, and was visibly growing weaker.

Nevertheless, strange as it may seem, this temporary suspension of my faculties ultimately proved his salvation, for, otherwise in the excitement of the moment, I would probably have fired, in which case one of two things must inevitably have happened. Either, I would have hit the tiger and thus provoked it to killing the man at once, even should the shot prove fatal in the end, or, what was equally likely, I might have shot the man instead, for the two were welded so closely together that it was practically impossible to fire at the one without hitting the other. Whereas these few seconds of mental and physical inaction, brief as they had been, had not only averted these dangers, but, as often happens in such cases, left me calm and collected and thus inclined to act with greater circumspection.

However, suddenly impelled with a feeling of conviction that there was but one thing to be done, I dropped my rifle on to the pad and calling on the Mahouts to join me, shouted as loudly as I could, at the same time clapping my hands together, to add to the tumult.

At the loud, and, to a wild animal, doubtless awe-inspiring sounds, the tiger turned its head and looking up for a moment, sprang back into the clump, and rushing quickly through it, entered the jungle beyond.

Already prepared, should my experiment fail, to get off and try to shoot the beast on foot, I was down in a second, and while the animal was still to be heard crashing through the jungle, had, with the assistance of Meajan, who strangely enough was the first to come to my assistance, carried the wounded man to a shady spot under a small tree. He was quite unconscious, but, thanks to his plucky defence with his gun, still living, for the tiger, having eventually wrested the weapon from his grasp, was still venting its rage on it when disturbed. Nevertheless, in

the brief space of time that had elapsed since its attack, two minutes probably at the most, the injuries it had inflicted on its victim, with its claws, were too terrible to look on. The left side of his face was laid bare, almost to the bones, while the shoulders, arms, and chest, down to the waist, were ploughed with furrows, as if with a rake. Of his clothing, the old, familiar khaki suit, there was hardly six square inches left intact and, from the fragments that remained, one might have supposed the material had been originally crimson.

Pouring some whisky into his mouth, part of which he seemed to swallow, he presently revived, and opening his eyes, which I was thankful to find uninjured, he looked earnestly at me a moment, then, in a hoarse whisper, enquired eagerly whether the tiger had been killed ?

I was about to reply, when his question was answered by the beast itself in a loud reverberating roar, which came echoing through the jungle. The old man had heard it too and, as if the sound had temporarily restored his failing strength, started up excitedly into a half sitting position.

" Sahib," he cried, in a voice trembling with emotion, vainly attempting to raise his mutilated arms in supplication. " Your slave is lying helpless here, and likely to die, but, he knows the gods will spare him, if the tiger's life is offered up to them instead," and falling back again as he concluded, relapsed into unconsciousness.

" What does he mean ? " I asked, turning to Meajan for an explanation of what I guessed was some native superstition.

" He has spoken true words, Huzoor," replied the old Mahout, " for, amongst these jungle people it is said that if a hunter is wounded by any animal he is hunting, the man, unless the beast is killed, is sure to die."

He then went on to tell me, that, knowing Kamsin to be a firm believer in this maxim, he feared, if we allowed the tiger to escape, the old man would fret himself to death. Under these circumstances it seemed to me the best thing I could do was to follow the tiger up at once. However, before setting out, assisted by the old Mahout, we washed the old shikari's wounds as well as we could, with a weak

solution of carbolic acid, which I always carried with me, and making him as comfortable as possible with his own bedding, taken off the elephant, we left him in charge of my orderly and khitmagar * with strict orders to tell him, at once should he come to during our absence, that the Sahib had gone to shoot the tiger. We found no difficulty in following up the beast, for its wounds seemed to have broken out afresh, and drops of blood, here and there, in small patches, marked its path in addition to the track that it had made.

To make a long story short, however, we soon came upon it, sooner, indeed, than we expected, for we had hardly entered the larger jungle, when with a loud, coughing roar, it suddenly sprang out at my elephant, doubtless intending to seize it by the trunk.

But my animal was too old a shikari to be caught in this way. Curling up this most sensitive portion of its anatomy, it went promptly down upon its knees, and with its solitary tusk piercing the beast right through the ribs literally pinned it to the ground.

This was all very well for the elephant, and, doubtless from the strategic point of view, a movement much to be commended, but, for me, this very sudden change in its position came perilously near to breaking my neck, or at the best being mauled by the tiger.

Shot out of the pad as if expelled by a catapult I found myself flying through space, with the rifle in hand to which I clung tenaciously, with the same inane persistence as a drowning man to his straw, and finally landed, fortunately as it happened, on a portion of my person less frangible than the neck, to receive the next moment a stinging blow across my face. When sufficiently collected to take in my surroundings I found I was lying within three feet of the tiger, which as it writhed and circled round its ivory pivot, vainly attempting to claw the elephant's head, had evidently struck me with its tail. Rolling out of its way, in time to avoid another blow I scrambled to my feet, and, watching my opportunity emptied both my barrels into the squirming carcase, whereupon, to my horror, the elephant, as if now resolved

* Table servant.

to leave the matter in my hands, with a sudden upward movement of its tusk projected the still living beast over my head into the jungle behind, whence with hardly a moment's pause it rushed open mouthed at me. Fortunately, I had reloaded at once, and as the beast approached I fired a right and left into its mouth and loading again as I retreated sought refuge behind the elephant's huge body. But there was no further cause for alarm, the last two bullets had done their business thoroughly, and I had hardly reached my shelter when I heard the welcome cries: "Murgya, Sahib, Murgya," * raised in chorus by the Mahouts. The tigress, for such she proved to be, had died without a sound, and I found her lying as she had fallen—flat on her chest, with her head blown almost to atoms by the two hollow bullets, both of which had evidently broken up. She was an ordinary sized tigress, just over eight foot two, and apparently had cubs with her, for the "kill," which the Mahout's had come across was already almost eaten to the bones.

Loading her on to a pad, not without some difficulty, we hurried back, anxious to communicate the good news to Kamsin whom we found now conscious again, propped up against the tree and evidently anxiously awaiting the result of the shots which he had doubtless heard. As he caught sight of the elephants I could see him looking eagerly from one to the other till his eyes lit on the one carrying the carcase, and it was curious to see the look of intense relief that came over his features, mutilated though they were, on seeing the long striped body hanging across the pad.

"Look, Kamsin," I shouted, pointing to the carcase, "you see we have killed the tiger, so now your wounds will quickly heal;" this I added thinking to encourage him by pretending I shared his strange belief.

The tears gathered in his eyes, but, controlling his emotion with an effort, he replied in terms too extravagant for repetition, "that owing to my all-powerful intervention," etc., etc., "his life would now assuredly be saved but," he continued, his sporting instincts still strong within him, "his slave would like much to hear how the beast was

* "He is dead, sir; he is dead."

killed." I told him exactly what had happened, and while listening with rapt attention to the tale of the encounter he seemed quite to forget his own terrible experience. "Of what use am I as a shikari," he cried as I concluded; "to be lying here like a stone, while the Sahib was fighting the tiger by himself?" But, as I tried to impress on him, the more important question at the moment was how he was to be transported to our last encampment, where I had decided to take him for the night, *en route* back to Alipur for treatment at the hospital. However, finally, at his own suggestion we lifted the old man carefully on to a small elephant, noted for her smooth paces, and wended our way slowly back to the hut, the orderly and my servant seated on each side of the pad to prevent his rolling off.

On arrival we made him as comfortable as circumstances would admit, on a pad placed under the shelter of the tree, for it was impossible to carry him up into the hut, and rigged a tent over him with tarpaulin to keep off the dew, which at that season was heavy almost as rain. The old Mahout and I sat up with him in turn, administering weak whisky and water at intervals throughout the night, but in spite of the ghastly nature of his wounds it was curious to see how wonderfully he had picked up since assured of the tiger's death, while the proximity of its skin, now hanging on a branch close by, seemed to afford him infinite satisfaction. We were fortunately not disturbed during the night, and with the first glimpse of dawn replacing the pad carefully on to the elephant, started on our return journey, literally retracing our steps along the track we had made two days before, and consequently did the distance in a little more than half the time.

We made straight for the hospital, where the native doctor, though at first somewhat aghast at the magnitude of the task, finally accomplished it with considerable skill, treating each wound with nitrate of silver till the old man, stoic as he was, cried out with the pain, declaring that the doctor was putting live coals on to the wounds. However, after the injuries had all been thoroughly cauterized, and where possible stitched up, he was given an opiate, to which unaccustomed luxury he immediately succumbed,

leaving the doctor at leisure to tell me his opinion, which he did at once in the usual " Doctor Babu " phraseology.

" Most awful serious case, sir," he began, doubtless as a hedge. " But his honour's happy-thoughted washings and carbolic at early stage has much arrested evil progress and patient will recover soon no doubt, D.V., by leaps and bounds. "

This was eminently satisfactory, so far as it went. Unfortunately, the latter portion of his prophecy was not realized, for, so far from the recovery being made by " leaps and bounds," the poor old man was laid up for two months, and then only recovered at the expense of his left arm, which was withered and useless from the shoulder, and a face scarred almost beyond recognition.

Meanwhile, as there seemed no improvement, the next morning I decided to obtain better advice if possible, accordingly started later in the day for headquarters, hoping to induce my friend McFarlane, our sporting civil surgeon, to come out and see the old man himself.

CHAPTER THE LAST

I TRAVELLED by the ordinary route along the road, being as anxious now to avoid the jungle as I had been to traverse it, for the excitement of it being over, the terrible scene I had witnessed seemed to have left a lasting impression on my mind which, strive as I might, I could not forget. Halting for the night at one of my police-stations half-way, I arrived at headquarters late the next evening and went at once to see the doctor, whom I found seated at dinner with half the station round him. It happened to be one of his bi-weekly entertainments, or " treatments " as he facetiously termed them, as an excuse for these convivialities, pretending that for a man to dine alone was fatal to his digestion !

" Hullo ! " he cried, as I came in unannounced, " what's brought you back so soon ? But come, sit you down, we have only just begun."

I required no persuasion for I had eaten nothing since the morning, but first told him the errand I had come on.

" Of course I'll go out at once," he said, as soon as he learnt the serious nature of the wounds. " I can start to-night if you will arrange a ' Palki-dak,' for though my chap at Alipur is all right, so far as he goes, this job may prove beyond him."

" I will come too," said Keenan, who with Woods had arrived the day before. " I have to go there again in any case, and would like to see how the old man is getting on; but I think we had better drive," he continued, " it will be quicker than going by ' Palki.' "

Matters being thus arranged, orders were given to send horses out at once to the various stages on the road, to allow of an early start being made, all of us contributing to the number of animals required for the journey, which, as the distance was fifty miles, would take seven horses to

accomplish. After dinner and a pipe or two, the two intending travellers soon retired to bed, when Miles, who was also one of the guests, and Woods, made me repeat the story all over again, listening with untiring attention, for neither could understand how so cute an individual as the old shikari had allowed himself to be surprised by the tiger. However, when at length they realized how close the beast had lain and how very suddenly it had sprung on him, they could not but admire the extraordinary presence of mind he had shown in protecting his face; for, as Miles rightly remarked, nine men out of ten would probably have given in at once and thus been killed outright.

The incident caused quite a sensation in the town, where the old man had been well known for many years as "the great shikari," and quite a mob assembled the next morning to see the "Doctor Sahib" and "Jungli Lord Sahib" start, the fact of two high European officials showing such concern for a poor native being quite unintelligible to their minds.

I may mention here that their mission proved eminently successful, for although they found the patient almost *in extremis*, McFarlane's skill, aided by the old man's delight at finding two Sahibs had come to see him, worked wonders, and from that moment he began to mend, eventually recovering as I have already stated.

The doctor told me later that at first he thought the case was hopeless, and feared blood-poisoning would set in, but that, although he had done his best, he was quite convinced no skill of his could have saved the patient's life, but for the old man's own belief in his recovery and what he termed the "Jungli Lord Sahib's" marvellous condescension in having come out all that way to see a pensioned "Pharas-Gad."

In the mean time my accidental meeting with the Garos in the forest, which had led to the disaster, turned out an event of no little importance, which I venture to relate as an example of the difficulties with which a district officer is confronted in his attempts to administer efficiently some of the remoter and less civilized districts of Bengal.

At the time the incident occurred, the decennial census of the province was about to be taken; the preliminary

counting had already been done and the schedules all prepared for the final enumeration to take place later. Miles, on hearing of these Garos, had at once sent for the schedule for that part of the district, and, examining it, found, as he suspected, that this gang had not been entered; hence, but for my accidental discovery, these hundred or more individuals would have escaped enumeration altogether, whereas this omission led to stricter enquiries being made, with the result that several other similar wandering gangs were discovered and counted.

But to resume this record of my adventures, which is now drawing to a close; indeed, so far as it would be of any further interest to sporting readers it may be said to have ended automatically with the disaster, since, shortly after it and for many years afterwards, my life was passed in the humdrum existence of an ordinary Indian station, where anything approaching to a sporting adventure was less likely to be met with than in Piccadilly or Pall Mall. For, as already hinted, with the reaction generally following on a period of intense excitement, such as I had just experienced, I found, shortly after my return to the station, that life in the jungle with all its attendant attractions which had hitherto possessed so strong a fascination for me, now seemed gradually to be losing its charms, till at length I came to look upon it with such feelings of horror that I vowed I would never enter a jungle again. My love of sport, too, which I had imagined nothing could have diminished, had changed to a feeling almost of abhorrence from the moment I had seen my faithful old attendant lying helpless and bleeding underneath the tiger. This may appear to be an hysterical, or, at best, an exaggerated view to take of an accident which, in big game shooting, is always liable to occur, but by any one who has had the misfortune to witness such a scene as I have attempted to describe, these feelings will be readily understood. Under these circumstances, it was obviously useless to remain on in a district of this kind, and the fact that both my friends, Miles and the Doctor, were shortly about to take furlough, acting as an additional incentive, I made up my mind to try and get away too. Accordingly, when some three months later an opportunity occurred

of obtaining a transfer, I availed myself of it at once, and was eventually posted to a district in that portion of the province generally known as Eastern Bengal.

Before leaving I had a final interview with my old shikari, who, except for his withered arm, had now fully recovered, and, evidently as keen as ever, had hardly been out of hospital a week when he accompanied Miles and the others on another tiger-hunt. He had brought the news of the "kill" to me first as usual, and when I told him I had given up shooting, and why, had seemed much perplexed, my reasons being apparently quite beyond his comprehension, till at length it appeared suddenly to strike him that I was probably suffering from some temporary derangement of the brain which would presently adjust itself.

"But what will the Sahib do when he is better if, as he says, in the place to which he is going there is nothing to shoot?" he said, ignoring my explanation, as if quite confident that with the restoration of my mental equilibrium all would come right again, according to his ideas. "The Huzoor, like all other Sahibs," he continued, meaning my predecessors, "will assuredly come back to Jalpaigori, where he will find his servant always present." The possibility that he might by then have been himself transferred to the happier hunting grounds seemed not to enter into his calculations, despite his threescore years and ten.

I saw it was useless trying to make the old man understand my feelings on the subject, so telling him that perhaps I might return some day, and that in the meantime I had arranged for a sum to be paid monthly to him as pension, dismissed him with the present of a hunting knife I had purchased for this purpose. As he left the compound I could hear him invoking all the ordinary Hindu deities, and many others of the somewhat mixed mythology he believed in, to pour down every blessing on my head, and, above all, to devote all their energies towards guiding my footsteps back to these jungles, this being apparently the most important supplication he was concerned with at the moment.

This was the last I saw of the fine old sportsman, for although he lived for many years, as evidenced by my

cheque-book, he died before I returned to Jalpaigori, but I heard of him up to the last, and that to within a few weeks of his death, which resulted from a cobra bite, he had successfully manœuvred the destruction of the largest tiger ever shot in that district.

I left that night *en route* to join my new appointment, travelling, on this occasion, the whole way by Palki to Purneah, where I spent a day or two with my old friend Burke. From there I drove the thirty miles to Calvert's bungalow, and, spending the night there, took train next morning for Calcutta. Here I happened luckily to hit on a steamer leaving the same day for a place called Goalundo, whence, after a day's voyage by steamer and country boat through various winding rivers, I ultimately reached Furreeidpur, the headquarters of my new district.

The station and, as I found later, also the district were both vastly different to my recent jungle habitation, the first being considerably larger, with properly constructed houses, instead of bungalows, standing in huge compounds. It boasted, too, of Law Courts, substantially built of brick, and of a size, as I found later, in proportion to the requirements of the people, whose love of litigation exceeded anything I had seen. The district was many more miles in area, thickly populated all over, and being lowlying and alluvial in its nature, was one of the principal paddy-growing centres in the province. Of jungles, properly so called, there were none, and, except for an occasional wild boar, wild animals were unheard of. The number of Europeans, however, were comparatively few, beyond the usual district officials, of whom there were but four, but most of these being married and some, the senior ones, possessed of daughters, newly out from home, the total white population, including some non-officials, amounted to about a dozen in all.

I had not been many days installed in my new office before I discovered that my hours of leisure would be few, for crime, I found, was astonishingly prevalent; but, as I gained more knowledge of the people, I ceased to be surprised, since, so far as I could judge, from past statistics, one half of the population appeared to be composed of most of the criminal classes in Bengal, while the

standard of morality possessed by the rest seemed but little higher. Finally, after some months of unremitting toil, I was forced to the conclusion that it would be useless to continue, for while, owing to these efforts, some of the principal leaders of these gangs were now occasionally arrested, the amount of false swearing indulged in by both sides made it quite impossible for the Courts to convict in any of the cases, and so it went on till at length I realized that evidence in this district was a marketable commodity, to be purchased for a sum, varying in amount according to its importance and the status of the witness. Indeed, to best describe the district and its people briefly, I cannot do better than quote the following verse from a poem written by a Bengal civilian-poet, who had served for many years in these parts, and apparently had one of these districts in mind when writing. I cannot quite recall the exact wording of the verse, but, so far as I remember, it ran somewhat in this strain:—

"Our church as at present it stands
Has neither a parson nor steeple.
The lands are all low-lying lands,
And the people are low, lying, people."

Yet, strangely enough, sordid, cunning and intriguing as was the general character of these people, they were by no means deficient in courage, a quality rarely seen in combination with such natures, and the presence of which added considerably to my troubles, leading as it did to frequent sanguinary contentions and riots, often ending in loss of life. However, by an ingenious, though perhaps somewhat arbitrary interpretation of the law empowering enrolment of special constables, we contrived eventually to nip some of these impending disturbances in the bud, and finally to stamp out this class of crime altogether.

The process was as simple as it proved invariably effective in all cases reported in good time, when immediately on receipt of the information the leaders of each party were promptly appointed special constables and called in at once to the police-station concerned to fill the gaps caused by the deputation of the "regulars" to the village or villages in question. Meanwhile the subject matter of the dispute was enquired into and finally referred

to the Court, where it was decided with all possible despatch, and, as a rule, to the mutual satisfaction of both parties, or at worst, in such a manner as to prevent any recrudescence for some time to come.

"Dacoities," burglaries, and thefts, however, still continued to be committed with unabated frequency, and it was only when an occasional, supposedly repentant, culprit confessed to his crime that such cases were detected, and even then it was often doubtful whether such confession was genuine or extorted. For, despite the then recently remodeled and, believed to be, purified police force, there was still the suspicion that the detective methods of the old police "Darogahs," * of which confessions, elicited by torture, was one of the chief features, had not as yet been quite forgotten or abandoned.

Many were the stories, still current in the district, of the doings of these bygone myrmidons of the law, especially as to the various measures they adopted for eliciting information or confessions from witnesses or prisoners as the case might be; of these, two perhaps merit special mention, if only for the devilish ingenuity with which they were conceived.

For the first, the services of a beetle were enlisted, preferably one of the burrowing kind, which, being placed on the victim's stomach, was covered over with a glass, or other concave vessel. The insect, thus finding itself a prisoner, might wander round the prison for a while, but eventually, following its natural instincts, would proceed to burrow into the flesh, till the agony caused by this process elicited the information required.

The second plan was, if possible, even more ingenious besides possessing the additional merit of leaving no marks, but could only be made use of when two or more persons were "put to the question" at one time, and provided they both had beards or moustaches, which, as the bulk of the population was Mohammedan, were generally available.

Given then that the persons to be operated on were

* Station officers of the old—practically unsupervised—police force were styled Darogahs, and, being more or less omnipotent, were often a terror to the people in out-of-the-way localities.

possessed of one or other of these appendages, the operation was performed in the following manner. The subjects to be treated were made to stand close together, facing each other, and their beards or moustaches being connected together with thin twine, the men were held firmly in this position by some of the operators, while another administered a pinch of snuff to each, continuing the excruciating process till the confession, or information, wanted was extracted.

With these examples of police ingenuity, and many others more clumsy, but none the less fiendish in conception, it would obviously have been dangerous to insist on a higher standard of efficiency, lest there should be a recurrence of such happenings, some of which, I was told, had taken place in comparatively recent times. I concluded, therefore, that of the two, it was best to choose the lesser evil, as my predecessors apparently had done. Nevertheless, to one responsible, as I was, for the efficiency of the force, it was heartrending to find these offences against property being committed night after night with unceasing repetition, when I felt that, with a trustworthy police force, they might have been stamped out altogether, or, at any rate, considerably reduced. In this respect, however, I was but one of many, for the heads of every district police force in Bengal, indeed throughout India, are more or less handicapped in this manner, since individual effort however persevering and untiring can effect but little good if unsupported; how much less then if opposed, passively though it be, not only by the subordinate police, but also by the people, with whom bribery and corruption of all kinds are traditionary institutions, amounting almost to unwritten law, to be cherished and made use of when the opportunity occurs.

Under these circumstances it will not be surprising to learn that when, at the end of two long years of unrequited labour, my furlough falling due, I was glad to make this the excuse for severing my connection with this district and its people, both so aptly described in the verse I have quoted; the last two lines of which might, I fear, be as truthfully applied to many other districts in that portion of Bengal. However, the knowledge I had gained stood

me in good stead, for this experience of the seamy side of human nature, as exhibited by these people, proved invaluable when later in my service I was called upon to decide questions of importance in which the truth often lay even deeper than " at the bottom of a well." Nevertheless, a week or so later, as I was slowly retracing my way along those deep, winding snake-like rivers, so singularly suggestive of the people inhabiting their shores, I felt much as the prisoner must feel who, after two long years of confinement and compulsory, uncongenial labour, finds himself once more a free agent. For again the spell of the jungles had come over me, and I found myself once more longing for its wild untrammelled life, but, alas! on my return from furlough the exigencies of the service kept me employed for many years in more civilized but less interesting districts of the province. But throughout this long period of uncongenial toil, " the call of the wilds " was for ever ringing in my ears, till at length, my old district falling vacant, I applied for and obtained a re-transfer, but only to find that time had wrought such drastic changes that it was difficult to believe the place could be the same I had known.

A railway now traversed the largest of its jungles, with tea-gardens, at intervals, on each side of the line, and where in former years elephants, tigers and rhinoceri had held undisputed sway the managers of these gardens now reigned in their stead; while the noisy " tom-toms," accompanying revels of their coolies, were now the only noises of the night.

Sic transit gloria mundi, I thought to myself, best expressed the situation, when after two further years of service I submitted my application to retire, for with the passing of the jungles the glory had indeed departed from these wilds, which, no longer a paradise for the sportsman, soon became the centre of an industry destined to develop into one of the greatest in Bengal.

POSTSCRIPT

As I read through these recollections and find how vividly each incident and adventure, some of which date back to forty years ago, are impressed upon my mind, I cannot fail to realize how grateful Anglo-Indians in particular should be, to a Providence who in its wisdom has ordained that with advancing age, events which marked their earlier years of life should be so indelibly recorded on the tablets of the memory; since, but for this providential dispensation, the pensioned, and often penurious, after-years of most retired Indian officials would be shorn of much that makes their lives still worth the living.

For such memories of the past must necessarily be dear to most of them, recalling as they do not only a period of activity, usefulness, and power, but of many an exciting incident and adventure in which they have taken part, for it must be remembered that in the India of forty years ago, those who helped to govern her were, many of them, employed in districts far removed from telegraph and rail, hence often called upon to decide important questions on the spot and without assistance or advice.

Such freedom of action necessarily at times gave rise to situations which, in the present day, could probably only be dealt with after voluminous correspondence and much expenditure of red tape; were then generally disposed of summarily by the process commonly known as rule of thumb. Thus the Indian officials of the period, embraced in these recollections, had many opportunities not only of displaying their individual capabilities, but of experiencing incidents and adventures both interesting at the time and pleasing to recall.

But apart from the official reminiscences there must always have been in most Anglo-Indian lives, other memories as pleasing in their way: to the sportsman, for

example, memories connected with big game shooting, of a kind as rare and varied as any to be obtained in countries less accessible and with infinitely less trouble. Nor to the man who had found his pleasure in society, would such retrospection fail to be agreeable, for in the larger stations and during periods of leave to the hills, Anglo-Indian life can also be exceeding enjoyable from the social point of view.

True, India as a field for the writer has already perhaps been overmuch exploited, but mostly in the form of fiction, for, except in the case of the great Mutiny, few writers have recorded their personal experiences of the country and none, so far as I am aware, of life in the Indian police.

In these circumstances, I am encouraged to hope that this record of recollections of a life in that service, covering a period of three-and-thirty years, may, if only for the novelty of the subject, prove of sufficient interest to justify its production.

But it is to the sportsman, past and present, that these memories may probably most appeal, for there must be many amongst this brotherhood, who have hunted in the jungles of Bengal, and more, no doubt, who would have done so if they could. Even to these, however, the incidents should be interesting, for with all true sportsmen, to read of the experiences of others, if occasionally somewhat tantalizing, is none the less enjoyable for that reason.

Be this as it may, to all who have been kind enough to wade through these recollections, I offer my apologies for the many defects and imperfections of style, language, and construction, that they may probably have found, for although blessed with a passably good memory, I can make no claim to be possessed of the literary gift without which facts, however well remembered and abundant, cannot be as attractively reproduced.

THE END

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

"DULALL THE FOREST GUARD"

A Tale of Sport and Adventure in the Forests of Bengal.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

The Scotsman, November 15, 1909.—"It is capital reading as a story, and the scenery, natural history, hunting lore, and native customs are obviously drawn from personal observation."

Publishers' Circular, November 20, 1909.—"Mr. Gouldsbury knows the country well, and his narrative bears the impression of reality."

Morning Post, November 29, 1909.—"Mr. Gouldsbury, late of the Bengal Police, has written a bright, realistic little book on sport and adventure in the Bengal forests . . . his descriptions are so lifelike, he knows so much of hunting lore and native customs, that he must have written from personal observation. . . . The chief character is Dulall Sing, a forest guard. . . . He is true to life, the embodiment of several skilled Shikaris. . . . There is no need to select particular incidents as more exciting or interesting than others. Perhaps the description of the tiger-shoot . . . is as good as any. But there are other scenes also which Mr. Gouldsbury has depicted with light touches and evident accuracy. . . . Mr. Gouldsbury tells his story simply and tersely. . . . Not only boys, but older people also will read this little book with pleasure. This cannot be said of every book on sport."

Freeman's Journal, November 26, 1909.—"The author has exceptional qualifications for writing a story of this sort. . . . The book is well written, and is both interesting and amusing. . . . The author holds out the hope . . . that he may be inclined to further describe the doings of Dulall, and we trust he may do so."

Newcastle Chronicle, November 26, 1909.—"Mr. C. E. Gouldsbury has turned the experience he gained as an officer in the Indian Police to fine advantage in 'Dulall the Forest Guard.' . . . Mr. Gouldsbury . . . can tell a good story well, and that is not, after all, such a common acquirement."

Broad Arrow, November 27, 1909.—"This is a good account by a late member of the Indian Police of sporting holidays in search of big game in the forests of Bengal. . . . The author spins a good yarn, which will no doubt find many readers."

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

Outlook, December 4, 1909.—"Some smaller books to which we gladly call attention are . . . 'Dulall the Forest Guard,' by C. E. Gouldsbury."

Field, December 4, 1909.—"A pleasant tale of sport and adventure in the forests of Bengal is told by Mr. C. E. Gouldsbury in 'Dulall the Forest Guard.' . . . The adventures which ensued are well told. . . . The author's own experience of an Indian forest and knowledge of the way in which tiger hunting is carried out with the aid of elephants and beaters has enabled him to indite some realistic description and to give the proper local colour to his story. With the exception of a frontispiece . . . there are no illustrations; nor, indeed, are any needed, for the narrative is so complete in detail as to be sufficiently convincing."

Bookseller, December, 1909.—"The writer of this vivid and lifelike story of sport and adventure is . . . an ex-officer of the Indian Police. . . . For the purposes of his story he imagined . . . two active young fellows . . . who have come out to India . . . and spent part of their leisure in sporting expeditions . . . under the charge of one Dulall Sing, an old . . . forest guard. His portrait is so graphically drawn that we cannot help quoting. . . . The author, as we have already seen, possesses the gift of vivid descriptions, and he also knows how to make the best of a dramatic and exciting situation. His book, therefore, carries conviction with it, and the reader is only too sorry when the end is reached . . . and any one who reads the present volume will await its successor with eager anticipation."

Literary World, December, 1909.—"In 'Dulall the Forest Guard' Mr. C. E. Gouldsbury recites the adventures and exploits of two . . . young Englishmen in the forests. . . . He writes in a natural and cheery style, which is in keeping with his subject. . . . Dulall . . . is a quaintly interesting personage. The book will be thoroughly appreciated by all lovers of sport."

Manchester Daily Guardian, December 15, 1909.—"'Dulall the Forest Guard' . . . is a book of out-of-the-way sport and life in India. . . . Much of it is curious, and some of it exciting. Mr. Gouldsbury has made a patient study of old Dulall. He has been in many of the dangerous situations which sport in India provides. The book is a simple, pleasant narrative."

Birmingham Daily Post, December 22, 1909.—"The author was at one time in the Indian Police, and he paints a series of vivid pictures of life in the Empire."

Academy, January 1, 1910.—"The title disguises a record of some of the adventures of the author in India. . . . When writing of sport in his boyhood, Mr. Gouldsbury's style is simple, fresh, and attractive. He becomes a boy again. . . . We assure our readers that this book is a true account of Indian sport and travel, and we think they will ask Mr. Gouldsbury . . . to continue these adventures and relate the further doings of 'Dulall the Forest Guard.'"

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

The Englishman (Calcutta), December 23, 1909—"'Dulall the Forest Guard' is an interesting little book which gives a very fair idea of the country and general Shikar, and also portrays the faithfulness of the . . . Shikaris to the life."

Spectator, January 18, 1910—"Readable novels 'Dulall the Forest Guard' a tale of sport with some glimpses of life among English and natives"

Daily Telegraph, February 16, 1910—"'Dulall the Forest Guard' The author of this fresh, breezy book, Mr C E Gouldsbury, is an old member of the Indian Police, and it is clear from his lively story that he is a good sports man who has seen many adventures in pursuit of big game His book can hardly be described as a novel it is rather an easy going, unaffected narrative of a holiday in the jungle . Mr Gouldsbury, in a bright, unaffected fashion, tells his tale of tiger and bear with plenty of spirit and good will All lovers of good sport will enjoy this book, and we echo the author's hope that he will return to his task again and recall some further escapades of Dulall the forest guard"

The Asian, Calcutta, April 23, 1910—"A recently published book which we have read with considerable interest is Mr C E Gouldsbury's 'Dulall the Forest Guard' Though Mr Gouldsbury's story treats of an India that has passed away, we do not find it the less entertaining now—let us say at once—less helpful to the young sportsman on that score Briefly it deals with the adventures of two young men who came out to the country and are lucky enough to obtain big game shooting under the guidance of an exceptionally good Shikari, whose name lends the book its title We have said that the book is one helpful to the young sportsman, and we think those who read it will find reason to share our opinion There is a great deal to be said in favour of gaining experience before putting pen to paper, but there is also much to be said in favour of writing while first impressions are vivid Mr Gouldsbury has combined both methods Though it is thirty years since his memory of those first jungle days remain as clear as though of yesterday, and we see the forest scenes through the wondering eyes of delighted novicehood. Conscious that book knowledge is as nothing beside practical work, he surrendered himself to the tutelage of Dulall and thus learnt much from that past master in jungle craft Incidentally we obtain some interesting light on the usages of such men when dealing with beasts and their own lives The book is thoroughly readable, and having enjoyed it we look forward with pleasure to the fulfilment of the author's half promise to write more of the doings of Dulall

Mr Gouldsbury has manifested a stock of good wares still to show us
In any case we shall have a ready-made welcome for further news of Dulall"

Madras Times, May 14, 1910—"This book is chiefly to be recommended to boys, and for them it may receive a very high recommendation What boy does not love to read about shooting adventures in a forest? This book teems with them Wild elephants, tigers, bears contribute their quota of

excitement, and all find themselves opposed by the profound jungle lore of the forest guard, Dulall. . . . But whereas many . . books of adventure are written by arm-chair sportsmen who are quite ignorant of the countries and animals . . . they describe, Mr. Gouldsbury's is a very accurate description of Indian jungle life by one who is evidently thoroughly conversant with the conditions he describes. . . . The story is told in a simple, straightforward manner, and should be very dear to the hearts of schoolboys. Incidentally it is no mean guide to the ways of beasts in the Bengal jungles, and the advice of Dulall is thoroughly reliable."

Indian Field, June 16, 1910.—"This is an interesting little volume . . . relating to the Indian jungle. . . . The chapters are full of vivid interest, and every page possesses a charm of its own as the narrator unfolds his thrilling experiences. The biggest of big game and the hunt for the great Bengal tiger are here described as only a great shikari can describe; but the writer's *tour de force* is the rollicking humour which pervades the whole book. The hero . . . is a veteran Shikari called Dulall Sing. . . . The many virtues with which this quaint individual is invested . . . and his dog-like devotion . . . rivals anything yet heard of in history or romance. Here is an admirable pen-picture of this Caleb Balderstone seated as he is on the leading elephant 'ready to take the field,' a thin, withered little old man. . . . Mr. Gouldsbury's book has the merit of being an eminently reasonable one. We hope to have some day a continuation of this bright, amusing yarn and the further doings of Dulall."

Sunday Times, September 18, 1910.—"A tale of sport and adventure in the forest of Bengal. . . . The incident and adventures are ably recounted, and the whole makes interesting reading. It is further written by one who knows his subject from the inside."

Rangoon Times, September 10, 1910.—"'Dulall the Forest Guard.' . . . This is a book which is bound to become a great favourite with young and old . . . for these tales of hunting big game in India are told by a man who must be a great Shikari himself. The story is given with all the practical details that nowadays is looked for in a sporting story. . . . In old days when an author . . . knew little of the country through which they made their travels. But Mr. Gouldsbury is evidently intimately acquainted with Indian forest scenery and the sounds . . . that break the silence of the night in the deep tree jungles, . . . and the author's powers of description are very considerable, and he knows how to excite and enchain the reader's interest. . . . The picture of the 'thin, withered little old man' has been drawn with very considerable skill, while his fidelity . . . will make him a great favourite with the reader."

Daily Mirror, October 15, 1910.—"An unpretentious book! . . . The author strings together a series of incidents in the early experience of big game shooting . . . in India. The result is good. The stories of danger from tiger and rogue elephant . . . are convincing, and the simple way in which they are told does not detract from their charm."