

# SHIKAR STORIES

Edited by

*Ruskin Bond*

The Rupa Book of  
**SHIKAR STORIES**

By the same author:

*Angry River*  
*A Little Night Music*  
*A Long Walk for Bina*  
*Hanuman to the Rescue*  
*Ghost Stories from the Raj*  
*Strange Men, Strange Places*  
*The India I Love*  
*Tales and Legends from India*  
*The Blue Umbrella*  
*Ruskin Bond's Children's Omnibus*  
*The Ruskin Bond Omnibus-I*  
*The Ruskin Bond Omnibus-II*  
*The Ruskin Bond Omnibus-III*  
*Rupa Book of Great Animal Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of True Tales of Mystery and Adventure*  
*The Rupa Book of Ruskin Bond's Himalayan Tales*  
*The Rupa Book of Great Suspense Stories*  
*The Rupa Laughter Omnibus*  
*The Rupa Book of Scary Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Haunted Houses*  
*The Rupa Book of Travellers' Tales*  
*The Rupa Book of Great Crime Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Nightmare Tales*  
*The Rupa Book of Shikar Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Love Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Wicked Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Heartwarming Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Thrills and Spills*

The Rupa Book of  
**SHIKAR STORIES**

Edited by  
Ruskin Bond

Rupa Co

Selection and Introduction Copyright © Ruskin Bond 2004

First Published 2004  
This edition 2010  
Second Impression 2011

Published by  
**Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.**  
7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,  
New Delhi 110 002

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Typeset in 11 pts. Revival by  
Mindways Design  
1410 Chiranjiv Tower  
43 Nehru Place  
New Delhi 110 019

# Contents

Introduction

The Tiger and the Terrier

*By Brig.-General R.G. Burton*

A Letter from the Jungle

*By 'Nimrod'*

A Further Letter from the Jungle

*By 'Nimrod'*

The Panther and The Shepherd

*By C.H. Donald*

Indian Lions

*By C.A. Kincaid*

Some Panthers

*By C.A. Kincaid*

An Adventure with a Tigress

*By N.B. Mehta*

The Midnight Visitor

*By C.A. Renny*

Hunting With A Camera

*By F.W. Champion*

Drought in the Jungle  
By F.W. Champion

Shooting in the Doon  
By John O'Lynn

Hunters of Souls  
By Augustus Somerville

Encounters With Big Game  
By 'Surfield'

On the Banks of the Narbada  
By 'Nimrod'

The Haunts of Isabeline  
By C.H. Donald

## Introduction

Some hunted for sport, others for commercial reasons. Some hunted for self-protection, or to rid an area of a dreaded man-eater or cattle-lifter.

Sixty and more years ago, the forests were extensive, wildlife abundant. Hunting was the sport of kings, officers and gentlemen. You were pretty low on the social scale if you had not bagged a couple of tigers. Big-game hunters, amateur shikaris, surveyors, administrators, all had their own thrilling experiences to relate, and many of these factual accounts appeared in the magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, a period when the popularity of “shikar” was at its peak. Some wrote under their own names. Others used pseudonyms, possibly to hide the fact that they had been spending a great deal of time away from their official duties! With one exception, none of these stories has appeared before between book covers. They have been selected from my collection of *Indian State Railways magazines* of that period.

It was a period when the walls of almost every official or civilian residence were adorned with the mounted heads of tiger and panther, or the antlers of chital, sambhur or antelope. But not everyone who entered the jungle went in with guns blazing. F.W. Champion of the Indian Forest Service, was a pioneering wildlife photographer who preferred to do his shooting with a camera. His books, *With A Camera in Tigerland* and *The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow*, reveal a knowledge of the jungle, wildlife and natural history equal to that of Jim Corbett or Kenneth Anderson.

Indeed, most of the writers represented in this collection—C.H. Donald, C.A. Kincaid, Augustus Somerville, C.H. Dawson—acquired an intimate knowledge of the jungle and its ways: Somerville, in his wanderings as a Surveyor; Kincaid as a curious and well-read Civil Servant who served in many parts of the country; Donald, who spent many years in the hills around Simla; ‘Nimrod’, who loved the Narmada....

About five years ago, when I was taking an elephant ride through the forest of the Rajaji Sanctuary near Hardwar, the elderly mahout who was my guide told me that he had been Champion’s mahout when he was just a boy. He showed me plenty of wild boar, cheetal and sambhur, but alas, there were no longer any tigers in the area; they had all gone, shot into extinction in the 1950s, when the Indian nouveau-



riche plundered the forests of what little the British had left behind. It was really the coming of the jeep that helped finish off the larger carnivores. No longer dependent on elephants or beaters, shikaris could drive along the narrow forest roads, and many used powerful headlights or searchlights to render these animals helpless targets.

As a boy, I had the mortification of being on some of these expeditions, my stepfather being an inveterate poacher. But on one occasion the hunters were hunted. Their jeep backed into a nest of vicious red ants. In a twinkling the shikaris were covered with the brutes, all intent on finding the softest portions of the human anatomy, biting with vicious little nips. The expedition beat a hasty retreat.

Another creature that is more than a match for humans is the big bee, common throughout the country. When disturbed it will attack both man and beast with the utmost fierceness.

There are many stories about the big bee and its vindictive ways. Two shikaris were resting between beats one hot May morning in the jungle. One of them unwarily lit a pipe. Overhead spread the crown of a talk silk-cotton tree with a dozen great combs of the big bee attached to its branches. Resenting the intrusion and the pipe smoke, the bees lost no time in launching an offensive.

It was an utter rout, and the elder of the two shikaris, a respected bald-headed Colonel of H.M.'s Regiments of Foot, led the retreat, which was lacking in both dignity and strategy. They fled towards the open country, and when the bees finally left them, the Colonel had to all appearances suddenly grown a stiff crop of bristles all over his pate. It took a lot of attention, profane language, and soothing ointments to get rid of all those bee-stings.

The Animal Kingdom is made up largely of two great groups of animals, the predators and the preyed upon. This also holds good for the insect world. In the words of the old jingle—

Greater bugs eat lesser bugs,  
And so on, *ad infinitum*.

There was a time when tigers were prevalent throughout the country, and the depredations of man-eaters and cattle-lifters did justify the hunting of these predators. But motives were often mixed, and hunting as a sport usually took precedence over hunting for the protection of villages and their livestock.

What is clear from the writings of these shikari-sportsmen is that many of them grew to love the jungle—camp life, the great outdoors, the richness of flora and fauna. From being hunters, a few became naturalists. And, once the jungle wove its spell, these men would return to it again and again. Not for gain, as is the case today; but for the feeling of freedom that only the jungle could give them.

“The pleasure of shikar is not all in successful results,” wrote ‘Nimrod’. “The joy of living the jungle life; the peace, and the being so close to nature, is the greater part of sport. And so, though without trophies, we are content and strike our camp, to proceed to other jungle resorts without any regrets in our minds.”

This represented the attitude and outlook of the finer type of sportsman.

Ruskin Bond  
Landour, Mussoorie

# The Tiger and the Terrier

By Brig.-General R.G. Burton

There was a time when “griffins”, as newcomers used to be called, expected to find tigers in their gardens and snakes in their boots when they went to India; but even thirty years ago such ideas were no longer prevalent, and were supposed to be found only in the tales of those eminent Anglo-Indians, Colonels Monsoon and Bowlong. But I was no novice when I arrived at a military cantonment in the Deccan in November 1898 and observed what a “jungly” appearance it presented. Indeed, my first walk induced me to remark to my companion on the tigerish look of a nullah which ran through the place and was at that time overgrown with the luxuriant foliage of the rainy season.

But there were, so far as we knew, no tigers within a radius of fifty or sixty miles, and no jungles to hold them, although a tomb in the old cemetery recorded that an officer had been killed by one of these animals ten miles off about seventy years before this time. A tiger requires extensive jungles for its wanderings, and the country around us was now mostly under cultivation with some sparse bush and wasteland on the hills. Yet, even then, all unknown to us, a tiger was padding his way towards the cantonment, and he had been seen, as I learnt long afterwards, by an old friend, a Muhammadan Mullah who was waiting in ambush for more harmless animals near a pool and whose heart “turned to water” as he expressed it, at the sight of a monster such as he had never seen before. Leopards he was familiar with, for they were plentiful in his district twenty miles away, but the greatest cat of all was strange to him.

Adjoining the large compound in which my house stood was a garden some acres in extent containing a bungalow now empty, the dwelling place of a missionary who for many years did excellent and devoted work in the surrounding country. Here, in his absence a gardener was employed to keep the place in order. Only a day or two after my arrival from leave in England, the gardener came over to say that he had seen what he described as a leopard lying down in the verandah of the unoccupied bungalow. Such simple people are prone to exaggeration, and it was thought more probable that the animal was a wild or a large domestic cat. However,

with a few followers and two sepoys we two turned out with our rifles, only to find the verandah empty. The gardener was, however, so sure that we decided to beat through an extensive patch of long grass in the compound, into which the animal must have retreated.

The two guns took up a position on the farther side of this patch while the men walked in line towards them. Suddenly, there was a rush and a roar, and not a leopard but a well-grown tiger, whose voice was at once recognisable, broke from the cover and sprang over the hedge, disappearing in a moment without giving the guns time to fire a shot. The tiger had made off as soon as it was disturbed, but in passing found time to strike down one of the sepoys and inflict some severe wounds on his back and shoulder. He was taken to hospital and made a good recovery in the course of a few weeks, although not in time to accompany us on the annual tiger-hunting expedition. No doubt, he had enough of tigers to last him the remainder of this life!

We then followed the tiger, which had disappeared in an adjoining compound. More "guns" had arrived and we walked across the open accompanied by Sal, the bull-terrier, who soon turned the tiger out of a shallow nullah that ran along the hedge on one side of the compound. The animal fled, followed closely by the gallant Sal and by several bullets, fired to the danger of spectators in the vicinity. It was already growing dusk. The tiger had taken refuge in a deep and dense hedge, from which we tried in vain to dislodge it and in which it could not be seen. Darkness came on with the usual rapidity and suddenness. With the aid of lanterns we attempted to make out the lurking animal, but although we went up close and peered into the hedge, nothing could be seen. It was a situation not without danger, especially as the beast had probably been wounded and was certainly angry.

There was nothing to be done but to leave it until morning, when the tracks were taken up where they crossed the dusty road, one halting footmark showing that the tiger was going lame, as indicated also by a few drops of blood. It had evidently retreated soon after nightfall, and a mile farther on it had slaked its thirst at a pool in a nullah on the edge of the cantonment. It then made towards the low hills where the velvet-footed beast left no impression on the hard and stony ground. We beat through the surrounding country and day after day I rode many miles round in the direction taken by the tiger, but no trace of it was found until five days later when a man was seized in a field near a village six miles off; he was mortally wounded, his insides being almost torn out of his body. The unfortunate villager was able to speak, and before he died he related that he had been scaring birds in the *Jowari* (millet) when he heard a peculiar noise and on going towards the spot from which it came he was seized by the animal, which rushed out upon him.

We went to the scene of the tragedy which was in a field where the *jowari* grew to a height of six or seven feet. There we found the poor man's staff and cotton

cloth, a pool of blood, and the tracks and a strong smell of the wild beast. We followed through the field and beyond, where the tracks were again lost on hard ground in a wide and rocky nullah. Dog Sal, though so keen and brave in the face of the enemy, seemed to have no nose for tracking.

We encamped upon the spot and next day beat through the nullahs in the neighbourhood without results. But the animal had to be killed. The whole country was in a panic, the people afraid to go out to work in the fields, and we feared to hear of more deaths, for the tiger, so far as we could ascertain, had taken no prey, and must be hungry and desperate; it is of such stuff that man-eaters are made. The district in which the animal had been lost sight of was hilly and broken, containing little water. It was obvious that it would have to find water to quench its thirst; even in normal conditions tigers are impatient of thirst, and doubly so when hunted and wounded. A mile or two across the hills we came to a nullah where there were fresh tracks, and we found a pool where the animal had watered; it was evidently lying up in the adjacent jungle.

We took post while Sal and the men beat through the cover, and the tiger soon broke and galloped across an open strip of ground pursued closely by the bull-terrier barking close at his heels. The chase disappeared in a patch of dense bush and after a succession of roars, howls, and barks Sal emerged, torn and bleeding from extensive wounds in the chest. Still the brave dog wanted to go in again and seek out her enemy, and had to be restrained.

Showers of stones and small shot failed to make the tiger move or give evidence of its situation. Night was coming on and we did not wish to leave it to another day which might involve a further prolonged chase and endanger more lives. Three of us, including a famous Indian officer who still resides near the scene of this encounter, crawled into the bush. After a long search we came suddenly upon the tiger which lay facing us, its eyes blazing in the gloom of the jungle, and appearing ready to charge, but a few shots put an end to its existence.

Poor old Sal was fat, heavy, and not very active, or she might have escaped the cruel claws; as it was she lived a fortnight, and eventually died of exhaustion when the wounds were already healing up. She was photographed with her bandages on the day before her death. The tiger was a male, probably between four and five years old and over eight feet in length. It had a wound which had splintered a bone above one of the hind feet, which showed signs of healing, but must have caused much pain and discomfort, no doubt sustained in the first encounter; there was a slight wound in the flank from a bullet fired when it was driven out on this last occasion, and the final shots were in the chest and the centre of the forehead, where the Subadar-Major's bullet had pierced the brain. The dead animal was carried back to the cantonment, where thousands assembled to view the bold beast which had given so much trouble, and which, they said, had come in search of one who had

killed so many of its kind.

Mention has been made of snakes, which were exceedingly abundant in this part of the country. A krait one night left its skin on a teapoy at the bedside; Russell's vipers were numerous, and one that lay in the doorway of a bedroom was nearly trodden upon, but was fortunately betrayed by its loud and persistent hissing. So, tigers in gardens and snakes in bungalows are not only to be found in the tales of our old Indian officers, Bowlong and Monsoon, at any rate they were met with thirty years ago.

The cantonment where these episodes took place has been long since abandoned, and the echoes are for ever silent which once resounded with the tramp of horse and foot and the thunder of guns. In those days the line of rail was nearly hundred miles distant. But should any now wish to travel to the scene of these and many other adventures, or to visit the battlefield where the greatest of English generals gained a famous victory, they need not traverse the long and dusty road along which the pony-tongas used to labour in days gone by. For, they can alight from the train within a mile of the spot where the invading tiger lay up on that November day.

(1929)

# A Letter from the Jungle

By 'Nimrod'

**Y**ou have been promised a letter from the jungle and here, at last, I send it to you.

You have probably not forgotten how cold it was during the time that arctic wave spread all over England (and Europe) early in February. Well, we arrived at our Forest Rest House on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, and that night the whole country was sorely stricken by the same cold wave which passed over the whole of India also, and caused great damage to the crops and the foliage of the forest tracts.

We were in the valley of the Tapti river and the cold was intense. The thermometer hung up in the verandah showed the temperature at six in the morning to be 30°Fahrenheit. Not very cold you will say, comparing that with the cold you experienced, but *really* cold to us dwellers in this warmer climate.

Following on that cold wave the forests of the low-lying country were, and still are, a pitiful sight. All was brown, having the appearance of having been burnt, where all should, at that time of the year, have been in every beautiful shade of green. Looking down on the valleys from the higher slopes of the hills one could see quite a distinct line marking the high level, as it were, of the cold wave.

We did not stay long at that camp as the tigers I wanted were absent. They would be there later in the year when the streams and pools in the forests have dried up. Then, the animals would have migrated to the larger streams; for where the animals congregate there will be the tiger and panther which prey upon them.

I went several times along the river looking for tracks, but did not find the sign manual of the Lords of the Forest. It is always very interesting to be out in the early morning at the time when, as the native of the country expresses it, "you can just see the hair on your hand against the sky." That is the time to *see* animals, and birds, too. All the feathered world is busy at the daily task of finding food; and the animals, having been feeding—or on the prowl, according to their nature—all night, are slowly and quietly making their way to secluded places where they can lie up for the day and have undisturbed rest.

The sandy bed of the river shows plainly to our eyes the tracks of all the jungle

people who have been abroad during the hours of darkness. Darkness to us but not to them; for not as you imagine it is the darkness of the tropic night. If one does not use an artificial illuminant, one soon becomes accustomed to the light afforded by the stars and finds it sufficient for one's needs. Except when in deep shadow one can see quite well.

But there are certain colours which are not readily visible in twilight and darkness; stare as hard as you wish you will not be able to make out with any distinctness the form of the larger carnivora even at a few yards' distance. It is the ground colour of tawny yellow which is their concealment. Night shooting without the aid of a torch is a very chancy affair.

In the river bed were the tracks of a hyæna, easily distinguishable from those of a panther by the uneven shape of the main pad of the foot; of a porcupine which had come to have a drink; of several wild cats—Great Grandsons of Tom Puss, I call them, of prowling jackals; and of otters. In one place, a long smear in the sand showed where a crocodile had been for a waddling stroll.

Hares love to sport and play in open spaces, and it was evident at one spot that there had been a fine frolic on the part of a couple of these "sons of asses" as natives of some parts of India style them. There were a few tracks of sambur, all hinds and small stags as was plain to the eye; and rounding a bend of the river we saw ahead of us, a couple of hundred yards away, a small stag chital with several hinds. They were re-crossing the river, to gain the security of the Government Forest, after having spent the night among the crops of a village on the further bank.

Peafowl and jungle fowl had been to drink; white egrets were to be seen along the reedy borders of the pools; a pair of Ruddy Sheldrakes—Brahmini ducks of the European sportsman—rose with loud calls of "chakwee, chakwa"; and circling in the sky was a Brahmini kite, a fine handsome bird of bright russet plumage with a conspicuously white head. This bird also is revered by Hindus as being sacred to Vishnu, one of their gods.

One day, I went to the higher hills and came across a large sounder of wild pig. Fine animals they were, and no doubt, very excellent pork! But as our servants are Muhammadans, to whom pork in any form is an abomination, the pigs were unmolested. On the way back to camp that day, I passed a place over which I had walked in the morning, and there, over my own tracks, were those of a panther which had no doubt been disturbed by us when we went up the ravine earlier in the day.

After twelve useless days at that camp we moved to another one ten miles south of the river and some six or seven hundred feet higher as to elevation.

The first Rest House was on the very edge of the forest. This one was in a large cultivated clearing into which led six roads, and several paths. Where there are roads and paths, it is much easier to locate the tigers on account of their habit of



using these at night during their wanderings in search of game. You can understand that, as it is their business—the business of their very existence—to see and hear and not be seen or heard, it is greatly to their advantage to walk along tracks which allow them to be all eyes and ears without thought of having to tread silent through dry leaves, grass and brushwood.

In order to get tigers, either by beating or by sitting up for them to return to their kill, one has to tie up young buffalo as bait. It sounds cruel but is less cruel than it seems. Death, when it comes to them, is speedy. There is a moment of alarm, it may amount to fright, when they first realise the approach of the feline; and though they may be frightened the first few nights at being left alone in the forest, they soon get used to that, and have but little fear, and no foreknowledge, of what will attack them.

How do I know all that? On very many occasions I have watched all night over live buffaloes and have five times seen what took place when the killing happened. I have also seen panthers kill goats tied up for them and in those cases too the end was merciful.

Sometimes panthers are playful in their killing, like a cat with a mouse, when they see a tethered goat which cannot escape them.

I once saw a panther rush at a goat—these big cats take their prey with a rush, and do not spring upon it—seize it by the neck and run off again! The goat got up, and after a few moments went on with his feed of leaves as if nothing had happened! Perhaps, I may find space in this letter for another incident in illustration of the want of *fear* evidenced by tethered animals; so the old lady who wrote the other day to a writer on shikar, saying he was “a cruel monster and should himself be tethered,” was kindhearted but mistaken.

That camp where all the roads met was a good one for tiger. I shot three there, all stone dead—no, one ran a few yards—so their end was even more merciful than that of their victims.

On the second night of the arrival at the new camp there was a kill on one of the main roads. The tracks in the dust showed that there were two animals at the feast, one a tigress—as could be known by the oval shape of the pug mark—and the other a large male cub. The size of the fang marks in the neck showed that it was the tigress who had done the killing.

I sat up over the kill in a dining room chair, which is quite a comfortable seat for the purpose, and at nine o’clock was made aware of the approach of the pair by a most expressive warning “swear,” uttered by the tigress to keep her son from being too hasty to get to his dinner. It was plain to me, and no doubt to him also, that she said “Keep off it you young fool, or you may get it in the neck!”

I was well screened, and sat very quiet. In a few minutes I could see by the light of the moon that a big animal was at the kill, and put up my field glasses. The beast

began to feed. The shadows were confusing, but it seemed to be the tigress as the forearm appeared large. I peered and stared, and should have waited for both the animals to be on the kill at the same time. It was interesting to see the way the tiger used the big claw—the “thumb” of the right paw—to push back the skin and bare the meat of the ribs.

The other animal not showing itself I fired at the shoulder of the feeding beast. To the shot it dashed away into the long grass, but as I heard what seemed to my practised ear a tumble, and no further sound, I knew the tiger must be dead.

At the same time the sound of two or three quiet footsteps came to my ears as the other animals made off and I knew it must be the son, and not the mother, which had been slain.

That this was the case was soon confirmed, as the whole jungle was made aware that the tigress was looking for her son. For the next two hours far and wide she roamed loudly uttering “a-a-ough, a-a-ough” to the terror of the sambur and the four-horned antelope, the barking-deer and the langoors, all of which sounded their alarm calls from time to time. But she did not return to the kill.

In the morning the tiger was found not twenty feet away from the kill. He had been shot through the heart, and in his death rush had turned a complete somersault so that his head was towards where he had come from when fired at. He weighed 180 lbs. and was seven feet long. His paws were large and his forearm as big, almost, as those of his mother. That was what had deceived me, but I ought to have waited. It was a pity I shot him, as he would have grown into a fine tiger.

The next night I again occupied the chair, but had a fruitless vigil. The tigress was around for two hours, calling and bewailing as on the previous evening, but did not come to the kill.

That night a big tiger passed the place where, had I not been sitting up for the tigress, a buffalo would have been tethered. A pity one cannot be in two places at the same time!

The next night, the tigress returned to the kill and had a big feed of very high meat. Had the tree been suitable for a full length machan I would have been in waiting. I decided to give the kill to the vultures and sit up over a live buffalo, as the tigress would be likely to remain in the vicinity.

The moon was now nearly at the full and the night almost as bright as the day. The buffalo—a calf of two years—had a good feed of grass, and then lay down to chew the cud and doubtless, bemoan the hardness of his lot.

It was exactly ten o’clock when I heard him get up. Looking, I saw him staring towards the jungle to my right. Next moment I heard the footsteps of the tigress in the leaves. Until then she had made no sound, but now, knowing herself to be within certain rushing distance of her prey and that it could not escape her, gave up all concealment.

Putting up the field glasses I saw the head of the great brute come into the field of view; then came her long massive form, advancing with slow steps, every muscle ready for instant action and grim purpose in her whole attitude. The fine ruff she wore glistened brightly in the brilliant rays of the moon.

The buffalo remained motionless, staring at the apparition, but when the tigress was about fifteen feet distant he began to struggle to get free. That movement launched the dread beast at him.

I could have killed the tigress as she advanced on the buffalo, but wanted to see the whole affair. And, it was possible that she would have dashed away on the torch shining in her face, for she was an old and cunning beast. The buffalo had to die.

Instantly the killing was over and she appeared to be all on the alert. Then, without further delay, she seized the carcase to drag it away; but finding she could not do this, at once began to break open the hinder parts and commenced her gruesome meal of the still warm and quivering flesh. Nothing to shudder at! Only the same thing, on a larger scale, that your house cat does on most nights of his life.

Interested in all these happenings I delayed my shot overlong, for the beast ceased feeding all of a sudden and went straight off into the forest. She made no attempt to be quiet but went away barking through the jungle as if intoxicated with success, as no doubt she was. All sorts of noises did she make; belchings, zoo noises, queer throaty sounds. The whole forest was aware of her success, and I heard her go further and further away. The animals of the forest seemed to take no notice of her now, as there were no alarm calls; perhaps there were no animals in such an unhealthy neighbourhood, as there had been no announcements of her presence before the killing took place.

It was five hours before she returned, and that she did without a sound, or any warning from the forest dwellers. Instantly, she lay down at the tail end and recommenced her meal.

It was now three in the morning and there could be no further delay. To the light of the torch in her face she looked up. Her eyes shone like balls of emerald. The next instant she lay dead, a p.470 bullet in her neck behind the ears. Her life left her with a great sigh the sound of which came distinctly to my ears as the reverberations of the report of the heavy rifle died away in the stillness of the night.

She measured eight feet three inches between pegs, and weighed 280 lbs. Merciful was her end.

A few days later, a male tiger came past that place and had sun-grilled bones for supper. I sat up for him over a live buffalo but, although he was making zoo noises all around, he did not put in an appearance.

Then, a tigress passed a buffalo, tethered in a river bed, within a few yards, and failed to see it. It had to be tied a few yards—ten, perhaps it was—to one side of the path, but quite in the open. It is not unusual for tigers to miss tethered baits in this

way, and such happenings are a strong argument against their having any power of winding their prey. On one occasion, two panthers passed a goat tethered in the open sand in the bed of the Narbada river and failed to see it. Their tracks were within twenty feet!

There followed some days of waiting, but I knew there would be a kill by the big male tiger mentioned above as it is the fixed habit of these felines to cover the same ground about every ten days. On the night of the first of March the expected kill took place. The kill was dragged a matter of five hundred yards, as the root to which the buffalo had been tethered gave way. Yet, it had looked sufficiently strong. Fortunately a suitable tree for the chair was near by, and by four o'clock I was quietly seated.

Beyond the heavy foot fall in the leaves there was no announcement by the jungle folk of the tiger's impending arrival. Just a few minutes earlier and there would have been a daylight shot. He did not pay any attention to the torch, or to the light arranged exactly over the kill to show, before the turning on of the torch, how he was lying, for the night was dark and the kill in deep shadow. He died as he lay, the back of his skull broken to pieces.

This shooting with the aid of a torch is a deadly business, and in course of time—and that not far distant—will have to be prohibited in many forests, or there will be no tigers left. Night shooting of this kind requires much endurance and also intimate knowledge of the habits of these great felines, besides much technique in the matter of numerous details. Fewer animals are wounded than is the case when beating—which is, of course, the more pleasurable method—and there is no risk to the unarmed villager without whose assistance one could obtain no shikar at all. But it is a form of shikar of which one gets tired. However, with a slender purse, and such indifferent beaters as the Korkus of the present day who have lost all their jungle instincts and are fast leaving the forests for the open country, the sitting up method is forced upon a large number of sportsmen.

(1929)

---

\* All temperatures are in Fahrenheit

# A Further Letter from the Jungle

By 'Nimrod'

Our next shooting block was thirty miles south of the one in which I shot those three tigers of which I have given you the history. We sent on our camp kit early in the morning in the small bullock carts of this part of the country, and ourselves went in the car to a Rest House about ten miles along the road. Early the next morning we completed the short distance remaining, and found the carts arrived and our servants settling into the new residence.

Now, I have brought my news up to date and will be able, more or less, to tell you of things as they occur.

All the forests of this part of the country are of teak and bamboo, and the lie of the valleys between the hills is mostly east and west. The average elevation of the main streams is about 1,600 feet above sea level, the adjacent hills being some three or four hundred feet higher, while those to the south of our present camp gradually extend by successive ridges and valleys to the main backbone of the Gawilgarh Hills, the highest point of which is over 3,500 feet in height.

It is now the 9<sup>th</sup> of April and the hot season is approaching as it is noticeably warmer than it has been, the temperature in the verandah rising to 100deg. in the middle of the day. But the nights are cool, the temperature falling rapidly after sundown. In the early morning it is as low as 56deg.

We are in the valley of a fair sized stream and, as in the Tapti valley so is the case here, all the trees being withered by the frost to a distinctly marked level. Some of the trees are recovering and putting out new leaves, while a few of the more hardy varieties are clothed in the brilliant green of their spring barb, thus giving to the forest the touch of colour needed to relieve the general sameness of the scenery.

As a rule there is not much colour in the forests of tropical countries; there are endless shades of green and brown and, at this season, autumn tints of every description. A few trees there are which gladden our eyes with splashes of colour. One of these—the 'ganiar' of the people—is a tree with a straight trunk which has large handsome saucer-shaped flowers of a bright yellow colour at the ends of the branches. These trees are now leafless, but their new foliage will appear in May.

Another tree, also leafless at this time, has brilliant red flowers which are very conspicuous in the forest; it is a species of *erythrina*. Then, there is the well-known tree, called by Europeans 'The Flame of the Forest' on account of the brilliant colour of its velvet-like orange-red petals. Where these trees are plentiful the display of colour is a wonderful sight.

On arrival here we were greeted with the news that there are seven tigers in the vicinity. I was also informed that the news of the countryside is that I have recently shot eight tigers. I fear the story of the seven is as inaccurate as that of the eight, for in walks abroad there is no sign of even one of the reputed seven. A bad sign at this camp is the silence at night. There are no alarm calls of sambur and other animals and no tracks of tiger, old or new. Panthers appear to be absent also.

Yesterday—we have been here ten days now—news came from a village five miles away that a panther had killed a calf the previous afternoon. I went to the place and tracked up the kill, which was very neatly 'butchered' and placed in a clump of bamboos. There was a suitable tree close by and my machan chair soon in position. By five o'clock all was quiet, and the panther could be nowhere in the vicinity. I had every hope of his putting in an appearance at dusk, or soon after, but he did not turn up.

Shortly before dark a lovely mongoose came and had a feed. He was bigger than usual and such a lithe, graceful animal with grey points to the hair of his sleek body and a fine black tip to his long tail. He reminded me of the several of his species which have been such interesting pets from time to time. No snakes, and no cockroaches, or spiders and such like, in one's house when there is a tame mongoose on the premises!

I came away at 9 o'clock and got back to camp and a midnight dinner.

We have a fine pool in the river not far from this bungalow, it is shaded by large trees and has much life about it, and in it. There are many kinds of birds, and almost daily we see the otters at play and the catching of fish. Others besides the otters like a fish diet. On any bare rock in the stream there are cormorants, and at one time or another I have seen four varieties of kingfisher there. One of these is so like the bird one sees in England that you could not tell the difference at sight. Perhaps, there is no difference. One of the others is a black and white bird about twice the size of the little one. His habit is to hover over the water about thirty feet up, plunge deep into the stream, and catch the minnows crosswise in his beak. A poet has described him as 'the pied fish-tiger o'er the pool', a very good description.

The two other kingfishers are alike in colouring, but different in size. Both have bright red bills, and their general appearance is blue and white, mostly blue. The smaller of these is half as big again as the 'fish tiger', while the larger one is more than twice as big again. Also, he is more rare, and only found in heavily wooded country.

Every night, four buffaloes have been tied up at carefully selected places. One night, a panther passed one of the baits but did not touch it. That often happens in these forests. Fourteen days and no kill! But there is likely to be one, as this morning I saw the tracks of a big male tiger along one of the forest cart roads.

It is three days since I wrote as above and I am still tigerless. The night after I saw the tracks, the tiger killed the bait in the river bed to the west of camp. The machan chair was already in position so there was a minimum of disturbance at the place. Owing to the very thick cover, and likelihood of there being no suitable tree near the kill if the tiger was permitted to drag it, the buffalo had been picketted with a wire rope.

An all-night vigil had no result, but in the morning the tracks of the tiger were found in the river bed not far away. I feared that I had come across one of the many very cunning animals of these parts; but sat up the whole of the next night also. Then, it was evident the tiger did not intend to return to the kill and it was made over to the vultures.

Time was running short so I decided to tie up at a place five miles down stream where I found tracks of this same tiger and learnt that his regular haunt was there, in thick cover, between the confluence of two rivers. Owing to the nature of the country a beat would not be likely to succeed so a machan chair was put up and a buffalo tethered on the tiger's tracks.

That was on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup>. What a pity I did not sit up over the live buffalo! That night he killed it and, a most unusual thing, broke the wire rope. He had unfortunately found the root of a shrub to give him the exact purchase required and was so able to exert the whole of his immense strength. The marks of his fore paws were plain to see.

I tracked up the drag of the kill and found it over a quarter of a mile away, well concealed under a mass of creepers. The tiger had fed at three places during the drag and eaten a great deal.

There was fortunately a suitable tree handy for the machan chair; but it was unfortunately necessary to cut away much of the creepers in order to be able to see. All was quiet at half past four, and at half past seven when it was quite dark, I heard the well-known heavy tread among the leaves, a hundred yards behind me. The nights are very still and one can hear the slightest sound at that distance.

The tiger was extremely cautious, stopping and listening and slowly coming nearer. No doubt, he sat down now and again, as he took nearly an hour to approach close enough to make up his mind that all was clear. Then I heard the quicker steps of the final direct approach and was full of confident expectation. Alas! it was not to be. Having come close enough to see the kill he was able to see that it was not as fully concealed as he had left it. For a tiger of his experience that was sufficient warning. He had no doubt, had a very convincing lesson on some previous occasion

and had no intention of taking any risks. Of the watcher in the tree he had, I am sure, no knowledge by any of his senses. I heard his retreating footsteps and that was the last of him for that night.

In the morning it was found that he had revisited the scene of his kill and removed a shin bone which he had left there.

My permit for this block would be up soon, so I decided that my only sure way of bringing this cunning beast to bag would be to put up the big machan and sleep in it every night until he came along again, as he was sure to do. So, the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> saw me duly ensconced in a large tree and well screened in.

Every afternoon at three o'clock I set off in a bullock cart, as it was too hot to walk with any pleasure, ate my dinner near the tree and was in the machan and settled down by half an hour before sunset. In the morning I would have a welcome cup of tea from a thermos flask and then walk the five miles back to camp.

I am writing all this in the past tense as I have been disinclined for any writing during these strenuous days!

On the evening of the 5<sup>th</sup>, I heard the moan of a tiger some way down the river and had hope of the expected kill taking place, but nothing happened. I knew the affair could not now be much delayed as the tiger was bound to be along his former round before long. I was getting tired of the game, but determined to sit him out to the last available moment.

Patience was rewarded on the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup>—the eighth night's vigil for this beast. At twenty minutes past seven I heard his moaning call down river, same as on the previous evening. Then it came nearer: and at last there was a low call so near that it was certain he must come past me.

There was no sound on the part of any forest animals to announce that the tiger was on the prowl. The buffalo was tethered exactly in the path through the small green bushes of the river bed along which he would come. I lay quietly on my back, listening for any slightest sound, but heard nothing.

At ten minutes to eight there was a rush over the leaf strewn pebbles and a choked bellow on the part of the poor buffalo. In an instant I was sitting up, with rifle out of the loophole and torch shining on the striped hide of the slayer. One very quickly decides where exactly to place the bullet and the foresight gleamed brilliantly on the centre of the shoulder blades as the trigger was pressed.

To the shot the tiger fell on his side exactly as seen in the photographs taken next morning; one from the machan, and the other from the slight elevation of a bullock cart. His tail beat the ground for a few seconds, but there was no other movement. After the tail was quiet, the buffalo's hind legs were kicking, so the tiger breathed his last before his victim ceased to live.

The bite in the back of the neck it was that killed the buffalo; the tiger had not had time to break its neck. His jaws had opened and released the neck—I watched



them gasping—but the claws of his left paw had scarcely released the left side of the buffalo's cheek, so instantaneous had been his death.

All four feet of the tiger are beneath the body of the buffalo. They fell together.

I was well content to have successfully concluded my eighth night's vigil for this beast. His length was nine feet between pegs and his weight four hundred pounds, forearm 19 inches. Not a very big tiger, but of the ordinary size of those of these jungles. There was no sign of any former injury by bullet. The villagers were well pleased to be rid of this beast which had taken toll of their cattle for years and would still be doing so but for the pertinacious 'Nimrod'.

Now, the tiger is skinned and pegged out and I have told you all about him, I can hark back to tell you of other jungle affairs.

I often get up in the dark and hie off to the forests to see animals. I frequently saw sambur and four-horned antelope. Although the leaves are very dry, one can, by moving slowly and carefully, at the same time keeping the wind in the right direction, get quite close enough to see very well with the aid of field glasses. Where animals are seldom hunted, as is the case here, they are not so quick at detecting one as when they have been stalked and fired at.

Often, the sambur feed along quite unaware that anyone is near them. The hinds with fawns keep separate from the stage. One stag I saw had fair horns—perhaps, 36 inches—and was exceptionally dark in colour. I have seen no stags anything approaching 40 inches and there is no doubt that to obtain a sambur head of such a size as to be of any value to a sportsman as a trophy, is a far more difficult undertaking than the killing of a tiger, unless of course, one happens to chance upon the beast on a fortunate occasion.

These forests seem to be overstocked with small stags; I see a great many. One day, several sambur came to within a few feet of me as I sat at the foot of a tree. Alas! My camera had been forgotten. When one gets on in years there is more desire to see than to destroy, and during the lives of the coming generation public opinion will more and more condemn the killing of wild animals. It is better to let live than to destroy, and the time is approaching when, if the hand of man is not stayed, there will be but few animals left to hunt! 'What about your own slayings?' you say. My answer is that my senile softness of heart does not extend to the greater carnivora; not yet at any rate!

Many people do not sit up at night, but to me there is a great charm about it. One learns to recognise the alarm calls of all the animals of the jungle; and the cries of the night birds, too. It was on one of those eight nights that I learnt to know the sound made by a porcupine; but whether he always makes the noise on his nightly wanderings, or whether this was a special occasion, I do not know. There was a loud expulsion and taking in of breath—such a noise as you can make for yourself by blowing out and inhaling quickly through your nose, doing it quickly—and I could

not imagine what it could be. The tracks in the morning showed beyond any doubt what animal it was which had been puffing and blowing all around my tree.

I have wandered on and forgotten all about that panther story which I mentioned in the early part of this letter. It is in illustration of the want of fear evidenced by animals tethered in the forest as bait for the carnivora.

Sometimes, when one is dull in camp during the day, it is pleasant to take a book and ensconce oneself in a tree by a jungle pool, with a picketted goat to call up any panther which may be within hail. On one occasion—it was midday and the attendants had not gone a hundred yards—the bleating of the goat called up a panther from his siesta in a neighbouring ravine. He came trotting through the trees after the manner of an eager dog, halting for a second or so now and again as if he could hardly realise his good fortune at obtaining such an easy meal. Up to the goat he trotted, to be met by a lowered head. A feint of a lifted paw by the panther was countered by a butt from the fearless goat—the fearlessness of ignorance. Another feint by the panther, and in an instant he would have made the fatal attack: but his intention and his life were ended by a bullet in the chest. Down he sat exactly in his tracks, and as life-like as possible to the astonished goat which just sniffed at him and went on unconcernedly with his meal of thorn leaves. A panther without experience this and, though full grown, his weight of 100 lbs. for his length of 5 ft. 11 inches showed that he had not yet attained his full proportions; a young man just leaving college, in fact.

Now, we are packing up, our shikar in these parts at an end for the present, and in a couple of days will be a couple of hundred miles away, selves bound for a Hill Station and camp kit to be stored until again required. Such is the facility with which one can move about in these days of motor transport. Our one ton lorry is brought to our forest camp and takes all our belongings to destination for the very reasonable hire of eight annas a mile.

So, I end this long letter which takes to you a breath of the jungle—a pretty hot one just now!—and shall hope to give further history of our doings at some future time.

(1929)

# The Panther and The Shepherd

By C.H. Donald

There are few places in India, where conditions permit, where the shepherds and panthers have not a bowing acquaintance with each other, but the Kangra Valley, with its huge range of mountains and valleys clothed in dense scrub and oak jungles, rather lends itself to this state of affairs.

During the bi-annual migration of sheep to and from their summer grazing grounds, panthers have a high old time and get fat, and the Guddis, on the other hand, tend to become lean from their nightly vigils and continual guard over their flocks.

You have only to ask a Guddi whether there are any panthers about and, if you are unacquainted with his ways, you will go away with the impression that life is not worth living and there are more panthers in the valley than there are goats and sheep, but that is only his little way of telling you that some damage has been done among his flocks. If you are a novice, and decide to take him at his word, and accept his invitation to visit his flock and sit up over a goat for the marauder who is doing untold damage, you will come away a sadder and wiser man without having seen so much as one spot of his glossy sleek coat.

Not that panthers are not there, but shepherds are everywhere when this migration begins and a panther can take his choice from among twenty or thirty flocks each night, and unless he is a fool, or extraordinarily attached to one flock, he makes a wide selection and range, and you might continue to sit over your goat for a week, while he kills everywhere except where you want him to. The shepherds, instead of helping you, do their best to hinder. They'll gladly give you a live goat to sit up over, knowing quite well that you'll pay for the goat if killed, and also *backshish* will be forthcoming if the panther is shot, but to give you *kubbar* of a freshly killed goat and to lead you thither is quite another matter. Often the goat, or sheep, is never found, but when it is, the Guddi thinks first of Number One, and that is himself. "That goat will be perfectly good to eat, but if the Sahib insists on sitting over it for a couple of nights, it certainly will not be, and who knows whether the panther will come and be shot or not, so let us take what the gods provide and eat the

goat, and let the Sahib and the panther take their chance somewhere else.” So says, and thinks the old Guddi, with the result that he will give you *kubbar* of a cow (which he does not eat), but never of a sheep or goat.

Should he, however, bring you notice of a goat that has been killed, you may be sure that what remains is neither fit for his consumption nor that of the felines and you can save yourself the trouble of going.

In spite of his knowledge of panthers and their ways, the Guddi is about the worst shikari you can find. Before I had had much experience of them, I gave them instructions to build a machan for me over a very freshly killed bullock, while I returned to have some lunch. They knew all about machans and had built hundreds, so they said, and I came away confident that I should get the panther that night. On my return, however, one glance at the tree and the machan, precluded the very smallest hope of anything but a blind panther coming near *that* kill. They had carefully cut down every branch and exposed the machan from every side, as they said, to enable me to get a good view all round. That the panther would also be able to get a good view of me from every side had never crossed their minds! Very occasionally a gun-posessed Guddi decides to sit up himself, and then he invites two or three pals to share his machan and his vigil with him, and they construct a platform on a tree which can be seen from half a mile, and come away next morning like martyrs in a good cause, because they have seen nothing. But, of course, there are Guddis and Guddis and there are a few exceptions to prove the rule, and some of them do occasionally shoot panthers. An amusing case came to my notice recently. A panther had done a good deal of damage in a village, so some half a dozen shepherds decided to take a share in building a trap for him. It took them several days’ hard work collecting stones and it was really a fine structure they erected, and having wasted many days of their hard labour, the trap was never set, as they could not agree between them who should supply the kid to put into the trap as a bait!

A panther is an enigma. There are occasions when he proves himself to be the most cunning animal under the sun, and yet the very next day he will walk into an obvious trap that no self-respecting jackal would ever go near. One day a panther will prove himself to be an arrant coward and run like a hare from a couple of dogs, and the very next he will dash in among half a dozen men sitting round a camp fire, and remove a dog from their midst.

The “sawing” roar of the panther is frequently heard where these animals are to be found and one of the reasons given for this call is that the animal gives himself courage to approach a camp, by roaring lustily when he is still a little distance from it. Be this as it may, it (the call) is probably also a sexual one to give notice to its mate as to the animal’s whereabouts, as it is sometimes heard miles away from any camp or village.

It is not often that one of these animals is taken by surprise, as both their

marvellous powers of sight and hearing keep them amply warned, but very occasionally one might be seen sitting on a hill-top whence he can watch the surrounding country, or keep an eye on a flock of goats grazing near his domain, or some luckless village dog. Of course, he is a past master in the art of camouflage, and his spotted coat is admirably adapted for the purpose.

He does not need heavy jungle to hide him. A couple of bushes, and the light and shade from surrounding trees is quite enough to make him practically invisible and woe betide the individual who thinks he can follow up a wounded beast without taking every precaution.

The methods employed of shooting them is legion, but the most common is to sit up either over a kill or a live bait. Beating for him in the Punjab is usually most unsatisfactory, as one wants really experienced beaters to drive old "spots" out of his lair and thereafter conduct him to where the gun is waiting. The number of times he breaks back or slinks past some of the "stops" is incredible.

Leopards in love go out of their way to attract attention to themselves and seem to lose all sense of self-preservation, as the following little episode will show.

A man arrived one afternoon with the information that two panthers were fighting quite close to my house. Armed with a rifle I went off with him, and not a quarter of a mile away met a number of people standing on the road, a fairly well frequented road at that, looking at something up the hill. On one side there were 30 to 40 cattle grazing and just beyond a flock of sheep. "Here is the place" announced the Guddi who came with the information, and hardly had he spoken when somebody said "look, Sahib, look!" I looked and at that moment a panther sprang from a rock and disappeared into a cave, and was followed by a frightful hullabaloo inside. "They have been going on like this all day" remarked one of the onlookers.

They were not fifty yards above the road where the crowd (some 15 or 20 men and women) was standing. I climbed up the spur and took up a position some 20 yards from the cave and straight opposite it, among some boulders, and had not to wait five minutes before one animal appeared a few yards below the cave and jumped on to a bolder in plain view. I fired and it toppled over into the rocks below without a sound. I waited for half an hour or so for the other but he did not put in an appearance, so leaving a couple of men to watch I went home to have some tea, and thereafter returned to see if I could make better acquaintance with the gentleman in the cave, and waited for an hour or so after sending away the men. He showed up but not till the light had almost gone and I could not make him out over the sights of my rifle as he blended so beautifully with the fallen oak leaves. After two or three vain efforts to pick out his head and neck from the leaves and rocks, he saw me and sprang clear into some brushwood and was gone.

The advent of the Kangra Valley Railway and the influx of sportsmen into this peaceful vale will, in time, bring peace to the Guddi and his flocks, but it will be a

long time ere panthers are reduced to any appreciable extent in this land of forests and rocks which supply such excellent cover for the wily pard.

(1928)

# Indian Lions

By C.A. Kincaid

**T**he Indian lion should be one of the unhappiest beasts alive! It is the firm belief of every Englishman, impressed on him in the nurseries of England, that the Indian lion is a mangy, maneless brute; and as he rarely sees one he dies with this belief firmly implanted in his breast. This belief is the grossest of libels upon the animal in question. It in no way differs from its cousin of North Africa. It is, it is true, smaller than the lion of South Africa, an immense beast, but it is every bit as big as the Somali lion and has a splendid mane. This hirsute decoration is often combed off if its owner lives in the forest; but the same fate happens to the African lion. Put both in captivity and the Indian will grow as big a mane as any lion of East or West Africa. Fortunately gross although the libel be, the Indian lion knows nothing of it and is thus saved from much mental pain and misery.

The Indian lion once roamed over the whole of India. In the early Sanskrit fables we hear a great deal about lions but nothing about tigers. The reason is that the tiger is a new-comer. Its home was in Manchuria and there it grew and still grows a fine thick fur. Like the Mongols, its neighbours, the tiger cast an envious look on the rich plains of India and descended on them. It drove the lion completely out of Bengal and then out of northern and southern India. When the English came, the lion was still holding out against the invader in central India, Guzarat and Kathiawar; but the English completed the lion's defeat. It was exterminated in the two former provinces and its only refuge left is in Junagadh, a State in Kathiawar, where there are no tigers and where H.H. the Nawab preserves the lion against English sportsmen.

I have not visited the Gir forest for more than twenty years, so I do not know what its present boundaries are. I believe a good deal of it has since then been cut down but twenty-five years ago it was a very extensive reserve. It began less than twelve miles from the seaport of Verawal and stretched northward to within a few miles of Junagadh. It was full of sambhur, chital and panther and it sheltered about a hundred and fifty lions. As there was not enough game to keep these lions fed, they preyed on the cultivator's cattle and goats and not infrequently on the cultivators

themselves. They had no fear of man; for they saw the foresters move through the forest every day and they were never hunted save when His Highness wished to entertain a Viceroy or a Governor of Bombay or when they had developed too violent a passion for human flesh. They were extraordinarily long lived. They lived usually forty years and some were even believed to live to the age of seventy; as they were prolific, they would rapidly have spread over the countryside but for certain causes. If any lion strayed outside Junagadh limits, it was at the mercy of any chief or sahib who came to hear of it. The foresters, whenever they came across a brood of lion cubs unattended by their parents, invariably attacked them with axes. Lastly, the Junagadh State needed a constant supply of young lion cubs for its fine zoological gardens. My first experience of the Indian lion was in those gardens. I went with other English visitors into a square, around which were small cages such as are still seen in travelling circuses. These were filled with lions and as it was just before their dinner hour, they were making the most awful noise. I was feeling rather frightened when an Indian gentleman said to me that the cages had been recently reported to be unsafe. I was seized with a wild panic and would gladly have run out of the grounds; fortunately the presence of other visitors restrained me and in time I got quite accustomed to the noise. The lions in the 'zoo' were mostly friendly; their keeper had taught them various tricks which they like to practise. But there were two male lions that were divided by an inextinguishable hatred. They had been friends and had been brought up in the same cage. A certain day—it was probably a hot and liverish day—one of the lions could no longer stand the angle at which the other carried its tail. It went up to its companion and without warning bit its tail off. The tail—I saw part of the incident myself—lay long and stiff on the floor of the cage, while all round it the tailless one and the wicked one fought a fearful battle. They were separated with the greatest difficulty and forced into separate cages; but they never forgot their hatred and whenever one caught the other's eye it would roar volley after volley of leonine abuse at it.

Another lion had had an interesting experience; it had escaped from its cage a year or two before I saw it. Now, the young lion has to learn its lesson just like young Englishmen or young Indians. Unless it is taught by its mother to stalk and kill game it never knows how to do so. The lion of which I am writing had been caught when quite tiny and had never learnt how to procure its food. When it escaped from the Junagadh gardens it took by instinct the road to the Gir forest, but once in the shelter of the woods it had no idea what to do. Dinner hour passed but no kindly keeper brought dinner. It tried to stalk a sambhur but its clumsy efforts only excited the stag's contempt. It tried to seize a goat but the herdsmen drove it off with stones. At the same time its feet were getting dreadfully sore. Its pads had only been used to the smooth bottom of its cage; they were cut to pieces by the stones of the road and the thorns of the forest. It would have very soon died of starvation.



Fortunately the keeper of the zoological gardens was experienced in recovering runaways. He put a portable cage on a bullock cart and with it and two bullocks he set out into the jungle. When he entered it, he began calling to the lion in a way that he had previously done when bringing its dinner. The joyful sound came to the fugitive's ears, just as it was about to give up hope, and gave it new strength. Pulling itself together, it ran towards the keeper. Seeing the cage that reminded it of the flesh pots of Egypt, it had no thought of attacking the bullocks. With a roar of thanksgiving it leapt through the open door of the cage and threw itself on the meat that lay inside all ready for it. While it was so engaged the keeper shut the door and turning the bullock cart brought back the runaway in triumph to Junagadh. The lion when I saw it seemed greatly attached to the keeper and probably never again longed for freedom.

My first meeting with a wild lion was in 1902 when I was spending the hot weather at Verawal; I had got leave to shoot panther in the Gir from His Highness the then Nawab and *khabar* of panther at Tellala was brought to me when I was in tents on the seashore of that charming little Junagadh port. I sent my tents to Tellala, a little village on the banks of the Hiran river and one of the most beautiful spots I have seen. The Hiran river was, during the hot weather, full of water partly because of the low dam at Verawal and partly because of a strange natural phenomenon, which so far as I know was unique. At the end of every monsoon the sea threw up a barrier of sand that blocked the mouth of the Hiran river three miles from Verawal. The result was that during eight months of the year a fresh water lake was formed on the very edge of the sea and the Hiran river bed all through the hot weather was full of water. The first day that I arrived at Tellala I went out with a shikari and sat until dark on a tree waiting in vain for the panther to be tempted by my bait. When I could no longer see my foresight I told the shikari that it was useless to wait any more; we climbed down and started for Tellala. About a mile from the camp, we were suddenly aware that a band of lions (I counted four, my shikari counted six) was walking towards us up the high road. We stopped at a loss what to do. The lions came towards us, apparently for some time unaware of us. When they saw us they stopped also; and then we stood looking at each other, both sides evidently disconcerted. I could not shoot, as I had promised not to kill a lion unless absolutely forced to in self-defence. The lions evidently thought that I and the shikari and our two or three beaters were too big a party to attack. I do not know how long we stood face to face. It seemed a very long time to me, but was probably not more than ten minutes. Then we heard shouts and saw torches, moving towards us. The lions did not like the situation. They got restive and I thought that they were going to charge us and I got ready to shoot. But they slowly moved off the road into the jungle. As they did so my servants and several villagers came up shouting and carrying torches and joined us. We could see the lions a few yards off the road and we walked past

them, glad at having out-manoeuvred them. Had not my servants and the villagers very pluckily taken the lions in the rear, we probably should have had to fight and the fight might well have gone against us. The lions were not satisfied with the result. Two nights later the same band came close to my tent and started roaring furiously. I had a pony with me and they hoped by roaring to frighten it and make it bolt into the jungle. Had it done so, they would soon have caught it up and eaten it; but it was an affectionate little Arab and so long as I sat by it and petted and stroked it, it felt sure that I would keep it safe against all the world. I stayed by it until three in the morning. By that time the lions had moved off and I was able to get a few hours' sleep.

The Agent to the Governor, my old and valued friend Colonel Kennedy, C.S.I., had about the same time a curious experience. Going into the Gir not long after me, he was sitting over a goat in the hope of getting a panther, when a large maned lion came up to the "bait" and taking it in its mighty jaws walked off with it, much as a retriever does with a running pheasant. Colonel Kennedy shouted at the lion and threw branches at it, but it only snarled at him contemptuously and went its way, taking the Colonel's goat with it.

I got my first chance at a lion three years later. In 1905, Lord Lamington, then Governor of Bombay, came to Rajkot on an official visit and afterwards went on the invitation of the Nawab of Junagadh to shoot in the Gir. His camp was at Shashan in the very heart of the Gir. The Governor and some of his staff went in one direction and his Private Secretary, Mr D—, a young soldier and Major Carnegy, the political officer, went in another. I saw poor Carnegy off at the station and was much concerned to hear him say that he had only a light sporting rifle. He, however, assured me that he did not mean to shoot. What led him to shoot in the end I do not know. An extra gun was probably needed; anyway he went out with the Private Secretary's party. Beats were organised and Mr D—wounded a lion as it passed him. Now, the rule of the jungle for all sportsmen is that wounded big game must be followed up and killed; otherwise they prey on the villagers. The three Englishmen followed the lion and came up with it. It charged and knocking down Carnegy bit his head and broke his skull. Mr D—killed the lion as it stood over its victim; but it was too late. Carnegy was already dead.

It was a dreadful tragedy but it did me a good turn. Realising that after this accident the Gir lions would be rather unpopular, I ventured a month later to ask His Highness if I might shoot a lion before saying good-bye to Kathiawar, which I was likely to leave shortly. To my delight the reply was in the affirmative. My wife and I went to Verawal to spend the hot weather. At Easter we took our tents to Tellala. As it happened, one of the lions there had become a bad man-eater and I was especially asked to kill it, if I could. The Gir foresters' method of marking down a lion is worthy of record. They know as a rule all the lions in their part of the forest and

their habits. When they are required to produce one, they follow it about all night preventing it from either eating or killing. In the morning it is exhausted and crawls into a thicket to sleep through the day. The foresters then hoist a cot to the top of a tree and a quarter a mile away surround the thicket on all sides except one, send for the favoured hunter, and when he is seated in his cot, drive the lion past him. The object of the cot is not to conceal the hunter, but to give him a good view of the jungle near him and keep him out of the way of the lion. A lion like other beasts of prey is not an “anthropos” and therefore does not look upwards unless it is wounded. Were the hunter on foot and blocking the lion’s exit he would certainly be charged. In a tree the lion takes no notice of him.

On arrival at Tellala I showed my “parwana” or permit to the head forester, who at once made his dispositions to get me a lion. He did not know where the man-eater was for the moment but he knew of two full-grown lions close to our camp. He followed them all that night. We got no news next morning and we were beginning to fear we should get no shooting that day. At midday, to our delight, a man came with news that the lions had been marked down about two miles from Tellala. We were to set out a little before two o’clock.

About 1-45, my wife, who refused to be left behind, and I mounted our horses and followed our guide through the most lovely forest scenery that I have ever seen. A quarter of a mile from our station, the head forester met us and bade us dismount and follow him. We did so and walked through glades and rides until we came to the tree where the cot had been hoisted. My wife, the head forester and I got into it, and a man was sent to start the beat. About half an hour, we knew by the sound of distant shouting that the beat had begun. It came nearer and nearer in an infernal crescendo. Just when it seemed as if Hell itself had been let loose, I saw what seemed a shadow flit through some bushes thirty yards off. My wife saw it too and touched my arm. A second later a splendid lioness walked out of the cover, as angry as any beast that I have ever seen. Her tail stood out behind as stiff as a ramrod and her eyes had a most unpleasant expression. I did not fire as she came towards the tree for if I had only wounded her, she would have seen us on the cot and she could easily have leapt up and swept us off with a blow of her paw. When she had passed, I fired behind her shoulder. The high velocity bullet hit her a little low. She fell down twisted round and struggled to her feet. I fired again into her back and hit her spine. She rolled into a bush and just then the beaters came up. The male lion had broken back and they thought that I had fired at it. They began saying what a pity it was. I reassured them, however, as to my skill as a marksman and told them in Gujarati that a wounded lioness was lying close to their feet. On hearing this, they stood not upon the order of their going, they went at once. And, in a moment every tree in the neighbourhood bore its load of agonised beaters, who were striving to reach the summit.

On returning to camp I sent a letter to His Highness the Nawab informing him that I had shot a lioness and that my wife had gone with me to the shoot and thanking him for the very great pleasure that we owed to his kindness. Early next morning I got the most delightful telegram that I have ever received "Take lioness for Madam Sahib, get lion for yourself." I showed it to the head forester who at once set about getting me a male lion. By a stroke of fortune, he was able to locate the bad man-eater, who was said to have accounted for no less than twenty-eight herdsmen and cultivators. The forester followed him up all that night and next day about noon we received word that the man-eating lion had been marked down about six miles away. A good road ran most of the distance, so my wife and I drove very comfortably through beautiful woods until we were met by the head forester. He made us, as before, walk for about a quarter of a mile until we came to where our cot awaited us. We climbed into it and the beat began as before. When the beaters had come near us, there suddenly rushed out of cover three quarter grown lion cubs. They were the most ridiculous objects imaginable; they rolled over each other playing like bull-terrier puppies. I got so excited that I would have shot one, only the head forester restrained me. After staying under my tree for a minute or so they scampered off; then at the last moment the man-eater sprang out of cover and dashed across in open space. It was a wily old campaigner and had evidently sent out its four young ones to draw the fire of any lurking enemies. I took rather rashly a snapshot at it, as it galloped past. A lucky shot broke its spine and it collapsed. It was a noble beast but its canine teeth had been broken and it was that misfortune probably that had led it to take exclusively to human diet.

So ended my connexion with the Gir lion but my good fortune continued all those holidays. A day or two later I got a panther and the same evening I received a letter from the Private Secretary to Lord Lamington informing me that I had been promoted to be judge of Poona. I was extremely pleased and wrote in great joy to my people at home. My proud parents told a somewhat serious friend; to their surprise he did not rejoice with them. He murmured in shocked tones "Good Heavens! Did your son shoot the judge of Poona, too?"

(1928)

# Some Panthers

By C.A. Kincaid

I cannot pretend to be in any sense of the word a big game shot; but I have been out a good many times after panthers. Since some of my experiences with them were rather exciting, I think that they might interest the readers of the *Indian State Railways Magazine*.

Kathiawar when I first knew it thirty years ago simply swarmed with panthers. There was a panther to be found on every hill and in almost every thicket. It was no uncommon occurrence to go out after black buck and to come back with a couple of buck and a panther lying dead in the same bullock cart. Colonel Fenton, while in Kathiawar, killed over eighty of them and several men whom I knew had speared them as if they had been pigs. The cause of the multitude of these *dipras* was no doubt the disordered state of the country. Only a few years before I was posted to Kathiawar, the province was overrun with bands of dacoits. They were generally led by some unfortunate landowner, who had been dispossessed of his estate by a none too scrupulous overlord. If he could escape capture long enough, he generally got his claims settled. If he was captured, he was shot out of hand. But as every small landowner in Kathiawar was in danger immediate or remote of dispossession, his sympathy and his secret help were always given to the man who had "left the path" as the Gujarati phrase went and had become a *bahirwatia* or outlaw. The bands of dacoits levied blackmail everywhere and robbed unfortunate shopkeepers or merchants or even rich cultivators whom they caught, mercilessly. The result was that village after village was deserted and left untilled; and panthers made their homes in what had once been cultivated areas.

To return, however, to the subject of my article, my first panther is the one that I shall always remember most vividly. No doubt because it was my first, but also because it gave me more trouble than any other. I had obtained permission to shoot a panther in the Gir forest from the Junagadh authorities and armed with a new .400 Jeffery high velocity rifle that I just had built for me, I went off gaily to the Gir. I first tried Tellala, a favourite spot for panthers, but my chief, Colonel Kennedy, had just bagged a brace there and there were no others for the moment. The Junagadh

authorities, who were always kindness itself to British officers, arranged that I should go to another part of the Gir, a village known, so far as I remember, as Gurmukhwadi.

When I arrived at my camp at my destination, I found tents in great numbers and furnished with every regard to my comfort. My servants were highly excited, because they had passed lions on the way from Tellala. However, no damage had been done and after listening to their highly varnished tale, I asked whether there had been a kill. A tall shikari, who had been listening to the servants' tale with some contempt, stepped forward and said that a panther had killed a peasant's goat early that morning and would probably return that afternoon to feed on it. Would the Sahib sit up for it? The Sahib said with much eagerness that he would sit up for it. Then the shikari said with perfect frankness: "Shooting panthers, Sahib, is different from shooting hares. Will the Sahib kindly shoot at a mark and shew me whether he can hit anything?" It was impossible to take offence at the man's words. He spoke with such dignity. I accordingly fired at a mark and apparently satisfied him; for he went away saying he would return at four and take me to the kill.

The hours passed very slowly, but at last four struck and the shikari appeared. We rode about two miles, dismounted near a small woodland village and walked a few hundred yards to where a machan or stand had been built over the remains of the unfortunate goat. It was not long before the shikari gave me a nudge to let me know that the panther was somewhere about. I do not know what he had seen, nor did I dare ask him, for I was too excited. He must have caught a glimpse of the panther, for a few minutes later a female panther stepped out of some undergrowth and sitting down like a dog began to call. My shikari wanted me to wait; but it was my first panther and I could not wait. What if the brute should bolt while I waited for it to come nearer. Regardless of the shikari, I put up my rifle and although I was very awkwardly placed for my aim, I fired. The high velocity bullet missed the panther's chest and struck it in the hindleg. It swung round twice in a circle and vanished in the undergrowth instantly.

The next question was what was to be done. Before I had left India, several persons, who had shot in other parts of India, had warned me against the danger of following a wounded tiger or panther on foot. "Always wait for your elephant", they said. But in the Bombay Presidency there are no elephants. For that contingency my Mentors had not provided; and as it is impossible to leave a wounded panther at large to kill the villagers, I had to descend sadly from my tree and start following the wounded beast on foot. I must confess that as I walked, I wondered why I had ever been so foolish as to go out panther shooting. I was not only concerned about myself, but about the villagers. They had come out in great numbers and armed, as all villagers in native states are with swords, they threw caution to the winds. One man got on to the panther's trail and shouting out "Am avyo" (He has come this

way), he ran off at full speed on the panther's tracks.

Unhappily the villager was on the right trail and, while I ran after him as quickly as I could, he came to where the wounded panther lay. It charged straight at him and knocking him over, tried to get at his throat. He held it off long enough for a young Rajput to draw his sword and give it a tremendous cut across the head. It left its intended victim and ran into a little bush close by. I had by this time come up and was shewn the wounded panther. It was lying down, but was wagging its tail like an angry cat. Again wondering why I had ever had the foolish wish to go out panther shooting, I drew a bead on the back of the wounded beast's neck. It was the most visible part of its body. The high velocity bullet this time hit its mark fair and square. The tail wagging ceased and the panther was dead. Much of my pleasure at my first panther was spoilt by the injury to the rash villager. Fortunately it was not serious. I had the man sent to the nearest hospital. In a few days he was perfectly well again; but I fancy that he treated panthers in future with more respect.

The most daring panther that I remember was one I shot some years later in the same Gir forest. My wife and I were camped by the sea side at Verawal, when a forester came and complained that there was a very bold panther near where he lived, would the Sahib come and shoot it. We were going into the Gir just then after lions, so I could do nothing at the time; but while camped in the Gir, I found a day to attend to the bold panther. One afternoon my wife and I started out on horse back followed by a shikari leading a wretched she-goat. Near the machan, we had to dismount and cross some very wild country. Once arrived at the machan, events moved very quickly. We climbed into our tree, the beaters tied up the goat, and as they left called to it. As the form of the last man moved round a rock the head of a panther came round a rock, on the other side. The brute was not in the least afraid of men and, so we heard afterwards, had several times carried off goats on a lead.

The panther was a little far off for a perfectly safe shot, so I waited. The goat had been calling cheerfully to its human friends when it suddenly saw the panther a few yards away. It became petrified with terror and made no further sound. It walked to the end of its cord and gazed as if hypnotised at the monster, whose dinner it was to provide. The panther did not seem hungry. It slowly sat down like a huge tomcat and watched with quiet enjoyment the emotions it was rousing in the goat's breast. I on the other hand was growing more and more excited. I felt that if I waited much longer, my hand would tremble, so that I should not be able to aim straight. I drew a bead on the brute's chest, as it faced me. I pulled the trigger and the panther rolled over growling helplessly. My second barrel hit it in the body and all motion stopped. I had hardly fired my second barrel, when my men came running back very much surprised to hear the shots so soon. We descended and we found that my first bullet had hit the panther higher than I had intended. The bullet had struck it straight between the eyes. To use the expression of my shikari, I had given it a *chanllo* or

sect mark. No other incident followed save the almost unendurable swagger of the unharmed goat on the return journey. It was clear to its mind at any rate that it alone "had won the War".

Another very bold panther came into my tents when I was in Mahableshwar. Our bull-terrier bitch had presented us with a litter of puppies, which would have served admirably for a healthy panther's supper. The mother had the courage of her race and although chained to one of the tentpoles, kept up so fierce a growling that the servants heard her and drove away the panther in time. The same day I learnt that the panther had been seen in the Blue Valley Road, which was quite close. At the suggestion of a local shikari, I went the same evening with a goat in the hope of getting a shot. On the way we met the panther. It was in no way disconcerted, but just stepped aside to let us pass. I could see it faintly in the undergrowth, but not clearly enough to fire. We decided to go on and sit up just off the Blue Valley Road. We tied up our goat and waited for an hour or so. It was now so dark that it was useless to wait any longer, so we decided to go back, leaving the goat there. Next morning the shikari reported that the goat had been killed and advised my sitting up for the panther the same afternoon. My wife insisted on coming too; and at five o'clock we were in the machan. We had a longish wait, for carriages were passing along the road; and last of all an idiotic Member of Council who had never done any shooting himself, passed by with his wife. Seeing the goat, he went up to it and not seeing us began to tell his wife all about the shoot that would shortly take place. We condemned him to all sorts of hot places while he talked and we sighed with relief when he passed on. The panther, who had probably been as bored by the Member's talk as we had been, waited only a few minutes longer. Suddenly it galloped across an open space almost noiselessly, looked up and down the road to see if any more carriages were coming and then walked with leisurely step to the kill. I fired between its shoulders and it sank without a struggle.

On another occasion at Mahableshwar, I had an experience that I had some difficulty in getting my friends to believe. A panther kill was reported about three miles beyond the Robbers' Cave. I rode out there, reaching the spot about half past four, as the panther was expected to return early. When I reached the spot I found the men, who were watching the kill in some excitement. The panther had already returned, and they had had some difficulty in chasing it back into the woods. After this tale, I hardly expected to see the animal again. But the country was very wild. The lords of the jungle had no fear of man; and I had hardly seated myself comfortably in the machan, when the shikari nudged me. Looking in the direction where he pointed, I could just make out through the undergrowth a panther lying like a cat and switching away flies with its tail. There was no chance of a safe shot for the moment, so with a heart hammering with excitement, I waited on events. Suddenly the brute vanished and I wondered where it had gone. I looked towards the



kill, but it had not gone there. I turned to the shikari and saw him shaking with terror. "He is coming to attack us" he whispered. I could see nothing whatever of the animal and wondered whence the attack would be launched. For some time I could get no sense out of the man. At last he pointed to a branch of the next tree and above our heads. There, like a cat on the back of an armchair, was the panther. It had apparently climbed up the tree and in doing so had scared the shikari. Quite ignorant of our presence it was looking at the kill, waiting for its appetite to improve. I at first hesitated to shoot, for I feared that I might knock the panther on the top of us. Then I calculated that it would miss us and aiming carefully, fired. Instantaneously the animal slid down its own tree and missed us with a good deal to spare. It was only about ten feet off when I fired and it was dead before it reached the ground.

Sometimes one had to go very far afield at Mahableshwar for one's panther. One day in the second week in June when the rains begin to fall, I got *khobar* of a panther in the valley beyond the Krishna. There was a drop of two thousand feet into the Krishna valley, a climb of two thousand feet the other side and then a drop of two thousand feet into the valley next to it. I started at two in the afternoon from my bungalow. As we reached the brow of the plateau and began to descend, we passed a little image of Ganpati and the hillmen all *salaamed* to it, because Ganpati is the god who blesses all beginnings. The author who begins to write a new book, the banker who opens a new ledger, the traveller who starts on a voyage all invoke the kindly help of Ganpati. Then we dropped down the steep path amid pouring rain, then up the other side and then down the hill again. Fortunately the rain stopped and I climbed into my machan. I was wet to the skin, but my clothes dried rapidly in the sun and I was cheered by the sound of a panther calling a few hundred yards away. I wanted a drink badly, but the shikari had no pity and made me settle in my machan. "There will be lots of time to drink, Sahib" he said, "when you have killed the panther". To this austere view I had to agree, as there was always the danger, that the panther, near as it was, might see us.

It was a long wait. The panther kept calling for an hour, but came no nearer. Then a long silence followed. I grew impatient. I said to the shikari, "It's no use waiting any longer, is it?" He put his finger to his lips and said one word *Yell* (it will come). I grumbled no more. The kill was the body of a young heifer. The panther had dragged its victim's corpse under a high rock, that stood up about twenty yards from where I was hidden. I looked so long and earnestly at the kill and the rock, that I must have hypnotised myself into a doze. I woke up with a start, as the shikari touched my shoulder and whispered "*Ala*" (it has come). I gripped my rifle, looked all round but could see nothing. It was dusk and it was getting difficult to notice objects. Then I noticed what seemed to be a round stone on the top of the rock opposite me. I had not observed it before and I wondered whether it could be a portion of a panther. It seemed, however, to be motionless. Just as I was about to

look elsewhere, the round rock began to grow and then alter its shape, and I at last made out clearly the head and forequarters of a panther. It looked enormous in the fading light and I confess that I thought it was a tiger.

Slowly the wary beast pulled itself to its feet and began to walk round the side of the great rock. For a second it disappeared, and I was in an agony of apprehension that it had gone for ever. I wondered how on earth I should climb back all those thousands of feet after a blank day. Then it reappeared and I was all excitement again. Very slowly and silently, it walked across the face of the rock until it was just over the dead heifer. “*Maro Sahib*” (Shoot), whispered my shikari and I aimed as best I could; for it had got so dark that I could barely make out the foresight. It fired and was very pleased to see my enemy crumple up and fall over. I still hoped that it might be a tiger and I joyously descended from my tree after giving the prone object a second barrel. The beaters would have rushed up to the dead animal, but I was able to keep them by me. We walked up to it, I covering it with my rifle. At last one of the beaters bent forward and pulled the animal’s tail. It made no response. “It is dead, Sahib,” said the shikari. “No *wagh* would suffer such an insult were it alive”. The shikari was right. It was dead, but it was only a panther.

I had my drink, while the beaters tied the panther’s feet to a bamboo. Then with our enemy ignominiously hanging upside down from the bamboo, we started homewards. At the frontier of every village, the beaters shouted to the village god that they had killed a panther and that the god should rejoice. We climbed up two thousand feet, then walked down two thousand feet into the Krishna valley. The stream was lit up in the weirdest way. The whole population of the valley were engaged in catching the crabs that infest the river bed and damage the crops. All of them had torches in their hands. These, I was told, dazzled the crabs. In any case they gave the hunters a chance of seeing their quarry. I watched them for some time and then started to climb the last two thousand feet to the brow of the Mahableshtar plateau. I shall never forget that climb. It was raining again. I had had no tea and no dinner. By the time I reached the top, I was “dead to the world”. And when we passed the little image of Ganpati, I, this time, *salaamed* before any one else!

It was 2 a.m. by the time I found my tonga on the road. Into it we stuffed the panther; and as I drove off I heard the beaters singing and laughing as they raced down the steep hill paths. Fatigue and they had never met.

The next summer I got a second panther in very nearly the same place, only a hundred feet up the far side of the valley. It was a bold panther this time, so the shikari told me, and it would not keep me waiting long. It had, it seemed, early that morning rushed past a herdsman, pulled down one of his young cows in spite of his loudly vocal protests. The other herdsmen had come up and had driven the robber off his prey and word had been sent to Mahableshtar. I received the news from my shikari and again I went down two thousand feet and up two thousand feet and down

two thousand feet and then up a hundred feet the other side. The kill lay out in the open and the trees round were villagers squatting like vultures. They had had a hard time keeping the panther off the kill.

I got into my machan, loaded my rifle and settled myself comfortably. Then I looked round. It was the wildest spot that I had ever been in. Rough, low scrub covered the hill side and hid the coarse grass beneath. There was not a sign of human dwelling visible, although there must have been huts somewhere in which the herdsmen lived. I felt thankful that good actions done in some former life had saved me from a life spent in such a valley. Then I looked at the kill and at the bushes round it. As I did so, a beautifully marked panther walked fearlessly into the open. It stood still and looked to see if the herdsmen, who had previously driven it off its prey were still there. Seeing and hearing nothing, it turned to take a step nearer the kill. I put up my rifle and aimed. As I did so, my sight protector came off the barrel and fell to the ground. I passed an agonising moment. If the sight protector had struck a rock, the noise would have startled the panther and I should never have been seen again. Happily the sight protector fell in the grass and made no sound. A second later I had fired and the panther was dead. It was a beautiful beast and I was delighted to get the skin. The tramp back was severe, but less so than on the previous occasion. It was much earlier in the day and I was back for dinner.

I went several times afterwards into the Krishna and adjoining valleys, but without any fortune. *One* day, however, I had an interesting experience. I had climbed down into the Krishna valley and up the other side and there I sat over the kill. It was a young bull that had been slain that morning by a panther, said by the villagers to have developed man-eating tendencies. I waited until it was dark and then got out of the machan. To light us homewards, one of the beaters carried a lantern. Just before we got to the edge of the plateau and were about to descend into the Krishna valley, the lantern bearer stopped and pointed to the ground. We came up and looked. Over the footprints that we had left as we walked towards the machan were the footprints of the panther. As we stalked it, it had stalked us, and had we not been such a large party, it might have tried to carry one of us off. It was very interesting and I was almost consoled for my blank day. I have always had a soft spot in my heart for that panther. We did each other no injury; we parted as friends. I did not get the panther and better still it did not get me.

(1928)

# An Adventure with a Tigress

By N.B. Mehta

Talking of lions reminds me of a remarkable experience I had with a tigress in the forests of the Central Provinces. “Remarkable”, inasmuch as I am still a piece of humanity journeying on with the great caravan—obviously for some important mission—and not stray molecules floating in the flesh and blood of a Berar man-eater. Every man has a few notable reminiscences to narrate in company when the conversation lags or when some youthful spirit in the style of Falstaff—may his soul rest in peace—narrates how single-handed he withstood, nay frustrated, the onslaught of half a dozen warriors, or how he measured in dust a wily panther in a dark deep Indian forest. This is my modest tale of adventure.

It came about in this wise. I, in company of two other officers was deputed to survey the traffic prospects of a railway line in the Central Provinces and had meandered into Akot, a station on the proposed railway, and a considerable cotton centre, twenty-eight miles to the north of Akola. We had halted at the *dak* bungalow, that oasis in the Indian countryside, when we were informed that the great attraction thereabouts was a hill fortress, Narnala, fourteen miles northward to be reached by car. We were no tourists and yet, as the next official move-on was to take place the next afternoon, we decided—a companion and I—to visit the fort and appreciate the best mediæval Afghan architecture thereon. Strange is human wanderlust!

Half-past-five the next morning found us starting for Narnala. We disdained to wait for the guide kindly arranged for by the local *Vahivatdar*. We could see the hill and the faint outlines of the fortress from the *dak* bungalow. And what is visible dispels fear. Again had we not tramped twelve miles through a trackless forest in the Melaghat under a blazing sun, crossing the Tapti barefooted and brought back in four hours information and statistics concerning the traffic potentialities of a jungle station? So we left with confidence. The car stopped at the foot of the hill and alighting we strode briskly towards our destination, which loomed high above. It was an April morning, cool and bracing, and we had no doubt but that in an hour's time we would scale the hill and reach the fortress, although we had no guide and we had but a hazy notion of the way up. Two miles we raced thus treading lightly on

the crisp forest leaves. Once or twice we felt we were not going in the right direction, but we were undaunted and hoped to reach our goal somehow. Then the thing happened. We were approaching an open space with a miserable bush to the right and a few bare silver birch-like trees to the left when, with a repeating growl, a huge Bengal tigress leaped barely eight yards in front of us. It was a beautiful clean jump and we should have applauded it in a circus show. But what was still more surprising was the repeating snarling noise which she emitted. No, it was not a roar that reverberates in a forest and I don't know why she preferred this method of welcoming us except that we looked, armed as we were with a cane and a camera, meek and modest, and she thought it better to reserve her loud speaker for a more fitting occasion. Then instead of leaping on us and giving us the *coup de grace* she described a semi-circle with her snarling face towards us and disappeared in the same bush. We were nonplussed at this uncalled for visitation and acting on the instinct of self-preservation, we picked up a few stones and started to run in the opposite direction. This was just the thing not to do; for on her return visit she could have caught us in a couple of leaps. Luckily I remembered having read that tigers don't climb trees and acting upon this, I instructed my companion to climb one of the small slender trees that were about us. I also lost no time in swinging up on one.

Hardly had we done so before the tigress with the same old semi-humorous growl rushed at us through the thicket and stared at us with surprise. But she was now frustrated. Why she did not knock us down when we were on *terra firma* quietly walking towards her is to me an unsolved riddle. It may be that she was afraid of the safety of her two cubs, who, we subsequently learnt, were with her, and went back into the thicket to assure herself of their safety. Whatever the cause of her clumsy mistake at our first meeting, at the second we were safely perched on the branches of two trees beyond her reach and contemplating her exasperation with good humour.

Once temporarily safe, we began to consider the means we should take to escape the attention of the beast who was all the time hiding in the thicket and waiting for us to come down. One thing was certain: we must escape and reach the village where our car was awaiting us and that before darkness set in. And we realised that as we were surrounded by tall hills on all sides it would be dark by 4 p.m. It was not particularly cold but it was blowing frightfully. Starvation was not our dread as we had stuffed our pockets with biscuits.

The nearest village was two miles away and as we had strayed off the beaten track the chances of people coming in our direction were remote. I then resorted to shouting at intervals of ten minutes in the hope of drawing the attention of some passer-by. We were on the tree for quite an hour before my shout received a reply. Two shikaris with guns and our chauffeur then turned up and we knew we were saved. The shikaris heard our story and asked us the direction in which the beast had

gone. We followed her footsteps but evidently she had taken a fortified position among the rocks and we thought it best to turn back to the village. We followed the footprints of the tigress towards the village where she had gone the previous evening and we came across stray limbs of a buffalo, a tell-tale evidence of the beast's previous meal. The shikaris also pointed out to us the smaller footprints of the two cubs. We certainly thanked our gods that the fate of the buffalo did not befall us. I suspect it was the sumptuous meal which the tigress and her cubs had had on the buffalo which made our visitor reluctant to draw the blood of such ignoble adversaries, as we were.

(1928)

# The Midnight Visitor

By C.A. Renny

All day long the air had glowed with a shimmering, unbearable heat. Long since the Christmas rains had departed and none other had fallen, the grassy levels of the plain surrounding my temporary abode and coolie lines were scorched and yellow, while gaping cracks, cleft in the ground by days of pitiless heat, were a menace to cattle by day and roving animals at night. The mango, sal and simul stood covered with hot dust hurled up by an occasional whirlwind, their dry and tired leaves drooping and thirsty, waiting for the rain that would not come.

It was the end of June, yet there were no signs of the approach of the monsoon. Nightly to south-westward, the sky was lit up by occasional flashes of summer lightning. All day, the work of transplanting went on with no sign of pleasure, the usual songs of the coolies as they worked, a sure sign of contentment, were hushed; all were contriving to complete the task set them as soon as possible to get home under the shelter of their thatched roofs.

The thermometer for days now had registered a hundred degrees, and the humid atmosphere of the Darjeeling Tarai made life as unbearable and uncomfortable as it could possibly be.

Extra work in the evening was out of the question, to expect it was inhumane.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, the neighbouring garden assistant rode over for a chat and a cup of tea. "Gee whizz," he exclaimed as he slid out of his saddle. "Today beats all other days and if tomorrow beats today, no work in the hot sun for this child." He climbed up the steps leading to the front verandah, threw his *topee* and came into a corner and selecting a Singapore cane chair, made himself comfortable. The "boy" brought out tea and other drinks and left them on the table, and placing the soda-water under the table, carefully balanced the opener on top of one of them.

Evidently Long John understood what was said and began pouring out the tea. He asked me if I wanted something, but I was engaged watching a Santal funeral passing the house towards the *Sal* jungle, a man walking in front was scattering rice to left and to right. The funeral had also attracted the young gardener, who turning

to Long John asked what the rice-scattering meant.

“These be jungle people and have strange manners and customs we know nothing of.” Meanwhile the funeral had crossed the Government road and entered the *Sal* forest.

Ten minutes after, the *Chota Saheb*, as he was familiarly termed, for I had none to help me, got astride his stud and galloped off towards his own garden, two miles to the north to issue orders for the following day’s work.

An hour after, the sun dipped behind the Nepal hills and shortly after, the disc of a brilliant full moon could be distinguished through the foliage of the *Sal* forest. A breeze had sprung up—a breeze welcome by all. Everyone seemed to take an interest in life again.

The hours dragged on, seven o’clock had given place to eight o’clock when Long John stepped out to announce dinner. Not to disappoint him I went in, sat down and played with my food. In spite of the breeze, it was really too hot to eat.

The bright moon had topped the trees while I dined, and on stepping into the verandah, I found the whole country bathed in its brilliant light. The silent coolie lines had become animated and from all sides the sound of Santal fiddles and flutes and the sound of the *Nagpuri* drums could be heard as they accompanied the songs of the dancers.

Beyond the northern coolie lines, on an abandoned tea estate facetiously named *Awl*, a term signifying, “the deadly malarial fever,” singing, dancing and drumming was being carried on with greater vigour. I had been informed that in a solitary hut a little inland from the left bank of the stream running through the estate, a marriage was to take place. The rice-beer usually supplied at all marriages on the tea garden had been copiously partaken of, hence the drumming and singing rising above all others.

Nine o’clock struck on a distant gong. Tired of sitting idle in the verandah, I went inside to finish a sketch. I soon found the centre room where I usually worked was a veritable oven. Throwing open every door and window I sat down to the drawing I had in hand; five minutes after I gave it up perspiring profusely. There was a make-shift *punkah* in the adjoining bed room, I went inside, undressed and went to bed, and was soon fast asleep. A ghastly sound, resembling nothing on earth, rent the air. I jumped out of bed wondering if I had heard it in my dream. Another and yet another unearthly shriek rent the stillness. I could not place the sound at all. I hastily donned some clothes, loaded every rifle and gun I had, and lit every lamp in the bungalow. The *punkah* had long ceased to function, the reason was obvious. Seizing the guns, I carried them into the small dining-room on the north side of the bungalow; for it was from this direction the sound had come. It was midnight by the clock. Peering through the window panes, which I had hastily closed, I tried to find some reason for the ghastly sound. Every coolie hut was barred, every line as silent



as night, not even the dogs attempted to give vent to their feelings. From beyond the northern lines again that ghastly shriek pierced the stillness. Chaos now reigned. The Chinamen Carpenters, who lived fifty yards to the south of my abode, on the fringe of the *Sal* forest, frightened out of their wits, had collected all waste timber and pouring half a tin of kerosene oil on it had set it alight. Another man inside their house, suddenly blessed with a brain wave, set a Chinese record on their gramophone and started it going. Where peace had reigned, the beat of drums, the lighting of flares, the beating of anything that could make a noise, accompanied the shrieks of a frightened woman.

There was a knock on the door leading into the back verandah and an unrecognisable voice prayed to be let in. I opened the door hurriedly to find Long John, shivering with fright. He hurried inside, barred the door, and collapsed in a corner, calling on *Allah*.

Again that awful sound came to us louder than the din created by frightened coolies. It sounded nearer. Grasping a rifle, I went to the window to have a shot.

"*Huzoor*, don't fire, lest it come here and wreck the bungalow." Pleaded Long John.

"What is it? Come, let me know quickly."

"*Huzoor*, it is the *pagla hati*—a mad elephant. Some say, *huzoor*, it is *Saitan* himself."

"*Saitan* or no *Saitan*, make me a cup of tea."

Again that blood-curdling shriek broke the stillness of the night. Regardless of Long John's advice, I fired in the direction of the noise and waited. Evidently the shot had either killed or had frightened the beast, for as the minutes went by, the flares died down, the drumming and the hubbub ceased, and a silence fraught with fright settled down on the estate.

I went out into my front verandah with the cup of tea in my hand and was greeted by Achong, the head Chinaman, with these words:

"Your nursery gone to hell."

"What John?"

"*Do tho' tha*" (There were two.)

"*Humra ghar tor dia*." (They have broken my house.)

"Alright, John."

'Alright, going,' and John went off.

Half an hour went by. The dawn was breaking. The coolies having recovered from their fright, were talking excitedly. I lit a cigarette, shouted for more tea and when Long John brought it, I found he too was his normal self again.

"Here, Long John, what has happened? What does Achong, Chinaman, mean by saying 'there were two'?"

"*Huzoor*, when that *pagla hati* shrieked, there were two wild elephants

wandering in the *Sal* forest. These took fright and in running past the Chinaman's house, knocked their cook-room over. I was with the Chinaman at the time and saw them cross the stream, run through your *gotibari* (nursery) and disappear towards the Mechi river." Saying which he went inside.

"I wonder what damage has been done? Well, we can tell in the morning," I murmured to myself.

Gradually the light strengthened and as the burning orb appeared over the Dalka Forest and lit the tops of the near *Sal* trees, the *jungli murghis* hailed the appearance with crow after crow. A solitary figure from the nearest coolie lines crept towards my bungalow and reaching the steps, gazed up at me mutely, with frightened eyes.

It was *Sani Sirdar*, head of the *Kharia* coolies.

"What is it, *Sani*?"

There was no answer. Fright had effectually sealed his lips. I knew the remedy in cases of this sort. Shouting to Long John, I ordered him to bring the whisky bottle. When he brought it, I poured out a stiff peg and handing it to him, told him to give it to *Sani*.

"Well, *Sani*?" I asked as the last drop vanished down his throat.

"*Huzoor*, a terrible thing has happened."

"What thing?"

"*Huzoor*, I cannot speak even of it. Come and see."

Other sirdars had joined him.

"Alright. I'll be with you in five minutes." I went inside, hastily donned a coat and taking my *topee* from the verandah peg, went down the steps.

I followed the sirdars who led me past *Sani Sirdar*'s lines, where several women were standing in a group. I chaffed them, but there was no answer. Poor creatures, I thought, they seem dumb with fright.

The sirdars walked on. We passed the northern lines and came to the hut where the marriage had taken place. It had fallen to the ground.

"Hullo, this was standing yesterday, how did it fall?"

Mangra Sirdar spoke. "*Huzoor*, as you know there was a marriage held here yesterday. While it was in progress, that *bhut* of a *hati* came up unawares. Even our line dogs were silent and none knew of his approach. We conclude he walked up the stream and up to this hut, which he put his head against and began shoving. As soon as the timber began to break, the men rushed out and seeing the elephant standing at the back of the hut, they lost their heads and ran away, leaving the women and children inside.

"I and Somra, had gone a little way when we stopped and came back. We were too late. As soon as the house began to fall, the *hati* came to the front and as the women rushed out one by one he caught them in his trunk and dashed them on the ground. We shouted to them to remain where they were. It was useless. The hut

already on a bad slant was slowly, but surely coming down. The brute stood ready, he spared no one. Somra and I lifted one side of the hut, after the elephant had gone, and have put all the bodies inside. Come and see.”

I went with him. The sight was heart-rending. The brute had done his work thoroughly and in sheer delight at the destruction emitted those horrible sounds we had heard in the night. I returned home dumbfounded. The *Chota hazri* laid out on the table I sent away untasted. I poured out a small glass of brandy and drank it down.

Seizing a telegraph form, I wired to the Magistrate to come over; instead, he had the elephant proscribed, offering a reward of Rs 250 to anyone who would kill it. Many of us have tried, not for the reward, but for the sake of the killing. Five of my bullets are embedded in him and others too claim to have hit him often. The animal seems to bear a charmed life. Five years ago the total number of human lives he had accounted for reached 135 and he still lives.

I heard his life history from a Nepalese crafter who lives in the Morung or Nepal Tarai. For years he wandered with a herd, the favourite of their leader, a fine female elephant. “One day”, said Dalbir, “another young male, sought her favours challenging this one to an open combat. The fight took place in a large clearing in the forest lying between the Chalsa and Jaldakka rivers.” “It was a very fierce fight, *huzoor*,” continued Dalbir, “and the *pagla hati*, as he is now known, broke his right tusk. If you have watched him walking, he limps. The tusk of the younger elephant was buried below the joint. He left the herd disgraced, and, as if the cause of his downfall was due to mankind alone, he takes his revenge yearly on many human lives.”

(1929)

# Hunting With A Camera

*By F.W. Champion*

**O**n the left bank of the Ganges, a few miles below Lachmanjhula, in the United Provinces, where the holy river emerged from the Himalayan foot-hills, lies a great forest which forms the home of many wild beasts from the mighty elephant and tiger downwards. Hardwar, that sacred and populous Hindu city, is only a few miles away on the other side of the river, and the pious pilgrims who come from all over India to wash away their sins by bathing in the holy water little realise how often at night tigers stand on the opposite bank of the river to watch with curious gaze the bright illuminations of their festivals, or how these huge beasts even listen to the rumbling of the trains as they bring the pilgrims to the railway station after long journeys from all parts of India.

In this forest for many years has resided a very fine tigress, who has so far escaped destruction at the hands of the numerous sportsmen who are for ever pursuing her—and may she continue to do so until old age mars her pleasure in the life which is as dear to her as their own is to her hunters! She is very powerfully built for a tigress and is perhaps as fine an example of her race as is to be found anywhere in northern India. For this reason the hunter who at last lays her low will undoubtedly feel very pleased with himself, although there are some amongst us—an increasing number these days, one is glad to be able to say—who can derive just as much pleasure from hunting with the bloodless camera, which, after all, takes no life and is much less selfish than shooting to kill, in that the resultant pictures can subsequently give pleasure to others in a way that skins or horns can never do even though the skin be stolen from one of the finest tigresses in northern India.

I will now describe a few episodes which have occurred from time to time during the last four or five years when we happened to be camping within this tigress' domain and have thus had opportunities to hunt her with a camera. The first time we became acquainted with her was several years ago, when she suddenly took to killing the buffloes which the local bamboo-cutters use for dragging their produce down to the edge of the Ganges, where the bamboos are tied together into huge rafts and floated away to distant markets on the banks of the great Ganges

canals—those fine monuments of the work of the Irrigation Department in Upper India. During a single week she killed four or five of these buffaloes and always left the carcasses to be devoured by vultures after making one heavy meal. Several times, mounted on a tame elephant, we searched the places where we hoped she would be lying up during the day, but she was never there and it appeared that there were two reasons for this. Firstly, she had at the time two or three small cubs to feed, which meant that she had to kill more frequently than usual, whereas an attack of rinderpest had greatly reduced the numbers of the sambar which form her usual food; and, secondly, she had been fired at in a beat and missed, so that she had learnt not to lie near her kills in the daytime. The result was that several natural kills produced no single glimpse of her to enable us to take a photograph, although one day a fine chital stag with his horns in velvet allowed us to approach within a few yards and seemed little perturbed at the click of the shutter as we recorded his picture. His very presence there, however, was a fairly certain indication that the tigress was not where we were hoping to find her. On another occasion, having once more failed to find our quarry, we followed a poor specimen of a sambar stag for two or three hours in the hope that he would stand in a good light and give us an opportunity to take his photograph; but he always moved too quickly from one belt of thick shade to another and all we could do was to snap him standing half-hidden among some bushes. Oh! If only the animal-photographer could explain to wild animals that, were they to stand out in the open for a few moments in a good pose, he would take their photographs, give them an honoured place on his wall or in his collection of jungle pictures and let them depart in peace!

But we are wandering from the subject of our tigress and must return. As we have already seen, she never seemed to be near her kills in the day-time, and, as she generally left them in the open, they were usually devoured by jackals and vultures long before the evening. She soon gave up killing the dragging cattle, which was as well for her, because, although the loss of these cattle was largely due to the carelessness of their owners, who calmly left them loose at night in places which they knew the tigress might visit, I should otherwise have had to make an effort to destroy her in the interests of my forest employees. We then tried tying up young buffalo-baits in very quiet secluded spots; but we soon found that the only places where she would kill these baits were open cross-roads, which meant that hyenas and jackals—which frequent jungle roads—always smelt them out and fired off the automatic flashlight arranged over the kills early in the evening and long before there was any hope of the tigress arriving. One day she killed a bait in a particularly quiet spot, and, full of hope, we mounted on a tame elephant and stalked the kill very quietly in the heat of the afternoon. Sure enough, we found her at last dozing in the shade of a bamboo clump and thus obtained our first view of her magnificent proportions. But she was evidently sleeping with one eye open, for, although there

was ample time for a quick shot with a rifle, she dashed off with an angry “whoof” just as I was getting her into focus on the mirror of my reflex camera, so that once more she got the better of us. This particular kill, however, did not fail altogether as one of her cubs, who was by now three-parts grown, returned during the night and was caught by our automatic flashlight in the act of seizing the kill.

The next stage in our efforts to secure her photograph involved sitting out all night over a live-bait tied near an old kill, which we hoped would attract her to the spot and perhaps induce her to attack the living bait, over which the flashlight apparatus had been arranged during the day time so that it could be fired by pulling a cord from the machan. The reader will now accompany me in thought to this machan and in imagination spend the night with me in the tree. We will assume that the difficult adjustments of the flashlight apparatus have already been done—they take several hours and we are now mounted on a tame elephant and approaching the chosen spot at about 4 p.m. on a fine warm afternoon. As we draw near the place, we move very slowly and approach carefully under cover, since tigers in general and this tigress in particular have a habit of doing the unexpected and who knows but that we may now find her calmly eating her kill in broad daylight. But no: she is not here at the moment. A short distance from the old kill stands a dead tree on which are perched a number of vultures, evidently resting after their disgusting meal of putrid flesh, and above in the crystal clear sky, is circling a kite, also attracted by the prospect of food. We pause for a moment to watch the wonderful grace of the movements of his forked tail, which is a hundred-fold more efficient than the rudder of any ship or aeroplane invented by man, and then we move on again, noting as we approach the stealthy retreat of a pair of jackals, who have been stealing a meal during the absence of the rightful owner of the kill. We now climb up to the machan and, sending the elephant back to camp, settle down to the prospect of the deep enjoyment of a moonlight night spent absolutely alone in the heart of a great forest. All around us is a vast jungle containing no human being for miles in any direction, yet positively alive with wild animals and birds of every kind and description. Only a day or two previously a herd of about 20 wild elephants, including two or three tiny babies, passed under the very tree in which we are now sitting, and the place is notorious for sloth-bears, which come from long distances to feed on the luscious crop of berries now ripening on the *ber* bushes all around us. The local sambar have been sadly thinned out by a recent attack of rinderpest, but chital are common in the neighbourhood, which, among many other species, even holds a few of those curious four-horned antelope nowhere common in the Himalayan foot-hills. And the birds! Who can give any idea of the marvellous beauty and variety of the feathered denizens of the foot-hill forests? All around us are scores of peafowl, attracted like the bears by the ripening of the jungle fruits; green paroquets in hundreds are dashing about at a tremendous pace in every direction and screaming

with joy in harsh raucous tones as through they are revelling in the thrill of their rapid motion through the air; bulbuls are twittering on almost every bush; plover of two or three species are running about the dry sandy *rau* bed in front of us; two or three kites are screaming in the air above us; a pair of fantailed flycatchers are pirouetting from twig to twig of the very tree in which we are sitting; and a host of others of every conceivable shape and colours are to be seen and heard in the directions. All seem bubbling over with a happiness which finds ready expression in song and play. And yet some naturalists claim that all Nature is intensely cruel! Those of us, however, who enjoy watching rather than destroying wild creatures do not find Nature cruel—far from it. Sudden death appears at intervals, it is true, but it is only our vivid imagination and fear of the hereafter that make us afraid of death. Wild creatures do not know what death is and are not troubled by thoughts about Heaven and Hell, so that the sudden passing of one of their number as the result of the advent of some flesh-eating animal or bird is but a fleeting incident soon forgotten by the survivors. But once again we are straying from our subject.

We sit happily on in our machan, hoping against hope that at last the tigress will give us our chance to take her photograph and imperceptibly the day passes away to be replaced by the full glory of a jungle night. Once or twice we hear the alarm cry of a kakar or chital in the distance and hope surges up in our hearts, only to die down again as the cries soon cease. Then a curious rumbling comes from the direction of Hardwar, some distance away, and we wonder what *tamasha* there can be making such a disturbance. But the noise seems to be increasing, and, at last, straining over the edge of the machan, we realise with dismay that a heavy storm is rapidly approaching from the west. What are we to do? We have no mackintosh and little bedding and our camp is several miles away, with a jungle full of wild beasts in between and no lamp or path to help us get there. Yet if we stay in the *machan* we are bound to get wet through and thoroughly chilled, which will inevitably result in a bout of fever. Even as we consider the problem the moon disappears, dazzling lightning flashes across the sky in all directions, a strong wind begins to blow, and down comes a tropical deluge of rain which soon soaks the camera, flashlight, blankets, and finally us. All hope of our long-sought picture has gone, and, feeling distinctly nervous of being struck by lightning, we see in imagination our tigress hugging herself with glee at the thought of how well we are being punished for having had the impertinence to continue for so long in the vain pursuit of her photograph. At long last, after we have become resigned to spending a night of misery, we hear a curious whistling which does not seem to come from any animal or bird we recognise. Surely we are not beginning to get a little light in the head as a result of our nerve-racking experience? No: the whistling continues and increases in volume so that at last we realise, with a thrill of joy, that it must be one of our tame elephants, which, despite our orders to the contrary, has been sent out by my wife to

rescue us from our predicament. We eagerly call up the elephant, thankful to escape from our chilly damp perch, and rapidly return to our comfortable camp 4 miles away, which we reach about 1 a.m. Shortly afterwards, fortified by hot Bovril, we are dozing in a comfortable warm bed and dreaming of new schemes for obtaining the photograph which had now become a fetish with us.

Thus the campaign continued for some years, but always without success. We could never find her again by stalking in the day-time; she always seemed to discover our presence if we sat in machans over her kills at night; and, if we arranged our automatic flashlight apparatus over her kills, she waited until hyenas and jackals had spent some time there first and thus fired the flashlight before she was due to appear. It seemed as though she were going to win in this contest of wits, and then, at last, we had a brilliant idea. We had a kill one day on the edge of a broad *rau* bed and we had noticed previously, from a study of her tracks, that she had formed the habit of hugging the foot of a low bank on the edge of this *rau* bed when passing this particular locality. How would it be if we were to arrange a tripwire at the edge of this bank, some distance from the kill, and thus avoid the risk of the chance being ruined by the inevitable jackals and hyenas? There seemed some hope of this method proving successful, especially as we had a good idea of the direction from which she was likely to arrive and could thus probably guide her, all unconsciously, by means of a judicious arrangement of cut branches, to the exact spot where our photographic trap was to be set. We decided to carry out this plan and arranged our apparatus with extreme care, even to the last detail of a trip-wire carefully matched to the colour of the surrounding ground for she had seen one of our trip-wires once before and carefully stepped over it without touching it! We then returned to our camp with a sneaking hope that at long last we stood a fair chance of winning in the long-drawn-out battle of wits. About midnight we heard the familiar boom of the exploding flashlight and we were so excited that we jumped out of bed and hurried out to the spot by the light of a lantern. Had we really succeeded at last, or had those ... hyenas and jackals once more ruined a good chance? After what seemed a tremendous time, although in reality the distance was quite short, we at last reached the spot and—hurrah! There were the tell-tale claw marks in the ground as she had involuntarily extended her claws on being startled by the noise and light of the exploding flashlight. Yes: the complicated mechanism of tripping the shutter had also worked without a hitch—it does not always do so—and at last our plate had been exposed. Now for the final stage of development. We rushed back to our camp, and, although it was the middle of the night, out came the developing chemicals, and before many minutes had passed we had the tremendous satisfaction of seeing a fine negative appearing in the developing dish—a negative which, except for a slight fault in one of the fore-legs, is as good as we had ever hoped to obtain even in our most optimistic moments.



Thus ended the hunt for the first negative of this fine tigress, to whom we take off our hats with heartfelt thanks for having given us such a fine run for our money. We could have shot her years before when we first saw her, and, had we done so, all would have been over except for a skin which would have begun rotting away by now under the effects of this trying climate. Yet she lives on and may still provide us with more harmless pleasure, so who can now say that, once we have overcome our primitive and savage lust of killing, hunting with a camera is not the peer of any form of blood-hunting that the world can produce.

(1929)

# Drought in the Jungle

By F.W. Champion

*“Of sapphire are the skies, but when men cry Famished, no drops they give.”*

LIGHT OF ASIA

NOON has passed some hours ago and the heat is now reaching its dreadful climax in the middle of the afternoon. A dull haze envelopes the whole jungle and the surrounding hills are but vaguely outlined against the sky; which, as though feeling in disgrace for having failed to produce one single drop of rain for a period of months, has now turned a dirty yellow colour—sullen and menacing. The previous monsoon has been a failure; the winter rains, which might have helped so much, were a bitter disappointment; the hot weather storms—the last hope—are still awaited. The inevitable result of such a shortage of the life-giving rain is that drought, cholera and famine, that dread trio, are now stalking forth, arm in arm, to take their fearful toll from man and beast, bird and fish, tree and plant alike. The trees have already dropped most of their leaves, in their valiant effort to save their lives by stopping transpiration of the little moisture which their far-spreading roots can suck up from the parched ground. The green grass, which should have sprung up after the winter-burning of the low-lying grassy areas, has completely failed and the hordes of half-famished cattle and herbivorous jungle animals are wandering aimlessly from place to place in their forlorn search for the food which practically does not exist.

The cattle, many of which have been brought from the famine-stricken village lands on the edge of the forest, form a terrible picture. Every rib stands sharply out from the tightly-drawn discoloured skin, the quarters are deeply sunken, the eyes staring, and many a miserable beast already carries the unmistakable hallmark of approaching death on its drawn and haggard face. The wild animals' plight, though bad, is perhaps not quite so serious as in the case of the cattle, for Nature's wild creatures are at all times far healthier and stronger than the domestic animals of man. Also, a denizen of the wilds, born and bred in the jungle, has much more

experience in obtaining food when food is scarce than the miserable overworked and under-fed cattle of the Indian villager. The scavenging and carnivorous animals, on the other hand, although also put to trouble over the scarcity of water, are now waxing fat on the trials of their neighbours, just as the war profiteer grows bloated at the expense of his country and countrymen during times of stress. The tigers and leopards have little trouble in obtaining more food than they can eat, for the deer and cattle are too weak to look after themselves properly and are forced to drink at one or other of the very few remaining pools of water, even though they know that death in feline form is probably awaiting them there. As for the hyenas, foul but necessary scavengers that they are, they now feel that 'Der tag' has indeed come at last for them, and their hideous forms are to be seen everywhere each evening as they set out on their nightly bouts of gluttony. Even the very expression of their faces seems to have changed, if one may judge by the leering grin of one which passed near the camp the previous night—a grin which seemed to say "Ah: now it is my turn. I, the despised outcast, am coming into my own at last!"

The birds, also, except again those that prey on their lesser neighbours, are not their usual bright and happy selves. Many are now sitting about dejectedly in the stifling heat, with their beaks wide open in the vain effort to lessen the dryness of their throats. Here a crow, that impertinent and ubiquitous villain of the East, squats with his head thrown back and mouth gaping open, like an Indian sepoy waiting to receive his dose of liquid quinine on a sick-parade. There a magpie-robin, which, at this season of the year, usually sings happily to his mate as she sits comfortably on her nest in a neighbouring tree. True: following Nature's imperious call to reproduce their species, the nest is there and the faithful housewife is doing her duty nobly; but the insects which make up their food have nearly all died in the drought, and, unless the long-delayed rain should come in time, the two parents will be very hard put to find sufficient nourishment for the four or five voracious youngsters which will presently occupy the nest and clamour for food from morning till night.

Not far from the magpie-robin's nest and at the mouth of a gorge leading into the foot-hills, simmers in the heat a timber camp, where the contractors who are working within this area have collected their produce preparatory to taking it away in bullock carts to the nearest railway station some 25 miles away. Sawn scantlings and sleepers of pine and sal, toon and laurel-wood, are scattered about all over the place, while here and there men and dragging-buffaloes are lying down and making the most of what little shelter they can find from the scorching rays of the afternoon sun.

A deep hush lies over all, and the only sound to be heard is the creaking of the punkah in the forest rest house at the edge of the *parao*. Even this sound is not continuous, for the punkah sways but erratically to and fro in response to the dreamy efforts of the punkah-puller, who naturally feels that it is indeed hard that he

alone should have to work while everyone else is resting. A short distance in front of the rest-house is a small pool of water, where the little hill-stream, one of the very few that have not yet dried up, makes its last appearance before disappearing under ground to be lost in the enormous bed of boulders, which, for untold ages, have rolled down the hills and now compose the bone-dry sub-soil formation of the bhabar tract. It is this pool of water that makes the place still habitable for man and beast and bird, and continuously all day and all night, a constant stream of thirsty creatures appears from all directions to drink of the life-giving fluid. At the moment the men and domestic animals are all dosing and the turn of the birds and more daring wild animals has come. A large party of langoors, seemingly quite indifferent to the blazing sun, are sitting about in the stoney stream-bed, and one or two are bending down in a most ungainly manner to lap up the tepid water, which has been stewing in the sun all day long. A jackal, fat and lazy as the result of the gargantuan feasts he has had during the last few weeks, is just sneaking back to the fetid carcase of a bullock which died of famine a few days ago. In a tree above the pool is a party of Paradise-flycatchers and what a vivid contrast there is between the almost unearthly beauty of the cock bird, with his snowy white livery, black crest, and long white tail, and the filthy sneaking appearance of the disappearing jackal! Surely one might mistake the one for a wanderer from Heaven and the other as one of Satan's minions, waxing fat on the present troubles of other creatures. If this were truly the case, the former would certainly find the Earth, in its present famine-stricken and sun-scorched state, a very poor substitute for the lush gardens of Paradise.

Presently a stir arises among the drowsy human beings in the camp, for word passes round that a *musth* wild elephant, driven almost mad by a combination of his temporary functional derangement and the lack of sufficient water, is advancing through the jungle towards the pool and must pass right through the stacks of timber to reach his objective. A *musth* elephant is a creature that is treated at all times with the greatest respect by everyone, from the mighty tiger downwards, and a *musth* elephant that is also suffering from heat and thirst may only too easily become a murderer on the slightest provocation. Once the dread news is out there comes a sudden stampede, as everyone flees to leave the thirst-racked creature a clear path to the water which he must and will have, for he, a lover of the night and the cool depths of the jungle, must be in desperate straits indeed to have ventured out in the open blazing sun in the middle of such an afternoon. Then once more the hush falls—this time a hush pregnant with the possibility of coming events. Even so, one or two of the human inhabitants of the *parao*, more daring than their fellows, hide themselves among the bushes on the line of approach of the elephant and nervously wait to watch his arrival.

For a short time absolute silence reigns; then comes a cracking of dry leaves

and branches. Once again all is still and it seems that he must have stopped. But no: he suddenly comes into view and—what a splendid sight he is. A magnificent *makna*, fully 10 feet in height at the shoulder, striding slowly along with stately majestic tread, he looks the veritable giant among wild elephants that he really is. His head is held very high, he appears to tower among the neighbouring trees, and his whole appearance is suggestive of utter contempt of any lesser creature that may dare to block his path. The dark *musth* discharge on his cheek is still clearly visible, but he is evidently nearing the end of his functional derangement; his whole body is drawn and emaciated, partly as a result of his *musth* state, and partly from lack of water and sufficient food; his eye is sunken and angry, and, although he is evidently not in a blood-thirsty mood, woe betide any creature that dares to check his progress. Thus he moves steadily forward and one wonders how many scores of years have passed over that stately head; how often has he seen the jungle stricken with drought and famine like the present; how many times has he visited this life-giving pool of water in similar circumstances?

By now he has reached the timber *parao*, which may check his progress or cause his slumbering temper to arise. But no! He pauses not for a moment, nor does he deflect a yard to the right or left. Straight through the *parao* among the cut timber he advances, seemingly unconscious of the cowering workmen who are lying concealed here and there among the logs, and now at last he is within sight of the water which has drawn him here at this unusual hour. A man in similar circumstances would rush the last few yards and eagerly lap up the precious fluid, but this jungle monarch shows not the slightest sign of eagerness or excitement. On he goes at exactly the same pace, advancing like inexorable Fate, until at last he has reached the pool and his greatly needed drink and bath are at hand. Even now he does not hurry, but pushes the end of his trunk gently into the water, carefully washes out the trunk, and then, with one sharp intake of his breath, draws up two or three bucketfuls of the tepid liquid. He then lifts up his trunk to squirt the water over his heated body and one can feel with him the intense satisfaction that he obtains as the water trickles down his enormous flanks and washes away the dust and dirt which have collected on his body during his tiring journey to the pool. Again and again he draws up trunkfuls of water, sometimes squirting it right up in the air so that it falls over him like a shower-bath, sometimes shooting it right down into his soft fleshy mouth, and sometimes swishing it over those muscular legs which must have carried his great frame tens of thousands of miles during the century of more that he has spent in these forests. Once or twice he pushes the end of his trunk further than usual down his throat and then vibrates his body in a most astonishing manner as though he were trying to force the water to the very extremities of his parched and somewhat emaciated frame.

In the meantime the human refugees, realising at last that this elephant is far too

absorbed in his enjoyment of the water to pay any attention to them, gradually creep nearer to watch the unusual scene. First one and then another of the jungle workmen and camp servants collect on the edge of the stream-bed some fifty yards away, until at last two score or more spectators are there, even including the Forest Officer's little four-year-old daughter, who, in her short life, has already had fine views of a tiger and a leopard, to which is now added the almost unique picture of a *musth* wild elephant bathing in broad daylight only a few yards distant from a forest-camp. The spectators finally lose all fear, and, squatting about quite openly all over the place, freely comment on the elephant's figure and manner of bathing, as though they were watching some performance in a circus. Yet, even now, although the human voice is usually anathema to a wild elephant, this monarch of the jungle pays not the slightest attention, but remains entirely absorbed in his own occupation. Perhaps he regards human beings with the contempt which many of them deserve and does not even notice their existence, or may be his mind and intelligence are befogged as the result of his affliction combined with the parching thirst which may have been racking his body for many days past.

In any case, he remains for perhaps fifteen minutes longer and then, satisfied at last, he turns, still not deigning even to glance in the direction of his audience, and strides off at exactly the same even steady pace that marked his arrival. As he leaves the open river-bed to reach the tree jungle, he passes over some soft sand, where he leaves clear foot-prints 5' 1" in circumference. Twice the circumference of an elephant's fore-foot gives the height at the shoulder almost to an inch, so that he thereby proves that, even though he has no tusks, he is over 10' in height, and, as regards size at any rate, fully deserves his claim—as testified by his magnificent appearance and bearing—to be a veritable monarch among the numerous denizens of these famous jungles.

(1929)

# Shooting in the Doon

By John O'Lynn

Huzoor, anything may come out in this jungle," the local guide assured me. "As you can see, it is really a continuation of the Government Forest and you are only the second sahib who has had permission from the *zemindar* to shoot here this year. The first, a Major Sahib, should have shot a tiger but he was too intent on watching a *cheetal* which was approaching him and he did not see the tiger go by."

Promising, what? Miles and miles of *sal* forest rising gradually into the lower hills fringing the Western Doon wherein lay the reserved Government Forest. As I had never before shot in a submontane area I had not yet seen a tiger nor yet—curiously enough—even a sambhur or *cheetal* in the wilds, though I had, at various times, shot two panther and two bear in the Hills. The present prospect of "anything at all" was distinctly pleasant.

The beaters—nearly a score in number—were arranged for and drawn into line with instructions from my guide as to the direction they should take. I was led away from them, through a maze of *sal*, and posted just over the crest of a knoll, behind a handy tree whence I obtained a fair view for nearly a hundred yards around.

My journey had been the best part of three-quarters of a mile but the beaters were, in a direct line, a matter of seven or eight hundred yards away.

They had started. Nearer and nearer came their shouts. Now they must be a mere three hundred yards distant. Still no cry, louder than usual, marking the advent of some large animal.

Suddenly from out of a small nullah in the labyrinth around me dashed a large *cheetal* stag. He paused a moment and though his head was then hidden behind two closely-growing trees I had seen enough to realise his was a head worth having. A second sufficed to bring my rifle to my shoulder, less than another for a quick aim at an easy shot at about sixty yards and the lovely creature fell like a log.

A rapid re-load—even before the stag lay on the ground—and, still crouched behind my tree, I awaited the beat. No, nothing more. The beaters began to emerge, I whistled up my companion and we met where the *cheetal* lay.

*Confound!* Still partly in hard velvet! What a nuisance to find my very first

*cheetal* to be one I would not have shot had I properly seen his horns. *Hm!* All his own fault for putting his head where it was screened!

However, he was a full thirty-one inches and there was really very little velvet to peel off. “It *would* come off”, said the crowd. Right, I would try not to regret my share in the tragedy, even though it was not wholly my fault, for *cheetal* were actually “open”.

Back in triumph to the car where the luggage-carrier was given an unusual load. The first tragedy was over.

## II

My orders were strict that the *cheetal* head be hung up in the sun every day to expedite the process, already started, of the velvet peeling. For three days, therefore, had the head hung from a nail, some six feet off the ground, in front of the *Dak Bungalow* where I was staying.

On the third afternoon I returned from my work, a couple of miles away, to find that consternation reigned in my camp. The head had remained unwatched for a short time because of the temporary absence of the watchman for the time being. These things *will* happen and it is a wise man who refrains from too close an inquisition but contents himself with a wholesome strafe all round!

“What dog was it?” was one of the few questions I allowed myself.

“*Huzoor*,” volunteered a servant, “it must have been that black and white female dog of the *bania*’s—the one whose shop is on the main road near the *serai*. I saw it prowling around here just before we discovered that the head had been pulled off the wall.”

“Do you mean the one I saw with puppies playing around it the other day?” I asked.

“Yea, *Huzoor*, that very one—the mis-begotten wretch!” came the eager reply.

Once more—“*Confound!*.” I gazed longingly at the ruined symmetry of my thirty-one inch (and *first*) *cheetal* head. No power on earth could now restore its lost beauty. Four clear inches had been gnawed off the right horn—just when it had begun to peel so splendidly too and I was on my way to having a trophy worth keeping.

However! I thought of the emaciated form of the mother-dog I had seen. Less than the proverbial bag-o’-bones, she was dependent chiefly on such scraps as were thrown to her for the existence of herself and four very jolly little pi-pups. ... Dash it all! How could I nurse wrath against her—even though I too had been the object of her frantic barks as I had passed by her master’s shop. “Poor thing” was the unpractical thought which persisted in rising in my mind as I thought of both her unfailing care of her whelps and her apparently unending watch over the *bania*’s



shop. She had not merely to live; she had two very distinct jobs in life and I could not find it in me to be too hard about it.

“Very well,” I ordered. “Orderly, you alone go and tell the *bania* not to allow his dog to come scavenging around here again. If she causes any further damage, however, tell him that I shall hold him responsible.”

Even while compliance was assured I could see disappointment in some of the faces of my staff. I am sure that they would have loved an opportunity to have gone off and thrown their weight about a bit more possibly till the *bania* had, for peace’s sake, sold them some flour at less than favourable rates!

There it was, the second tragedy. The head was ruined beyond recall but, because of some silly urge within me, I could forgive and try to forget. To forget wholly was impossible. Curious, eh?

### III

Two afternoons later my shikari came to me with news which was always most welcome—a panther kill of the night before. Would I sit up? Yes, he had found the kill and, if I could come, he would make a machan. Time and distance were no obstacle as the place was a bare thirty yards from the main motor road.

We went there and, after a brief look around, I decided to sit on the ground. The kill was a few paces down the bank of a shallow nullah and hidden under some very dense scrub. Above was a field of wheat. To the right was the road and to the left, circling below the field, was a dense scrub through which lay the panther’s only way if he wanted—as of course all panthers want—cover on his way to his meal.

Some fifteen yards back, in the field, stood the only tree available for a machan; but it would have involved a long and very sketchy shot at a tangent, as it were, over the edge of the field. On the other hand, a large tree stump on the edge of the field provided a convenient base for a good bower on the ground and I decided to use it thus. Moreover, it was only some eighteen feet from the kill.

The shikari had certainly made a good job of it by the time I went back and I settled down in my “synthetic bush” at a quarter to seven. There was no need to get in earlier. A good deal of traffic passed along the road—bullock carts, men from fields near by, and even occasional motors. About a hundred yards away, on some open ground at the foot of the nullah, lay an encampment of picturesque men from far-off Bashahr State who had brought their herds of long-haired goats down into these foothills for winter grazing. These men moved about their evening tasks talking and singing without restraint while their very large and woolly dog bayed intermittently against the chafe of his chain. Life was altogether a noisome affair.

Patient and motionless did I sit, watching the sky change from blue to grey and then into that “faded” black, the herald of true night. Sounds of traffic grew more

and more infrequent and by half-past seven I had begun to stay really vigilant. The moon had risen and, while it cast a brilliant band of light on about two-thirds of the distance between me and the kill, it failed to pierce the thicket over the kill. It became quite a game to try to see anything in there. I had to give it up after a time as I found I was unduly straining my eyes in the effort. I had, in consequence, to depend on my ears which I attuned to the silence around me to enable me to pick up any sound that arose.

How time can drag when one is sitting still! At eight-fifteen I heard a slight and distant purr.

“Hello! Spots coming?” I wondered.

Not a bit of it. My companion in the *Dak Bungalow* (as I learnt later) had returned unexpectedly from his inspections of roads and bridges, heard that I had gone out for a panther and came out to verify the information. Blighter! How I mentally swore at the glare of his headlights and the hum of his engine as he made his inquiries from my men on the road before he swung back again. This was the approaching purr which, for a few glad seconds, I had hoped was that of a cheerful big cat approaching his dinner.

When would I get my dinner that night? I had confidently laid down that I would sit till at least midnight because I quite agreed with the shikari that if the panther returned at all he would most probably come long after sunset. Now, however, as 9 p.m. drew near the heartening effects of a substantial tea were beginning to . . . er! . . . wear off! Nor could I tighten my belt—I was wearing braces!

That Bashahr dog, too, was beginning to annoy me. “*Whoof-whoof-whoof*” he kept on at the strange sounds of night which had now replaced the hush of late evening.

Would he never stop for more than ten seconds at a time? Could it be that the panther was about and that the dog had sensed its proximity? A wretched buffalo, tethered apparently somewhere below on my left, had now joined forces with the baying dog.

“*Ugh-h-h-h*” softly grunted the buffalo in the brief intervals that the dog allowed the silence I so much desired. “*Whoof-whoof-whoof*” gaily responded the dog!

My resolutions about midnight wavered. What was the use of so protracted a vigil? I would make it eleven o’clock and call it a night.

9-30 now and a deep hush prevailed—save for that infernal dog and the low grunts of the buffalo. Would I make it 11 or just 10-30—or perhaps even 10? Yes, perhaps 10 only!

9-45 and not a sign of the panther . . . Stay! Surely that was the light crackle of a dry leaf below me? No. There were too many dry leaves about and a panther would make much more noise. It must be a jackal or a wild cat. Anyhow, I would

look and furnish myself with a perfectly sound excuse for getting back, for if a jackal came on the kill it meant that the panther was not about and not likely to come for hours—if at all.

Taking the precaution to align my gun in the direction of the kill I pressed the button of my torch.

Heavens! The panther himself—above the kill and broadside on!

How his yellow fur with its dark rosettes gleamed in the brilliant light! I had time to notice how he strove in vain to peer into the flood of light which fell on him from fifteen feet.

In much less time than it takes to narrate I sighted and my finger curved lovingly around the trigger. The crash of my shot danced into a pandemonium which ensured for a few seconds.

“Whoof! Wa-wa-wa-wa-wa!” and the stricken animal tore through the undergrowth—forwards and down the *nallah*.

Silence. Then a flurry of leaves—his death-struggle, as we saw later, but which got me switching on my torch again in a fevered hurry lest he were coming up to investigate the cause of his downfall! Then complete silence—even on the part of the probably awed dog and the buffalo.

My men came from the road to my whistle, we gathered up my belongings and, giving the panther time to settle down to his last sleep, I went back to dinner.

Half an hour later I returned and with torches going and each step taken after a very cautious look around, we found the great cat already growing cold. He must have died immediately and so the distance he had travelled amazed me the more. The shot, moreover, seemed a good one.

I was interested to learn also that no buffalo had been in the neighbourhood that night and that I had been listening to *Felis pardus* himself swearing softly at the dog’s incessant challenge.

The main question was lost sight of as we recognised the identity of the dog, confirmed on inquiry from the owner.

“Yes, *Huzoor*,” said the *bania*, “as you know she was given to wandering a lot and I missed her in the morning. She must have run out at night at the panther and so been carried off. Oh, she was a very good chowkidar and I am sorry to lose her but we shall all bless you for ridding us of this pest, the panther.”

Poor old mother pi-dog! She had, in death, given me a trophy far more handsome and more valued than even a first *cheetal* head. She had also, through my agency, encompassed the downfall of a public enemy.

She was now wholly and unequivocally forgiven because of this, her share in the completion of the cycle of jungle tragedies.

# Hunters of Souls

*By Augustus Somerville*

**D**uring a long period of service in the Survey Department of the Government of India, I have had occasion to visit many of the remotest parts of India, away from the beaten tracks and devoid of those forms and amenities of civilization that the average traveller learns to expect.

It was on one of these excursions that I came across an extraordinary tribe living in the heart of the mountain fastnesses of Chhota Nagpur. These people who call themselves Bhills, but who, I have reason to suspect from their colour, language and facial expressions, are closely related to the Sontal and Ghond tribes, are a nomadic, semi-barbaric race living exclusively on wild animals, in the snaring and trapping of which they are experts, and also on their reputation as “Soul Catchers.” In this last extraordinary avocation I was most interested, but could glean no information from the natives themselves until one day I had an opportunity of watching a “Soul Catcher” at work.

Early in October 1908, I received orders to survey a large section of forest land in the Palamu District. Certain wise-acres had discovered traces of minerals, such as mica, coal, etc., in the neighbourhood and were making tentative offers for the purchase of a large tract of this land, with mining rights thrown in. A wide awake Government hearing that I had a mining engineer’s certificate attached to the many credentials that secured me this position, decided to send me down to survey the land, and incidentally report on its possibilities as a mining area.

I will hasten over the first part of journey as uninteresting but once at Daltonganj, a small station on the extreme end of the only decent motoring road in the district, I found myself on the brink of the unknown.

Next morning I procured a hand-cart for the transport of my tent, guns, ammunition, etc., and with two servants and a native guide, set out for the interior.

The only road was a rough cart track, which after we had followed for about six miles, disappeared in the impenetrable undergrowth through which we were compelled to travel; abandoning the cart, we bundled the tent and accessories into three packs, which my two servants and the guide carried, and shouldering my rifle

myself, set out on the 30-mile trek that would eventually bring us to the village of the Soul Catchers.

That night we camped on the edge of the jungle, near the banks of a small stream. In a short time we had the tent erected and a good fire blazing merrily. Dangerous animals were numerous in the district and after a good dinner I turned in, with my rifle fully loaded on the cot besides me.

Nothing untoward occurred that night, but in the early hours of the morning the servants awoke me with the disquieting information that our guide had disappeared.

Needless to say I took this information very seriously. To be without a guide in that wilderness of unchartered forest and impenetrable bush was alarming enough, but what worried me most was that I had supplies only for a couple of days, and the possibilities of locating the village without a guide was remote enough to depress the most sanguine of explorers.

I will never forget the three days we wandered in that forest. It was one of the most awful experiences I have ever had.

From the onset I had determined to travel light and so abandoned the tent and other heavy accessories. My survey instruments, I buried securely in the vicinity of a large *pepul* tree, marking the spot with several heavy boulders from the adjoining stream, then carrying only our food, guns and ammunition, set out for the nearest human habitation.

Directing myself solely with my pocket compass I travelled due south-east the direction we were taking prior to the guide's disappearance. Of beaten tracks there were none, but hitherto we had managed to avoid the worst sections of the forest fairly successfully. Bereft of the experience and woodcraft of our guide we blundered into all manner of pitfalls, and on several occasions found ourselves in thick masses of undergrowth composed almost entirely of stunted plum bushes fairly bristling with thorns, that tore our clothes and lacerated our hands and legs fearfully. All that day we trekked through a waterless section of the forest and suffered agonies from heat and thirst. Towards evening, however, we emerged on an open plain on the edge of a vast swamp. My two servants were advancing slightly ahead of me, and as they left the forest and saw the cold water ahead, they threw down their burdens and raced towards the marsh. At this instant I also broke from the entangling bushes on the edge of the swamp and all but followed their example, so parched was I, when I beheld a sight that for a moment kept me spellbound. As the natives reached the water-edge, two huge black forms rose, and with a snort of rage made for the unfortunate men. In a moment I had recognised the animals for the powerful fearless wild buffalo of the Chhota Nagpur plateau. Unslinging my rifle from my shoulder, I fired at the animal nearest to me but in my haste aimed too low, so that the bullet, intended for the shoulder, penetrating the animal's knee. The buffalo went down with a crash and as I turned to fire at its mate, I realised with a

thrill of horror, that I was too late. The second unfortunate Indian in his haste to leave the water had slipped on the marshy banks and lay floundering in the mire. In a moment the buffalo was on him and with one mighty sweep of its huge horns hurled his body through the air to land a mangled mass of bones and flesh some ten feet from the bank. At this moment it spotted me, and with a snort of rage charged in my direction. I am afraid I let no sporting sentiments interfere with my shooting. Working the bolt of my rifle steadily from my shoulder—my rifle being of the magazine pattern—put four successive shots into the huge brute in as many seconds, so that it went down as if pollaxed.

By this time my remaining servant, trembling with the shock of his recent experience, had reached my side and reloading, I went towards the wounded buffalo. Although handicapped with its broken legs the animal was nevertheless, making a gallant effort to get out of the deep mire that hampered its movements. As we approached the beast, it glared at us and with a savage bellow attempted to charge. Awaiting till it had approached sufficiently close, one well-directed shot put an end to its miseries, and we were safe to attend to our unfortunate comrade.

Poor fellow, he must have been killed instantaneously; covering up the body with a piece of cloth, we dug a shallow grave and buried him as decently as possible. By this time it was getting dark, so we built a fire and camped a short distance away.

That night I slept badly. The excitement of the evening and the strangeness of the situation kept me continuously awake. Towards morning the cold became intense and unable to sleep, I determined to rise, replenish the fire and if possible boil some water for an early cup of tea.

Leaving the shelter of the bush in which I lay, I walked briskly towards the place where I had seen Mohamed Ali stock our small store of edibles. Unable to find them I was first under the impression that I had mistaken the spot, but a closer inspection showed a few remaining packages containing flour and sugar.

Shouting loudly to Mohamed Ali to wake up, I started a feverish search in the surrounding bushes for further signs of the stores but although I wandered far into the forest, not a single trace of food could I find. Incensed with Mohamed Ali for his carelessness and blaming myself bitterly for not carefully attending to the storing of this essential part of our equipment more carefully, I awaited the arrival of my servant impatiently determined to give him a bit of my mind.

I must have waited fully half an hour still searching round in the hope of finding part of the missing stores before I was aware that no Mohamed Ali had turned up.

“What on earth is the matter with the fellow”, I wondered. “He surely cannot be still asleep.”

Returning to the camp, I looked all round for him. His blanket lay in a ruffled

heap on the spot where he had slept, but of the man himself there was no trace.

All that morning I waited, searching the surrounding forest and even firing my rifle occasionally in the hope of attracting his attention if the poor fellow had wandered into the forest and lost his direction, but to no avail and at last I was compelled to admit that henceforth I would have to travel alone.

Imagine my position. One of my servants killed, two mysteriously spirited away in the dead of night and no provision of any sort except a little flour and sugar to sustain me till I reached a human habitation of some type.

To say I was depressed, is to put it mildly. Candidly I was more than depressed, I was scared. The vision of myself parched with thirst, faint from starvation, wandering through the dense forest, a prey to any wild animal I chanced to meet, filled me with the gravest apprehensions.

Keep on I knew I had to. To stay where I was, would only diminish my chances of reaching civilisation, so that while I had the strength and ability I determined to push on depending on my good fortune to strike some village.

Cutting first a generous supply of meat from the carcass of one of the buffaloes, I had shot the evening previous, I packed the few things I needed and with as much ammunition as I could carry, set out on my lonely trek.

All that day I worked steadily south-east, but although I kept a sharp lookout, I failed to detect any signs of human habitation.

That night, fearing to sleep on the ground alone, I looked around for a convenient tree and after singeing a portion of the meat over a small fire, I ate a frugal meal, and climbed to the topmost branches.

The evening was still light and I scanned the forest in every direction. On every side was an unending vista of green and yellow leaves broken here and there by small clearings, but of villages no sign existed.

The night fell quickly, and soon a glorious moon sailed over the tree tops flooding the rustling, billowy sea of green below me, with a soft translucent light. It was a night, which in spite of my precarious position, I recall with the keenest delight.

Scarcely had the darkness fallen when a sambur belled in a thicket nearby and soon the forest awoke to its nocturnal life of mystery and movement.

From my lofty perch, I watched a herd of spotted deer troop past my tree, pursued by a stealthy yellow form which I instantly recognised for a huge leopard. I could have shot the beast easily, so unaware was he of any human presence, but I refrained from firing and later was thankful for this forbearance.

As the night wore on, I settled myself more comfortably in the deep fork of the tree and was soon asleep.

I may have slept a couple of hours, perhaps less, when I was awakened by a peculiar throbbing sound that seemed to fill the forest.

I roused myself and looking round eagerly soon detected the direction from which the sound was proceeding. As it approached, I recognised the low droaning of the large drums the Sontals in this district use and I must confess the thought of human beings filled me with a strange sensation of joy and relief.

Fortunately a natural prudence restrained me from springing from my perch and hastening in the direction of the drums. Waiting till the first of the drummers emerged from the thick forest I raised myself and was about to call out when I noticed that the leading natives, bearing huge flaming torches, were nude, except for a single loin cloth and grotesquely decorated in yellow and vermillion. The torch-bearers were followed by others hideously painted in white and black representing skeletons. These extraordinary beings were executing a wired type of dance and chanting a solemn dirge, while immediately behind them, slung from bamboo poles, were the bodies of two men. The vanguard of this strange procession was formed of a large crowd of Sontals armed with spears, bows and arrows and various other crude weapons.

The procession passed immediately under my tree and as the bearers of the two corpses, (as I took them to be) were beneath me, I looked down and received quite a shock—the bodies were those of our guide and my servant Mohamed Ali.

Waiting till the procession had passed, I took my rifle and slipping from the tree followed cautiously in their wake.

I had not far to go. Reaching a clearing, the procession stopped. As the dancers and musicians advanced, each threw his burning torch on the ground and in a little while there were a heap of torches burning fiercely, around which the whole procession gathered.

Concealing myself in the bushes a short distance out of the circle of light I watched in amazement the strange rites that now followed.

First of all the two bodies were laid side by side on the ground close to the fire. Two of the dancers more grotesquely decorated than the others and whom I rightly conjectured were high priests of this strange sect, advanced and raising each body in turn, set the pole into a hollow in the ground, so that the bodies now confronted the dancers in an upright position. The instant the firelight fell on their faces I realised with a thrill of horror that both men were alive, but so drugged or otherwise stupefied that they hung loosely in their fastenings swaying like drunken beings.

No sooner was this done, then the whole circle of dancers sprang into activity. Round and round the fire they whirled, chanting a queer plaintive refrain, punctuated with staccato beats from the muffled drums. For a long while they danced till at last weary with their exertions, they gave a final shout and settled down once more.

The two priests now advanced. Going up to the captives they raised their heads and forced them to drink some concoction which they poured from a pitcher



brought by one of the dancers. Whatever the drink was, it must have been a powerful restorative. Within five minutes both men were fully awake and conscious of all that was taking place round them.

What, I wondered, would be the ultimate fate of these two men. It was not likely that in a district so near to British administration they would attempt a cold-blooded murder, but had I known what was to follow, death would have been a merciful release.

Seeing that both men were now perfectly conscious, one of the priests arose and taking a long sharp knife in his hands advanced towards his victims. I fingered my trigger uneasily, uncertain to fire or not, but determined at all cost to save the lives of those two servants of mine. Instead of injuring them, however, he commenced a long harangue. Pointing frequently towards the prisoners and then into the forest in the direction in which I had come, he seemed to be working his followers up to some momentous decision and he was not long in gaining their unanimous support. The moment he stopped, with one voice, the whole tribe chanted "*Maro, maro*" (Kill, kill) and, with a swiftness that completely deceived me, the priest struck twice, and the red blood gushed down the chests of the victims. Quickly I slung my rifle round, bringing the foresight to bear on the murderer. But from the moment of that one fierce shout and the anguished cry from the two prisoners, not a further sound could be heard. A strange tense expectant hush seemed to fill the forest. On the face of the two prisoners were depicted the most abject terror, their wounds, probably superficial, bled profusely, but the men were unaware of the blood, instead they stood staring before them into the forest waiting for some awful apparition to come, —and come it did.

Swiftly, silently, remorseless as death itself came a queer sinister shape. Not two feet high, semi-human in form, its hair, straggling and entangled all over its body, its face hideous, with two great eyes darting out of cavernous sockets, it leapt and gambolled out of the forest, into the clearing and with a shrill maniacal laugh stood confronting the two prisoners.

So hideous, so repulsive was this awful creature, that my rifle forgotten I stood staring, unable to believe my eyes; and then started a dance the likes of which I have never seen.

Whirling slowly at first, advancing, retreating, this grotesque human shape, fluttered up and down before the terror-stricken silent men. Gradually the pace increased, a drum, commenced to throb gently, swifter grew the dance and swifter, louder grew the drums and louder the chanting of the priests joined the roll of the drums, slowly, one by one, the other dancers joined in, the spectators swayed by a common impulse beat time to the ever swelling music, and the prisoners, hypnotised by the rhythm of sound and movement round them, sank lower and lower, till they hung inert, their bonds alone supporting them.

The end came suddenly, dramatically. A rifle shot rang out a sharp command, and a thin line of khaki-clad figures broke from the cover of the jungle and surrounded the dancers.

In a moment pandemonium broke loose. Surprised, startled and wholly unprepared, the dancers and priests broke and fled for the cover of the surrounding forests. Anxious to join the melee I broke from the cover of the forest and rushed towards the fire. At that instant I came face to face with one of the presiding priest.

With a fine disregard for sacerdotal procedure, I jammed my rifle butt into his ribs that he went down with a groan and stayed there. Reaching my two servants, I hastened to undo their bonds, and while engaged in this task was suddenly seized from behind and swinging round found myself face to face with a young Police Officer.

“Well I’m damned. If it isn’t the very man we are looking for,” he cried with surprise. “What on earth are you doing here?”

“Can’t you see,” I said, “Getting these two poor devils out of the scrape they have got into.”

Mutual explanation followed and I learned that from the moment I had left Daltonganj I had been shadowed by members of this tribe under the mistaken impression that I was an Excise Officer on one of my periodical raids into the interior. The guide had been overpowered and carried off the first night in the hope that without a guide further progress would be impossible, but as I continued, all unknown to me, in the right direction, my servant Mohamed Ali suffered the same fate.

Anxious to avenge themselves on what they considered were informers of the Police, these two men were taken into the heart of the forest and handed over to the “Soul Catchers”. The rites I witnessed were explained to me by the young Police Officer who had arrived on the scene so opportunely.

The men were first drugged with a native concoction containing *bhang*. On arrival at the scene of operations, they were given an antidote and restorative, and later branded in the chest by the priests, so that they were marked men for life. Next a strange half-demented creature, who lived in that part of the forest and who was credited with supernatural powers, danced before the victims who were thus hypnotised and in this condition made to believe that their souls had left them and were in the keeping of the “Soul Catchers.” They were seldom harmed physically, but were socially ostracised, driven from village to village and refused even the ordinary necessities of life. The hardships of such an existence usually drove these poor creature crazy or they died from starvation and neglect. None dared to assist them for fear of incurring the enmity of the “Soul Catchers” themselves. There was, however, a method of release and many took this course. By selling all they possessed, they would raise the necessary amount of money needed and this on

being paid to the high priest of the sect, a ceremony was performed by which the unfortunate victim regained his soul and his position in society. Although in the turmoil that followed the first rush of the Police, the strange creature I had seen, eluded the troops and disappeared in the forest, the high priest of the sect I had knocked senseless with my rifle, was secured and duly appeared in Court. I will never forget the sensation he created, when in his full regalia he appeared in the dock to answer the charges against him. Although I formed the principal witness, he produced an alibi that was unshakable—in fact the whole village turned out *en masse* prepared to swear that on that particular night this self-same priest was asleep in his hut in the middle of the village and that the whole case was a Police plot brought up out of spite.

He was eventually convicted and got three years hard and the tribe of “Soul Catchers” shifted to healthier quarters, but to this day I never visit Daltonganj and the neighbouring villages without a strange sensation of being watched and spied on.

(1932)

# Encounters With Big Game

By 'Surfield'

**T**he remark has often been made to me, "You survey people must get wonderful opportunities for big game shooting."

Actually this is by no means the case. Big game shooting takes time; and the survey officer who is here today and gone tomorrow, has not the time to spare to follow up news of big game in his vicinity. He must hasten on to see the work of his next surveyor. It is inevitable, however, if one tours for months on end in the jungle, to have some encounters with big game; and such encounters are no less exciting for being unexpected.

Wild elephants are common in many parts of Burma, and for long after my first arrival in the country, I was anxious to see something of them. For hundreds of miles I walked or rode through good elephant country without encountering one. Fresh tracks were frequently in evidence, but always the elephants had moved on a short time before and were nowhere to be seen. After a time I ceased to expect to see one. Then, as it so often does in the jungle, the unexpected happened.

I was testing the work of a surveyor, and in company with his squad, we were walking along a level and fairly good jungle trail in single file. I led, closely followed by the surveyor, and the squad was a few yards behind. A crackling from a clump of bamboos a few yards away made me pause.

"Is that an elephant?"

"No, sahib, only monkeys," was the reply; and we went on.

A few yards further on I caught sight of an object, about thirty-five yards from the path, which at first glance I took to be a large boulder. A second glance however showed it to be a solitary bull elephant slightly turned away, and apparently unconscious of our presence. I expected it to make off as soon as it heard us, but as we had no gun with the party it seemed just as well to try to slip by quietly and not disturb it. Before I could motion to those behind to be quiet, however, there was a loud exclamation from one of the Indian *khalasis*,

"*Hathi!*"

The sequel was as instantaneous as unexpected. The elephant swung round with

a shrill trumpet, curled up its trunk and charged.

It is said that provided the going is good, and not downhill, an active man can just keep ahead of a charging elephant. Whether this be true I cannot say, but after the first few yards I turned and saw the elephant on the trail about the same distance away, still coming after us. The party had scattered, half coming on with me and the remainder turning back; fortunately no one had a load which hampered running. Then we rounded a bend in the path, and the elephant crashed straight on into the jungle and we saw it no more. Half an hour later stragglers and scattered equipment had been collected, and we continued on our way; but since then I have noticed that my wish to see wild elephants has considerably diminished.

In some areas such encounters with rogue elephants are fairly frequent and during survey operations in the low hills of the Chindwin-Irrawaddi watershed, two wild elephants were killed and another wounded in one season, by surveyors acting purely in self-defence. On one occasion a surveyor and his squad were on a narrow ridge when they encountered and were charged by a wild elephant. The surveyor managed somehow to escape unharmed, but three of his men flung themselves in terror down the steep sides of the ridge, and had to be sent to hospital as the result of their injuries.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the majority of elephants, or even many of them will attack without provocation. This unpleasant habit is confined practically entirely to rogues, as solitary bulls are called who have been ousted from a herd by some successful rival. A herd of wild elephant will generally make off at the first sign of the approach of man.

Just as vicious, and in some ways more deadly than any rogue elephant, is the hamadryad, or king cobra, fortunately rare in Upper Burma but not uncommon in the eastern foothills of the Arakan Yomas. This snake commonly attains a length of thirteen feet or more, and will attack at sight. Its speed makes any attempt to escape by running, useless. Unlike the elephant, I had no wish whatever to encounter a hamadryad, but it was not long before I did so.

Walking along a narrow jungle trail behind a Burman guide, I suddenly became aware of the largest snake I had ever seen lying beside the path, its head pointed away and its tail not a yard from my feet. The markings on its back and the large hood put its identity at once beyond doubt. It was a very large hamadryad; and the guide had walked right past it within two feet of its head without noticing or disturbing it.

In an instant I had turned about and run back for my shot gun, which was coming along with a coolie a few yards behind. Meanwhile the guide stopped and called out to ask the cause of the delay, and began idly to chop a bamboo with his *dah*. At once the snake was on the alert, and raised its head in readiness to strike. One glance was enough for the guide, who with an exclamation fled. The snake

fortunately did not attack but remained with hood erected, and head swaying slightly backwards and forwards, the picture of malignant watchfulness. I rammed a No. 8 cartridge, the first that came to hand, into my gun and hurriedly fired. The range may have been too great for the small shot to be effective, or my aim uncertain, for the snake instead of collapsing, disappeared with a whirl of coils, into the undergrowth down the hillside, and was not seen again.

The seaward slopes of the Arakan Yoma mountains, have a sinister reputation for man eating tigers. Near the crest of the main range there is a small rest-house which must be unique. It is surrounded by a tiger-proof fence. That his protection is necessary, was amply proved by the experience of a party of surveyors who camped a few miles away, one night in January 1929. Four of them were with their camp officer and squads, making a total of about forty men altogether. The surveyors and the officer were sleeping in tents or shelters of bamboo round the edge of the camp, and their *khalasis* and coolies lay on the ground in the centre, surrounded with a circle of fires.

At midnight the camp was awakened by a sudden scream. A tiger had bounded through the circle of fires, seized a sleeping coolie and carried him off. The shouts of the others and the struggles of the man made the tiger drop him, only to pounce on him and knock him down again when he tried to escape. Again the man struggled free, and this time got back to his companions, badly mauled.

The remaining hours of the night were hours of terror. The whole camp stood huddled together behind the circle of dying fires, for which no one dared to fetch more fuel. In the surrounding darkness, the tiger could be heard prowling about, waiting an opportunity to seize another victim; and on one occasion it actually entered a surveyor's tent and pulled about his bedding. With the coming of daylight the tiger went away, and the injured man was hurried down to the nearest hospital, a couple of marches away; but blood poisoning set in and he only survived the journey by a couple of hours.

Nor was this the only victim of the man-eaters of those parts. A few days after the tragedy just related, a couple of Kachin coolies were sent by a surveyor, with a letter, to the camp headquarters at Sandoway. There were no villages for the first two marches, so they had to spend a night in the jungle. This was, however, nothing new to men born and brought up in the frontier hills, and following their usual custom they built a bamboo platform on a tree, seven or eight feet above the ground and went to sleep on it.

Shortly before dawn, a tiger sprang on to the edge of the platform, seized one of the sleepers and pulled him to the ground; where the shouts of the other succeeded in driving it away. At dawn the wounded man took his enamel plate to serve as a basin, and went to a stream a few yards away to wash his wounds.

After some time, as he did not return, his companion called to him, but received no reply. Again he called, but still there was no reply. Now thoroughly alarmed, the man got down from his tree, and ran down the trail, in search of help. After going five miles he met a party of villagers cutting bamboo, and returned with them. Going to the bank of the stream they found the last chapter of the tragedy clearly written in the sand. At the water's edge was the enamel plate and a leather purse, and leading from the spot were the pug marks of a large tiger. No trace of the body was ever found.

In this area, about the same time a European camp officer witnessed a scene which must be rare, if not unique—that of a pair of tigers cooperating in hunting a barking deer. Early one morning, coming quietly over a rise, he caught sight of a tiger a short distance away crouching behind a bush. A moment later, a barking deer pursued by another tiger dashed past the spot. In an instant the first tiger had sprung on it and borne it to the ground. At the same time it saw the officer who had been joined by his men, and both tigers made off, leaving the deer on the ground calling out, but paralysed by a bite in the neck. The men ran forward, despatched the deer and bore it off in triumph, feeling for the first and only time during that anxious period, pleasantly disposed towards the tigers of the Arakan Yomas.

In Upper Burma, tigers, though numerous, are seldom man-eaters; and except for carrying off an occasional mule, cause the surveyor little trouble. Should they take village cattle, the villagers retaliate by setting traps. These are of two types, either cross bows with poisoned arrows, or spring guns, set to go off with a trip wire, or actual traps, working on the principle of a mouse trap, to catch and crush the tiger.

This setting of spring guns once led me into an adventure, which it is pleasant to look back on, but which I would not care to repeat. Survey operations were going on in the southern portion of the Somra Tract, a loosely administered tribal area, in the north-east of the Upper Chindwin district; and I had marched up to Dansagu, a fair sized Kuki village, perched on a hill-top at about 4,000 feet above sea level.

The morning following my arrival, rain and low clouds made work impossible, and I had to remain in my tent. During the morning, news came that a tiger had killed a young mithun, one of the peculiar cattle of the Burma-Assam hills, half bison half domestic cattle; and at the request of the villagers I sat up for it that night. Luck was however against me, for the tiger under cover of the low clouds had returned to the kill during the daytime, and on my arrival, a couple of hours before sunset, there was nothing remaining of it but the head. An extremely uncomfortable wait over this, which voracious blood blister flies made a misery, proved fruitless.

During the next few days work took me elsewhere; but on my return, just before dark one evening, I was told that in my absence the village had been practically besieged by, not one, but a family of tigers. Two more mithun, a couple of pigs and

goats had been taken, the last named from right under houses in the village, and the villages were in a great state of alarm. Like all the hill people of the eastern frontier, Kukis are very superstitious, and they attributed their present misfortune to the displeasure of the local *nats*, the spirits who haunt the jungles on the lookout for causes of offence. As the attitude of these people towards the survey had from the first been somewhat uncertain, this state of mind was most undesirable. They might easily decide that our work was the cause of the displeasure of the *nats*, and this would lead to endless complications.

The night before my return a mithun had been killed in a clearing about a thousand feet below the village, and dragged into a patch of very dense jungle, where half of it had been eaten. The villagers had during the day set two ancient flintlock muzzle-loading guns over the remains, with trip wires across the most likely approaches. There was only one muzzle-loader in Dansagu, so the second had been borrowed from a neighbouring village, thus denuding the place of local fire-arms.

At about seven-thirty that night, the stillness was broken by a loud report from the darkness below, followed a few minutes later by another report. Both guns had gone off, but whether monkeys, passing deer or pig, or the tigers had fired them, only the morning would show.

Shortly after daylight the matter was settled. Two individuals accompanied by a crowd of villagers presented themselves at my tent, and informed me that they had been down to the kill to investigate. A tiger had been wounded and was still in the vicinity of the guns, and they had disturbed another tiger a short distance away. One of the men was bleeding from several gashes in his legs and cheek and I thought at first that he had been mauled; but his injuries turned out to have been the result of a fall during a too hasty flight from the vicinity of the wounded tiger.

The villagers asked me to go down and finish off the tiger and enable them to recover their guns. This placed me in a dilemma. To follow one's own wounded tiger on foot through dense jungle is bad enough, but one at least has the feeling of performing a duty; to go after a wounded tiger for which one is in no way responsible is much worse. I had once before had occasion to follow one up and had no wish to repeat the performance. On the other hand the villagers seemed to have such unlimited faith in my shooting powers that I hadn't the face to admit that I was frightened; and in any case it was very desirable to do something towards allaying their superstitious fears about these particular tigers. After some hesitation I decided to go, having first stipulated that I would keep the skin, a proposal to which I thought the villagers agreed almost too readily.

The next move was to the village where we collected half a dozen spears with which I armed the bravest looking men. Then we set off down the trail to the clearing, my two informants acting as guides. After a short way we left the path, and



after fifteen minutes were approaching the spot through jungle so thick that it was impossible to see more than five yards ahead. I liked the affairs less and less, but it was now too late to turn back. Then to my relief, light appeared ahead and we found ourselves on the edge of a small ravine running diagonally down the steep hillside.

At the same moment, the silence was broken by a reverberating growl from a thick clump of grass just beyond the ravine. We halted abruptly and assumed the defensive, expecting to be charged; but after half a minute the sound ceased. The growl of a wounded tiger at close quarters is extraordinarily awe inspiring; it is not very loud but it gives the impression of enormous power. We waited a little longer and then crossed the ravine higher up. The tiger was now about forty yards below, on the far side of the patch of grass. In the next few minutes something would happen; we were all keyed up to the highest pitch.

We now formed a compact line, with the spearmen at either side and myself in the centre. Cautiously we moved forwards down the hill, our senses strained to detect the slightest sound or movement from in front. After what seemed hours, but must in reality have been only a few minutes, someone spotted a patch of dull red through the grass—the tiger's shoulder. I quickly put a shot into it, and was answered by a roar before which the line shrank away; then silence once more. Again a cautious advance, and then we came on the tiger lying stretched out at its last gasp. A final shot finished it off. To my great disappointment it turned out to be not the mother, but a three-quarter grown cub. This, however, made no difference to the villagers, whose return with the dead tiger slung on a pole, resembled a triumphal procession. That evening the event was celebrated with drinking and revelry which were kept up long into the night.

The tigress and the other cub still remained in the vicinity and after a few days, there were further losses of pigs and goats. A fortnight later I was camped once again just outside Dansagu, when the alarming news was received that a raiding party had come over the border from Manipur with the object of securing a couple of heads which the *nats* had demanded. The previous day it had been seen near a village seven or eight miles away, but had since disappeared. The inhabitants of Dansagu were in a state of great alarm, and would not leave their village, except in large parties.

My camp was situated a couple of hundred yards below the village, and at dusk all the villagers turned in and barricaded themselves into their houses. It seemed most improbable that the raiding party would attempt anything in the vicinity of an official known to be armed, so my camp turned in without taking any special precautions. I personally felt sceptical about the story of the headhunters and was soon fast asleep.

About midnight I was awakened by a shout from the next village, about three-quarters of a mile away across the valley. In a few moments it was followed by an

uproar. In an instant everyone in the camp was on the alert. Going out of my tent I found the country bathed in moonlight; with the aid of which we could dimly see the village from which the noise was coming. The thought of the headhunters at once leapt to our minds; but the shouting was too far away and confused for us to be able to make out anything definite from it. We called up to the Dansagu people, but they were too alarmed to leave their houses, and refused to come down and discuss the situation.

Presently the shouting died down, and after a further wait, as nothing more occurred we turned in and went to sleep once more; though this time I must confess to some misgivings. In the morning a strong party from Dansagu went to enquire the cause of the disturbance, and found it to have been not headhunters, but the tigress which had come boldly into the village and carried off a young mithun right under the eyes of the villagers. Of the raiding party we heard no more, but I subsequently learnt from a trustworthy source that one really had come over the border after heads, but had thought better of the matter and turned back.

Official duties called me down to the plains in the morning, and that year I had no more news of the tigress. The following year, however, I met the brother of the headman of Dansagu, who came for work as a *khalasi*, and from him I learnt that the tigress had soon afterwards met her fate. She too had fallen a victim to a spring gun.

(1933)

# On the Banks of the Narbada

By 'Nimrod'

**I**t is difficult in these days, when the mileage of the working railways in India amounts to 39,049, of which the Indian State Railways control 16,000, to realise the days prior to 1851 when the first section of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway was commenced from Bombay. Then the Narbada river, from the banks of which we write, was accessible only by weeks of travel, much of it through wild and difficult country. Now it is bridged by railways in four places.

The portion of the river where we are is some twenty-five miles north of the G.I.P. Railway, which runs more or less parallel to the river between Khandwa and Jubbulpore.

“Narbada Mai” or Mother Narbada, as it is reverently named by Hindus, is the most sacred of all the rivers of India. It rises to the East of the Central Provinces, on the borders of the State of Rewah, at a place called Amarkantak and enters the sea near the town of Broach after a course of some seven hundred miles.

In former days it formed, with the forests and hills along its course, one of the main barriers which shut off the peoples of northern India from those of the Deccan. At the close of the triumphant career of Samudragupta, the second king of the Gupta dynasty, the Narbada river was his frontier to the South. He did not attempt to retain conquests made south of the river, and returned, about the year AD 330 past the fort of Asirgarh which is seen in these days by railway passengers from the carriage windows as they travel between the junctions of Bhusawal and Khandwa.

The Narbada (Sanskrit Nar-mada “causing delight”) is rightly named. It is a beautiful river through most of its course, and to camp on its banks in the cold weather season is truly a delight. In the hotter months of the year the pleasure may be somewhat at a discount, but the sport is more, both as to tiger and panther, and there is the fishing! In the cold weather there is no fishing with rod and line, and water being found in many places away from the river banks, the carnivora are also less easily located.

However, there are always animals in the forests bordering the river, and a ramble along the banks the day after our arrival at camp showed us the old and new

tracks of both tiger and panther.

Our camp is pitched in the open, in the vicinity of shady trees beneath which the tents will be placed when the weather gets warmer. Some young buffaloes are procured at an average price of eight rupees, also a couple of goats at about the same rate, and we are ready for shikar. At this season of the year, it is not possible to beat these extensive and dense covers so any slaying of the carnivora has to be done from a machan, of which we have two. One is a full-sized newar (cotton webbing) bed of solid and non-creaky construction, and the other an ordinary dining room chair with the cane removed and newar substituted. This latter can be tied in almost any tree, thus giving a much wider choice as to position.

We make a careful survey of all possible places at which to tie up our baits, and finally decide upon a large shady tamarind tree—some fifty yards from the river bank and alongside a path leading to it—for the big machan. This is about one and a half miles up stream. Less than a mile down stream a shady tree is chosen for the chair, and the place for the poor “boda” to await his blood-thirsty slaughterer is beside a driftwood tree sunk in the sand, a protruding branch affording an excellent hold for the unbreakable rope with which the animal is to be tethered.

There is much-acquired experience in our arrangements. The machan must be well screened all round and from below. Even now, before we are sitting up, some screening is necessary. Nothing should be left to chance. There must be a rest for the rifle and a small peephole, separate from the aperture from which the shot is to be taken so that we can see the “kill” without having to make any movement. Other details include the fixing of nails into the tree trunk, or its branches, on which to hang our waterbottle and any other sundries at convenient places. To the small chair a comfortable rest for the feet is essential, and a small pillow has to be tied where it will allow the head to comfortably rest; for the vigil may be long or it may be short. We have to await the pleasure of our guest to his dinner and we must be in position, especially at this season of the year, by three o’clock in the afternoon.

When all is ready at both the selected places, men are engaged at eight annas a day each—two for each buffalo as they won’t go alone—to tie up the baits each evening and visit them each morning about an hour after sunrise. The animals require one’s personal attention as to plenty of dry grass to lie upon at night and proper feeding and watering during the day. Also we have two spare animals so as to give each buffalo an alternate “night-in-bed”. The moon will be at the full in seven days. This second quarter of the moon is the best—almost the only period—for this “sitting-up”, so we hope the tiger or tigress will soon return this way.

Our mind at rest as regards all our arrangements, we take walks abroad to learn our surroundings. We are close to a ferry plying backwards and forwards across the river. The ferry boat is run by a contractor who secures the necessary labour by subsidising the villages on either bank, the people arranging among themselves a

“roster of duty”. The ferry fees are moderate enough. A loaded cart is two annas, and if with bullocks, three annas. An anna is a consideration, so most of the bullocks have to wade and swim; and there is much shouting and yelling and throwing of stones to make the animals take to the water. A human passenger is taken across for the twelfth part of an anna.

The people of the village on our side are mostly Dhimars—fishermen by caste and occupation but a good deal lower in the social scale than the Bois of the south who are, in most places, hereditary palanquin bearers. It seems likely that as servants—when Europeans first came to India—were largely recruited from the Bhois the term “boy”, so much used, is derived from Bhoi. However this may be, these people are clean and industrious at their work of catching fish, which they sell in the surrounding villages at four annas a pound.

There is much life in the river and along its sand banks and islands. We see a crocodile on yonder spit of sand, and nearby, perched on a branch of a submerged tree, is a “snake-bird” as the Indian Darter is called by Europeans and very snake-like he looks when his lean head and neck are protruded from the water. The specimen we see has his wings spread out to dry and looks rather like a church lectern. At a respectful distance from the seemingly sleeping crocodile are two Brahmini ducks—Ruddy Sheldrake to give them their proper name. Wary birds they are, and without good reason, as they are not sought after by European sportsmen and are protected by Hindus, who do not like them being shot. The graceful river terns are seen sweeping easily along over the water, and kingfishers of three varieties are noticed, the black and white kingfisher being less common than the two coloured ones.

Cormorants we also see and that curious bird, the Goggle Eyed Plover, or stone-curlew, is constantly spied as we float silently in our dug-out among the islets of the river. Among the bright green foliage of the dwarf jamun bushes is heard the twittering of many small birds, bulbuls, warblers, sparrows, and the like. A racquet-tailed drongo scolds us as we drift by and we hear the screeching of green parroquets among the trees along the bank. There is the occasional splash of fish, and the wide ripple we see in front of us is caused by a crocodile having slipped silently into the stream.

Indeed the river is a delight, not only on account of the many forms of life we see but on account of the lovely lights and shadows; the waving of the graceful tamarisks and grasses; and the beauty of the sunset which we watch until all the crimson glow has faded away. Then follows the paddling upstream in the moonlight until we arrive at the sandbank just below our camp.

The camp larder is empty and we have to find the wherewithal to fill it, so the morning finds us early abroad with a view to rounding up some of the numerous pea-fowl in the vicinity. This proves an easy matter, and we do not mind firing an

occasional shot in the vicinity of camp.

In this way four days pass and then the buffalo downstream is killed by a male tiger. We see by the tracks that he was hunting among the reeds and bushes of the river bed; that he saw the buffalo and rapidly made towards it; that he swam across a small lagoon and then, stealing under the bank in the dark shade of some trees, quickly got within a few yards of his unsuspecting victim, the body of which is now covered with branches weighed down by stones. We have known a branch pulled aside by a prowling jackal to expose a limb to the ubiquitous crow, with the consequent arrival of vultures and the complete destruction of the "kill". We decide that three o'clock will be early enough to be in position, in which we are wrong, as it is while we are completing the screening arrangements that we hear the coughing of langoors announce that the tiger is on the move close by. The men hurriedly unscreen the carcass and make off up the bed of the river.

The suspicions of the tiger have been aroused. He has heard movement at the place; and instead of appearing in daylight as he would probably have done, kept away until 10-30 p.m.

The moon was well above the trees and the kill, in the shadow early in the evening, was now in the light, almost as broad as daylight, of a moon at the full. The stillness of the jungle at night can almost be felt. One could hear a pin drop. So when there is a slight rustle on the bank ten yards away, it is known who has arrived on the scene. After several minutes—we know his attitude of intent listening, watchfulness with all senses on the alert, we hear his heavy approach as he sets aside all caution and comes striding down the steep sandy incline to pass within about twelve feet of the muzzle of the rifle as he goes to the kill. He lifts the carcass with a quick movement, as is almost invariably the case on first arrival, finds it still hard and fast and stands, again listening intently, gazing out over the river bed.

The rifle is raised, sighted, and lowered. There is plenty of time and such preliminary righting shots are a guard against undue haste. It is the first shot that is all important. The stillness of the peaceful night is rent by the tremendous explosion of seventy-five grains of cordite. The tiger lurches to one side, collapses, and slides to the foot of the slope shot through the heart and killed instantly by the terrific impact of the soft nose and split bullet of five hundred grains weight. One moment standing in all his majestic strength and symmetry, the next his life is extinguished, and his death even more merciful than that of the buffalo he slew a few hours before.

To the sound of the signal horn we carry for such occasions, the men come up from the huts half a mile away. The mighty beast is seen, admired and carried up the bank—a difficult business and requiring a number of men as the tiger was nine feet long and weighed three hundred and eighty-four pounds.

The following day is occupied with skinning, and pegging out and curing the

skin (for which purpose there is nothing better than burnt alum and saltpetre finely powdered and mixed in the proportion of four parts of alum to one of saltpetre). In doing all this, *experientia docet*, and personal attention to all details ensures a good result. The least one can do before shooting animals is to make sure we know all about the proper preservation of the trophies we seek.

A period of ten days elapsed before the tigress put in an appearance. One of the methods of shooting a tiger is to so arrange an approach to the kill as to enable one to get silently and without discovery within certain shooting distance. Up the river such an arrangement had been made, and for six successive mornings we stalked the tied-up buffalo at dawn, each time in the hope of this, the acme of all tiger-shooting.

On the seventh morning, we wearied of the difficult walking over the stones of the river bed to the sandy path from which the stalk commenced, and took a day off. That very morning the tigress was found to have killed. She was an unwary beast, or very hungry. Having slain the buffalo at about daybreak, as could be known from the tracks along the sand, she appeared in broad daylight, shortly after four o'clock in the afternoon, seized the kill and then stood listening intently and looking up the path along which she no doubt heard the men come when they visited the kill in the morning. She fell in her tracks, instantly slain. Not a move, scarcely a twitch of the tail. And so she came down the river in a dug-out canoe; the beautiful river along the banks of which she had hunted for many years, for she was an old beast. Eight feet two inches she measured and her weight two hundred and forty pounds.

It was to be expected that after these two animals some time would elapse before other tigers took their places, and so it proved. Another year however finds us at the same place: and making similar arrangements we await the pleasure of the tiger and tigress, successors of their departed relatives, who are now in possession.

We are not, alas! to have the same fortune, as the tiger is disposed of by a village shikari over a bullock, some few miles away, and the tigress is the wildest within our experience.

The tigress killed the upstream buffalo very early one morning and the tracks showed that when she first sighted the tethered animal she stuck out her claws, whisked round, and galloped off to the jungle fifty yards away. She eventually came through the forest and killed. It may be that she would have returned that night to meet her end, but chance in the shape of a village calf she met in the forest intervened, as we learnt next day after a night in the machan, that while we were settling ourselves in she was killing the calf. The carcass could not be found and a second night in the machan was without result.

Another bait was tied up at a new place. This cunning tigress examined it at ten paces but refused to kill. Some days later, stalking along the edge of the reeds about daybreak, she again came on the bait, again turned tail and did not kill. She did not return within our stay and will doubtless be slain in a beat during the hot weather.

So we are tigerless on this occasion, both on account of this cunning beast and because a tiger, swimming across the river, chose to walk downstream instead of up and missed our bait. A traveller, this tiger. We heard the various alarm calls of the jungle folk, soon after sundown, announcing his departure. Tigers take readily to water and often swim the Narbada, even in the cold season.

The pleasure of shikar is not all in successful results. The joy of living the jungle life; the peace, and the being so close to nature, is the greater part of sport. And so, though without trophies on this occasion, we are content, and strike our camp, to proceed to other jungle resorts without any regrets in our minds.

Narbada Mai! We will visit you again!

(1928)



# The Haunts of Isabeline

By C.H. Donald

## I

**I**t has been a severe winter in the Himalayas, and an early one, but once more the sun shines bright and warm, and green patches of grass here and there, in a great wilderness of dazzling white snow, acknowledge its power and the advent of spring. A flock of lighthearted little choughs circling in the bright blue sky above sing to each other, and convey the joyful tidings to all whom they may concern, that the snow is fast melting from their feeding grounds, and that it is high time to be out and enjoying life in such glorious weather.

Isabeline, the little brown mother bear, hears the call, and pokes her nose out of her hollow at the root of an ancient mountain oak, where she has spent the winter, and given birth to two tiny wee cubs. The nose is followed by a great shaggy head and two little beads of eyes, blinking hard in the glare, roll in their sockets, while her nose wobbles about from side to side, to ascertain from every passing zephyr of the presence of any lurking enemy. Her keen scent, however, tells her that all is well, and that she may leave her two woolly balls and come out. Stealthily a great paw, armed with large white nails, next makes an appearance, and then the whole bear in all her glory of a magnificent winter coat, steps out into the sun, to stretch her weary limbs after her long winter sleep. She can still hear the cry of the choughs far, far above her, as she looks up the valley to the alpine pastures which she knows so well, and slowly she moves off in that direction, her legs so stiff that they have some difficulty in bearing her weight, but at each step they get better, and soon “Isabeline” is well above the forests and revelling in the warm sun.

There is, however, no time for enjoyment and the pangs of hunger must be first attended to, before she hurries back to the little ones in the cave. The sight that meets her eyes on every side is not very reassuring and there does not seem very much prospect of satisfying her ravenous appetite on these snow-covered slopes, but she sees the little green path and makes for it and is rewarded for her pains by getting a

few mouthfulls of luscious young, wild carrot tops, as *hors d'oeuvre*. Thence she slowly makes her way down again, turning over all the big stones she passes and getting from under one, a nest of beetles or ant's larvæ, and under the next a few blades of sprouting grasses, till eventually she finds herself in a ravine, from the side of which all the snow has been blown off by the wind and the grass coming up sweet and green everywhere, and here she makes up for lost time. As she feeds on she becomes aware that she is not the first of her kind that has visited this spot during that morning, and her nose tells her that another has gone over the same ground, only a few hours before her, but there is no time to think of others, as she goes from tuft to tuft, and here and there turns over a stone to see if it conceals anything edible, beneath it.

She is not nearly satisfied, but the sun is high up in the horizon, and it's time that she made her way back to the little ones at home, as it is not safe to wander about at a time when her arch enemy, man, may be about. Day after day she might be seen grazing on the bare plateaux, in the early mornings, and late evenings, and as the snow melts, new pastures come into being, and she has much less difficulty in satisfying her cravings than she formerly had.

Spring has past into summer, and the snow has given place to green fields of grass and flowers of every hue. Masses of dainty primulae, king-cups and anenomes, clothe the plateaux on every side in gay pinks, yellows and purples, whilst a bright patch of blue tells of a bed of little forget-me-nots or gentians, and there on that crag, all by itself, too proud to mix with the rest, waves gently in the breeze, the gem of the mountains, in its wonderful electric blue, the blue mountain poppy.

The little cubs have been all over these hills with their mother, since we last saw her, and though only three months old now, are fine sturdy little specimens, and up to every kind of mischief their ursine brains can devise. In size there is practically no difference between them, and in colour they are identical, except that the one has a small white waist-coat which is almost indistinguishable in the other. In temperament however, they are as the poles apart, and if you could only get near enough to see the wee, restive little beady eyes of each, you could have no doubt as to which had the wits of the family.

I had seen old "Isabeline" on the very first occasion that she had ventured out of her hollow in the tree, and I had from afar, coveted that glossy, light brown winter coat of hers, which I had examined carefully through my glasses, and as she approached the green patch in the snow, she little guessed, poor little lady, how near she was to feeling a rifle bullet smashing through her bones. I, too, had seen the green patch and knew she would go to it, so keeping the spur of the hill between us, had reached a point a few yards above it, just before her, and watched her as she grazed. I had seen that beautiful coat, but I had also seen something else, when she

came to within 30 yards of me, which the glasses had not revealed, and which proved her salvation.

This was the lack of hair, in patches, underneath, which showed me that she was the mother of one, if not two little babies which eagerly waited for her arrival, and would starve in their cave if some cruel hand laid her low now. From that date on she became my especial care, and many and many is the time, that I have sat and watched her turning over the boulders and grazing on the grassy slopes, little dreaming how near she was to her enemy, who, for the time being, was also her friend. When “Devil” and “Fool”, as I christened the cubs, first made their appearance in public, early in June, I had the good fortune to meet them at very close quarters, without their knowing it, and from that hour fell in love with them, and was determined to have them for my own, but how to get them, without shooting the mother, was another matter altogether. However, there was no hurry and I could afford to wait and watch, and before long got to recognise the one from the other almost as well as the mother could have done. There was something in the Devil’s eyes and general saucy devil-may-care look that was quite wanting in poor Fool. It was not only in his eyes but in his general demeanour, for it was not necessary to be near him to be able to recognise him, he was unmistakable 40 yards away.

What it was, I could not tell, but it was there, and if anyone who had never seen the cubs before, had been asked which was Devil and which Fool he would have pointed them out correctly, the very first shot.

One evening I had gone up for a quiet stroll to Isabeline’s haunts; it was a warm afternoon and very still, even at this altitude, and whilst waiting under a rock, I had got drowsy and fallen asleep.

I woke up with a start hearing strange noises somewhere very near, and there to my delight, not ten yards away, embracing each other, were Devil and Fool. Such a time as they were having, on the soft turf, and the mother a few yards below, not taking the least notice of her dear little hopefuls’ gambol. This was luck, the wind blew directly from them to me, so there was no possibility of my being winded, and until it changed, or they got above me, I would be able to feast my eyes on their delightful antics. The fond embrace in which I first saw them, culminated in the Fool losing his balance and toppling over with the Devil still holding on to him, and down they went rolling in a ball for a few yards, when Devil loosened his hold, and ran for his mother. Right under her legs he rushed, and then turning round, stood up on his hind legs, with his forepaws on her back, and coyly peeped at Fool from this coign of vantage. I just suppressed a loud laugh, for anything more grotesque than the Devil’s rolling eyes and twitching snout, and the poor Fool’s tired look and perplexity, would be hard to find. After a couple of seconds or so, Fool too made a rush for his mother’s legs, evidently hoping to get a grip of Devil from below, but Devil had played this game before, seemingly, and was prepared, for as soon as

Fool emerged on the other side, Devil fell on his back, with both paws firmly gripping Fool's sides and his teeth in Fool's neck, and thus got quite a pleasant little ride at Fool's expense, till his weight brought Fool down on his nose. Up got Devil again, and made for his mother, and Fool, picking himself up, quietly set about following his mother's example and feeding. The Devil, though, was irrepressible, and, not finding Fool sociably inclined, he looked at his mother as much as to say "shall I?" and began tearing up the ground with his forefeet, and backing at the same time, then suddenly made a plunge at her, but evidently rather misjudged his distance, for he landed right on her head, which had the effect of jabbing her snout rather violently into the ground. Next instant old Devil was flying through space as though out of a gun barrel, and landed on his back quite ten feet down the hill. The mother went on with her grazing and took no further interest but the Devil's face was a treat. He stood up and looked at his mother out of the corner of his eye, and such a look!

I am sure that had he been able to speak English, the words he would have muttered would have been "nasty old cat" He could not have expressed himself more plainly than he did, though.

Now this would probably have kept Devil quiet for some time, and made him think of more serious things, but just then he looked up and his eye met Fool's, in which he plainly saw written the words "that served you jolly well right", and that coming from Fool was not to be endured at any price, so he made a savage charge at him, and once again I saw them in a loving embrace, but this time they had both got a good deal to say to each other as they rolled down, locked in each other's arms, and from the way it was all said, I knew it was nasty names that they were calling each other. A depression in the ground hid them from my view for a few seconds, and what was my surprise to suddenly hear the angry "unf unf unf" half sneeze, half grunt of a bear alarmed, and angry. Up went the mother's head in a second, with her nose held well to the wind, and giving vent to a deeper "unf unf unf" than the last I had heard, off she went, after Devil and Fool, but pulled up at the top of the depression, where I could still see her, with all the long hair on her withers bristling with anger, at something I could not see. The babies had both now joined their mother and all there stood looking down at, to me, the unknown disturber of their peace.

What could it be? Not a man, for they would not stand there looking at him, and besides, there were no shepherds on this plateau as yet, and nobody but a shepherd would come here. I began to get as excited as the bears were, but could not move from my rock without attracting the attention of one or the other of the three before me, so had to curb my impatience and sit where I was, but was soon rewarded, for the mother gradually edged off and down into the depression and both the cubs followed. I was out of my hiding at once, and taking advantage of a small spur

behind one got quickly round it.

As my head got over the rising ground, the breeze brought up the shrill “chick chick” constantly repeated notes of the monaul pheasant, this also was his note of alarm and warning, but far down in the valley.

With my glasses I searched every inch of the rolling plateaux before me and below me, but not a thing could I see anywhere, and yet I felt certain that something was astir somewhere, what could it be?

Just as I was getting tired of looking at nothing, a movement a long way down the hill caught my eye, but look as I would nothing could I make of it, though I gazed again and again with a powerful pair of Zeiss glasses, at the exact spot where I had seen the movement with the naked eye. Looking still lower down, I suddenly spotted a fox digging for voles some 200 yards below where I had first seen the “movement.”

This would account for the cry of alarm of the monaul, but did not in the least explain the uneasiness of the bears, or that “movement” I saw. Still worried, I kept on looking at the fox, a tiny speck in the distance, when again that movement caught my eye, and much more distinct this time. Again I got the glasses out and looked and looked till my eyes ached, but nothing was visible, and yet I was sure that I was not mistaken. More puzzled than ever, I decided to watch the country around the fox for a few minutes, and before a couple of minutes had gone I distinctly saw a greyish object flash through the air and again disappear into the very bowels of the earth. Again my glasses revealed nothing, for some time, but at length, on a grey boulder, I noticed the twitch of a tail, and there right before me, was a beautiful panther crouching low on the rock. I must have had my eyes and glasses on him over and over again, and yet not seen him, and now that I had seen him, he was as plain almost as the bears had been a few minutes previously. It was absurd to risk a 400 yards long shot, but how was I to get nearer in such open country, was the question? But then again why those sudden movements on his part and why was he now crouching on that rock?

Then a thought struck me. He was stalking the fox. If so, that would be something worth watching, and I soon forgot all about Isabeline and her family and settled myself to watch developments in this direction. For five full minutes that panther sat immovable as the rock on which he crouched, and then without a moment's warning or the slightest movement of a muscle, he sprang straight into the air and stopped dead on a rock some ten feet lower down, in the identical position in which he left the last rock. I looked at the fox but she had noticed nothing, and was moving leisuredly about in quest of her voles. The next move of the panther was different, and he sprang lightly off the rock and crouching low, went very stealthily yet with quick steps, down the hill. This time the fox looked up, and immediately the panther crouched and lay still. The fox, however, like me, had

got a glimpse of something and though not scared, was still suspicious and kept looking up every few seconds, but the panther never moved a muscle, and only about 80 to 100 yards divided them.

Gazing through binoculars for any length of time is very tiring for the eyes, and though loth to miss a single state of the drama before me, I put them down till the feline should again make a move, keeping my eyes on him in the meantime. It was about 10 minutes ere he moved again and this time covered a good 20 paces ere he stopped, but the fox too was changing her ground and still kept her distance. She was now no longer straight below him as she had been when I first saw him, but had got several yards to one side, yet he still went on straight down.

Could he have lost sight of her, and is he making for the place he last saw her in, from the rock, in the fond hope that she is still there? Not much fear of his taking those all-seeing eyes of his off her for a single second. I soon saw his little game; there was a huge rock some 30 feet to the rear of the fox and he meant to get that between him and her as soon as possible. A slight pause of a few seconds and as the fox did not look up, he moved stealthily forward and got on to a rock and very slowly peered over. The little fox still merrily went from hole to hole, noising each, oblivious of all danger, and as she turned her back for a second, I saw a sight I shall never forget.

The panther had been looking over the rock at the time, with his fore paws resting on it and his hind feet on the ground below, and yet from that non-jumping attitude, he sprang clear 20 feet or so down, and looked for all the world like a shooting star. This spring and a rush and he was behind the coveted rock, but what in the meantime had alarmed the fox? She was not looking in his direction, but rather down the hill and below him, yet “pheaw pheaw-aw-aw” came her long warning cry.

I could no longer see the panther now, but knew he was only waiting for the fox to turn her head, and she was as good as dead, and then, perhaps I might have a chance of a stalk after him. The fox looks this way and that, undoubtedly alarmed, but unaware of the cause of it. Some wonderful instinct warning her to be on her guard, for what else could it be that alarmed her? Had it been some sound the feline made, or had she got his scent, she would have run off some distance away from either, before turning to “pheaw,” but it is something in no way located, yet she is aware in some vague way of the presence of danger.

It comes too; as she turns her head there is a mighty rush, and a something with the speed of a falcon is on her, almost before she has time to look back, but there again, that something has befriended her, and with a sudden whisk of her tail, and a twist that my eye could not even follow, she has evaded those relentless talons, and somehow doubled under the panther’s legs and is flying for life down the hill, to find cover in the birch jungle below. Strangely enough the panther never even attempted to follow, but accepted his defeat, and sat down on a rock and watched the

fox racing down the hill. I could hear the “pheaws” coming up from the forest below, for a long time after.

I carefully changed my position and getting into a dip of the hill crawled round till I got a ridge in between myself and the feline, and then ran as hard as I could for a spot I marked out in my mind as being within 100 yards of him, and arriving there, stalked very carefully over, till I could get my eyes just over the top, but he was “non est”.

High and low I searched, but not a sign of him could I find and as night was fast approaching, I had to make my way back to camp, and leave him.

## II

In the meantime, while I interested myself in the panther and his doings, Isabeline and her cubs had wandered out of sight, and I saw them no more for some time to come. I had rather wondered at the bears giving their note of alarm for a panther, and I do not suppose that a solitary one would have bothered his head much about him one way or the other, but with a mother with tiny cubs, it is different, as Mr Spots would not hesitate long about making a meal off a cub if he got the chance, and Isabeline had long ago taught Devil and Food to be careful of his scent, and warn her at once should they come across it.

I have already said that I had wanted to capture the cubs and have them as pets, but one cannot go and shoot an animal one has taken an interest in for over a month, in cold blood, though I have no doubt, had I seen her with the cubs the first time she came out, I should not have thought twice about it. The next time I came across them, the summer had given place to late autumn, the sheep had left the alpine pastures, the flowers had bowed their heads to the cutting winds, and the glorious verdant carpets on which Devil and Fool had been wont to play had assumed a sombre brown. In the valley below, the birch and maples had clothed themselves in their golden tints, and lower still could be seen the brilliant scarlet of the virginian creeper clustering about the dark green of the spruce and silver-fir.

The scene in all its wonderful variety of colours, even though it lacked the vivid greens of spring, defied description. Above, the grand old giants reared their virgin snow-capped peaks into the clear blue sky, and in the gorge, just below that mighty peak, a glacier grim, glistened with blues and greens as the rays of the morning sun touched it.

Well might Isabeline be proud of her lovely haunts, and loth to leave them till the bleak winter winds and hard frosts which made digging impossible, drove her down to more sheltered nooks. The hardy “bhurrel”, the blue sheep of the Himalayas can alone face those icy blasts, and appears to revel in the blizzards that howl round his inhospitable, rugged peaks.

As soon as the frost sets in, and even Isabeline's great claws and forearm can make no impression on the hard ground, she thinks of looking about for a sequestered home in which to spend the winter. A cave beneath an overhanging rock, or the hollow at the root of a tree, which will keep her warm and dry and yet permit the passage of fresh air, are selected with much care, for her long winter sleep. She will enter it a fat tubby ball, almost round, and issue four to five months later, simply skin and bone, but the possessor of a lovely coat.

It was in late October, when I came across Isabeline and her cubs. The latter were now well grown, and to catch them would have been no easy matter, so I was obliged to give up all thought of it, but my interest in them had not abated in the slightest and I was as ready as ever to watch them at their play. Determined to find out their hibernating quarters, I used to be up on their feeding grounds before the sun touched them and on the first occasion contented myself by watching them leave for the trees, as the day advanced, through my glasses. But that proved a fruitless watch, as I lost sight of them as soon as they got into the forest.

The next time, some ten days later, I decided to follow them, but the ground being caked and hard with frost, I had the greatest difficulty in seeing their tracks, and lost them entirely in the forest, where they went over a succession of rocks and boulders. The following week a light fall of snow came to my help, and the morning after it, I made my way up to her favourite ravine and was just in time to see her and the cubs disappearing into some birch jungle. There was no mistaking their tracks now, and on hands and knees I crawled after them among the dense tangle of branches which being bent down year after year by the winter snows, grow down instead of standing up straight.

Careful not to get too near or disturb them in any way, I carefully avoided each branch, either stepping over or crawling under it. Thus I must have covered over a mile, and was thankful to find myself getting into more open cover, the birch giving place to oak and pine. All this time I had not got a single glimpse of them, though I know from the tracks that I was very near. Under one tree I found marks of the mother's claws, where she had raked up some twigs and branches, preparatory to lying down for the day, but had changed her mind and moved on. This at all events meant that she would not go very much further and it behoved me to be all the more careful, in case I stumbled on to her unawares from below, in which case she might charge and tend to make things nasty, in defence of her cubs.

I had my trusty rifle with me, but there are times when it is difficult to be quick enough with it, and this might be one of them. Carefully, with one eye on the tracks and the other on the ground ahead, I plodded on, removing every twig that chanced in my way, and to my joy I at last came to where the tracks began moving downhill. This gave me a much better command of the position and also enabled me to see further. A bear, brown or black, if he selects a tree to sit behind, will almost



invariably sit on the upper side and not below it, so I should now have a chance of seeing the family from some distance if they meant to sleep under a tree and not go into a cave, which at this season, however, was unlikely.

On the other hand, this would not help me to find, their hibernating quarters, but having come so far, I intended to continue now, wherever they went, and follow them. A tragopan gave me the first intimation of their exact whereabouts, for not 50 yards ahead, I could hear his plaintive cry as, disturbed by their approach, he rushed up the hill uttering his curious single note. This meant that I could hurry on for a few paces, as a spur divided us, and any noise I made would not reach them, but I must be careful, not to frighten the tragopan unduly and make him fly, as that might put the bears on the *qui vive*.

The bears had not wasted their time while seeking their place for the mid-day siesta, as over-turned stones and logs of wood testified, and in one place I had to make a dive into some undergrowth to avoid a nest of angry jungle wasps, whose home had been ruthlessly torn out and their winter store of honey robbed by the furry marauders ahead.

A musk-deer near whose lair they passed, stood up and gave his cry of alarm—"fitch fitch"—at intervals of a few seconds, and so engaged was he in looking at the bears, that I got to within 30 feet of him, and could see his gleaming white tushes and saw him stamp his foot, as he "fitched" and wagged his little scut.

One ear was held forward and the other twitching back and fro, alive to every sound. I crouched behind a stump and very gently "fitched" in return. In a second his head turned in my direction, and he stood staring intently, not being able to make it out, the very embodiment of grace and daintiness. I dare not alarm him or he might go racing off down the hill in his succession of jumps, a mode of locomotion, peculiar to the little beasts, and yet I must get him away from here, before I could move myself, and in the meantime, the bears were getting further and further away. "Fitch fitch" I said to him and "fitch sh sh" was his reply, and a violent stamp on the ground. A second "fitch" from me was too much for his nerves and had the desired effect. With half a dozen dainty little bounds, all four legs rising and falling at the same time, he fled up the hill and with a final "fitch" disappeared from view behind some rocks.

Again I moved forward and, climbing a small rise over which the tracks led me, looked down on an expanse of melting snow and at the foot of it saw Devil and Fool playing hide and seek. Glancing at the tracks, I could see that they had not troubled to walk down, but had simply glissaded or rolled the whole way to the bottom. Even Isabeline had become playful after her slide, for, as one of the cubs ran round her, she got up on her hind legs, her great fat forearms swaying from side to side, and gave vent to a loud snort ending up with a tremendous puff as though blowing bubbles.

Little Fool rushed up and also got on to his hind legs in front of her, and the pair promptly set to work to do a little boxing, but Devil did not see why he should be left out in the cold, and made for poor Fool. A fair spar, with the mother as umpire, ensued, but as usual it did not last long and ended up in close grips and a roll in the snow. Devil's honour was satisfied and once more the trio started off up the opposite hill, and I had to sit where I was till they went round the next spur, and once more took up the trail from the next ridge.

I had been most fortunate all this time in having the wind blowing down hill, but it was now time for it to change. In the Himalayas the wind usually blows down the valleys from 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon till 8 or 9 a.m. the following morning, and uphill for the rest of the day, but this fact would not trouble me so long as the bears kept to the contour of the hills, but if they suddenly went down a valley I should be discovered at once if I attempted to follow, so in that case I would have to wait till they had climbed up the other side.

As I topped the crest I found before me a ravine covered with a forest of spruce and silver-fir, and now left convinced that this was the place the bears had been making for, and would now lie up under some old forest giant. Nor was I wrong. Just below me was the tree they had selected for their seista the previous day, but now they had gone down lower, and I must be cautious as they might come to a halt any moment. I crawled along a few paces and was pulled up sort by hearing a twig crack, and peeping round the trunk of a tree, I espied Isabeline busy making up a snug bed for herself, and both the cubs interestedly watching operations.

Foiled in my hopes of seeing their winter quarters I took my sandwiches out of my pocket and proceeded to replenish the inner man, and at the same time keep an eye on the bears. Having removed any stones or hard twigs from under her, the old lady sat up on her haunches and had a good look all round, with her nose well to the wind. Satisfied that all was well she thought about attending to her toilet. A great big hind paw began very deliberately scratching the back of her head and, that done, she lay down with both her fore-paws in front of her and surveyed her huge white claws. Devil still had something on his mind and went down a little way to investigate the roots of another tree, but Fool sat down alongside his mother and getting his hind foot into his mouth, was busy for the next ten minutes sucking it, making an extraordinary gurgling the while. Devil too came up and joined the other two, and half an hour from the time they arrived there everyone was sound asleep, bunched close together. Even though I had seen them settle themselves, I could not make out where one began or the other ended. They looked like one great brown stone except for the fact that every now and again a puff of wind stirred the hair on one of their backs. There was nothing now left for me to do, but to get back home, but before doing so, I would give them a chance of winding me, to see if they kept their noses open even in sleep.

Going back over the spur I had just come over, I descended to their level and quietly got some 20 yards below their tree and hid myself behind another. I had not been there many seconds, when a small head looked round the edge, the nose well in the air and working vigorously, and with a low “unf unf unf” awoke the other two. Both the cubs took to their heels up the hill but the mother waited just long enough to see that nothing followed, and then went after her sons. Their education had not been neglected, evidently, and the mother no doubt was not a little proud of her apt pupils. Had I not seen them go off I might have passed them within a *few* yards and never known that there was a bear within a mile of me, so quietly had they all disappeared. Fortunately for mother bear, in the Higher Himalayas there is so very little that can harm her or her young that she can instruct them pretty thoroughly as to what they should avoid.

“All man’s scents are not necessarily dangerous but it is as well to steer clear of them all. That which is tainted with the smell of goat and sheep, or with that of cows and buffaloes, you need not run from, but just get out of his way and get behind a log or a tree till he has passed. If it is pure man’s scent, whether he means mischief or not, fly the moment you get it, and keep to thick scrub as long as you can till well out of his reach, and then go over all the stones and rocks you can find to leave no track. If you get the smell of a panther, give me warning, and keep near me. Goats and sheep are very nice eating but do not go too near a flock while it is still light, unless you can find a straggler. Beware of a flock with which there is smell of dog, as they will bark and rouse the camp and guide the men on your scent, and you will have to give up your dinner even if you have had the luck to get it away. You will be a match for any two or three dogs, but you can do nothing when the dogs are followed by half a dozen men armed with big sticks. Buffaloes will do you no harm if you do them none, and though our cousin the black bear has no difficulty in killing them now and again, and we are stronger than he, yet he has got sharp claws with which he can get a firm hold on the back of a buffalo and so hang on till the animal becomes frantic, and falls over a cliff or breaks a leg, but our claws are no good for that sort of thing, being meant only for digging. The same applies to cows and bullocks, though when you are full grown you may be able to manage a cow, but be careful, as sometimes one or two of the bulls with the herd may charge, and in the open, he will get the best of it. A wheat crop is a very pleasant place to spend a night in, but if grazing is good in our own haunts eschew such luxuries, as they are often fraught with danger, and if it is known that we make raids on the crops, a man with a gun may be there in hiding to receive you one night. Keep to your own lovely feeding grounds, and follow the instructions I have so often drummed into your heads and you will live to be as old as you desire, but remember that curiosity killed the cat, and will be the end of you, if you are not very careful.”

The advice was good, and though curiosity was Devil’s besetting sin, he was

getting over it as he grew up, and after the one or two frights his mother gave him, began to learn that it was enough for him to discover the presence of danger through his nose, without trying to see it as well.

Eighteen months went by, and I had not been able to visit the haunts of Isabeline again, but I had heard of her and the cubs, now grown almost as big as herself, from shepherds and others who had spent the preceding summer near her. Three bears always together, had been frequently reported to me, but no one had ever feared of them attacking sheep, but of late, one huge beast had also taken up his quarters and he had done a good deal of damage among the flocks.

The villagers had begged me to go up and shoot him, and one old man who had been with me on two or three occasions when I had followed up Isabeline and had thought me crazy for not having shot her instead of going miles and miles for the sake of “looking” at her, was careful to inform me that it was not the mother with cubs that the villagers referred to.

It was June ere I got a chance of paying the dear old haunts a visit. Devil and Fool would now be 28 months old and well able to look after themselves. Would I still be able to tell one from the other and when I did see them, would I forget all past associations and shoot on sight, or would I be as eager to watch their antics as of yore?

The second day after arriving on the scene, two bears were seen on a plateau some distance from camp, but too late in the evening to permit of my making a closer acquaintance on that day. Next morning I left camp before it was light and found myself far up on the highlands ere the first streaks of dawn touched the peaks ahead, and shortly after, my glasses revealed one solitary bear, and, if size was any criterion, the veteran who had done the damage among the flocks. Half an hour’s careful stalking brought me to within a few yards of where I had last seen him and a cautious look round showed him sitting on a patch of snow, meditating over his many misdeeds.

A low whistle roused him and he cocked his ears and peered round in the direction of the sound, but did not move his position. A depression in the ground served me admirably to run round and get in front of him, but he had heard me moving and was now on the alert though still sitting where I had left him. A snap shot was the work of a moment, and the monster’s life blood dyed the white snow beneath him a bright crimson.

Later on I found Isabeline—alone. Devil and Fool had been driven from her side by the big beast whose hide now covers the floor, and the little mother roams the alpine pastures still, and has long forgotten the existence of her young hopefuls.

Thrilling tales of true adventure in the jungles of India!

Big game hunters and others describe their encounters with man-eating tigers, musth elephants, panthers, and other predators in a land still teeming with wildlife.

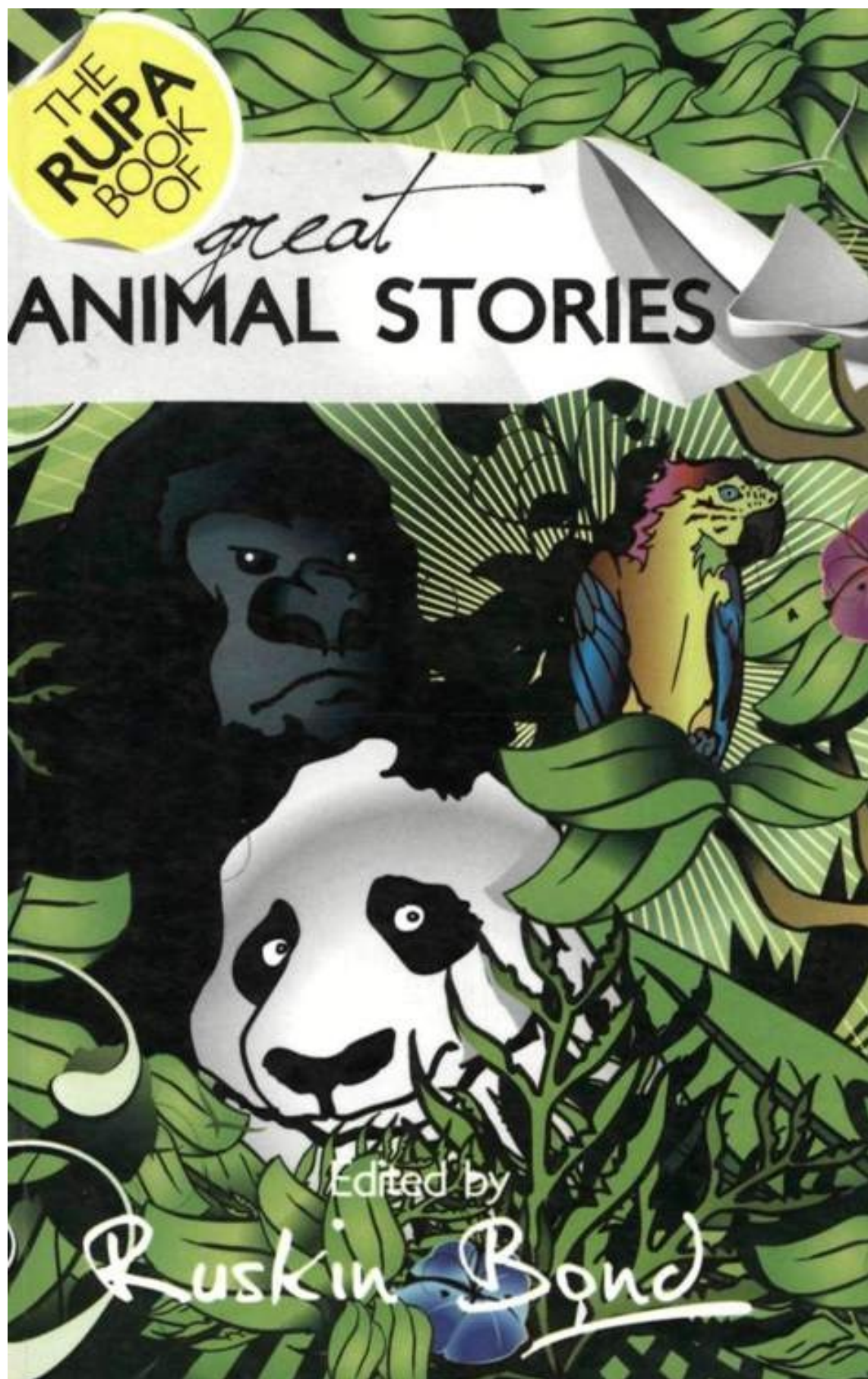
Men sought the jungle for sport, for adventure and for the freedom that only the great forests could offer.

Complete your collection of Ruskin Bond's popular Rupa anthologies with this, the lucky 12<sup>th</sup> in the series.

**Ruskin Bond**, well-known as one of India's best-loved and most prolific writers, has been writing novels, poetry, essays and short stories for almost half a century now. Apart from this, over the years he has expertly compiled and edited a number of anthologies. For his outstanding literary contribution, he was awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957, the Sahitya Akademi award in 1992 (for English writing in India) and the Padma Shri in 1999.

*Rupa & Co*

[www.rupapublications.com](http://www.rupapublications.com)



THE  
RUPA  
BOOK OF

*great*  
**ANIMAL STORIES**

Edited by

Ruskin Bond

The Rupa Book of  
Great  
Animal Stories

By the same author:

*Angry River*  
*A Little Night Music*  
*A Long Walk for Bina*  
*Hanuman to the Rescue*  
*Ghost Stories from the Raj*  
*Strange Men, Strange Places*  
*The India I Love*  
*Tales and Legends from India*  
*The Blue Umbrella*  
*Ruskin Bond's Children's Omnibus*  
*The Ruskin Bond Omnibus-I*  
*The Ruskin Bond Omnibus-II*  
*The Ruskin Bond Omnibus-III*  
*Rupa Book of Great Animal Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of True Tales of Mystery and Adventure*  
*The Rupa Book of Ruskin Bond's Himalayan Tales*  
*The Rupa Book of Great Suspense Stories*  
*The Rupa Laughter Omnibus*  
*The Rupa Book of Scary Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Haunted Houses*  
*The Rupa Book of Travellers' Tales*  
*The Rupa Book of Great Crime Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Nightmare Tales*  
*The Rupa Book of Shikar Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Love Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Wicked Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Heartwarming Stories*  
*The Rupa Book of Thrills and Spills*



# The Rupa Book of Great Animal Stories

*Edited by*  
RUSKIN BOND

*Rupa Co*

Selection Copyright © Ruskin Bond 2003

First Published 2003  
This edition 2010  
Second Impression 2011

Published by  
**Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.**  
7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,  
New Delhi 110 002

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Typeset in 11 pts. Nebraska by  
Mindways Design  
1410 Chiranjiv Tower  
43 Nehru Place  
New Delhi 110 019

To  
Upendra Arora  
*a bookseller who cares about books,  
and who has been specially helpful  
and supportive to this writer.*

# ***Contents***

## *Introduction by Ruskin Bond*

1.    **The Coming of the Tiger**  
      *by James S. Lee*
2.    **Man-Eater**  
      *by Frank Buck with Edward Anthony*
3.    **The Pale One**  
      *by John Eyton*
4.    **A Philosopher Stag**  
      *by John Eyton*
5.    **The Tiger-Charms**  
      *by Alice Perrin*
6.    **Travels with a Bear Cub**  
      *by C.H. Donald*
7.    **Tippitty, A Flying Squirrel**  
      *by C.H. Donald*
8.    **The Man-eater of Mundali**  
      *by B.B. Osmaston*
9.    **Garm—A Hostage**  
      *by Rudyard Kipling*

10. “Sandy” Beresford’s Tigerhunt

*by Charles A. Kincaid*

11. A Terrible Bedfellow

*by L. St. C. Grondona*

12. Chased By Bees

*by E.F. Martin*

13. In the Jaws of the Alligator

*by P.C. Arnoult*

14. The Tiger in the Tunnel

*by Ruskin Bond*

15. The Leopard

*by Ruskin Bond*

16. The Regimental Myna

*by Ruskin Bond*

17. The Moose And Rusty Jones

*by Charles D. Roberts*

18. Mustela of the Lone Hand

*by C.G.D. Roberts*

19. A Warrior from Bhut

*by John Eyton*

## *Introduction*

**W**ould you rather be devoured by a man-eating tiger or eaten by a crocodile? The former might be a quicker and less painful procedure. Crocodiles are apt to linger over their meals.

Alternatively, you can be strangled and swallowed by a boa-constrictor, stung to death by wild bees, or trampled by a rampaging elephant. The choice is yours.

The stories in this collection cover all these possibilities!

There was a time when men roamed the earth in smaller numbers than they do today. They were hunters who killed for food or in self-defence. Sometimes they were the hunted, falling prey to wild animals who had the advantage of unlimited forest cover and swampland. Apart from that, the weapons used by early man were not very sophisticated.

Barely two centuries ago, the vast majority of Indians and South Asians lived in rural areas, often on the edge of jungles, and they had to protect themselves not only from invading armies and bands of robbers but also from herds of wild elephants, packs of wolves, and large numbers of tigers, reptiles and other carnivores. Most villages were surrounded by some sort of fortification. For security, people travelled together in large groups or caravans. Seldom did anyone venture forth on his own.

Slowly, as human “civilisation” evolved and populations increased, villages became towns and towns became cities. The forest cover diminished. The animal world began retreating. Men began to hunt for recreation and trophies rather than just for food or self-protection. British and other European colonials posted in India and elsewhere felt they had to prove their manhood by “bagging” a tiger or bison or wild boar; they were often aided and abetted by local potentates. But by the end of the twentieth century, as many species disappeared, wiser counsels prevailed and we

began to think in terms of protecting and preserving what was left of our wild life.

Most of the stories presented here date from the early and middle years of the last century, when man and beast met each other on what was almost an equal footing. They were often in conflict. Man, with his intelligence and fire-power, usually prevailed. But sometimes the beast got the upper hand ... as you will discover when you read these exciting stories and first-person accounts.

However, not all these accounts depict nature red in tooth and claw. We come across animals, wild or domestic, who have struck up great partnerships with humans: the moose who was befriended by a Canadian farmer; the loyal terrier in the Kipling story; C.H. Donald's relationship with a bear-cub and a flying-squirrel. Wild creatures are not always our natural enemies: the leopard in my story is just one example. But we have become competitors in the struggle for survival. The more aggressive tiger, moving into India from the north-east, drove out the lion; we in turn have decimated the tiger.

This is a collection of realistic, true-to-life stories. I have not included stories about talking animals who engage in human dialogue. Real bears are far removed from cuddly Teddy Bears.

These stories have been chosen because they are rivetting to read: thrilling, moving, or humorous. They are essentially true stories. Even those that have been written in a fictional format are based on actual episodes or experiences. Most of them are set in India, but for variety I have included a few from other lands. My story of 'The Regimental Myna' is published here for the first time.

Ruskin Bond  
October 2002

# *The Coming of the Tiger*

by James S. Lee

*In the year 1894, Mr. Lee, then twenty-two years of age, became mechanical engineer in a mining settlement on the north-east frontier of India. Here, he tells one of the many exciting adventures that befell him.*

I was in grand form; I found life very interesting, for there was plenty of variety here.

I have seen a man-eater, a tiger. Not only that, but I have smelt its foul breath on my face, and have almost felt its claws when reaching for me, within a few inches of my body. Yet I am still alive, but the memory of it will live with me forever. Those hours of fear were torture far more acute than any pain; a mental torture which I never before realised was possible to be produced by fear. Yes, believe me, fear can be more agonising than bodily pain.

I was sleeping in my bed when I was awakened in the early hours of the morning by a coolie standing under my window, calling, "Sahib! Sahib!"

As soon as I awakened, I got up and went to the open window—a window which contained no glass; only a wooden-louvred shutter.

"Sahib, *harkul bund hai*," said the coolie, meaning, "The fan has stopped."

This was a very serious matter. I knew that there were more than a hundred men and women working underground on the night shift, and soon the air underground would be unbreathable, and work would have to stop. The fan must be got going at



once. I got up and dressed quickly, meanwhile sending the coolie for one of my fitters, who had a hut just below my compound.

Lukai, the fitter, an old man something like an Egyptian mummy in appearance, came up to my compound, carrying a hurricane lamp and a large pipe wrench, while the coolie fireman followed carrying some tools.

It was no joke, really, for we had to walk about half a mile through the jungle before we got to the fan, which was situated in an isolated spot, right in the heart of the jungle, and high up the hillside.

I was always scared on this trip at night-time, and I had made it a few times under similar conditions; the fan had a habit of stopping sometimes at night. It might be the feed pump of the boiler which had gone wrong, or perhaps the coolie had allowed the water to get out of sight in the gauge glass, when he would get scared, draw the fire, and come down for a fitter.

I was scared because the jungle was known to be infested by tigers and leopards, and many natives had been killed at one time or another in the district.

As we walked along the winding path up the side of the hill, with thick jungle on either side, the old man was fairly trembling, and muttering to himself: "*Khun roj Bargh kyh-ager*," which means literally, "Some day tiger eat."

The coolie was the only one of us who appeared not to be afraid, but then perhaps he had no imagination; he was a poor specimen of humanity; naked, with the exception of a loincloth, and coal black, with spindle legs and big feet; and his face and arms were covered with syphilitic sores.

I could certainly have taken my rifle with me, but it would not have been much protection at night-time.

A tiger could spring out on us before I could use it, or a leopard could jump down on us out of a tree as we passed underneath; besides, I knew that I would come in for a good deal of chaff from the other Europeans. I carried a hunting knife only.

Although I reckoned that the chances of us meeting a tiger were about 100 to 1 against, this did not seem to help much.

Arrived at the spot I proceeded to investigate.

The place was a levelled and cleared portion of the hillside towering above us. Here, there was a horizontal engine and a large vertical boiler, standing on a massive concrete foundation, and driving, by means of a leather belt, the fan, which was built in the hillside. In front of me the jungle sloped away steeply down to the valley below.

The boiler fire was out, and the steam had fallen to a few pounds pressure, and steam and water were leaking into the furnace.

I knew that there was a tube leaking, probably the uptake tube. It was a very old boiler and all I could do was to make a temporary repair.

Leaving Lukai and the coolie to blow off the water and take off the manhole

cover, I proceeded down the hill by a different route to the mine entrance, to see the foreman miner, and tell him to withdraw the coolies; the repair would take the rest of the night to make.

By the time I got back, I found that they had got the water blown off, and the manhole opened, leaving an opening into the boiler several feet above the ground.

They had a ladder placed against the boiler, and Lukai was on the domed roof, taking off the chimney, while the coolie was down below raking out the ashes, and taking out the fire-bars, so that I could stand upright when inside the furnace. The interior was still hot, so we started to partly fill the boiler with cold water as high as the furnace crown, on which we would have to stand when inside the steam space.

Although we had thrown buckets of cold water all round inside the furnace door, the interior was also fairly hot and stifling when I crept inside with a small lamp.

Meanwhile, Lukai got into the boiler through the manhole overhead, and between us we located the leak. As I expected, it was a small leak through the uptake tube. It had worn thin just there. Really it was dangerous, but as it would take a week to get another boiler up, and we could not stop the mine working, I had to patch it up as quickly as I could.

I next got in the manhole beside Lukai, and while he held the lamp, I punched a round chisel or drift through the leak until I had made a round hole large enough for a half-inch bolt to pass through.

This done, we got outside and found two pieces of plate of about two inches square, with a hole through the centre of each, for the bolt to pass through. These plates or washers were slightly curved, so as to fit the tube.

Wrapping the neck of the bolt with spunyarn, and covering it with red and white lead, I threaded on a plate, first passing the second piece of plate up to Lukai, who had climbed into the manhole.

Again, getting inside the firedoor, I reached up the tube, and pushed the bolt through the hole, until the plate, well-covered with lead and spunyarn, was pressing firmly against the tube.

Lukai now threaded his piece of plate on to the bolt from the other side of the tube, first well leading and wrapping it; and all that now required to be done, was for him to put on the nut and tighten up, so that the leak would be tightly gripped by the plates, inside and outside.

Just then I heard the coolie scream, and saw his legs and feet scampering up the ladder.

He was now on top of the boiler shouting, "*Bargh*" ("tiger").

The sudden realisation of my position now struck me for the first time. I was trapped like a rat in a trap. I was on the ground level, and there was an open hole into the chamber.

Could the tiger reach me with its claws, through the open door? I felt that it could, and I knew then real fear, such as few people ever experience.

Thoughts raced through my brain, quickly following one another. I thought of our relative positions.

The coolie was on top of the boiler, high up out of reach of the tiger, and therefore safe. Lukai was inside the boiler, and the only opening into this part was the manhole, and this was several feet above the ground. He was fairly safe I thought, because the tiger could not climb up the smooth steel side. My position was the only one which was dangerous. I could now hear it moving about outside, and once or twice I caught a glimpse of its stripes, as it passed the door opening, because the night was not dark, the stars were shining above us.

The creature evidently had not yet discovered my presence, and was concentrating its attention on the coolie above.

It moved in silence, and both Lukai and the coolie were now silent.

Suddenly, with a terrible snarl, it sprang upwards, and I could hear its claws rasping on the steel plate as it slipped back. Its rage and snarls were now horrible, and all the time I was pressing myself back against the far side of the boiler as hard as I could.

Could it reach me when it discovered my presence?

I measured the distance with my eye, and I felt more hopeful.

Suddenly the snarling stopped, and I saw its head at the opening. It had found me.

First it tried to force itself through the door, but it could only get its head through, and its fangs soon were snapping within a couple of feet of my body. Its breath came in horrid, foul gusts, filling the chamber with a sickening odour, and its roars inside the confined space were enough to hurt my ear drums, while its eyes were glaring into mine.

I stood there fascinated with horror.

I now knew that it could not reach me that way, but would it start reaching in with its claws? My imagination now began to visualise its claws reaching me, and speculating as to what part of me it would rip up first. The constriction on my heart had almost become like a physical pain. Just then I heard something strike the boiler plate with a loud clang. Lukai had thrown his hammer. Of course. How foolish of me! I had forgotten my hunting knife, which was in my belt. I would wait until it put its head in again, and then try and jab the blade through its eye into the brain.

Now it was reaching for me with its paw through the door opening, and its claws came within a few inches of my body, opening and shutting in a horrible manner. It could not reach me, but I knew that if it had the intelligence of a human being, it would reach in sideways, and then all would soon be over.

It was too dangerous to try and slash its paw, besides, it would do little good. I

would wait.

Again, it had got its head in the opening and I raised my knife, but found that its teeth followed my hand, and it was risky to strike, because it was snapping all the time. Its top lip was lifted, exposing fangs which seemed enormous, and its whiskers were trembling with rage.

Then I struck with all the suddenness I was capable of. I had missed, and the knife only slashed down its nose, because its head had moved.

Quickly the tiger backed out with a roar. Its rage now was so terrible that it even bit at the plate of the door opening. It was behaving outside like a rampaging demon; lashing its tail and sometimes springing up at the coolie, who had now recovered his courage when he found himself beyond reach. Both he and Lukai were spitting and hissing and hurling abuse at it.

Once on its upward spring it got its paw in the manhole door opening and hung there a minute while the rest of its claws were slipping and rasping on the steel plates of the boiler side. Then Lukai brought his spanner down with all his force on its paw, nearly cutting it through on the sharp edge of the door opening.

Now the creature was almost insane with rage. It had first been hit by Lukai on the back with a hammer, then its nose had been split by my knife, and lastly its paw had been nearly cut off by the last blow.

Presently it put its head in the fire door again, and, following Lukai's example, I struck it a heavy blow on the nose with my large hammer.

Now a tiger's nose is a very tender and sensitive spot, and it is intended to be so, because its whiskers have to guide it through the thick undergrowth in the dark, and it feels the touch of any obstruction first through these, and then through its nose; consequently the pain must have been extremely acute, judging by the noise it made. It then bounded off into the jungle.

However, none of us ventured to leave our refuge before it was broad daylight, and in the meantime we completed the work.

# ***Man-Eater***

by Frank Buck with Edward Anthony

*Frank Buck spent a great many years collecting live wild animals for zoos, circuses, and dealers. He was famous for his early “Bring ‘Em Back Alive” documentary films. In the following story he tells of the capture of a huge tiger at Johore, for an American Zoo.*

**I**n 1926, I was again in Singapore putting the finishing touches to a splendid collection. My compound was fairly bursting with fine specimens. I had brought back from Siam a fine assortment of argus pheasants, fireback pheasants, and many small cage birds. Out of Borneo I had come with a goodly gang of man-like orang-utans and other apes. From Sumatra I had emerged with some fat pythons and a nice group of porcupines, binturongs, and civet cats. Celebes had yielded an imposing array of parrots, cockatoos, lories (brush-tongued parrots of a gorgeous colourings)—one of the biggest shipments of these birds I had ever made. My trip to Burmah was represented by a couple of black leopards (more familiarly known as panthers), several gibbons, and a sizeable army of small rhesus monkeys. In addition, I had a number of other specimens picked up along the line.

I was to sail for San Francisco in a couple of weeks. This meant that I would have to make a thorough inspection of my crates and cages to make sure they were all in shape to stand the rigours of a thirty-five-or forty-day trip across the Pacific.

With Hin Mong, the Chinese carpenter who had served me for years, I made the rounds of the various boxes, he making notes of new cages and crates that were

needed.

His cleverness knows no bounds. Working with a home-made saw, crude chisel made out of a scrap of iron shaped and sharpened on a grind-stone, and a few other primitive tools, he does carpentry that is as finished as if it came out of an up-to-date shop equipped with the finest of tools. Some of it, in fact, is finer than any carpenter work I have ever seen done anywhere. With a couple of chow-boys (apprentices) to assist him, Hin Mong would pitch into any task to which I assigned him and when it was done it was a piece of work to be proud of.

The owner of the house in Katong where I usually lived when in Singapore had sold it, making it necessary for me to move out, although I still maintained my compound there. After the sale of the house I invariably stayed at the Raffles Hotel when in Singapore. I had just returned to my room there after an early morning session with Hin Mong, in the course of which we made a final inspection of the crates and cages, when I was informed that the Sultan of Johore was on the telephone and wished to speak to me at once. Whenever the Sultan telephoned, the information that he was on the wire was passed on to me with much ceremony, sometimes my good friend Aratoon, one of the owners of the hotel, announcing the news in person.

As the morning was still young I was puzzled, for it was most unusual for H.H. to telephone so early. It was a very serious H.H. that spoke to me. He got to his business without any loss of time. Did I still want a man-eating tiger? Well, here was my chance. Breathlessly he told me that a coolie on a rubber plantation twenty-five miles north of Johore Bahru had been seized by a tiger while at work and killed. The animal, a man-eater, had devoured part of the body. Work, of course, was at a standstill on the plantation. The natives were in a state of terror. He (the Sultan) was sending an officer and eight soldiers to war on the killer. It was necessary to show some action at once to ease the minds of his frightened subjects. If I thought I could catch the man-eater alive he would be glad to place the officer and soldiers under my command, with instructions to do my bidding. If, after looking over the situation, it became apparent that in trying to capture the killer alive, we were taking a chance of losing him, he expected me to have the beast immediately shot. He wanted no effort spared in locating the animal. There would be no peace in the minds and hearts of his subjects in the district where the outrage was committed until the cause was removed. In a series of crisp sentences the Sultan got the story off his chest. This was an interesting transition from his lighter manner, the vein in which I most frequently saw him.

Needless to say I leaped at the opportunity to try for a man-eater. H.H. asked me to join him at the fort over in Johore Bahru, which I agreed to do without delay.

At the fort, which is the military headquarters for the State of Johore, the Sultan introduced me to the officer he had selected to assist me, a major with a good

record as a soldier and a hunter. He was a quiet little chap, so well-mannered that his courtesy almost seemed exaggerated. (The Malays, by the way, are the best-mannered people in Asia.) His soldiers were a likely looking contingent. It was obvious that H.H. had picked good men to help me with the job.

The major was not in uniform. He was dressed in ordinary rough clothes of European cut. I was interested in the rifle he carried. It was a Savage 303, which most hunters consider too small a gun for tiger-shooting. This capable Malay, however, had killed several tigers with this weapon, the Sultan told me. It took a good man to do that.

The major's command were dressed in the khaki shirts and "shorts" affected by Malay soldiers. They wore heavy stockings that resembled golf hose. If not for the little black Mohammedan caps on their heads and their weapons—(each was armed with a big sword-like knife and a Malayan military rifle)—they might have been taken for a group of boy scouts. A cartridge-belt around each man's waist topped off the war-like note.

The major bowed two or three times and announced in his fairly good English that he was ready to start. We departed, the officer and his men piling into a small motor lorry, Ali and I following in my car. The asphalt roads of Johore are excellent—many of them the work of American road-builders who did a wonderful job of converting stretches of wilderness into fine highways—and we were able to motor to within three miles of the killing. The rest of the journey we made on foot over a jungle trail.

I had requested the Sultan to order the body of the slain coolie left where it was when the killer had finished his work. When we arrived we found a group of excited natives standing around the mangled remains. One leg had been eaten off to the thigh. The animal had also consumed the better part of one shoulder, and to give the job an added touch of thoroughness had gouged deeply into the back of the neck.

Other groups of natives were standing around not far from the body, some of them hysterically jabbering away, some making weird moaning noises, others staring down at the ground in silence. One has to have a good comprehension of the wild world-old superstitions of these natives to appreciate fully what happens inside them when a man-eating tiger appears. All the fanaticism that goes with their belief in strange devils and ogres finds release when a tiger, their enemy of enemies, kills a member of their ranks. They act like a people who consider themselves doomed. Going into a delirium of fear that leaves them weak and spiritless, they become as helpless as little children. Under a strong leadership that suggests a grand unconcern about man-eating tigers, they can be rallied to work against the striped foe; but, until there are definite signs of a possible victory, this work is purely mechanical. The most casual glance reveals that each member of the terrified crew is staring hard at the jungle as he perfunctorily goes through the motions of doing whatever it is you

assign him to.

An investigation revealed that the victim of the tiger had been working on a rubber tree when attacked. His tapping knife and latex cup (in which he caught the latex, or sap) were just where they had dropped from his hands when the poor devil was surprised, mute evidence of the suddenness of the assault. Then he had been dragged fifteen or twenty yards into some nearby brush.

Bordering along the jungle wall—as dense and black a stretch of jungle, incidentally, as I have ever seen—was a small pineapple plantation. This was not a commercial grove, but a modest affair cultivated by the estate coolies for their own use. An examination of the ground here revealed marks in the dirt that unmistakably were tiger tracks. The tiger's spoor led to a fence made by the natives to keep out wild pigs, whose fondness for pineapples had spelled the ruin of more than one plantation. Through a hole in this fence—which could have easily been made by the tiger or might have been there when he arrived, the work of some other animal—the killer's movements could, without the exercise of much ingenuity, be traced in the soft earth across the pineapple grove into the coal-black jungle some fifty yards away.

It is no news that a tiger, after gorging himself on his kill, will return to devour the unfinished remains of his feast. If there is no heavy brush within convenient reach he will camouflage those remains with leaves and anything else that is handy for his purpose and go off to his lair. Confident that he has covered his left-over skilfully enough to fool even the smartest of the vultures, jackals, hyenas, and wild dogs, he curls up and enjoys one of those wonderful long sleeps that always follow a good bellyful and which I have always believed to be as much a part of the joy of making a good kill as the actual devouring of it.

I felt, as I studied the situation, that when the tiger returned for the rest of his kill—assuming that this creature would follow regulation lines and re-visit the scene of the slaughter—he would again make use of that hole in the fence. It was a perfectly simple conclusion. Either the animal would not return at all or if he returned he would re-travel his former route.

“*Changkuls! Changkuls! Changkuls!*” I yelled as soon as I decided on a course of action. A *changkul* is a native implement that is widely used on the rubber plantations. It is a combination of shovel and hoe. With the assistance of the major I managed to make it clear to the natives what it was I wanted them to do.

My plan was to dig a hole barely within the borders of the pineapple plantation, so close to the hole in the fence through which the tiger had travelled on his first visit that if he returned and used the same route he would go tumbling down a pit from which there was no return—except in a cage.

I specified a hole four feet by four feet at the surface. This was to be dug fourteen or fifteen feet deep, the opening widening abruptly at about the half-way



mark until at the very bottom it was to be a subterranean room ten feet across.

Soon we had a sizable gang of natives working away with the *changkuls*. The helpful major, to whom I had given instructions for the pit that was now being dug, bowed a sporting acquiescence to my plan when I knew full well that this accomplished *shikari* who had brought down many tigers with the rifle was aching to go forth into the jungle in quest of the man-eater.

The pit finished, we covered the top with nipa palms. Then we made away with the pile of dirt we had excavated, scattering it at a distance so that the tiger, if he returned, would see no signs of fresh soil. The body was left where it was.

Ali then returned with me to Johore Bahru where I planned to stay overnight at the rest-house adjoining the United Service Club. Before leaving, I placed the soldiers on guard at the coolie lines with instructions to keep the natives within those lines.

The coolie lines on a rubber plantation correspond to the headquarters of a big ranch in this country. There is a row of shacks in which the natives live, a store where they buy their provisions, etc. My idea was to give the tiger every possible chance to return. Too much activity near the stretch of ground where the body lay might have made him over-cautious.

Early the next morning the soldiers were to examine the pit. If luck was with us and the tiger was a prisoner, a Chinese boy on the estate who owned a bicycle that he had learned to ride at a merry clip was to head for the nearest military post—(there is a whole series of them, very few jungle crossroads in Johore being without one)—and notify the authorities who in turn would immediately communicate with the fort at Johore Bahru.

The next morning no word had been received at the fort. At noon I drove back to the rubber plantation to see if there was anything I could do. The situation was unchanged. There was no signs of the tiger. No one had seen him, not even the most imaginative native with a capacity for seeing much that was not visible to the normal eye.

The body of the mangled native was decomposing. Though I did not like to alter my original plan, I acquiesced when the natives appealed to me to let them give their fallen comrade a Mohammedan burial (the Malay version thereof). They put the body in a box and carried it off for interment.

The major did not conceal his desire to go off into the jungle with his men to seek the killer there. He was characteristically courteous, bowing politely as he spoke, and assuring me that he had nothing but respect for my plan. Yes, the *tuan's* idea was a good one—doubtless, it might prove successful under different circumstances—but it was not meeting with any luck, and would I consider him too bold if he suggested beating about the nearby jungle with his men in an effort to trace the eater of the coolie?

What could I say? My plan had not accomplished anything and we were no closer to catching our man-eater than when we first got to work. I readily assented, stipulating only that the pit remain as it was, covered with nipa palms and ready for a victim—though if the animal returned after the number of hours that had elapsed, it would be performing freakishly.

There was no point in my staying there. So, when the major went off into the jungle with his men, I left the scene, returning to Singapore with Ali. I still had considerable work to do before the big collection of animals and birds in my compound would be ready for shipment to America.

I felt upset all the way back to Singapore. Here was the first chance I had ever had to take a man-eating tiger and I had failed. Perhaps I was not at fault—after all, the business of capturing animals is not an exact science—but just the same I was returning without my man-eater and I was bitterly disappointed. Ali did his best to cheer me up, but all he succeeded in doing was to remind me over and over again that I had failed. Using words sparingly and gestures freely, he tried to communicate the idea that after all a man could worry through life without a man-eating tiger. In an effort to change the expression on my face he grinned like an ape and made movements with his hands designed, I am sure, to convey the idea of gaiety. He was not helping a bit. Feeling that I was too strongly resisting his efforts to buck me up, he grew peeved and resorted to his old trick of wrinkling up his nose. This drew from me the first laugh I had had in several days. Seeing me laugh, Ali broke into a laugh too, wrinkling up his nose a few times more by way of giving me a thoroughly good time.

When we returned to Singapore I kept in touch with the situation by telephone, the fort reporting that though the major and his men had combed every inch of the jungle for some distance around, they found no trace of the killer. The major gave it as his opinion that the beast had undoubtedly left the district and that further search would accomplish nothing.

“Well, that’s that,” I said to myself as I prepared to busy myself in the compound with the many tasks that were waiting for me there.

The third day, very early in the morning, just as I was beginning to dismiss from my mind the events that had taken place on that rubber plantation, I received a telegram from the Sultan of Johore which, with dramatic suddenness, announced that the tiger had dropped into the pit! No one knew exactly when. “Some time last night.” Would I hurry to the plantation with all possible haste? He had tried to reach me by phone and failing this had sent a fast telegram.

Would I? What a question! Perhaps it is unnecessary for me to say how delighted I was over the prospect of returning to the plantation to get my man-eating tiger. Ali ran me a close second, the old boy’s joy (much of it traceable to my own, no doubt, for Ali was usually happy when I was) being wonderful to behold.

We climbed into the car and set out for the plantation at a terrific clip. At least half the way we travelled at the rate of seventy miles an hour, very good work for the battered bus I was driving.

When we arrived, the natives were packed deep around the sides of the pit. Never have I witnessed such a change in morale. There was no suggestion of rejoicing—for the natives endow tigers with supernatural powers and they do not consider themselves safe in the presence of one unless he is dead or inside a cage—but they were again quick in their movements. A determined looking crew, they could now be depended upon for real assistance.

In addition to the crowd of coolies, the group near the pit included the major and his soldiers and a white man and his wife from a nearby plantation. The woman, camera in hand, was trying to take a picture. Even in the wilds of Johore one is not safe from invasion by those terrible amateurs to whom nothing means anything but the occasion for taking another picture. I distinctly recall that one of my first impulses on arriving on the scene was to heave the lady to the tiger and then toss in her chatterbox of a husband for good measure. This no doubt established a barbarous strain in me.

I ploughed my way through the crowd to the mouth of the pit. The natives had rolled heavy logs over the opening, driven heavy stakes and lashed the cover down with rattan.

“*Apa ini?*” I inquired. “*Apa ini?*” [What is this?]

“Oh, *tuan! Harimu besar!*” came the chorused reply, the gist of it being that our catch was a “great, big, enormous tiger.” I loosened a couple of the logs, making an opening through which I could peer down into the pit. Stretching out on my stomach, I took a look at the prisoner below, withdrawing without the loss of much time when the animal, an enormous creature, made a terrific lunge upward, missing my face with his paw by not more than a foot.

This was all I needed to convince me that the natives had shown intelligence in covering the mouth of the pit with those heavy logs. I did not believe that the beast could have escaped if the covering was not there; yet he was of such a tremendous size that it was barely possible he could pull himself out by sinking his claws into the side of the pit after taking one of those well-nigh incredible leaps.

The business of getting that tiger out of the pit presented a real problem. This was due to his size. I had not calculated on a monster like this, a great cat that could leap upward to within a foot of the mouth of the pit.

Ordinarily it is not much of a job to get a tiger out of a pit. After baiting it with a couple of fresh killed chickens, a cage with a perpendicular slide door is lowered. An assistant holds a rope which when released drops the door and makes the tiger a captive as soon as he decides to enter the cage for the tempting morsels within, which he will do when he becomes sufficiently hungry. A variation on this

procedure, though not as frequently used, is to lower a box without a bottom over the tiger. This is arduous labour, requiring plenty of patience, but it is a method that can be employed successfully when the circumstances are right. When you have the box over the tiger and it is safely weighted down, you drop into the pit, slip a sliding bottom under the box and yell to the boys overhead to haul away at the ropes.

It was obvious that neither of these methods would do in this case. I simply could not get around the fact that I had under-estimated the size of the man-eater and had not ordered a deep enough pit. Our catch was so big that if we lowered a box he could scramble to the top of it in one well-aimed leap and jump out of the hole in another. Ordinary methods would not do. They were too dangerous.

I finally hit upon a plan, and, as a good part of the morning was still ahead of us, I decided to tear back to Singapore for the supplies I needed and race back post-haste and get that striped nuisance out of the pit that day. I could not afford to spend much more time on the plantation. I had so much work waiting for me in connection with that big shipment I was taking to the United States.

My first move on arriving in Singapore was to get hold of Hin Mong and put him and his chow-boys to work at once on a special long, narrow box with a slide door at one end. When I left for my next stop, Mong and his boys had cast aside all other tasks and were excitedly yanking out lumber for my emergency order. Knowing this Chinese carpenter's fondness for needless little fancy touches, I assailed his ears before departing with a few emphatic words to the effect that this was to be a plain job and that he was not to waste any time on the frills so dear to his heart.

Leaving Mong's I headed for the bazaars, where I bought three or four hundred feet of strong native rope made of jungle fibres. Next I went to the Harbour Works and borrowed a heavy block-and-tackle. Then I hired a motor truck.

When I added to this collection an ordinary Western lasso, which I learned to use as a boy in Texas, I was ready to return to the rubber plantation for my tiger. While on the subject of that lasso, it might be appropriate to point out that the public gave Buffalo Jones one long horse laugh when he announced his intention of going to Africa and roping big game, and that not long afterwards the laugh was on the public, for Buffalo serenely proceeded to do exactly what he said he would. I have never gone in for that sort of thing, but my rope, which is always kept handy, has been useful many times, even a crane, a valuable specimen, having been lassoed on the wing as it sailed out over the ship's side after a careless boy had left its shipping box open.

When the box was made—and though Hin Mong and his chow-boys threw it together hastily, it was a good strong piece of work—I loaded it and the coil of rope and the block-and-tackle on to the truck and sent this freight on its way to the rubber plantation, putting it in charge of Ali's nephew, who was then acting as his uncle's

assistant at the compound. I gave him a driver and two other boys and sent them on their journey after Ali had given his nephew instructions on how to reach the rubber plantation. Four boys were needed to carry the supplies the three miles from the end of the road through the jungle trail to the plantation.

My own car, which had carried Ali and me on so many other important trips, carried us again. Our only baggage was my lasso, which I had dropped on the floor of this speedy but badly mutilated conveyance of mine that for want of a better name I called an automobile.

As I had not seen the Sultan since the day he turned his major and those eight soldiers over to me, I decided to drop in on him on the way to the rubber plantation.

Having learned he was at the fort, I headed for these glorified barracks, where H.H. greeted me effusively. He came out of the fort as we pulled up, leaning over the side of the car. Two or three times he congratulated me on my success in getting the tiger into the pit. Then, very solemnly—and for half a second I did not realise that he had reverted to his bantering manner—he said, “Glad you stop here before you go take tiger from pit. I would never forgive you if you did not say good-bye before tiger eat you.”

Laughing, I told H.H., whose eyes were resting on the lasso at the bottom of the car, “You don’t seem very confident, do you?”

“Confident?” came the reply. “Sure! You going to catch tiger with rope like cowboy, no? Very simple, this method, no? Very simple. Why you don’t try catch elephant this way too? Very simple,” Then the Sultan broke into one of those hearty roars of his, slapping his thighs as he doubled up with laughter.

“Don’t you think I can do it, H.H.?” I asked.

Tactfully, he declined to answer with a yes or a no. All he said was, “This is tiger, not American cow,” This was more eloquent than a dozen noes.

“I’ll tell you what, H.H.,” I said. “I’ll make a little bet with you, just for the fun of it. I’ll bet you a bottle of champagne that I’ll have that tiger alive in Johore Bahru before the sun goes down.” H.H. never could be induced to make a wager for money with a friend; that’s why I stipulated wine.

“I bet you,” he grinned. “But how I can collect if tiger eat you?” (Turning to Ali with mock sternness.) “Ali, you do not forget that your *tuan* owe me bottle champagne if he do *not* come back!” Then he exploded into another one of those body-shaking laughs of his.

We were off in a few minutes. Clouds were gathering overhead and it looked like rain. I wanted to get my job over with before the storm broke. Stepping on the gas, I waved a good-bye to H.H., and we were on our way.

I was worried by the overcast skies, but I did not regard the impending storm as a serious obstacle. It looked like a “Sumatra,” a heavy rain and wind-storm of short duration, followed by bright sunshine that always seems freakish to those who do

not know the East. The chief difficulty imposed by the storm, in the event that it broke, would be the slippery footing that would result. A secondary problem would be the stiffening of the ropes. Rope, when it has been well exposed to rain, hardens somewhat, although it can be handled. If it rained, my job would be so much tougher.

We tore along at maximum speed, my engine heralding our approach all along the line with a mighty roar. Considering the terrific racket, I had a right to expect the speedometer to indicate a new speed record instead of a mere seventy an hour. My bus always got noisy when I opened her up, reminding me of a terrier trying to bark like a St. Bernard.

The skies grew darker as we raced along and when we were a short distance from the point where it was necessary to complete the journey on foot, a light rain started to fall. By the time we were half-way to the plantation it was raining hard and Ali and I were nicely drenched when we arrived.

The rain had driven many of the coolies to cover, but at least a score of them were still standing around when we pulled up. The major and his soldiers, soaked to the skin, stood by faithfully, the major even taking advantage of this inopportune moment to congratulate me again—he had done it before—on my trapping of the man-eater. I appreciated this sporting attitude after the failure of his search in the jungle. However, I did not feel very triumphant. The tough part of the job was ahead of me. Getting a tiger out of a pit into a cage in a driving rainstorm is dangerous, strenuous work.

I got busy at once. Taking out my knife, I began cutting my coil of native rope into extra nooses. This done, I knocked aside some of the stakes that secured the pit's cover, rolled away some of the logs, and, stretching out flat with my head and shoulders extending out over the hole, began to make passes at the roaring enemy below with my lasso rope. One advantage of the rain was that it weakened the tiger's footing, making it impossible for him to repeat the tremendous leap upward he had made earlier in the day when I took my first look down the pit. As I heard him sloshing around in the mud and water at the bottom of his prison, I felt reassured. If the rain put me at a disadvantage, it did the same thing to the enemy.

With the major standing by, rifle ready for action, I continued to fish for the tiger with my rope, the black skies giving me bad light by which to work. Once I got the lay of the land I managed to drop the rope over the animal's head, but before I could pull up the slack—the rain had made the rope “slow”—he flicked it off with a quick movement of the paw. A second time I got it over his head, but this time his problem was even easier for the fore-part of the stiffening slack landed close enough to his mouth to enable him to bite the rope in two with one snap. Making a new loop in the lasso I tried over and over but he either eluded my throw or fought free of the noose with lightning-fast movements in which teeth and claws worked

together in perfect co-ordination as he snarled his contempt for my efforts. The rain continued to come down in torrents. When it rains in Johore, it rains—an ordinary Occidental rain-storm being a mere sprinkle compared to an honest-to-goodness “Sumatra.”

By now I was so thoroughly drenched I no longer minded the rain on my body; it was only when the water dripped down into my eyes that I found myself growing irritated.

After working in this fashion for an hour till my shoulders ached from the awkward position I was in, I succeeded in looping a noose over the animal's head and through his mouth, using a fairly dry fresh rope that responded when I gave it a quick jerk. This accomplished my purpose, which was to draw the corners of his mouth inward so that his lips were stretched taut over his teeth, making it impossible for him to bite through the rope without biting through his lips. I yelled to the coolies who were standing by ready for action to tug away at the rope, which they did, pulling the crouching animal's head and forequarters clear of the bottom of the pit. This was the first good look at the foe I had had. The eyes hit me the hardest. Small for the enormous head, they glared an implacable hatred.

Quickly bringing another rope into play, I ran a second hitch around the struggling demon's neck, another group of coolies (also working under Ali's direction) pulling away at this rope from the side of the pit opposite the first ropehold. It was no trouble, with two groups of boys holding the animal's head and shoulders up, to loop a third noose under the forelegs and a fourth under the body. Working with feverish haste, I soon had eight different holds on the man-eater of Johore. With coolies tugging away at each line, we pulled the monster up nearly even with the top of the pit and held him there. His mouth, distorted with rage plus what the first rope was doing to it, was a hideous sight. With hind legs he was thrashing away furiously, also doing his frantic best to get his roped fore-legs into action.

I was about to order the lowering of the box when one of the coolies let out a piercing scream. He was Number One boy on the first rope. Looking around I saw that he had lost his footing in the slippery mud, and, in his frenzied efforts to save himself, was sliding head first for the mouth of the pit. I was in a position where I could grab him, but I went at it so hard that I lost my own footing and the two of us would have rolled over into the pit if Ali, who was following me around with an armful of extra nooses, hadn't quickly grabbed me and slipped one of these ropes between my fingers. With a quick tug, he and one of the soldiers pulled us out of danger.

The real menace, if the coolie and I had rolled over into the pit was that the other coolies would probably have lost their heads and let go the ropes. With them holding on there was no serious danger, for the tiger was firmly lashed.

I've wondered more than once what would have occurred if the native and I had gone splashing to the bottom of that hole. Every time I think of it, it gives me the creeps; for though the coolies at the ropes were dependable enough when their *tuan* was around to give them orders, they might easily have gone to pieces, as I've frequently seen happen, had they suddenly decided that they were leaderless. It wouldn't have been much fun at the bottom of the pit with this brute of a tiger.

The coolies shrieked but they held. The rain continued to come down in sheets and the ooze around the pit grew worse and worse. Self-conscious now about the slipperiness, the boys were finding it harder than ever to keep their feet.

The box would have to be lowered at once. With the tiger's head still almost even with the surface of the pit, we let the box down lengthwise, slide door end up. Unable to get too close, we had to manipulate the box with long poles. The hind legs had sufficient play to enable the animal to strike out with them, and time after time, after we painstakingly manœuvred the cage into position with the open slide door directly under him, our enraged captive would kick it away. In the process the ropes gave a few inches, indicating that the strain was beginning to be too much for the boys. If we were forced to let the animal drop back after getting him to this point, it was a question if we'd ever be able to get him out alive.

Quickly I went over the situation with Ali. I was growing desperate. With the aid of the major and three of his soldiers we got the box firmly in place, the tired boys at the ropes responding to a command to tug away that lifted the animal a few inches above the point where his thrashing hind legs interfered with keeping it erect. I assigned the three soldiers to keeping the box steady with poles which they braced against it. If we shifted the box again in the ooze we might lose our grip on it, so I cautioned them to hold it as it was.

"Major, I'm now leaving matters in your hands," I said. "See that the boys hold on and keep your rifle ready." Before he had a chance to reply I let myself down into the pit, dodging the flying back feet. Covered with mud from head to foot as a result of my dropping into the slime, I grabbed the tiger by his tail, swung him directly over the opening of the box and fairly roared: "Let go!" Let go they did, with me leaning on the box to help steady it.

The man-eater of Johore dropped with a bang to the bottom of Hin Mong's plainest box. I slid the door to with a slam, leaned against it and bellowed for hammer and nails. I could feel the imprisoned beast pounding against the sides of his cell as he strove to free himself from the tangle of ropes around him. His drop, of necessity, had folded up his hind legs and I didn't see how he could right himself sufficiently in that narrow box for a lunge against the door at the top; but the brute weighed at least three hundred pounds, and if his weight shifted over against me he might, in my tired condition, knock me over and——

"Get the hammer and nails!" I screamed. "Damn it, hurry up!" I leaned against



the box with all my strength, pressing it against one side of the pit to hold the sliding door firmly closed.

No hammer! No nails!

Plastered with mud, my strength rapidly ebbing, I was in a fury over the delay.

“*Kasi pacoo!* [Bring nails!]” I shrieked in Malay, in case my English was not understood. “Nails! *Pacco!* Nails” I cried. “And a hammer, you helpless swine!” There weren’t any swine present but that’s what I called every one at the moment. I felt the tiger’s weight shifting against me and I was mad with desperation.

The major yelled down that no one could find the nails. The can had been kicked over and the nails were buried in the mud. They had the hammer. ... Here she goes! I caught it. ... What the hell good is a hammer without nails?

“Give me nails, damn it, or I’ll murder the pack of you!”

It was Ali who finally located the nails, buried in the mud, after what seemed like a week and was probably a couple of minutes. Over the side of the pit he scrambled to join me in a splash of mud. With a crazy feverishness I wielded the hammer while Ali held the nails in place, and at last Johore’s coolie-killer was nailed down fast. Muffled snarls and growls of rage came through the crevices, left for breathing space.

Then I recall complaining to Ali that the storm must be getting worse. It was getting blacker. The *tuan* was wrong. The storm was letting up. Perhaps I mistook the mud that splashed over me as I fell to the floor of the pit, too weak to stand up, for extra heavy raindrops.

Ali lifted me to my feet and my brain cleared. I suddenly realised that the job was all done, that the man-eater of Johore was in that nailed-down box. I was overjoyed. Only a man in my field can fully realise the thrill I experienced over the capture of this man-eating tiger—the first, to my knowledge, ever brought to the United States.

Ropes were fastened around the box—(no one feared entering the pit now)—and with the aid of the block-and-tackle, our freight was hauled out of the hole.

Eight coolies were needed to get our capture back through the slime that was once a dry jungle trail to the highway leading to Johore Bahru. More than once they almost dropped their load, which they bore on carrying poles, as they skidded around in the three miles of sticky muck between the rubber plantation and the asphalt road which now reflected the sunlight, wistfully reappearing in regulation fashion after the rain and wind of the “Sumatra.” There we loaded the box on to the waiting lorry, which followed Ali and me in my car.

About forty minutes later as the sun bathed the channel in the reddish glow of its vanishing rays, I planted the man-eater under the nose of the Sultan in front of the United Service Club in Johore Bahru.

With more mud on me than any one that ever stood at the U.S.C.’s bar, I

collected my bet, the hardest-earned champagne I ever tasted.

The Sultan was so respectful after I won this wager that once or twice I almost wished I hadn't caught his damned man-eater. H.H. is much more fun when he's not respectful. I enjoyed his pop-eyed felicitations but not nearly so much as some of the playful digs he's taken at me.

The man-eater of Johore, by the way, eventually wound up in the Longfellow Zoological Park, in Minneapolis, Minn.

# *The Pale One*

by John Eyton

## Chapter 1

‘**T**he Pale One’ was one of the most mysterious creatures in the world—a she-elephant, queen of her herd and of the vast jungles wherein they moved. Her kingdom stretched from the blue Nilgiri Hills, through leagues of rugged hillocks clothed in scrub, to the dense jungles on the Cauvery’s banks. She and her kind had but little to do with the works of man, save for the occasional descent on a village at the jungle edge, when they would maraud a few fields for fodder; sometimes too in the dusk, on the Ootacamund road or on the way to Mercara, men would see great shadowy forms ahead of them, and would flee—but she was hardly aware of man at all.

Perhaps her colour had attracted the great Tusker, who had wandered alone in the forests of Coorg until a bullet drove him from his old haunts into the jungle by the river. One evening he saw the herd at drinking, and challenged at once, stamping and roaring and calling their ancient leader—the giant of the One Tusk—to battle; then all night he wandered round the bamboo brake, trumpeting defiance. In the morning the memorable battle started, which lasted three days and determined, in sight of all, the leadership of the herd. The jungle folk kept away; even the tiger and the buffalo avoided the battle-ground, where trees were uprooted and pounded into

the floor; where the very forest swayed to the movements of the fighters, while the cows trembled for their calves, and the young males stood aloof and envied the prowess. At last height and great spirit won the victory over age and experience; the elephant of the One Tusk went alone and wounded from his kingdom, never to be seen again, while the great black Tusker danced the dance of victory and lorded it over the young males, and chose his bride.

She was of a paler grey than the rest, who were almost black, and her paleness came of an old stock, and won her his regard. So the Pale One knew her lord.

Who can tell of the wanderings of the herd during the three years which followed? They rarely stayed long in one place. In the rainy time they sought the hills, and in the dry time they followed the river, where they would stand at evening in the deep, draining great gulps, squirting one another, teaching the young to swim, revelling in the cool and depth of it. Great, black, shiny monsters they were, but by the side of the greatest of all was always one of paler hue, whom he served, towering over her with his immense height, full of tusk, broad of forehead, with great spreading ears. He ruled the twenty-five elephants of the herd sternly, nor brooked interference from other herds which crossed their path, so that they became famous, and had the freedom of all the jungles of the south, with the coolest places for the heat, the best drinking pools, and the sweetest bamboo groves. No elephant ever stood in the path of the big black Tusker, lord of the Pale One.

In the third summer of their wandering, directly after the rains, there came a spirit of unrest on the herd. They were leaving the hills for the country of green scrub and luscious fresh food, welcoming the sun, which they had not seen for many days. Yet one day, as they stood basking in the open, a feeling of restlessness came on them. To an elephant this means either that he is in love or that he is being interfered with; in the latter case it is the instinct of the curtailment of that freedom which is his birthright. The old mother of the herd felt it first, as it came on the breeze to her, and she communicated the news. They were not alone in the jungle; something was stirring between them and the hills—other elephants perhaps—or something unknown.

One or two of the younger males threw up their trunks and squealed, and were promptly dealt with by the Tusker, who wanted to listen, and said so; then shuffling and stamping ceased; mothers quieted their calves; only the breeze from the hills sighed in the grass and tiny birds twittered; then from far away knowledge came to them.

The ground vibrated ever so slightly; other elephants were afoot ... a great herd ... two, three herds ... one from the direction of the sun, another from the hills, and another from the plain of great grass. But there was something else ... a new smell, vaguely disconcerting ... men.

Then an unusual thing happened: the big Tusker did not, as was his wont, turn to

challenge the new herds, but began to move uneasily, aloof from the rest, throwing his trunk and shifting his feet; presently he moved slowly away, and the Pale One joined him; then, one by one, the rest followed. When they were together, the rush quickened to full pace, and they thrust through the thickets, massed like a wedge, driving a road over the country, never stopping till nightfall. It was a new experience—the first of many—and it meant panic. The herd had rarely travelled like that, at full pace, *en masse*, careless of its mothers and the calves ... and never for a whole day. But they got beyond the area of unrest, and were in free land again, where the ground brought no vibrations, and the breeze no upsetting smell. They did not forget these things, because only few things are forgotten by elephants, but they puzzled over them that night, and next day moved on towards the distant river jungles, not *en masse*, but in open feeding formation, eating as they went. For two days they travelled on over the low hillocks, each day making a longer midday halt; then, on the third day, they came upon a little pool with good green feeding on its banks, where they stayed a night and a day, carelessly feeding and wallowing. But at dusk they saw a new thing.

The older ones had seen it before, and thought little of it at a distance if they were hungry. What they saw was a line of little points of light, flashing out behind them, like stars over the hill; the wind brought smoke too, which tickled the trunk curiously; and there were little sounds, such as they had heard in villages; then a faint sound which they knew well—the far-off call of a she-elephant—the night call. Familiar it was, and yet unfamiliar; it brought back the spirit of unrest to them, for it was not a free call—it had trouble in it, such as they did not understand.

At the second trumpeting, the herd left the sucking mud and plunged into the darkness, careless of what they trampled or where they went, driving in fear through the night. From that time they knew restless days and nights; the sense of freedom had passed.

## Chapter 2

The twinkling lights were not those of a village, but of a great camp. There were a hundred camp fires on the side of a low hill, and round them many men squatted. The red glow lit up wild faces among the little tents and the trees; there was bustle of cooking and a good smell of hot food; pipes were being passed round from mouth to mouth, and in every group there was one who talked of elephants, and many who nodded. Here were grizzled old mahouts, heroes of many kheddahs,<sup>1</sup> who spoke of great elephants as if they were children, and wore the Maharajah's medals; their sons, smooth-faced young men in bright turbans, who hung upon their words; the

elephant servants—thin, bearded Mohammedans, with sleepy, drugged eyes; the trackers—wild, hairy jungle men, almost naked, talking in strange tongues; and, besides, a motley crew of beaters and chamars<sup>2</sup> and water-carriers and coolies from Mysore and Malabar, who raised a babel of chatter. The only restful things were the lines of dim elephants in the background, silent for the most part, save when one trumpeted or brushed a branch to and fro with his trunk to clear it of dust. The fire flickers just showed these swaying forms under the trees, dignified amid the bustle, eating unhurriedly their heaps of green branches.

Meals were eaten; from some of the groups came snatches of song—the crooning of Southern love, and the triumphs of roping elephants; a drum was beaten in the shadows; then the talk died and men lay down, muffled in brown blankets, while the watchers sat silent. At last there was no sound but the shuffling and munching of the great sentinels of the moving camp, the driving elephants of Mysore.

There was indeed good cause for the panic of the wild herd. That moving camp was full of purpose, and the khaki-clad man with the eyes of a hunter, who ruled it, knew his business. This was the central camp of three, moving in the form of crescent over the elephant country, tracking herds, and persuading them gently forward day by day in the direction of the Cauvery kheddahs. At present they were rounding up, but their most difficult duty lay ahead, and began with the exact timing of the last drive at close quarters when the three groups should converge on the same day. But it was all hard work, for they were moving in country untouched by man, far from villages and crops—the country of wild elephant and buffalo. Their strange encounters in thicket and by river while driving or fetching chara<sup>3</sup> would fill many stories; but they were travelling all the time, tracking as they went, keeping touch with the other groups in a land of no communications, and rounding up stray elephants from the wild herds.

They had made touch with three herds in all, and the biggest was in the middle. Only one man had seen this herd, which had moved forward like a phantom at full pace, and he spoke of a giant, a rajah among elephants, and of a pale tuskless elephant, standing out of the welter of the rest; the mighty mallan,<sup>4</sup> the torn-up trees, and the scarred tree-trunks on the elephant path showed that he spoke the truth, and that this was the master herd. By the time the three camps had converged in the neighbourhood of Karapur, where deep jungle flanks the Cauvery River, the Pale One and her lord had become famous, almost legendary ... the theme of many a mahout's prayer and triumph-song. The herd had the reputation of being restless; as it was feared that they might overshoot the kheddah jungle and cross the river, they had not been overharried or molested. On the night before the kheddah drive they were tearing the bamboo near the river's edge, uneasy, but settled for the time being. There was a great suspense in the camp of two thousand men and two hundred

elephants, gathered for the final act of their long drama.

### Chapter 3

Ever since the stampede from the pool the wild herd had travelled fast—too fast for the Pale One, who was shortly destined to present her lord with a son. More and more she had lagged behind, and only a great heart had helped her through. So when at last they reached the welcome shade of the river jungle she lay down and rested long, while the others were tearing at the trees and rejoicing at having thrown off the unrest.

But they rejoiced too soon, for on the third day, as they were moving for the evening drink, they heard the trumpeting of an elephant near at hand, again and again, whereat the big Tusker stopped to listen, flapping his ears and gently raising his trunk. There were elephants close behind them ... but not only elephants—there were men, many men. Sounds of drums and gongs and stirring and shouting filtered the trees as the herd fidgeted uneasily and began to mass. There was a moment of uncertainty, and then they saw lights in the wood, waving and bobbing, and waited to see no more; they crashed forward, shambling through the dense growth till they came out on to the sand by the river, where the red rays of the setting sun lit up the water and intensified the gloom of the farther bank ... then they plunged into the stream, the great Tusker leading and the Pale One in the rear, and between them a surge of scrambling subjects, old and young, half-grown and calves, fighting to gain the gloom of the bank beyond.

Then suddenly that gloom burst into flame. Even the unconquerable drive of a wild herd was pulled up short. One moment all had been darkness and silence ahead of them; the next, men burst from the trees in hundreds with shouts and sudden noises like the rending of trees—and, above all, the lights. They could not face those torches. Dazed, bewildered, they turned up-stream, to find that elephants had put into the water from both banks and were advancing in line; the bank which they had left, too, was full of dancing, leaping men with lights. The herd hesitated; two young males broke away up-stream and flung themselves against the line; it was like dashing against a brick wall. They met four great old Tuskers, who pushed them squealing down-stream with ugly blows in the ribs, while sharp spears pricked them in tender places from above, and loud cracks rang in their ears; smarting, buffeted, stunned, they blundered into the deep water with a gurgle and a splash, and half swam, half floundered past the herd, which was standing at bay. A black mass they made against the red sky—the humped forms gathered round the big Tusker, who with angry eyes, ears out, trunk extended, awaited the first shock.

Then, with a rush and a bump, the line met them; there was a mighty swaying and pushing—loud gun-shots, flashes, sharp thrusts, cries of men, smell of gunpowder—all in a mêlée; but the advancing line had the advantage of science, impetus, and the stream, and the wild herd had to give, breaking and scattering suddenly, the Pale One leading the rout. It was not her way to flee, but she knew that she must reserve her strength and trust her lord.

So the herd broke, but their spirit was not gone. Amid pandemonium from both banks there were a dozen individual fights as elephant after elephant broke back, leaving only the mothers with their calves to take their time and move on; but, one by one, they encountered new tactics, for they were cut off, roughly hustled, and mastered in detail, fight as they would. The big Tusker, who held the rear, found himself the special charge of four full-grown elephants; he could have tackled the lot in the open, unhampered, but here he was too angry for strategy; when he knocked one out of his way the other three butted into him from behind; and when he turned to vent his wrath he saw flashes and had stinging pains in the head. So he could but lash and storm and ramp like a half-grown elephant, sending up the water in great sprays around him, as he was gradually edged down below the steep right bank in the wake of the rest.

So the herd was passing down the river, when suddenly the Pale One stood still. Below her, stretched across the stream, she saw another line—silent, impassive, motionless—of full forty elephants. She looked right and left; on the left the crowd still surged with their torches; on the right was the high bank—but here was a gap in the bank and a track into dark jungle above. Slowly and uncertainly she made for that gap, still suspicious, but, as nothing happened, she walked up the track, past a fence, into a bamboo grove. Then the herd, bundled together between two converging lines, massed again and followed their queen; last of all came the big Tusker, who stood proudly at bay in the middle of the gap. Then a whole constellation of flashes dazed his eyes, and he, the lord of the Southern jungles, turned and followed his herd. Something clashed behind him—timber on timber. They were in kheddah.

## Chapter 4

It was as if they had passed through a nightmare, and had awakened in good feeding jungle and absolute quiet. True, there were fires round the circle of the bamboo patch, and a jumble of sound, but they were not molested. The younger elephants started at once to feed on the bamboo, but the great Tusker remained aloof and sulky, touring round the patch and trying the defences. He found that they were



surrounded by a ditch that could not be crossed and a timber fence that could not be reached, and his defiant trumpeting woke the echoes and told the herd that all was not well.

But the Pale One was beyond caring, for her time was very near. That night she went apart from the rest, and in the morning there lay beside her a little crumpled grey object no bigger than a sheep-dog. In the dim morning she stood over it, and caressed it with her trunk, till soon it tottered to its feet, and felt for her; so she fed it, forgetting the nightmare for a while.

For a day and a night they had peace, and she grew to love her little one at her side, playing with it, feeling all over it with her trunk, giving her milk freely for its strength, watching it find its feet.

Then, on the morning of the second day, the nightmare returned. The great Tusker, in his pilgrimage round the ditch, suddenly came face to face with a line of elephants drawn up outside for battle; he parted the bamboos, and for a long time remained gazing, measuring, taking stock ... then slowly turned and rejoined the herd. Then they heard the opening of the gates and the entry of the enemy ... so the great fight began.

They had good hope this time; they had rested and were in the open—their own ground; and they were prepared. The Pale One went at once to a lonely corner, her little one ambling along at her side, while her lord led the charge in mass formation at the centre of the line. But, as they closed, the noises started again, and the pricks in tender parts, and all the bewilderments of the first fight. Once more they encountered science that was not of the wild, for they were deftly cut up and hustled in batches in the direction of a tall enclosure with a narrow entrance. Soon it became evident that the strangers meant to drive them into that enclosure, and they resisted with might and main, breaking back again and again, scattering the enemy, they rallying to their leader ... but always the enemy re-formed and encircled them. At noon honours were still equal, for the enemy retired outside, while the herd made for a muddy little swamp with shallow water in it, and for an hour drank deep for refreshment, and blew out spouts of muddy water to cool one another. Only the Pale One did not join them, tending her babe apart, ill at ease.

When the fight began again, the enemy had reinforced; the herd was completely surrounded in the swamp, and hustled pell-mell towards the enclosure, where a last stand was made against overwhelming numbers; nothing availed: willy-nilly they were bundled through the gap into the small enclosure, where they heaved and barged and squeezed, trumpeting and squealing, making the timbers creak.

Only the great Tusker managed to break away, irresistibly, as a ship drives through water, sending three elephants headlong before him. He stood near the gate, gathering his strength for an ugly rush, ready to take on the whole line in fair fight... But the fight was not fair; as he was advancing, there came the last indignity, and the

first knowledge of slavery ... the rope touched him. Deftly his head was lassoed; then a hind leg; then another; then came a mad struggle against six elephants tugging at the end of the ropes; he became aware of men too, and struggled the more. The old freedom had gone; he could not fight devilry—creepers that twined and would not break. Dimly understanding that his hour had come, and that his birthright had been stolen from him, he suffered himself to be drawn away by the six down a steep bank into the cooling river ... out of sight of his herd.

So passed the great Tuskar into the haunts of men for the years of slavery.

It was the Pale One who made the Homeric fight, which will be told over camp fires a generation hence. They found her in a corner, tending her babe, and she confronted them, pushing the babe beneath her body. Then they hemmed her in, but the trained elephants shrank from her and would not close, for all that she was the smaller and alone. Men said afterwards that she was bewitched, for she made the boldest half-hearted, and drove through them, butting with her broad forehead, striking with her heavy trunk. For an hour she led the hunt, and they could not catch her nor close with her; even when defeat seemed certain she broke the line with the force of a ram, and the boldest turned from her. She was fighting for more than life, or the honour of the herd, or the freedom of the South: she was battling for her young, and dimly she knew what the loss of the fight would mean—the loss of the love she felt for him.

She never would have been taken alive had she not looked down and missed her babe ... saw it being led away ... gave a mad squeal, and chased, with destruction in her eyes ... then thundered against the great gates of the palisade.

So at last they caught her easily enough. The Pale One had nothing more to fight for.

In the evening she stood alone under a tall tree, the chain clanking at her leg. While the others trumpeted and fought their chains, she was silent, with an ineffable sadness. Pale and ghostly she loomed against the glow of the camp fires, and men watched and wondered at her. Then they brought her the little grey elephant-babe, which ran up to her and commanded milk with its tiny trunk. ...

The Pale One turned her head slowly away. The free days were past, and she would never know her babe again.

From *The Naked Fakir and Other Stories* (1922)

- 
1. Kheddah = Enclosure.
  2. Chamar = Tanner, leather-worker.
  3. Chara = Feed of elephants.
  4. Mallan = Track of an elephant.

# *A Philosopher Stag*

by John Eyton

## Chapter 1

India is happy in her children, the deer, for they are many. Perhaps Ram Singh, whose little fields lie alongside the jungle, and who spends his nights watching for these same children, would not endorse the sentiment; but, after all, Ram Singh is in the minority, and even he should not be utterly thankless, for he has the venison.

They all have their characteristics: nobility for the Hangul of Kashmir, greater brother of the Red Deer; charm for the Cheetal, with his spotted hide and his tapering horns; cheek for the little autumn-coated Khaker, who barks like a dog; pride for the Gond of the swamps and long grass, with antlers branching like an oak. But the familiar Sambar of wood and hill has a rugged honesty all his own; he is the quiet friend of the woods, big and dark and beautiful.

‘Rusa Aristotelis’ they call him in Natural History, surely because he, too, is something of a philosopher; shy, but trustful; slow to stir, and apt to blunder when he gets up, like the philosopher at the tea-table; a trifle absent-minded; contented, with simple tastes. What more would you have?

Hear, then, the story of a philosopher stag. He was born in the forests of Nepal, near the banks of the Sarda river, of a strong, hardy breed. In childhood he was

familiar with the utterly wild forests, where man was unknown and elephants brought no fear; when he only owned as enemies the tiger, the leopard, and the destroying red dog, which foes his mother, soft-eyed and watchful for him, taught him to shun. He grew quickly, and early found his strength and speed, while he carried the long brow-points of the fighter; though he fought seldom, among his own kind he was destined for high place. What pride he took in those horns, as year by year he made a higher score on the tree-trunks, and felt his crown more pleasantly heavy. Strong horns they were, thick at the base, gnarled like the Sal trees among which he fed—veritable trunks themselves, and of the dark colour of trunks, cleft near the top in two strong branches, sharp and light-coloured at the tips; and between the horns was a noble span, fully a yard inside the bend. Such did he grow to be in his prime, free of the woodland and the hillsides, and of the shady drinking-places by the rivers, while yearly he mated his large-eyed does.

He was big in body, of a slaty colour, and with long wiry hair on throat and neck, like a mane upside down; he had soft, big ears, light-hued inside, and deep eye-pits for eyes like dark woodland pools.

His daily course seldom changed. The daytime he spent in the foot-hills, and slept for most of the time in a warm baithak<sup>1</sup> among the leaves and grass under the tall trees of a rounded hill-top; then, when the sun was setting, he would wander down to the river and the level places for food and drink, with a wary eye open for his enemies. All night he would move feeding—on nuts, berries, leaves, grass, according to season—then at dawn he would steal through the mists to his high perch again. In their season he had his little family of does to do him honour; in youth, too, he had wandered with other stags of his age; but dignity brought solitude, and he spent his latter years alone.

He might have stayed in deep Nepal all his days had he not been disturbed in old age by a tiger beat, involving a hundred elephants, and gongs, and strange noises, and been driven incontinently from his ancient and rightful home. He resented this intrusion deeply, for he could hardly know that anxiety to make sure of the tiger had saved him a bullet in the shoulder at twenty yards.

So he snorted loudly, with the sharp note of a horn, rushed through the woods till he came to the river, and splashed through deep water to the other side. Then, philosopher that he was, he stopped to look back.

Noises everywhere! No place for him.

He walked slowly into the Sal wood, and began to wander westwards.

## Chapter 2

The spirit of unrest was in him, and he travelled a long way, more than a day's journey from Nepal. He found the jungle thinner and less apt to impede the horns; it was homely, sunny stuff, with fair feeding and enough water, and he was tired, so he delayed his return.

On the second evening he made a delightful discovery. He had walked a little south, and had left the tall trees for a country of golden grass and brown bushes, where cheetal were feeding, and some smaller stags of his own kind. Absent-mindedly he followed the latter in the dusk till they came on an open space, stretching as far as the eye could see—fresh and green. The others started browsing, and he took a nibble or two ... a new taste, utterly delightful, and soft to yellowing old teeth; and apparently an inexhaustible supply. He spent the night in this pleasant place, and lay up near it in the grass for the day. Truly the new country contained things undreamed of.

The next night he returned with the eagerness of a gourmet to his new pastures, and wandered a little farther afield without taking much note of a queer structure which stood up like an overburdened tree some distance from the jungle.

Suddenly a deafening roar made him jump a yard in the air; there was a blinding flash as if the sun had fallen in the night; and his coat was stung in several places. With his usual alarm signal, he made like a meteor for the woods, and did not stop till he had covered half a mile.

Meanwhile, old Ram Singh gathered up his box of slugs, his powder flask, and his muzzle-loader, and climbed wearily down from his perch. A pest on the jungle that an old man should lose his sleep of nights; twenty rupees worth of young wheat ruined, and no venison!

But he rather enjoyed telling his wife about the monster he had shot at. The sound and the scramble had come from no mamuli janwar.<sup>2</sup> He was almost inclined to make it an elephant and be done with it.

Scared as he had been, the great stag could not forget the lure of the green food. If instinct bade him return east, appetite drew him west, and west he went. Again he travelled farther than he had intended, for he got into a patch of jungle where men were sawing wood, with a noise remarkably like a leopard's song, and had to gallop on, much disturbed by the new portent.

But always he found the same green food at the jungle's edge, and, like Lotus, it made him forget.

Perhaps the richness of his new diet made him a trifle fat and slack. At any rate he was nearly destroyed one day in a way most terrible of all for a child of the wild ... by fire.

There were evil-minded men in this new country, and their way of avenging a fancied wrong was to set alight thousands of acres of jungle, thus destroying all green things, and birds, with many of the beasts and most of their young. The

ordinary yearly fires, lit in definite places for the benefit of the grass, were known to the deer, who had an easy line of escape from the wave of flame. But this was different—a devilish scheme.

One quiet evening, at drinking time, six men stole into the jungle at points far apart—men with dark hair and dark faces, low-caste and furtive. As the evening breeze began to sigh through the trees, these men knelt down at their various points, and soon before each of them there was a little curl of smoke in the grass; then a tongue of flame lit their faces for an instant before they fled.

Within five minutes the jungle was alight at six points, and peace was no more. Every animal looked up and sniffed the breeze; then started for the hills. But suddenly they hesitated—there was more smoke ahead. Now they stamped and fidgeted, ill at ease, while the birds flew twittering from tree to tree above them; finally they stampeded wildly as the roar of the fire came to them. Many perished; many lost their young, and their own lives in looking for them; only the lucky lived in that mad, aimless, cruel stampede. There were startled eyes and wild cries, and crashings through the trees, while the lighters of the fires crouched round the little fires that are for honest men, and laughed.

The old stag was sitting in the grass when he caught the smell, and had hardly struggled to his feet when a wave of flame behind him smote and crumpled the trees. He dashed forward at a gallop, saw another line of flame to his right, swerved, and crashed headlong into a hidden nullah with water in it. He had lost his head completely, for all his philosophy, and would certainly have been burned to death or suffocated if the banks of the nullah had not been deep and absolutely sheer. He was forced to splash, at the gallop, through the water in its bed to escape what he looked on ungratefully as a prison, until he emerged on to a rocky beach, free of undergrowth, leading to freedom.

He did not stop to breathe the cool, clean air, but galloped on and on into the west, mile after mile, until his breath gave, and he was forced to sink panting to the ground. For days he pursued his course at the foot of the hills, crossing rivers and gullies and roads, passing little villages, with fresh terrors of fire in them, and green fields where he dared not stop to eat.

He was only pulled up in his long flight because the jungle seemed suddenly to end, and he had to retrace his steps a little. Then at last he rested.

### **Chapter 3**

He had come to a strip of jungle, stretching like a finger from the hills, and lining both banks of a clear, bubbling stream. On either side mustard fields marched with

the forest, yellow below the blue backs of the hills. The place had a new atmosphere—free from alarm. There would be good feeding in the woods from favourite trees, and a carpet of soft moss beneath them. Here was the ideal resting-place, the Eutopia of age ... a place wherein he could end his days in peace, feeding on the threshold of home, drinking his own waters undisturbed. Here the evening breeze called him to stay and rest the burden of his horns, till one day he would no more be able to rise and wind his alarm, but would wait patiently for the tiger to spring and deal the death-blow, swift and merciful.

The home he chose was a little ruined garden, set in the midst of the forest on the bank of the stream. Long ago a man had tilled it, and still the bright oranges swung in the green leaves, and the little red plums gave feasting to the birds. Green parrots rioted above, while the peacock and the jungle fowl shared the ground below; and there was naught to break the peace or mar the beauty. Here the old stag lay down, and many days he brooded in the nest he had formed, his great horns merged with the low branches of the tree that gave him shade, while his soft ears flapped gently to and fro. In the evening he would struggle slowly to his feet and walk though the trees to the stream-bank, and, when the sun set in gold, his great form would stand out magnificently as he raised his head towards the hills.

First he would sip lightly—look up again—drink deep to the fill; then once more raise his proud head, and so stand till the dark came over him.

So he lived his last days, till one evening the river called and he could not rise; his legs were as water and his head heavy. Twice he essayed to get up, and then, as if he knew that his time had come, lifted his soft eyes to the low sun, gazed a moment, and settled for the long rest.

Then the dark came on.

---

1. Baithak = Form, resting-place.  
2. Mamuli janwar = Ordinary animal.



# *The Tiger-Charm*

by Alice Perrin

**T**he sun, the sky, the burning dusty atmosphere, and the waving sea of tall yellow grass seemed molten into one blinding blaze of pitiless heat to the aching vision of little Mrs. Wingate. In spite of blue goggles, pith sun-hat and enormous umbrella, she felt as though she were being slowly roasted alive, for the month was May, and she and her husband were perched on the back of an elephant, traversing a large tract of jungle at the foot of the Himalayas.

Colonel Wingate was one of the keenest sportsmen in India, and every day for the past week had he and his wife, and their friend, Captain Bastable, sallied forth from the camp with a line of elephants to beat through the forests of grass that reached to the animal's ears; to squelch over swamps, disturbing herds of antelope and wild pig; to pierce thick tangles of jungle, from which rose pea-fowl, black partridge, and birds of gorgeous plumage; to cross stony beds of dry rivers—ever on the watch for the tigers that had hitherto baffled all their efforts.

As each 'likely' spot was drawn a blank, Netta Wingate heaved a sigh of relief, for she hated sport, was afraid of the elephants, and lived in hourly terror of seeing a tiger. She longed for the fortnight in camp to be over, and secretly hoped that the latter week of it might prove as unsuccessful as the first. Her skin was burnt to the hue of a berry, her head ached perpetually from the heat and glare, the motion of the elephant made her feel sick, and if she ventured to speak, her husband only

impatiently bade her be quiet.

This afternoon, as they ploughed and rocked over the hard, uneven ground, she could scarcely keep awake, dazzled as she was by the vista of scorched yellow country and the gleam of her husband's rifle barrels in the melting sunshine. She swayed drowsily from side to side in the howdah, her head drooped, her eyelids closed. ...

She was roused by a torrent of angry exclamations. Her umbrella had hitched itself obstinately into the collar of Colonel Wingate's coat, and he was making infuriated efforts to free himself. Jim Bastable, approaching on his elephant, caught a mixed vision of the refractory umbrella and two agitated sun-hats, the red face and fierce blue eyes of the Colonel, and the anxious, apologetic, sleepy countenance of Mrs. Wingate, as she hurriedly strove to release her irate lord and master. The whole party came to an involuntary halt, the natives listening with interest as the sahib stormed at the mem-sahib and the umbrella in the same breath.

'That howdah is not big enough for two people,' shouted Captain Bastable, coming to the rescue. 'Let Mrs. Wingate change to mine. It's bigger, and my elephant has easier paces.'

Hot, irritated, angry, Colonel Wingate commanded his wife to betake herself to Bastable's elephant, and to keep her infernal umbrella closed for the rest of the day, adding that women had no business out tiger-shooting; and why the devil had she come at all?—oblivious of the fact that Mrs. Wingate had begged to be allowed to stay in the station, and that he himself had insisted on her coming.

She well knew that argument or contradiction would only make matters worse, for he had swallowed three stiff whiskies and sodas at luncheon in the broiling sun, and since the severe sunstroke that had so nearly killed him two years ago, the smallest quantity of spirits was enough to change him from an exceedingly bad-tempered man into something little short of a maniac. She had heedlessly married him when she was barely nineteen, turning a deaf ear to warnings of his violence, and now, at twenty-three, her existence was one long fear. He never allowed her out of his sight, he never believed a word she said; he watched her, suspected her, bullied her unmercifully, and was insanely jealous. Unfortunately, she was one of those nervous, timid women, who often rather provoke ill-treatment than otherwise.

This afternoon she marvelled at being permitted to change to Captain Bastable's howdah, and with a feeling of relief scrambled off the elephant, though trembling, as she always did, lest the great beast should seize her with his trunk or lash her with his tail, that was like a jointed iron rod. Then, once safely perched up behind Captain Bastable, she settled herself with a delightful sense of security. He understood her nervousness, he did not laugh or grumble at her little involuntary cries of fear; he was not impatient when she was convinced the elephant was running away or sinking in a quicksand, or that the howdah was slipping off. He also understood the

Colonel, and had several times helped her through a trying situation; and now the sympathy in his kind eyes made her tender heart throb with gratitude.

‘All right?’ he asked.

She nodded, smiling, and they started again ploughing and lurching through the coarse grass, great wisps of which the elephant uprooted with his trunk, and beat against his chest to get rid of the soil before putting them in his mouth. Half an hour later, as they drew near the edge of the forest, one of the elephants suddenly stopped short, with a jerky, backward movement, and trumpeted shrilly. There was an expectant halt all along the line, and a cry from a native of ‘Tiger! Tiger!’ Then an enormous striped beast bounded out of the grass and stood for a moment in a small, open space, lashing its tail and snarling defiance. Colonel Wingate fired. The tiger, badly wounded, charged, and sprang at the head of Captain Bastable’s elephant. There was a confusion of noise; savage roars from the tiger; shrieks from the excited elephants, shouts from the natives; banging of rifles. Mrs. Wingate covered her face with her hands. She heard a thud, as of a heavy body falling to the ground, and then she found herself being flung from side to side of the howdah, as the elephant bolted madly towards the forest, one huge ear torn to ribbons by the tiger’s claws.

She heard Captain Bastable telling her to hold on tight, and shouting desperate warnings to the mahout to keep the elephant as clear of the forest as possible. Like many nervous people in and uttered no sound as the pace increased and they tore along the forest edge, escaping overhanging boughs by a miracle. To her it seemed that the ponderous flight lasted for hours. She was bruised, shaken, giddy, and the crash that came at last was a relief rather than otherwise. A huge branch combed the howdah off the elephant’s back, sweeping the mahout with it, while the still terrified animal sped on trumpeting and crashing through the forest.

Mrs. Wingate was thrown clear of the howdah. Captain Bastable had saved himself by jumping, and only the old mahout lay doubled up and unconscious amongst the debris of shattered wood, torn leather and broken ropes. Netta could hardly believe she was not hurt, and she and Captain Bastable stared at one another with dazed faces for some moments before they could collect their senses. Far away in the distance they could hear the elephant still running. Between them they extricated the mahout, and, seating herself on the ground, Netta took the old man’s unconscious head on to her lap, while Captain Bastable anxiously examined the wizened, shrunken body.

‘Is he dead?’ she asked.

‘I can’t be sure. I’m afraid he is. I wonder if I could find some water. I haven’t an idea where we are, for I lost all count of time and distance. I hope Wingate is following us. Should you be afraid to stay here while I have a look round and see if we are anywhere near a village?’

‘Oh, no, I sha’n’t be frightened,’ she said steadily. Her delicate, clear-cut face looked up at him fearlessly from the tangled background of mighty trees and dense creepers; and her companion could scarcely believe she was the same trembling, nervous little coward of an hour ago.

He left her, and the stillness of the jungle was very oppressive when the sound of his footsteps died away. She was alone with a dead, or dying, man, on the threshold of the vast, mysterious forest, with its possible horrors of wild elephants, tigers, leopards, snakes! She tried to turn her thoughts from such things, but the scream of a peacock made her start as it rent the silence, and then the undergrowth began to rustle ominously. It was only a porcupine that came out, rattling his quills, and, on seeing her, ran into further shelter out of sight. It seemed to be growing darker, and she fancied the evening must be drawing in. She wondered if her husband would overtake them. If not, how were she and Jim Bastable to get back to the camp? Then she heard voices and footsteps, and presently a little party of natives came in sight, led by Jim and bearing a string bedstead.

‘I found a village not far off,’ he explained, ‘and thought we’d better take the poor old chap there. Then, if the Colonel doesn’t turn up by the time we’ve seen him comfortably settled, we must find our way back to the camp as best we can.’

The natives chattered and exclaimed as they lifted the unconscious body on to the bedstead, and then the little procession started. Netta was so bruised and stiff she could hardly walk; but, with the help of Bastable’s arm, she hobbled along till the village was gained. The headman conducted them to his house, which consisted of a mud hovel shared by himself and his family with several relations, besides a cow and a goat with two kids. He gave Netta a wicker stool to sit on and some smoky buffalo’s milk to drink, while the village physician was summoned, who at last succeeded in restoring the mahout to consciousness and pouring a potion down his throat.

‘I die,’ whispered the patient, feebly.

Netta went to his side, and he recognised her.

‘A—ree! mem-sahib!’ he quavered. ‘So Allah has guarded thee. But the anger of the Colonel sahib will be great against me for permitting the elephant to run away, and it is better that I die. Where is that daughter of a pig? She was a rascal from her youth up; but to-day was the first time she ever really disobeyed my voice.’

He tried to raise himself, but fell back groaning, for his injuries were internal and past hope.

‘It is growing dark.’ He put forth his trembling hand blindly. ‘Where is the little white lady who so feared the sahib, and the elephants, and the jungle? Do not be afraid, mem-sahib. Those who fear should never go into the jungle. So if thou seest a tiger, be bold, be bold; call him “uncle” and show him the tiger-charm. Then will he turn away and harm thee not——’ He wandered on incoherently, his fingers

fumbling with something at his throat, and presently he drew out a small silver amulet attached to a piece of cord. As he held it towards Netta, it flashed in the light of the miserable native oil lamp that someone had just brought in and placed on the floor.

‘Take it, mem-sahib, and feel no fear while thou hast it, for no tiger would touch thee. It was my father’s, and his father’s before him, and there is that written on it which has ever protected us from the tiger’s tooth. I myself shall need it no longer, for I am going, whereat my nephew will rejoice; for he has long coveted my seat. Thou shalt have the charm, mem-sahib, for thou hast stayed by an old man, and not left him to die alone in a Hindu village and a strange place. Some day, in the hour of danger, thy little fingers may touch the charm, and then thou wilt recall old Mahomed Bux, mahout, with gratitude.’

He groped for Netta’s hand, and pushed the amulet into her palm. She took it, and laid her cool fingers on the old man’s burning forehead.

‘Salaam, Mahomed Bux,’ she said softly. ‘Bahut, bahut, bahut.’ Which is the nearest Hindustani equivalent for ‘Thank you.’

But he did not hear her. He was wandering again, and for half an hour he babbled of elephants, of tigers, of camps and jungles, until his voice became faint and died away in hoarse gasps.

Then he sighed heavily and lay still, and Jim Bastable took Mrs. Wingate out into the air, and told her that the old mahout was dead. She gave way and sobbed, for she was aching all over and tired to death, and she dreaded the return to the camp.

‘Oh, my dear girl, please don’t cry!’ said Jim distressfully. ‘Though really I can’t wonder at it, after all you’ve gone through to-day; and you’ve been so awfully plucky, too.’

Netta gulped down her tears. It was delicious to be praised for courage, when she was only accustomed to abuse for cowardice.

‘How are we to get back to the camp?’ she asked dolefully. ‘It’s so late.’

And, indeed, darkness had come swiftly on, and the light of the village fires was all that enabled them to see each other.

‘The moon will be up presently; we must wait for that. They say the village near our camp lies about six miles off, and that there is a cart-track of sorts towards it. I told them they must let us have a bullock-cart, and we shall have to make the best of that.’

They sat down side by side on a couple of large stones, and listened in silence to the lowing of the tethered cattle, the ceaseless, irritating cry of the brain fever bird, and the subdued conversation of a group of children and village idlers, who had assembled at a respectful distance to watch them with inquisitive interest. Once a shrill trumpeting in the distance told of a herd of wild elephants out for a night’s raid on the crops, and at intervals packs of jackals swept howling across the fields,

while the moon rose gradually over the collection of squalid huts and flooded the vast country with a light that made the forest black and fearful.

Then a clumsy little cart, drawn by two small, frightened white bullocks, rattled into view. Jim and Netta climbed into the vehicle, and were politely escorted off the premises by the headman and the concourse of interested villagers and excited women and children.

They bumped and shook over the rough, uneven track: The bullocks raced or crawled alternately, while the driver twisted their tails and abused them, hoarsely. The moonlight grew brighter and more glorious. The air, now soft and cool, was filled with strong scents and the hum of insects released from the heat of the day.

At last they caught the gleam of white tents against the dark background of a mango-grove.

‘The camp,’ said Captain Bastable, shortly.

Netta made a nervous exclamation.

‘Do you think there will be a row?’ he asked with some hesitation. They had never discussed Mrs. Wingate’s domestic troubles together.

‘Perhaps he is still looking out for us,’ she said evasively.

‘If he had followed us at all, he must have found us. I believe he went on shooting, or back to the camp.’ There was an angry impatience in his voice: ‘Don’t be nervous,’ he added hastily. ‘Try not to mind anything he may say. Don’t listen. He can’t always help it, you know. I wish you could persuade him to retire; the sun out here makes him half off his head.’

‘I wish I could,’ she sighed. ‘But he will never do anything I ask him, and the big game shooting keeps him in India.’

Jim nodded, and there was a comprehending silence between them till they reached the edge of the camp, got out of the cart, and made their way to the principal tent. There they discovered Colonel Wingate, still in his shooting clothes, sitting by the table, on which stood an almost empty bottle of whisky. He rose as they entered, and delivered himself of a torrent of bad language. He accused the pair of going off together on purpose, declaring he would divorce his wife and kill Bastable. He stormed, raved and threatened, giving them no opportunity of speaking, until at last Jim broke in and insisted on being heard.

‘For Heaven’s sake, be quiet,’ he said firmly, ‘or you’ll have a fit. You saw the elephant run away, and apparently you made no effort to follow us and come to our help. We were swept off by a tree, and the mahout was mortally hurt. It was a perfect miracle that neither your wife nor I was killed. The mahout died in a village, and we had to get here in a bullock-cart.’ Then, seeing Wingate preparing for another onslaught, Bastable took him by the shoulders. ‘My dear chap, you’re not yourself. Go to bed, and we’ll talk it over to-morrow if you still wish to.’

Colonel Wingate laughed harshly. His mood had changed suddenly.

‘Go to bed?’ he shouted boisterously. ‘Why, I was just going out when you arrived. There was a kill last night, only a mile off, and I’m going to get the tiger.’ He stared wildly at Jim, who saw that he was not responsible for his words and actions. The brain, already touched by sunstroke, had given way at last under the power of whisky. Jim’s first impulse was to prevent his carrying out his intention of going after the tiger. Then he reflected that it was not safe for Netta to be alone with the man, and that, if Wingate were allowed his own way, it would at least take him out of the camp.

‘Very well,’ said Jim quietly, ‘and I will come with you.’

‘Do,’ answered the Colonel pleasantly, and then, as Bastable turned for a moment, Mrs. Wingate saw her husband make a diabolical grimace at the other’s unconscious back. Her heart beat rapidly with fear. Did he mean to murder Jim? She felt convinced he contemplated mischief; but the question was how to warn Captain Bastable without her husband’s knowledge. The opportunity came more easily than she had expected, for presently the Colonel went outside to call for his rifle and give some orders. She flew to Bastable’s side.

‘Be careful,’ she panted; ‘he wants to kill you, I know he does. He’s mad! Oh, don’t go with him—don’t go——’

‘It will be all right,’ he said reassuringly. ‘I’ll look out for myself, but I can’t let him go alone in this state. We shall only sit up in a tree for an hour or two, for the tiger must have come and gone long ago. Don’t be frightened. Go to bed and rest.’

She drew from her pocket the little polished amulet the mahout had given her.

‘At any rate, take this,’ she said hysterically. ‘It may save you from a tiger, if it doesn’t from my husband. I know I am silly, but do take it. There may be luck in it, you can never tell; and old Mahomed Bux said it had saved him and his father and his grandfather—and that you ought to call a tiger “uncle”—she broke off, half laughing, half crying, utterly unstrung.

To please her he put the little charm into his pocket, and after a hasty drink went out and joined Wingate, who insisted that they should proceed on foot and by themselves. Bastable knew it would be useless to make any opposition, and they started, their rifles in their hands; but, when they had gone some distance and the tainted air told them they were nearing their destination, Jim discovered he had no cartridges.

‘Never mind,’ whispered the Colonel, ‘I have plenty, and our rifles have the same bore. We can’t go back now; we’ve no time to lose.’

Jim submitted, and he and Wingate tiptoed to the foot of a tree, the low branches and thick leaves of which afforded an excellent hiding-place, down-wind from the half-eaten carcass of the cow. They climbed carefully up, making scarcely any noise, and then Jim held out his hand to the other for some cartridges. The Colonel nodded.

‘Presently,’ he whispered, and Jim waited, thinking it extremely unlikely that cartridges would be wanted at all.

The moonlight came feebly through the foliage of the surrounding trees on to the little glade before them, in which lay the remains of the carcass pulled under a bush to shield it from the carrion birds. A deer pattered by towards the river, casting startled glances on every side; insects beat against the faces of the two men; and a jackal ran out with his brush hanging down, looked round, and retired again, with a melancholy howl. Then there arose a commotion in the branches of the neighbouring trees, and a troupe of monkeys fought and crashed and chattered, as they leapt from bough to bough. Jim knew that this often portended the approach of a tiger, and the moment afterwards a long, hoarse call from the river told him that the warning was correct. He made a silent sign for the cartridges; but Wingate took no notice: his face was hard and set, and the whites of his eyes gleamed.

A few seconds later a large tiger crept slowly out of the grass, his stomach on the ground, his huge head held low. Jim remembered the native superstition that the head of a man-eating tiger is weighed down by the souls of its victims. With a run and a spring the creature attacked its meal, and began growling and munching contentedly, purring like a cat, and stopping every now and then to tear up the earth with its claws.

A report rang out. Wingate had fired at and hit the tiger. The great beast gave a terrific roar and sprang at the tree. Jim lifted his rifle, only to remember that it was unloaded.

‘Shoot again!’ he cried excitedly, as the tiger fell back and prepared for another spring. To his horror Wingate deliberately fired the second barrel into the air, and, throwing away the rifle, grasped him by the arms. The man’s teeth were bared, his face distorted and hideous, his purpose unmistakable—he was trying to throw Bastable to the tiger. Wingate was strong with the diabolical strength of madness, and they swayed till the branches of the tree crackled ominously. Again the tiger roared and sprang, and again fell back, only to gather itself together for another effort. The two men rocked and panted, the branches cracked louder with a dry, splitting sound, then broke off altogether, and, locked in each other’s arms, they fell heavily to the ground.

Jim Bastable went undermost, and was half stunned by the shock. He heard a snarl in his ear, followed by a dreadful cry. He felt the weight of Wingate’s body lifted from him with a jerk, and he scrambled blindly to his feet. As in a nightmare, he saw the tiger bounding away, carrying something that hung limply from the great jaws, just as a cat carries a dead mouse.

He seized the Colonel’s rifle that lay near him; but he knew it was empty, and that the cartridges were in the Colonel’s pocket. He ran after the tiger, shouting, yelling, brandishing the rifle, in hopes of frightening the brute into dropping its



prey; but, after one swift glance back, it bounded into the thick jungle with the speed of a deer, and Bastable was left standing alone.

Faint and sick, he began running madly towards the camp for help, though he knew well that nothing in this world could ever help Wingate again. His forehead was bleeding profusely, either hurt in the fall or touched by the tiger's claw, and the blood trickling into his eyes nearly blinded him. He pulled his handkerchief from his pocket as he ran, and something came with it that glittered in the moonlight and fell to the ground with a metallic ring.

It was the little silver amulet. The tiger-charm.

From *East of Suez* (1926)

## *Travels with a Bear Cub*

by C.H. Donald

Bhaloo had no sense of decency, no conscience worth talking about, no sense of propriety, and, in fact, there was very little about him which, in polite society, we consider essential. One thing he had in a very high stage of development, and that carried him through life. It was a wonderful sense of humour. Had he been left to roam the forests he would have been a Dan Leno-Harry Lauder combination among his own people—the regular inhabitants of the woods—but Bhaloo came into my keeping early in life and the woods were deprived of much boisterous pleasure in consequence.

How I first met Bhaloo does not much matter, but the mother of any bear is a nasty thing to meet at close quarters. I met his mother at very close quarters. Either she or I had to die. I preferred that she should. She did. The poor orphan thus came into my possession and showed his gratitude by nearly biting my thumb off and scratching my face. That first hour in my care Bhaloo did not like at all. He was tied up fore and aft and there was more rope than Bhaloo to be seen when we arrived back in camp, but he made himself heard all right.

I presented him with quite a pretty dog-collar studded with brass, and a nice little chain, and he was tied to a stake just outside the verandah.

During the first hour he did nothing but bite his chain, turn somersaults, get his legs entangled in his collar and then swear at the top of his voice. I was going to say

little voice, but though Bhaloo was little his voice was not. Even a bear gets tired after a bit and this little chap was no exception. He finally collapsed and slept the sleep of the unjust. It was late in the evening when he awoke and I offered him a saucer of milk with a spoonful of sugar mixed in it. Bhaloo gave it a slap and sent it flying down the hill and then tried to bite me; ungrateful pig that he was I then threw him a ripe apricot. He smelt it, made a long nose and then turned his back on it and carried on like a very spoilt child, yelling the hillside down. It took him a long time to discover that the chain was not a pleasant thing to bite too frequently, but he finally did find this out and then he turned his attention to the ground and began digging it up. I tried him once again with milk but in vain so gave it up for the night. Bhaloo had very lusty lungs and made the night hideous with his yells, and every soul in the compound wished him elsewhere. Next morning he was much more sober and I found that the much squashed and trampled apricot had disappeared and only the seed remained. Another saucer of milk was offered and again refused—and not even decently refused—but anyway it was not sent flying down the hill this time, and that was hopeful.

I sat down beside him, just out of reach of his claws and teeth, and remained there for well over half an hour, by which time Bhaloo gave up swearing and even walked past me without opening his mouth and wobbling his nose at me. I tried the milk again and he put a very dirty paw into the middle of it, then put the paw on the ground and finally sucked it. He liked the taste of milk and dust very much. I again held out the saucer, very slowly towards him.

He looked at it, very nearly said ‘thanks’, in bear language, then changed his mind, fixed two beady eyes on me, wobbled his nose and gave the saucer two frightful slaps. What lay on the ground did not resemble milk in the least. Bhaloo very deliberately put the end of one sharp claw into the mess and as deliberately brought his claw to his nose and smelt it. The smell was doubtful but evidently good, so he had another try and this time conveyed his dirty claw to his mouth and licked it. He thought he could now trust his tongue on the stain on the ground. Bhaloo had not learnt that ‘he who hesitates is lost’, for, by now, the liquid had been absorbed by the earth, and all that remained was a dark stain. He licked it and got some mud into his mouth, so just what might have been expected of him, happened.

He promptly blamed me for spilling the milk, wobbled his nose at me twice, scratched up the ground and came straight for me, using the vilest language I had yet heard. To assuage his wrath I sent for more milk and this time only put a little into the saucer and politely offered it to him again. Again he put a dirty paw into it, and once more he sucked his paw and then actually put his tongue into the saucer, and, for the first time, discovered that milk and sugar was a pleasanter mixture than mud, milk, and sugar. With both paws in the saucer he lapped up every scrap and swore at me loudly because I could not see the saucer to pour in more, on account

of his paws. From now on it was plain sailing and Bhaloo and I got better friends daily. Within three days we went out for our first walk with all the dogs. They tolerated him but did not trust him, nor did I.

Bhaloo grew in stature and also in wisdom, but it was the wisdom of his Satanic Majesty. He was now about 6 months old and had been my regular companion for some 3 months, and had even become a *shikari*, loving the sound of a gun. Bhaloo could not be trusted inside the house, so had to be chained up during the day. After tea he was let loose and would join the dogs and accompany his master on his afternoon stroll.

He was a clown naturally and when he was quiet, which was very seldom, you knew he was hatching some plot. Butter would not melt in Bhaloo's mouth so long as your eyes were glued on him. If by chance you looked up the hill, you were brought back to thoughts of Bhaloo very rudely by finding a solid ursine form embracing you round the leg and doing his best to land you on your nose. It was done and over in a second, for the moment he had given you a good start, away he would go down the road and tackle the first unfortunate dog he came across. If the dog happened to be looking, Bhaloo would pass on to the next. Having got the animal firmly by the hind quarters he would look round at you as much as to say: 'this is the brute who tripped you up and I have got him for you.'

Bhaloo and Nicholas, a large St. Bernard, were real pals. Nicholas had a tail that wagged, and anything that wagged was a joy to Bhaloo. He would take up his position behind Nicholas and stand up on his hind legs, never a very safe position for him. When the tail passed him, Bhaloo had a shot at it and if he missed it, he took one, very unsteady, step forward and waited for the next wag to bring the tail back again. It came, of course, but Bhaloo had forgotten that he had taken a step forward. The slap did not meet the tail as had been intended, but the tail met him across the face upsetting his balance. Bhaloo would then put his head on one side, with his paws up to avoid the tail smiting him again. This attitude was generally too much for Rosie, a very wiry and active little spaniel. With one bound she would descend on him from the rear, catch him by the ear and roll him over on to his back. Putting himself into an upright position from lying on his back was a laborious process for Bhaloo and by the time it was accomplished he had no dignity left.

Being very friendly, he was quite prepared to greet any wayfarer he met, and if not looking, even to trip him up. Now and again he would meet a hill-man with a 'kilta' (a basket which fits the back, the shape of a megaphone, which most hill men carry), and if the latter liked the look of Bhaloo he would go the length of extracting a half dried apricot or a bit of stale 'chuppatti' from his kilta and give it to him. In time the bear came to connect kiltas with food. This part is quite comprehensible, but what devilment made him adopt the tactics I am about to explain, I never made out.

If he saw a man coming along in the distance, Bhaloo would find business in a thick bush or behind a rock and so be left behind. As the man approached his hiding place he would be confronted by a mighty ‘ouf ouf’ and find a half grown bear standing in front of him. On such occasions even a small cub looks very big. The wretched man would drop his basket and fly down the hill as hard as he could go. Bhaloo would watch him go, and then deliberately turn and make for the kilta, have the contents out on the road in no time, and sample all the edible things.

This became a regular proceeding with him when out for walks, and I had finally to warn men as they passed me not to be alarmed if they met him round the corner. Nonetheless, the majority were alarmed. Bhaloo accompanied me down to the plains and had his first ride in a train at Kalka. This was before the Simla-Kalka Railway had even been thought of. In the brake-van there was no room for him and in the two dog boxes attached to the train, were already several dogs, so what would be his fate? The guard said I had better take him into my carriage as there would be nobody else travelling, in all probability, so Bhaloo and I took possession of the one and only first class carriage.

Shortly after two men who had been shooting in the hills arrived but were fortunately rather taken with the bear and made friends with him at once. All went well until within a couple of minutes of starting time when a third traveller appeared on the scene. He was very stout and Bhaloo was near the door. I asked if he had any objection, but had not got halfway through the sentence when he replied —‘*Objection, objection, objection*, to travelling with a savage brute like that! certainly have, Guard, Guuaarrd, can’t you hear, remove this animal to the dog box.’ The guard arrived and hesitatingly took the end of the chain. Bhaloo prepared for a game of hide-and-seek, slowly got on to his hind legs and, with one paw on the edge of the door, aimed a slap at the guard and said ‘wouf’. The guard dropped the chain, the very stout gentleman’s rosy countenance visibly paled, and he made a hasty retreat. A very big ‘DA’ issued from parched lips, and the ‘M’ was wafted back on the breeze from some distance off. I next expected to find the station master and the entire staff arrive and eject Bhaloo and master from the carriage, but just then the train streamed off and we saw a very burly black entering the next compartment, a 2nd Class, while not a soul in our carriage could speak for laughing.

His two new friends regaled Bhaloo with fruit and he had a heavenly time until we changed trains in Ambala. The crowd rather upset him, and when somebody trod on his toe he made himself both heard and felt. We arrived at our destination late in the evening and the problem was what to do with the bear during the night, as I did not like to leave him chained outside on account of the number of pariah dogs about. The only thing to be done was to empty the bathroom of the dak bungalow and put him there.

Bhaloo, however, had his own ideas on the subject and I was awakened in the

middle of the night by a terrible commotion in the compound, and went out to find him surrounded by ‘pi’ dogs and in a very nasty temper. His first night cost me Rs. 5 as he had pulled out all the bricks from one wall of the room and let himself out. He was then tied up in an empty stable and the night passed without further mishap. After breakfast we went for a stroll into the country, but to get out we had to pass a sweet stall. Bhaloo smelt sweets and promptly made for them. The very portly gentleman in charge objected and waved a fly flap at him, but he had made an entrance and had just begun to sample a basket of very yellow looking stuff and was not easily to be discouraged. The portly gentleman then struck him and Bhaloo jumped up hurriedly, but in doing so pulled over the whole tray, which in turn dislodged another. The ‘bunnia’ shouted loudly and so did Bhaloo. The dogs, seven of them, also rushed in.

Chaos reigned. What with dogs hunting for rats and bears hunting for sweets, the contents of the sweet stall were soon deposited in the street. Bhaloo was pulled out and tied up and the portly gentleman made comparatively happy with a small note and we continued our walk.

We had gone about two miles when an *ekka* with four prospering traders in it, returning from a timber auction, was seen coming down the road. The horse shied and went off into the ditch and the *ekka* followed. Not being adapted for cross country running a wheel came off, shooting the occupants not very gracefully on to mother earth.

I helped to put the *ekka* right side up, apologised to the prosperous traders and tipped the *ekka-wallah*. In making up accounts I discovered that Bhaloo’s escapades in the last 24 hours had cost me more pay than I had drawn in 48, so it was obvious we should either have to part company or retrace our wandering footsteps to our beloved jungles, where such things as dak bungalows, sweet shops and *ekkas* cease from troubling, and my pockets would be at rest.

It ended by Bhaloo going to a neighbouring zoo. I have seen him every year since and he has grown out of all recognition.

## *Tippitty, A Flying Squirrel*

by C.H. Donald

To know ‘Tippitty’ was to love her, and I had known her for very long. Men called her a ‘ripper’ and women went crazy about her, and called her a ‘little darling’, and many other similar endearing epithets. I always look back to the evenings when Tippitty sat on a curtain rod, with a delightful furry muffler round her neck, and looked down on me from her place of vantage, preparing for her usual spring to my shoulder.

Tippitty, I must tell you, was not a naughty little girl with a penchant for climbing up curtain poles, but a little rodent commonly called a Flying Squirrel, and known to naturalists as *Pteromys inormous*, the large red flying squirrel, and must on no account be mistaken for the Flying Fox, which has nothing to do with Tippitty’s family.

She was brought to me when only a few days old, together with a sister and a brother. The latter, however, were both injured by the fall of the tree in which they had their home and died a few hours after. Tippitty survived, and grew into a splendid specimen, in all the glory of her wonderful chestnut-red coat and two feet of bushy tail. She knew she was fascinating even at a very early age, and nothing delighted her more than to show off her lovely tail. Her one drawback as a pet was that she was nocturnal and so was most lively when it was time for ordinary mortals to be in bed.

She lived in a little box with two partitions; the inner one— her bedroom—was fitted up with a little nest of feathers and cotton wool, and a tiny door led from it into the bigger sitting room, where also she dined. The former was in darkness whereas the latter had sides and top of wire netting so was quite light. If her master was very busy and could not entertain Tippitty, or happened to be dining out, she was given her dinner in her own little room, but as a rule, master and Tippitty dined together and, in fact, spent most evenings in each other's company.

The door of her sitting room being usually open, Tippitty would announce the fact that she was awake by giving a low growl and issuing therefrom in a succession of long and not very graceful jumps. She would make her way to the nearest table and there indulge in a tremendous stretch, extending her fore-legs to the full in front of her and her hind-legs as far as they could go behind her. Her head would first rest on the right fore-foot and then on the left, her tail making circles in the air in the meantime. After her stretch would come her toilet, about which she was most particular, like all her sex. Tippitty would sit erect and carefully get to work with both her little hands. Beginning with the tip of her nose she would gradually work over the whole of her face and head, the tail would be her last, but by no means her least, care. She would start on it from the very root, bending her back double to get at it and then gradually work up to the tip, holding it firmly between her fore-paws. Her toilet finished, Tippitty would have a look round, take one jump off the table and race up the nearest curtains to the pole above. There she would sit, her tail coiled round her neck and those great big black eyes of hers looking solemnly down, and sooner or later she would leap right across the room on to my shoulder.

Don, a field spaniel, and Brock, a large shaggy Tibetan sheep dog, were Tippitty's best friends. Brock's great bushy tail afforded Tippitty much amusement as well as shelter in time of danger, for Tippitty knew friend from foe and the approach of a stranger was the signal for her to make use of Brock's tail as a hiding place.

Her behaviour was not always that of a well brought up young lady and truth obliges me to admit that, during meals, it was advisable to keep her tied at one end of the table. I have already said she had a lovely tail, but its beauty was sometimes marred after passing through the soup—and so was the taste of the soup! Her own dinner consisted of milk and, occasionally, custard. Puddings she loved as much as any school-boy and stewed fruit kept her happy all evening. The hardest hill walnut was child's play to her sharp teeth. It took her about ten minutes to make a hole in the nut and then her long teeth and tongue would soon fetch out most of the kernel.

Tippitty was the means of my solving a problem in natural history regarding which a controversy had raged for many months. The Himalayan Nutcracker *Nucifraga bemispila* had been credited with the holes one frequently found in walnuts in the Himalayas. The writer tested the truth of the assertion by placing



walnuts under a tree where a pair of Nutcrackers were wont to come. The birds turned over the nuts but did not attempt to break them. After this a few nuts were collected in which Tippitty had already made the holes, and placed under the same tree and carefully watched. In due course the birds came along and at once selected the bored walnuts and began pecking at them and working their beaks inside the holes, proving that they were incapable of boring the holes themselves, but were not above taking the remains of Tippitty's dinner. However, Nutcrackers have nothing to do with the life history of Tippitty, and I must apologize to her and my reader, for the digression.

Flying squirrels are said to lap their drink, but Tippitty was *much* too lady-like to make any such fuss over her milk. She was usually in rather a hurry for it, and consequently more of her face went into the saucer than was intended by nature, with the result that a certain amount of liquid went up her nose and made Tippitty sneeze and splutter. Sometimes several attempts were made before she really settled down to have a good drink, but when she did she got her lips well into the milk and no attempt was made to lap.

She frequently accompanied me and the dogs on an afternoon stroll, after being ruthlessly pulled out of her box. For the first 100 yards or so she was perfectly happy, jumping along behind. A flying squirrel's natural mode of progression when on the ground is a succession of jumps: not the graceful little hop of the striped squirrel, but rather a lumbering gallop with all four feet in the air at the same time, and the tail held straight up in the air, the last four inches or so curling over. This not being adapted for long distances, Tippitty would soon overshoot her endurance and come to a halt. If I were near, she would make for my legs and be up on my shoulder in the twinkling of an eye, or if Brock or Don happened to be at hand, she would spring on to one of their backs and get a free ride. An oak or a deodar tree invariably attracted her attention and she would make her way to the extreme end of a branch and nibble off the young leaves. The point of the stem which grew out of the branch appealed to her most and she would pick off leaf after leaf just nibbling the juicy end of it and throw the rest away. However, she was quite happy on any tree or shrub and found something to eat on all.

As I have already said, Tippitty was nocturnal and woke up a little after sunset if left to herself. Provided she did not get a good dinner she would be prepared to play and look about for odds and ends to nibble at all night through. I very soon discovered that a good feed just before I went to bed had the effect of making her sleepy too. On 'custard' nights, Tippitty would invariably over-eat, and that meant sleeping solidly till the early hours of the morning. She very seldom woke me during the night. As a rule, I would wake up to find a warm, soft, furry ball curled up against my neck, but occasionally the awakening would be much ruder and I would find Tippitty having a lovely game with my toes, my ears or my hair.

There was something extraordinarily fascinating about her every movement and her little 'chirrup' of pleasure was very sweet to hear. Tippitty had an assortment of calls and her growl was most alarming and would have done credit to an animal ten times her size. She had a temper of her own, I am sorry to say, which every member of the household, master and dogs included, had occasion to remember. It showed for a second and was gone again as suddenly as it had been roused, but in that instant her sharp claws had torn some offending hand, or her terrible teeth had sent a dog howling out of the room.

Poor Tippitty! Her end was tragic in the extreme. We'll hope it was also painless. She had been tied up just before dinner, but somehow the end of the chain had got unfastened from the leg of the chair. I heard her hopping about on the boards of the verandah and dragging her chain behind her. I went out to bring her back but in that instant something flashed past me. There was a tiny squeal and a fox had poor Tippitty in its relentless jaws. Her death was avenged, but that is another story.

Before concluding the biography of Tippitty it might be as well to give the reader an insight into the life and ways of the Flying Squirrel in its wild state, and explain exactly what it is. Though very closely allied to the ordinary squirrels with which everyone is familiar, the Flying Squirrels can easily be distinguished by the membrane uniting their limbs, which extends to the toes and forms a parachute when the limbs are extended. To make the parachute still more effective, the membrane is supported by a small bony cartilage attached to the outside of the wrist (ulnar). The leap of the Flying Squirrel is said to be 60 to 80 yards, but I can safely say it is well over double that distance at times, as I have seen one go right across a valley nearer 200 yards in extent. It can only 'fly' downhill, using the parachute to buoy it up. On approaching the tree it means to settle on, the head is raised and the tail lowered so that the parachute then acts *against* the wind as a brake, bringing it slowly against the tree. The tail, to some extent, acts as a rudder, but the change of direction is really made by a slight drawing in of the extended limbs, on the opposite side to which the animal wishes to turn.

The nest of this species is invariably in the hole of a tree, preferably oak, but deodars, firs, chestnuts, walnuts and birch are impartially selected when oak is not at hand. It is composed of lichen and moss, with a sprinkling of feathers and hair. The family *Sciuridae* which comprises squirrels, flying squirrels, and marmots, is well distributed throughout India and the genus *Pteromys*, comprising some six species, is represented from the high upland forests of the Himalayas down to the most southerly forests of the peninsula. Tippitty's species is essentially a dweller of the higher ranges of the Himalayas ranging from 5,000 to 11,000 feet.

---

From *Companions—Feathered, Furred and Scaled* (Bombay, 1917).

# *The Man-eater of Mundali*

by B.B. Osmaston  
(Imperial Forest Service)  
From his memoirs\*

**J**aunsar-Bawar, which includes Chakrata, is an outlying portion of the Civil District of Dehra Dun. It is situated north-west of Dehra between Mussoorie and Simla and is very mountainous throughout, the hills ranging from 2,000 to 10,000 ft in altitude. These hills, except on southern aspects, are mostly clothed with forests of Deodar, Fir, Pine, Oak, etc., and mountain streams and torrents flow through the valleys. In summer the climate is pleasantly cool, but very cold in winter with heavy falls of snow down to 6,000 ft. There was much game in the form of *gooral*, barking deer, *serow*, musk deer and leopard; also partridges, *chukor* and several species of pheasants. *Sambhar* and pig were scarce, and *chital* absent altogether. Tigers usually avoid these hill forests, not because they dislike the cold, but because they find feeding themselves difficult, if not impossible. In the plains *sambhar* and *chital* constitute their main food supply, but these are scarce or non-existent in the hills.

Moreover, a tiger is unable to pursue and catch smaller game, such as *gooral* which take refuge on steep slopes where a tiger, due to its weight cannot safely follow. In 1878 however a tigress suddenly appeared beyond Chakrata, at about 9,000 feet; she is believed to have come up from Dehra Dun, having followed the

Gujars' buffaloes on their spring migration up to the hills.

These Gujars are a nomadic race of graziers, and own herds of magnificent buffaloes which they maintain largely in the Government forests, feeding them mainly on loppings from trees. During the winter months, they keep to the forests in the plains, but in April they start driving their cattle up to the hills where they remain throughout the summer and rains, at altitudes between 7,000 and 11,000 feet; and in October, before the advent of snow, they take them down again.

But to return to the tigress in question. Having followed the Gujar's cattle up to the hills, killing and feeding on stragglers from the herds during their 60–80 miles slow-moving trek, she then settled down to an easy and comfortable existence in the vicinity of the Gujar's camps, without any food problems whatever! But when October came, and the Gujars started driving their cattle down to the plains again, she seems to have either accidentally missed their departure, or, more likely, to have been more or less compelled to remain behind because she had meanwhile produced 3 babies which were still entirely dependent on her, and far too young to travel.

She thus, all at once, found herself and her cubs stranded, up at some 8,000 to 9,000 feet with snow in the offing, and normal food supplies virtually non-existent. She and her family soon became desperately hungry and, one day while she was out hunting, she suddenly came across a man at close quarters, and, in her extremity, she killed him. She found that he was both ridiculously easy to kill, and also excellent to eat.

This led to her rapidly becoming a confirmed, notorious and cunning man-eater, taking toll from villages scattered over some 200 square miles of mountainous country. The villagers were terror-stricken and would not go out except in large parties. Even so, her killings continued, either by day or by night, and more often than not it was a woman she selected.

She brought up her three cubs on human flesh and they too all became man-eaters. They however lacked the cunning of their mother and were killed long before she was accounted for: one was killed by a spring-gun set by Mr. Lowrie at Lokhar; another was shot near Chakrata by Mr. Smythies, who obtained the assistance of British soldiers to surround the valley in which the young tiger had been located; the third cub was found dead under a tree which appeared to have been struck by lightning. The tigress however had continued in her evil ways, until in 1879 a reward of Rs 500 was placed on her head. This had resulted in many visits from experienced *shikaris* but none had ever succeeded in getting in touch with her, and the reward remained unclaimed for ten long years.

That was the picture when I arrived at Mundali on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1889. I had been in India less than 5 months and had never seen a tiger outside a zoo. The day I reached Mundali, I heard that the tigress had killed a buffalo calf about half a mile

from our camp. The latter included Forest Students from Dehra Dun, in the charge of Mr. Fernandez, Deputy Director of the Forest School. I determined to tie up a *machan* in a tree near the kill, from which I hoped to get a shot at the tigress when she returned. But the same idea had also occurred to several of the students, and I foresaw little chance therefore of anyone at all getting a shot that way. A young fellow called Hansard however, one of the students, approached me with a suggestion that we should explore the steep ravine below the kill at mid-day, when we thought the tigress would be enjoying a siesta. I readily agreed and we set out, I being armed with a double-barrelled 12-bore rifle by Riley, firing a conical shell propelled by 6 drams of black powder, which was kindly lent me by Mr. Fernandez. Hansard had only a small bore rifle which I later realised was quite inadequate for the purpose.

The kill was situated at the head of a precipitous ravine which had extremely steep wooded sides, and a small spring-stream at the bottom, bubbling down through a wild confusion of countless large and small boulders. It was under the lee of one of these large rocks that we were hoping perhaps to find the tigress asleep; and with that end in view, we cautiously started off down the ravine,—I on one side fairly close to the stream, while Hansard was some 20 yards higher up on the other side.

The going was very difficult and slow, and we had not managed to get very far, when I suddenly heard a fierce snarling noise from moderately high up on the further side of the ravine. I momentarily imagined that it was Hansard trying to pull my leg; but, upon raising my head to tell him to shut up and keep quiet, I saw to my horror, the tigress on top of him, biting at his neck.

It is extraordinary with what lightning speed thoughts can flash through one's brain in an emergency of that nature; and, in a matter of perhaps half a second, I knew that I must shoot—whatever the danger of hitting Hansard, instead of, or as well as the tigress—and in the next half second I had fired. The tigress immediately let go of Hansard and came charging down at me. I fired the second barrel as she came bounding down (but without effect), and then dropped the empty rifle and fled for my life down the precipitous ravine, leaping wildly from boulder to boulder in my head-long flight, and expecting every moment to get the tigress on top of me. But after I had covered some distance without either breaking my neck or being seized by the tigress, I realised that I was not being pursued after all; and I decided to cut straight back through the forest to the camp, in order to get another rifle, and help for Hansard.

Several of the students and their servants accompanied me back to the spot, bringing with them a camp-bed for use as a stretcher. Upon arrival there, we found Hansard lying unconscious by the stream, and the tigress lying dead a few yards away. It was my first shot that had actually killed her, the second one having merely

grazed one of her fore-paws.

We afterwards ascertained from Hansard that he never knew that she was stalking him until she was on him, and he certainly never had a chance to fire his rifle. He was wearing a thick woollen muffler rolled up round his neck which doubtless did much to save him. In spite of this however the tigress had mauled him terribly, one hole penetrating from below his ear into his throat. Bits of the red muffler were adhering to the claws of the tigress when we found her in the water. She was old, though exactly how old it was impossible to say; but her canine teeth were worn right down almost to the gums and one, at least, was badly decayed. Otherwise she appeared to be in good health, and had a very good coat. Her length was 8 feet 6 inches.

Hansard and the tigress were at once carried to the camp where the former's wounds were attended to by the Assistant Surgeon attached to the school-camp, and two days later he was carried 60 miles across the hills to Mussoorie on a stretcher. There he remained in the Station Hospital for some months and, when he was eventually discharged, in reasonably good shape, he married his hospital nurse, and they went to Ceylon where he had another forest appointment.

Some years later I met his son who said that his father had eventually died from the after effects of that terrible encounter.

The day after the tigress was brought into camp, the villagers flocked in from near and far to see the body of the dreaded beast which had carried off so many of their friends and relations during the past ten years.

Many of them cut off little bits of the tigress' flesh and hung them as charms round the necks of their children. The killing of the tigress was reported to the Government and the reward of Rs 500 was duly paid to me; this was shared with Hansard who certainly deserved it at least as much as I did.

[More than a hundred years later, a notice-board at Mundali still marks the spot where Osmaston shot the man-eater.—Ed.]

---

\* Courtesy, Henry Osmaston

## *Garm—A Hostage*

by Rudyard Kipling

One night, a very long time ago, I drove to an Indian military cantonment called Mian Mir to see amateur theatricals. At the back of the Infantry barracks a soldier, his cap over one eye, rushed in front of the horses and shouted that he was a dangerous highway robber. As a matter of fact he was a friend of mine, so I told him to go home before anyone caught him; but he fell under the pole, and I heard voices of a military guard in search of someone.

The driver and I coaxed him into the carriage, drove home swiftly, undressed him and put him to bed, where he waked next morning with a sore headache, very much ashamed. When his uniform was cleaned and dried, and he had been shaved and washed and made neat, I drove him back to barracks with his arm in a fine white sling, and reported that I had accidentally run over him. I did not tell this story to my friend's sergeant, who was a hostile and unbelieving person, but to his lieutenant, who did not know us quite so well.

Three days later my friend came to call, and at his heels slobbered and fawned one of the finest bull-terriers—of the old-fashioned breed, two parts bull and one terrier—that I had ever set eyes on. He was pure white, with a fawn-coloured saddle just behind his neck, and a fawn diamond at the root of his thin whippy tail. I had admired him distantly for more than a year; and Vixen, my own fox-terrier, knew him too, but did not approve.



‘‘E’s for you,’ said my friend; but he did not look as though he liked parting with him.

‘Nonsense! That dog’s worth more than most men, Stanley,’ I said.

‘‘E’s that an’ more. ’Tention!’

The dog rose on his hind legs, and stood upright for a full minute.

‘Eyes right!’

He sat on his haunches and turned his head sharp to the right. At a sign he rose and barked thrice. Then he shook hands with his right paw and bounded lightly to my shoulder. Here he made himself into a necktie, limp and lifeless, hanging down on either side of my neck. I was told to pick him up and throw him in the air. He fell with a howl, and held up one leg.

‘Part o’ the trick,’ said his owner. ‘You’re goin’ to die now. Dig yourself your little grave an’ shut your little eye.’

Still limping, the dog hobbled to the garden-edge, dug a hole and lay down in it. When told that he was cured he jumped out, wagging his tail, and whining for applause. He was put through half a dozen other tricks, such as showing how he would hold a man safe (I was that man, and he sat down before me, his teeth bared, ready to spring), and how he would stop eating at the word of command. I had no more than finished praising him when my friend made a gesture that stopped the dog as though he had been shot, took a piece of blue-ruled canteen-paper from his helmet, handed it to me and ran away, while the dog looked after him and howled. I read:

SIR—I give you the dog because of what you got me out of. He is the best I know, for I made him myself, and he is as good as a man. Please do not give him too much to eat, and please do not give him back to me, for I’m not going to take him, if you will keep him. So please do not try to give him back anymore. I have kept his name back, so you can call him anything and he will answer, but please do not give him back. He can kill a man as easy as anything, but please do not give him too much meat. He knows more than a man.

Vixen sympathetically joined her shrill little yap to the bull-terrier’s despairing cry, and I was annoyed, for I knew that a man who cares for dogs is one thing, but a man who loves one dog is quite another. Dogs are at the best no more than verminous vagrants, self-scratchers, foul feeders, and unclean by the law of Moses and Mohammed; but a dog with whom one lives alone for at least six months in the year; a free thing, tied to you so strictly by love that without you he will not stir or exercise; a patient, temperate, humorous, wise soul, who knows your moods before

you know them yourself, is not a dog under any ruling.

I had Vixen, who was all my dog to me; and I felt what my friend must have felt, at tearing out his heart in this style and leaving it in my garden. However, the dog understood clearly enough that I was his master, and did not follow the soldier. As soon as he drew breath I made much of him, and Vixen, yelling with jealousy, flew at him. Had she been of his own sex, he might have cheered himself with a fight, but he only looked worriedly when she nipped his deep iron sides, laid his heavy head on my knee, and howled anew. I meant to dine at the Club that night, but as darkness drew in, and the dog snuffed through the empty house like a child trying to recover from a fit of sobbing, I felt that I could not leave him to suffer his first evening alone. So we fed at home, Vixen on one side and the stranger-dog on the other; she watching his every mouthful, and saying explicitly what she thought of his table manners, which were much better than hers.

It was Vixen's custom, till the weather grew hot, to sleep in my bed, her head on the pillow like a Christian; and when morning came I would always find that the little thing had braced her feet against the wall and pushed me to the very edge of the cot. This night she hurried to bed purposefully, every hair up, one eye on the stranger, who had dropped on a mat in a helpless, hopeless sort of way, all four feet spread out, sighing heavily. She settled her head on the pillow several times, to show her little airs and graces, and struck up her usual whiney sing-song before slumber. The stranger-dog softly edged towards me. I put out my hand and he licked it. Instantly my wrist was between Vixen's teeth, and her warning *aaarh!* said as plainly as speech, that if I took any further notice of the stranger she would bite.

I caught her behind her fat neck with my left hand, shook her severely, and said: 'Vixen, if you do that again you'll be put into the veranda. Now, remember!'

She understood perfectly, but the minute I released her she mouthed my right wrist once more, and waited with her ears back and all her body flattened, ready to bite. The big dog's tail thumped the floor in a humble and peace-making way.

I grabbed Vixen a second time, lifted her out of bed like a rabbit (she hated that and yelled), and, as I had promised, set her out in the veranda with the bats and the moonlight. At this she howled. Then she used coarse language—not to me, but to the bull-terrier—till she coughed with exhaustion. Then she ran round the house trying every door. Then she went off to the stables and barked as though someone were stealing the horses, which was an old trick of hers. Last she returned, and her snuffing yelp said, 'I'll be good! Let me in and I'll be good!'

She was admitted and flew to her pillow. When she was quieted I whispered to the other dog, 'You can lie on the foot of the bed.' The bull jumped up at once, and though I felt Vixen quiver with rage, she knew better than to protest. So we slept till the morning, and they had early breakfast with me, bite for bite, till the horse came round and we went for a ride. I don't think the bull had ever followed a horse

before. He was wild with excitement, and Vixen, as usual, squealed and scuttered and scooted, and took charge of the procession.

There was one corner of a village near by, which we generally passed with caution, because all the yellow pariah-dogs of the place gathered about it. They were half-wild, starving beasts, and though utter cowards, yet where nine or ten of them get together they will mob and kill and eat an English dog. I kept a whip with a long lash for them. That morning they attacked Vixen, who, perhaps of design, had moved from beyond my horse's shadow.

The bull was ploughing along in the dust, fifty yards behind, rolling in his run, and smiling as bull-terriers will. I heard Vixen squeal; half a dozen of the curs closed in on her; a white streak came up behind me; a cloud of dust rose near Vixen, and, when it cleared, I saw one tall pariah with his back broken, and the bull wrenching another to earth. Vixen retreated to the protection of my whip, and the bull paddled back smiling more than ever, covered with the blood of his enemies. That decided me to call him 'Garm of the Bloody Breast,' who was a great person in his time, or 'Garm' for short; so, leaning forward, I told him what his temporary name would be. He looked up while I repeated it, and then raced away. I shouted 'Garm!' He stopped, raced back, and came up to ask my will.

Then I saw that my soldier friend was right, and that that dog knew and was worth more than a man. At the end of the ride I gave an order which Vixen knew and hated: 'Go away and get washed!' I said. Garm understood some part of it, and Vixen interpreted the rest, and the two trotted off together soberly. When I went to the back verandah Vixen had been washed snowy-white, and was very proud of herself, but the dog-boy would not touch Garm on any account unless I stood by. So I waited while he was being scrubbed, and Garm, with the soap creaming on the top of his broad head, looked at me to make sure that this was what I expected him to endure. He knew perfectly that the dog-boy was only obeying orders.

'Another time,' I said to the dog-boy, 'you will wash the great dog with Vixen when I send them home.'

'Does *he* know?' said the dog-boy, who understood the ways of dogs.

'Garm,' I said, 'another time you will be washed with Vixen.'

I knew that Garm understood. Indeed, next washing-day, when Vixen as usual fled under my bed, Garm stared at the doubtful dog-boy in the verandah, stalked to the place where he had been washed last time, and stood rigid in the tub.

But the long days in my office tried him sorely. We three would drive off in the morning at half-past eight and come home at six or later. Vixen, knowing the routine of it, went to sleep under my table; but the confinement ate into Garm's soul. He generally sat on the verandah looking out on the Mall; and well I knew what he expected.

Sometimes a company of soldiers would move along on their way to the Fort,

and Garm rolled forth to inspect them; or an officer in uniform entered into the office, and it was pitiful to see poor Garm's welcome to the cloth—not the man. He would leap at him, and sniff and bark joyously, then run to the door and back again. One afternoon I heard him bay with a full throat—a thing I had never heard before—and he disappeared. When I drove into my garden at the end of the day a soldier in white uniform scrambled over the wall at the far end, and the Garm that met me was a joyous dog. This happened twice or thrice a week for a month.

I pretended not to notice, but Garm knew and Vixen knew. He would glide homewards from the office about four o'clock, as though he were only going to look at the scenery, and this he did so quietly that but for Vixen I should not have noticed him. The jealous little dog under the table would give a sniff and a snort, just loud enough to call my attention to the flight. Garm might go out forty times in the day and Vixen would never stir, but when he slunk off to see his true master in my garden she told me in her own tongue. That was the one sign she made to prove that Garm did not altogether belong to the family. They were the best of friends at all times, *but*, Vixen explained that I was never to forget Garm did not love me as she loved me.

I never expected it. The dog was not my dog—could never be my dog—and I knew he was as miserable as his master who tramped eight miles a day to see him. So it seemed to me that the sooner the two were reunited the better for all. One afternoon I sent Vixen home alone in the dog-cart (Garm had gone before), and rode over to cantonments to find another friend of mine, who was an Irish soldier and a great friend of the dog's master.

I explained the whole case, and wound up with:

'And now Stanley's in my garden crying over his dog. Why doesn't he take him back? They're both unhappy'

'Unhappy! There's no sense in the little man anymore. But 'tis his fit.'

'What is his fit? He travels fifty miles a week to see the brute, and he pretends not to notice me when he sees me on the road; and I'm as unhappy as he is. Make him take the dog back.'

'It's his penance he's set himself. I told him byway av a joke, afther you'd run over him so convenient that night, whin he was dhrunk—I said if he was a Catholic he'd do penance. Off he went wid that fit in his little head *an'* a dose av fever, an' nothin' would suit but givin' you the dog as a hostage.'

'Hostage for what? I don't want hostages from Stanley'

'For his good behaviour. He's keepin' straight now, the way it's no pleasure to associate wid him.'

'Has he taken the pledge?'

'If 'twas only that I need not care. Ye can take the pledge for three months on an' off. He sez he'll never see the dog again, an' so, mark you, he'll keep straight for

evermore. Ye know his fits? Well, this is wan of them. How's the dog takin' it?'

'Like a man. He's the best dog in India. Can't you make Stanley take him back?'

'I can do no more than I have done. But ye know his fits. He's just doin' his penance. What will he do when he goes to the Hills? The docthor's put him on the list.'

It is the custom in India to send a certain number of invalids from each regiment up to stations in the Himalayas for the hot weather; and though the men ought to enjoy the cool and the comfort, they miss the society of the barracks down below, and do their best to come back or to avoid going. I felt that this move would bring matters to a head, so I left Terence hopefully, though he called after me—

'He won't take the dog, sorr. You can lay your month's pay on that. Ye know his fits.'

I never pretended to understand Private Ortheris; and so I did the next best thing—I left him alone.

That summer the invalids of the regiment to which my friend belonged were ordered off to the Hills early, because the doctors thought marching in the cool of the day would do them good. Their route lay south to a place called Umballa, a hundred and twenty miles or more. Then they would turn east and march up into the hills to Kasauli or Dugshai or Subathoo. I dined with the officers the night before they left—they were marching at five in the morning. It was midnight when I drove into my garden and surprised a white figure flying over the wall.

'That man,' said my butler, 'has been here since nine, making talk to that dog. He is quite mad. I did not tell him to go away because he has been here many times before, and because the dog-boy told me that if I told him to go away, that great dog would immediately slay me. He did not wish to speak to the Protector of the Poor, and he did not ask for anything to eat or drink.'

'Kadir Buksh,' said I, 'that was well done, for the dog would surely have killed thee. But I do not think the white soldier will come any more.'

Garm slept ill that night and whimpered in his dreams. Once he sprang up with a clear, ringing bark, and I heard him wag his tail till it waked him and the bark died out in a howl. He had dreamed he was with his master again, and I nearly cried. It was all Stanley's silly fault.

The first halt which the detachment of invalids made was some miles from their barracks, on the Amritsar road, and ten miles distant from my house. By a mere chance one of the officers drove back for another good dinner at the Club (cooking on the line of march is always bad), and there I met him. He was a particular friend of mine, and I knew that he knew how to love a dog properly. His pet was a big fat retriever who was going up to the Hills for his health, and, though it was still April, the round, brown brute puffed and panted in the Club verandah as though he would burst.

‘It’s amazing,’ said the officer, ‘what excuses these invalids of mine make to get back to barracks. There’s a man in my company now asked me for leave to go back to cantonments to pay a debt he’d forgotten. I was so taken by the idea I let him go, and he jingled off in an *ekka* as pleased as Punch. Ten miles to pay a debt! Wonder what it was really?’

‘If you’ll drive me home I think I can show you,’ I said.

So we went over to my house in his dog-cart with the retriever; and on the way I told him the story of Garm.

‘I was wondering where that brute had gone to. He’s the best dog in the regiment,’ said my friend. ‘I offered the little fellow twenty rupees for him a month ago. But he’s a hostage, you say, for Stanley’s good conduct. Stanley’s one of the best men I have—when he chooses.’

‘That’s the reason why,’ I said. ‘A second-rate man wouldn’t have taken things to heart as he has done.’

We drove in quietly at the far end of the garden, and crept round the house. There was a place close to the wall all grown about with tamarisk trees, where I knew Garm kept his bones. Even Vixen was not allowed to sit near it. In the full Indian moonlight I could see a white uniform bending over the dog,

‘Good-bye, old man,’ we could not help hearing Stanley’s voice. ‘For ‘Eving’s sake don’t get bit and go mad by any measly pi-dog. But you can look after yourself, old man. *You* don’t get drunk an’ run about ‘ittin’ your friends. You takes your bones an’ you eats your biscuit, an’ you kills your enemy like a gentleman. I’m goin’ away—don’t ‘owl—I’m goin’ off to Kasauli where I won’t see you no more.’

I could hear him holding Garm’s nose as the dog threw it up to the stars.

‘You’ll stay here an’ be’ave, an’—an’ I’ll go away an’ try to be’ave, an’ I don’t know ‘ow to leave you. I don’t know——’

‘I think this is damn’ silly,’ said the officer, patting his foolish fubsy old retriever. He called to the private, who leaped to his feet, marched forward, and saluted.

‘You here?’ said the officer, turning away his head.

‘Yes, sir, but I’m just goin’ back.’

‘I shall be leaving here at eleven in my cart. You come with me. I can’t have sick men running about all over the place. Report yourself at eleven, *here*,’

We did not say much when we went indoors, but the officer muttered and pulled his retriever’s ears.

He was a disgraceful, overfed door-mat of a dog; and when he waddled off to my cookhouse to be fed, I had a brilliant idea.

At eleven o’clock that officer’s dog was nowhere to be found, and you never heard such a fuss as his owner made. He called and shouted and grew angry, and hunted through my garden for half an hour.

Then I said:

‘He’s sure to turn up in the morning. Send a man in by rail, and I’ll find the beast and return him.’

‘Beast?’ said the officer. ‘I value that dog considerably more than I value any man I know. It’s all very fine for you to talk—your dog’s here.’

So she was—under my feet—and, had she been missing, food and wages would have stopped in my house till her return. But some people grow fond of dogs not worth a cut of the whip. My friend had to drive away at last with Stanley in the back-seat; and then the dog-boy said to me:

‘What kind of animal is Bullen Sahib’s dog? Look at him!’

I went to the boy’s hut, and the fat old reprobate was lying on a mat carefully chained up. He must have heard his master calling for twenty minutes, but had not even attempted to join him.

‘He has no face,’ said the dog-boy scornfully. ‘He is a *punnier-kooter* (a spaniel). He never tried to get that cloth off his jaws when his master called. Now Vixen-baba would have jumped through the window, and that Great Dog would have slain me with his muzzled mouth. It is true that there are many kinds of dogs.’

Next evening who should turn up but Stanley. The officer had sent him back fourteen miles by rail with a note begging me to return the retriever if I had found him, and, if I had not, to offer huge rewards. The last train to camp left at half-past ten, and Stanley stayed till ten talking to Garm. I argued and entreated, and even threatened to shoot the bull-terrier, but the little man was as firm as a rock, though I gave him a good dinner and talked to him most severely. Garm knew as well as I that this was the last time he could hope to see his man, and followed Stanley like a shadow. The retriever said nothing, but licked his lips after his meal and waddled off without so much as saying ‘Thank you’ to the disgusted dog-boy.

So that last meeting was over and I felt as wretched as Garm, who moaned in his sleep all night. When we went to the office he found a place under the table close to Vixen, and dropped flat till it was time to go home. There was no more running out into the verandahs, no slinking away for stolen talks with Stanley. As the weather grew warmer the dogs were forbidden to run beside the cart, but sat at my side on the seat, Vixen with her head under the crook of my left elbow, and Garm hugging the left handrail.

Here Vixen was ever in great form. She had to attend to all the moving traffic, such as bullock-carts that blocked the way, and camels, and led ponies; as well as to keep up her dignity when she passed low friends running in the dust. She never yapped for yapping’s sake, but her shrill, high bark was known all along the Mall, and other men’s terriers ki-yied in reply, and bullock-drivers looked over their shoulders and gave us the road with a grin.

But Garm cared for none of these things. His big eyes were on the horizon and

his terrible mouth was shut. There was another dog in the office who belonged to my chief. We called him 'Bob the Librarian,' because he always imagined vain rats behind the bookshelves, and in hunting for them would drag out half the old newspaper-files. Bob was a well-meaning idiot, but Garm did not encourage him. He would slide his head round the door, panting, 'Rats! Come along, Garm!' and Garm would shift one fore-paw over the other, and curl himself round, leaving Bob to whine at a most uninterested back. The office was nearly as cheerful as a tomb in those days.

Once, and only once, did I see Garm at all contented with his surroundings. He had gone for an unauthorised walk with Vixen early one Sunday morning, and a very young and foolish artilleryman (his battery had just moved to that part of the world) tried to steal them both. Vixen, of course, knew better than to take food from soldiers, and, besides, she had just finished her breakfast. So she trotted back with a large piece of the mutton that they issue to our troops, laid it down on my verandah, and looked up to see what I thought. I asked her where Garm was, and she ran in front of the horse to show me the way.

About a mile up the road we came across our artilleryman sitting very stiffly on the edge of a culvert with a greasy handkerchief on his knees. Garm was in front of him, looking rather pleased. When the man moved leg or hand, Garm bared his teeth in silence. A broken string hung from his collar, and the other half of it lay, all warm, in the artilleryman's still hand. He explained to me, keeping his eyes straight in front of him, that he had met this dog (he called him awful names) walking alone, and was going to take him to the Fort to be killed for a masterless pariah.

I said that Garm did not seem to me much of a pariah, but that he had better take him to the Fort if he thought best. He said he did not care to do so. I told him to go to the Fort alone. He said he did not want to go at that hour, but would follow my advice as soon as I had called off the dog. I instructed Garm to take him to the Fort, and Garm marched him solemnly up to the gate, one mile and a half under a hot sun, and I told the quarter-guard what had happened; but the young artilleryman was more angry than was at all necessary when they began to laugh. Several regiments, he was told, had tried to steal Garm in their time.

That month the hot weather shut down in earnest, and the dogs slept in the bathroom on the cool wet bricks where the bath is placed. Every morning, as soon as the man filled my bath, the two jumped in, and every morning the man filled the bath a second time. I said to him that he might as well fill a small tub specially for the dogs. 'Nay,' said he smiling, 'it is not their custom. They would not understand. Besides, the big bath gives them more space.'

The punkah-coolies who pull the punkahs day and night came to know Garm intimately. He noticed that when the swaying fan stopped I would call out to the coolie and bid him pull with a long stroke. If the man still slept I would wake him



up. He discovered, too, that it was a good thing to lie in the wave of air under the punkah. Maybe Stanley had taught him all about this in barracks. At any rate, when the punkah stopped, Garm would first growl and cock his eye at the rope, and if that did not wake the man—it nearly always did—he would tiptoe forth and talk in the sleeper's ear. Vixen was a clever little dog, but she could never connect the punkah and the coolie; so Garm gave me grateful hours of cool sleep. But he was utterly wretched—as miserable as a human being; and in his misery he clung so closely to me that other men noticed it, and were envious. If I moved from one room to another, Garm followed; if my pen stopped scratching, Garm's head was thrust into my hand; if I turned, half awake, on the pillow, Garm was up and at my side, for he knew that I was his only link with his master, and day and night, and night and day, his eyes asked one question—'When is this going to end?'

Living with the dog a. I did, I never noticed that he was more than ordinarily upset by the hot weather, till one day at the Club a man said: 'That dog of yours will die in a week or two. He's a shadow.' Then I dosed Garm with iron and quinine, which he hated; and I felt very anxious. He lost his appetite, and Vixen was allowed to eat his dinner under his eyes. Even that did not make him swallow, and we held a consultation on him, of the best man-doctor in the place; a lady-doctor, who cured the sick wives of kings; and the Deputy Inspector-General of the veterinary service of all India. They pronounced upon his symptoms, and I told them his story, and Garm lay on a sofa licking my hand.

'He's dying of a broken heart,' said the lady-doctor suddenly.

'Pon my word,' said the Deputy Inspector-General, 'I believe Mrs. Macrae is perfectly right—as usual.'

The best man-doctor in the place wrote a prescription, and the veterinary Deputy Inspector-General went over it afterwards to be sure that the drugs were in the proper dog-proportions; and that was the first time in his life that our doctor ever allowed his prescriptions to be edited. It was a strong tonic, and it put the dear boy on his feet for a week or two; then he lost flesh again. I asked a man I knew to take him up to the Hills with him when he went, and the man came to the door with his kit packed on the top of the carriage. Garm took in the situation at one red glance. The hair rose along his back; he sat down in front of me and delivered the most awful growl I have ever heard in the jaws of a dog. I shouted to my friend to get away at once, and as soon as the carriage was out of the garden Garm laid his head on my knee and whined. So I knew his answer, and devoted myself to getting Stanley's address in the Hills.

My turn to go to the cool came late in August. We were allowed thirty days' holiday in a year, if no one fell sick, and we took it as we could be spared. My chief and Bob the Librarian had their holiday first, and when they were gone I made a calendar, as I always did, and hung it up at the head of my cot, tearing off one day at

a time till they returned. Vixen had gone up to the Hills with me five times before; and she appreciated the cold and the damp and the beautiful wood fires there as much as I did.

‘Garm,’ I said, ‘we are going back to Stanley at Kasauli. Kasauli—Stanley; Stanley—Kasauli.’ And I repeated it twenty times. It was not Kasauli really, but another place. Still I remembered what Stanley had said in my garden on the last night, and I dared not change the name. Then Garm began to tremble; then he barked; and then he leaped up at me, frisking and wagging his tail.

‘Not now,’ I said, holding up my hand. ‘When I say “Go,” we’ll go, Garm.’ I pulled out the little blanket coat and spiked collar that Vixen always wore up in the Hills, to protect her against sudden chills and thieving leopards, and I let the two smell them and talk it over. What they said of course I do not know, but it made a new dog of Garm. His eyes were bright; and he barked joyfully when I spoke to him. He ate his food, and he killed his rats for the next three weeks, and when he began to whine I had only to say ‘Stanley—Kasauli; Kasauli—Stanley,’ to wake him up. I wish I had thought of it before.

My chief came back, all brown with living in the open air, and very angry at finding it so hot in the Plains. That same afternoon we three and Kadir Buksh began to pack for our month’s holiday, Vixen rolling in and out of the bullock-trunk twenty times a minute, and Garm grinning all over and thumping on the floor with his tail. Vixen knew the routine of travelling as well as she knew my office-work. She went to the station, singing songs, on the front seat of the carriage, while Garm sat with me. She hurried into the railway carriage, saw Kadir Buksh make up my bed for the night, got her drink of water, and curled up with her black-patch eye on the tumult of the platform. Garm followed her (the crowd gave him a lane all to himself) and sat down on the pillows with his eyes blazing, and his tail a haze behind him.

We came to Umballa in the hot misty dawn, four or five men, who had been working hard for eleven months, shouting for our dâks—the two-horse travelling carriages that were to take us up to Kalka at the foot of the Hills. It was all new to Garm. He did not understand carriages where you lay at full length on your bedding, but Vixen knew and hopped into her place at once; Garm following. The Kalka Road, before the railway was built, was about forty-seven miles long, and the horses were changed every eight miles. Most of them jibbed, and kicked, and plunged, but they had to go, and they went rather better than usual for Garm’s deep bay in their rear.

There was a river to be forded, and four bullocks pulled the carriage, and Vixen stuck her head out of the sliding-door and nearly fell into the water while she gave directions. Garm was silent and curious, and rather needed reassuring about Stanley and Kasauli. So we rolled, barking and yelping, into Kalka for lunch, and Garm ate

enough for two.

After Kalka the road wound among the hills, and we took a curricule with half-broken ponies, which were changed every six miles. No one dreamed of a railroad to Simla in those days, for it was seven thousand feet up in the air. The road was more than fifty miles long, and the regulation pace was just as fast as the ponies could go. Here, again, Vixen led Garm from one carriage to the other; jumped into the back seat, and shouted. A cool breath from the snows met us about five miles out of Kalka, and she whined for her coat, wisely fearing a chill on the liver. I had had one made for Garm too, and, as we climbed to the fresh breezes, I put it on, and Garm chewed it uncomprehendingly, but I think he was grateful.

‘Hi-yi-yi-yi!’ sang Vixen as we shot round the curves; ‘Toot-toot-toot!’ went the driver’s bugle at the dangerous places, and ‘Yow! yow! yow!’ bayed Garm. Kadir Buksh sat on the front seat and smiled. Even he was glad to get away from the heat of the Plains that stewed in the haze behind us. Now and then we would meet a man we knew going down to his work again, and he would say: ‘What’s it like below?’ and I would shout: ‘Hotter than cinders. What’s it like up above?’ and he would shout back: ‘Just perfect!’ and away we would go.

Suddenly Kadir Buksh said, over his shoulder: ‘Here is Solon’; and Garm snored where he lay with his head on my knee. Solon is an unpleasant little cantonment, but it has the advantage of being cool and healthy. It is all bare and windy, and one generally stops at a rest-house near by for something to eat. I got out and took both dogs with me, while Kadir Buksh made tea. A soldier told us we should find Stanley ‘out there,’ nodding his head towards a bare, bleak hill.

When we climbed to the top we spied that very Stanley, who had given me all this trouble, sitting on a rock with his face in his hands and his overcoat hanging loose about him. I never saw anything so lonely and dejected in my life as this one little man, crumpled up and thinking, on the great grey hillside.

Here Garm left me.

He departed without a word, and, so far as I could see, without moving his legs. He flew through the air bodily, and I heard the whack of him as he flung himself at Stanley, knocking the little man clean over. They rolled on the ground together, shouting, and yelping, and hugging. I could not see which was dog and which was man, till Stanley got up and whimpered.

He told me that he had been suffering from fever at intervals, and was very weak. He looked all he said, but even while I watched, both man and dog plumped out to their natural sizes, precisely as dried apples swell in water. Garm was on his shoulder, and his breast and feet all at the same time, so that Stanley spoke all through a cloud of Garm—gulping, sobbing, slaverling Garm. He did not say anything that I could understand, except that he had fancied he was going to die, but that now he was quite well, and that he was not going to give up Garm any more to

anybody under the rank of Beelzebub.

Then he said he felt hungry, and thirsty, and happy.

We went down to tea at the rest-house, where Stanley stuffed himself with sardines and raspberry jam, and beer, and cold mutton and pickles, when Garm wasn't climbing over him; and then Vixen and I went on.

Garm saw how it was at once. He said good-bye to me three times, giving me both paws one after another, and leaping on to my shoulder. He further escorted us, singing Hosannas at the top of his voice, a mile down the road. Then he raced back to his own master.

Vixen never opened her mouth, but when the cold twilight came, and we could see the lights of Simla across the hills, she snuffled with her nose at the breast of my ulster. I unbuttoned it, and tucked her inside. Then she gave a contented little sniff, and fell fast asleep, her head on my breast, till we bundled out at Simla, two of the four happiest people in all the world that night.

From *Thy Servant A Dog*, circa 1920

## ***“Sandy” Beresford’s Tigerhunt***

by Charles A. Kincaid

**W**alter Beresford, known to his friends as “Sandy” because of his reddish-yellow hair, but styled by the Government of Bombay as Mr. Walter Trevelyn Beresford, District Superintendent of Police, Dharwar, lay in a long chair on the verandah of the traveller’s bungalow at D——, some sixty miles from Dharwar cantonment. In front of him stretched a beautiful little lake, covered here and there with masses of water-lilies; in far corners of it dab-chicks disported themselves, while a bunch or two of teal and an odd “spotbill” sneaked about, half hidden by the reeds. “Sandy” had had an excellent dinner and felt at peace with the world; moreover that afternoon he had bagged his seventeenth panther.

The only fly in the ointment of his happiness was that he was alone. It was the first day of the Christmas holidays and he had expected his old friend Ford Halley, the D.S.P. of Belgaum, to be at D——with him. On his arrival that morning at the bungalow, a telegram was handed to him. He opened it and read the following words:

“Very sorry. Detained by a murder case. Joining you tomorrow.”

Beresford was thus condemned to spend the next twenty-four hours alone. Happily Ford Halley would be there for Christmas; so the two friends would eat their Christmas dinner together. On Boxing Day the real business of the camp would begin. They would drive for a man-eating tiger that had been doing a lot of damage

over an area of twenty miles round D——. Ford Halley was an old shikari and had at least a dozen tigers to his credit. Nor was Sandy Beresford a new hand. He had killed a couple of tigers, two or three bears and sixteen panthers.

During breakfast which Beresford, after a long ride in his car, ate with a first class appetite, his orderly, who also did duty as shikari, came in in a state of suppressed excitement. “Wagh! Sahib! Wagh!” he half-whispered, half-hissed at his master.

Beresford sprang to his feet. “Patayat Wagh? (A Tiger)? Biblia Wagh (A Panther?).”

“Mothe Thorile nahint. (It is not a tiger). Biblia Wagh ahe. (It is a panther).”

Beresford was at first disappointed, but on second thoughts felt a thrill of joy. If he got the panther it would make his seventeenth, only three short of twenty. Twenty panthers were quite a respectable total for a man of only thirteen years’ service. He turned to his shikari: “Well, Dhondu,” he said, “how far off is it?”

“Sahib, it is only the other side of the lake. It killed a young buffalo last night and dragged the kill under a big tree. I have had the kill tied with a rope to the trunk and if the Sahib is ready to come this afternoon about four, I shall have a *machan* (stand) built and come and fetch the Sahib.”

“Splendid!” said Beresford. “I shall be ready all right. You had better go back now and rig up the *machan*, so that all work at it may be finished before half past three. The panther might wake up then; and if he saw you at work I should get no chance of a shot.”

The shikari salaamed and vanished.

Beresford took from its case his rifle, a .400 Jeffery cordite, that would stop a charging elephant. He glanced down the barrels and satisfied himself that they were beautifully clean; he put the rifle to his shoulder once or twice to see that it came up all right. Next he took out his shotgun which, loaded with SS, he carried always as a second weapon. These preparations finished, he lay in his long chair and smoked and dozed until tea time. A little before four his shikari appeared and the two men went off together.

The shikari had not underestimated the distance. The spot where the kill lay was only half an hour’s walk from the bungalow; and when Beresford reached it, he found the man whom the shikari had left in the *machan* in a great state of excitement. The panther, he said, had come and had looked at the dead buffalo from a distance of fifty yards. Then it had moved away. It was somewhere close by. The Sahib should get into the *machan* without delay.

Beresford, recognising the soundness of the advice, climbed as quickly as possible into his hiding place. Ten minutes later he saw dimly the outline of the panther, lying in some bushes fifty yards away. It was too difficult a shot to risk; so he waited. After some five to ten minutes, during which time Beresford’s heart

thumped so hard that he was afraid the panther would hear it, the brute rose and came towards the kill. It was evidently not very hungry; for instead of beginning at once to tear the flesh, it stood looking at the dead buffalo, as if uncertain with which bit to start its meal. Before it came to any decision, a bullet from Beresford's .400 rendered the question academic. The panther lay dead on its dead victim, of which it would never eat another mouthful.

Beresford came back in excellent spirits, the villagers carrying his seventeenth panther, fastened by its four feet to a long bamboo pole. He tubbed, changed and ate the dinner provided for him with a Spartan's appetite, although indeed his cook had served a meal that needed no hunger sauce. Beresford was now reclining in a long chair, as I have said, in the verandah of the bungalow and a golden coloured "peg" lay within reach of his right hand.

As he lay, he suddenly began to feel creepy. He remembered a story told him, when a boy, of his grandfather General Beresford. The latter, when a young officer, had, shortly after the Mutiny, been posted to Dharwar, and had gone on a shooting trip to the very bungalow where "Sandy" now was. He had had a horrible experience. Lying in a long chair in the verandah where his grandson now lay, he had gone asleep. By him reclined his friend, a Captain Richardson, afterwards General Sir Archibald Richardson. He, too, had dropped off. Beresford had been awakened by a sharp pain in his left arm. Looking at it, he had seen a tiger standing beside him. It had seized his arm in its mouth and was dragging at it. Beresford had kept his head and had called to Richardson to fetch a rifle from within and shoot the brute. As the tiger was pulling at his arm, Beresford had to go with him, for he feared that if he resisted the tiger would kill him outright. He rose and walked alongside the tiger through the compound—a *via dolorosa* as terrible as any in history—hoping always that Richardson would be able to put the rifle together and load it before they reached the compound wall. The idea that Richardson would shew the white feather never entered his head; but Beresford knew that on reaching the compound wall the tiger would take his body into its mouth to leap the wall. He walked step by step, as slowly as he dared. Suddenly he heard a cheery voice and the steps of his friend racing behind him. The tiger seemed utterly contemptuous of the newcomer and stopped near the wall, preparatory to gathering its victim's body within its mighty jaws. The moment's pause proved its undoing. Richardson, reaching the tiger's side, knelt down; aiming at its heart, he pulled the trigger. The brute's grip on Beresford's arm relaxed and it rolled over amid a cloud of smoke. It was stone dead. Richardson had saved his friend's life; but Beresford's left arm had had to be amputated; and "Sandy" remembered distinctly the empty sleeve that his grandfather used to wear pinned across his breast.

"Sandy" looked nervously round and felt very much inclined to run into his bedroom and bolt the door. Then he pulled himself together, smiled at his fears and

said half aloud: "The modern tiger has far too wholesome respect for the Englishman to behave in that truculent fashion." To support his statement, he drained the whisky and soda at his side, settled himself once more in his chair and a few minutes later fell fast asleep.

He had a ghastly dream. He dreamt that he had gone to bathe in the lake in front of the bungalow. As he entered the water one of his sepoy's ran up and begged him not to, as it was full of "maghars". Beresford laughed at the warning and began swimming in the lake. Suddenly an acute pain in his left arm made him realise that the sepoy's warning was one to have followed. An alligator had seized him by the arm and was trying to pull him under. Struggle as "Sandy" Beresford might, he was helpless. He cried aloud for help and in doing so woke up, the perspiration streaming down his face.

He gave a sigh of relief and wanted to wipe his face with his handkerchief. He found he could not move his left arm which, moreover, hurt him a good deal. Surprised, he looked and saw that a tiger was standing by his chair and had seized his left arm, just as the other tiger sixty years before had seized his grandfather's. By an involuntary trick of memory he called out "Richardson! Richardson!" Then his blood ran cold as he realised that he was alone in the bungalow. If only Ford Halley had been there; but there was no one. Even the shikari had gone to another village to tie up for the shoot on Boxing Day. There were, it is true, the servants in their quarters; but their doors were certainly barricaded from inside and they would be far too frightened to come outside, even if they knew how to handle a rifle. "Sandy" Beresford's case was indeed desperate, nevertheless he called out at the top of his voice "Qui Hai! Qui Hai!" hoping for some miracle to happen.

No one answered and the tiger, disturbed by the noise, was pulling at Beresford's left arm in a way that took no denial. Just as his grandfather had done, "Sandy" rose to his feet, and walked alongside the tiger down the verandah steps and across the compound towards the far wall. He continued to call at the top of his voice as he went. He knew that it was wasted breath; still hope dies hard.

At last, when he was close to the compound wall, he realised that he was a doomed man. Nevertheless he made a supreme effort to escape. Indeed he actually tore his arm out of the tiger's jaws; but the effort was useless. A stroke of the tiger's paw knocked him senseless to the ground. The tiger's teeth tearing through his heart and lungs effectually prevented his ever recovering consciousness. Taking Beresford's arm again into his mouth, the man-eater skilfully swung the dead man's body across its shoulders and, easily clearing the compound wall, disappeared into the forest.

Next morning Beresford's cook and butler opened the doors of their quarters and peered outside. Ignorant of the previous night's tragedy, the cook made his master's tea and the butler carried it inside the bungalow. The latter was surprised



not to find Beresford in his bedroom and he was still more astonished to notice that his master's bed had not been slept in. He called to the cook and the sepoy. They searched everywhere in vain. Then the butler saw drops of blood on the floor of the verandah leading into the compound. These they followed until they came to some softer earth where they could make out clearly an Englishman's footprints and a tiger's pugs. They guessed then that Beresford had fallen a victim to the very man-eater that he had come to kill.

When Ford Halley arrived about eleven, he found his friend's domestic staff in a state of utter perplexity and confusion. The shikari to whom Beresford had related what had happened to his grandfather was loudly proclaiming that the tiger was not an ordinary animal but a demon reincarnation of the beast that Richardson had shot. It was, therefore, useless to hunt it. All that man could do was to flee from the accursed spot as quickly as possible.

Ford Halley brushed aside this fantastic theory and restored some order among the household. He organised a search for Beresford's body and found his half-eaten remains a mile from the bungalow. These he had put into an improvised coffin and sent into Dharwar, where they received a Christian burial. The rest of the holidays he spent hunting the man-eater and was able to put 'paid' to its account on the very last day, namely the second of January. In the meantime he reported his friend's death to the Bombay Government.

When His Excellency learnt the news of the tragedy he wrote a charming letter to Beresford's widowed mother, informing her—which was quite true—how much he regretted her son's death and how greatly he felt the loss of his valuable services.

From his brother officers Beresford received the epitaph usual in such cases:

"Beresford killed by a tiger! By Jove, what bad luck!" After a pause "Damn it all! Dharwar is a splendid climate. I wonder whether the Government would send me there if I applied for it."

From *Indian Christmas Stories* (1930)

## *A Terrible Bedfellow*

by L. St. C. Grondona

**N**ot a bad spot to camp, this, old men, and there looks to be a decent bit of pickin' for you two down there on that burnt flat, doesn't there?"

An Australian bushman invariably talks to his horse, and "Biljim" was no exception. Born and bred in Central Queensland, he was the typical long, wiry, sun-tanned product of the bush. Just at present he was travelling between two outback cattle stations.

Having removed the riding and pack-saddles, with their gear, Biljim unfastened his quart-pot from where it had been suspended from the "D's" of his saddle, and, still chatting absent-mindedly to his horses, led them over to the artesian bore. A muffled roar that grew in intensity as they approached told of a magnificent flow of water.

These bores are driven down into the bowels of the earth to depths varying from a couple of hundred to three thousand or even four thousand feet, till the drill pierces the porous strata through which the seemingly limitless subterranean lakes or rivers of Australia flow. The clear, sparkling water, slightly mineralised, then gushes riotously up the narrow bore and pours forth in a steady flow, never varying perceptibly in its intense volume, which in many bores is over a million gallons a day. This glorious stream is directed into channels that carry it to the natural watercourses or creeks. It keeps these replenished for miles during the longest

drought, when otherwise the creeks would be dry and the squatter's stock would fare ill. One happens on artesian bores in most unexpected places in the bush.

Biljim pulled the bits out of his horses' mouths and they drank their fill. Then taking the quart-pot he proceeded to souse the animals' backs thoroughly, at the same time rubbing vigorously to remove the sweat and dust that had gathered under the saddles. Having completed their toilet Biljim led his animals down to the burnt patch. This was a strip of country through which a bush fire had passed perhaps a month before. The new green shoots of herbage promised well for a good night's feed for the animals.

Biljim, having put a bell on Lofty and a pair of hobbles on Kate, told them to "get a good skin full," and strolled back to camp. Here he lit a fire and put his quart-pot on to boil. He next removed his sleeping-kit from the pack-saddle, and selecting a decently clear patch of ground, spread out a strip of unbleached calico: A couple of grey blankets, with his saddle as pillow, made his modest bed for the night complete—except, of course, for the mosquito-net. Pulling his tomahawk from its leather carrier, fastened, as the quart-pot had been, to the "D's" of his saddle, he cut four strong stakes about four feet in length and, sharpening the ends, drove one in at each corner of his bunk. The mosquito net—absolutely indispensable in the Northern Australian bush—was then rigged. It was made of strong cheese-cloth in the shape of a box, to the four upper corners of which were attached tapes to suspend it from the tops of the four stakes or "bed-posts." The sun was just sinking in a characteristic ball of fire, its rays dimmed by the dense shimmering haze of the mid-summer evening. Darkness would be down with tropical suddenness on the grey, silent bush in a few minutes.

"By gum! I'll rinse those saddle-cloths out over at the bore before it gets dark," said Biljim to himself, and proceeded to carry out the idea, taking his towel and soap at the same time.

That little thoughtfulness for his horses brought Biljim nearer to his death than he has ever been since, even in the then little-dreamt-of days in Gallipoli and Northern France.

The walls of the box-net contained plenty of material, in order that they could be well tucked in all round under the blankets. The mosquitoes of Central Queensland are popularly described as being "as big as tom-tits, as thirsty as vampires, and as vicious as a cornered dingo." However that may be, it is necessary to tuck in the net all round when rigging it, otherwise unpleasant visitors soon find their way underneath, and wait to pounce on their unhappy victim when he turns in.

Biljim was back in a quarter of an hour. He hung the saddle-cloths over a branch of a tree, knowing that they would dry in the warm night air long before morning. It was nearly dark now, and he threw a handful of mixed tea and sugar into the vigorously-boiling quart-pot and quickly lifted it off the fire with two sticks, so

that it might draw while he got out his “tucker.”

As the fire blazed up momentarily Biljim noticed that he had neglected to tuck in his mosquito-net, so he promptly remedied the trouble, and then sat down on a log to enjoy his solitary meal. He was in luck that evening, for he had spent the previous night at a station, and had been able to make some purchases at the station store—a tin or two of fish and some jam and odds and ends. In addition, the hut cook had loaded him up with “Johnnie cakes,” “brownie,” and cooked fresh meat. The mosquitoes, however, were already too troublesome to allow him to linger over his food, and he hurried through the meal in order to get to his pipe again. Putting his stores away in a sugar bag, he hung it to the branch of a tree, hoping the ants would not find a hole through which to make raids on his meat and jam.

Biljim was possibly the only human being for twenty miles in any direction, but that troubled him not one whit. From the direction of the green flat came the comforting tinkle of Lofty’s bell. His horses had good pasture; he had eaten his fill, his bed was ready to roll into, and that was all that mattered.

His pipe finished, he lost no time in getting his clothes off and crawling—innocent of aught but his grey shirt—under the mosquito-net. Biljim did not wear pyjamas. He’d seen them on “Jackaroos” (new chums), and had often meant to try them, but had not done so yet. Needless to say, he did not bother about getting under the blankets. Taking care that no part of his epidermis was touching the cheese-cloth he stretched himself out, and was soon fast asleep.

Suddenly Biljim awoke with a sensation of the utmost horror.

Gliding leisurely across his throat was the cold, silky-scaly body of a large snake. That same cold, silky-scaly body was travelling leisurely across his naked legs, and all up his right side and over his right upper arm he could feel the same leisurely sinuous movement.

Biljim lay as still as death. It was now bright moonlight, but, lying as he was, he could see nothing of his dreadful bedmate. The reptile continued its slow movement and gradually drew clear of the man’s throat. A cold perspiration broke out on Biljim’s head, face, and throat. His heart beat with a palpitation whose every thud threatened to burst something in his head. Nevertheless he lay still, not daring to move a finger. His mouth grew parched and dry, and his breath came in short gasps. He was not a religious man—he had never been taught a formal prayer in his life, nor had he been inside a church—but he muttered an appeal of concentrated fervour. Mentally he cursed his carelessness in not tucking the net in securely, and hoped against hope that the snake had gone whence it had come, little dreaming that the reptile, though extremely anxious to get out, was unable to do so, as the net was now carefully tucked in all round, and it was impossible for it to escape.

As time passed the man had a vague hope that the snake had gone, but the next instant he felt the brute crawling across his legs again. This time it moved up the

side of the bunk to about his waist, when it crawled up on to his stomach and then moved towards his left breast. Now poor Biljim could see the reptile's head quite plainly in the moonlight. It was broad and blunt, and though it showed black in that light Biljim guessed it to be the deadly brown desert snake. A picture of "Tommy," his best cattle-dog, dying in ten minutes after being bitten by just such a reptile, flew to his mind as the snake suddenly stopped still. It was obviously startled by the violent pulsations of the bushman's heart. His left breast literally heaved at every beat, and his whole side quivered. The snake's only movement now was to poke its black forked tongue threateningly in and out. Biljim felt its body stiffen perceptibly, as though drawing its muscles taut, and he knew only too well that this tightening of the muscles was preparatory to striking!

The suspense was awful. The cold perspiration stood out in great beads all over his body. The thudding of his heart grew worse, and the snake became momentarily more uneasy. Suddenly it reared its head a foot in the air with a vicious jerk, and remained poised there, its head flattened abnormally and its cruel black eyes glistening fiendishly. The faintest movement of hand, arm, neck, or head, and those deadly fangs, Biljim knew, would be buried like lightning in his helpless, quivering flesh!

Biljim shut his eyes for fear that they would attract the venomous fangs, and waited in an agony of dread for the snake's next move. After a seemingly interminable period the reptile appeared to become reassured, for it dropped cautiously from the striking position and Biljim felt its muscles relax again as the brute continued its interrupted peregrination. Again the man lost touch with the cold, scaly body, and presently a reaction set in. He had the greatest difficulty in keeping himself from shivering violently, but by clenching his fists and tightening his muscles he managed to overcome this, though violent pains unaccountably racked his whole body. Fervently he hoped that his deadly companion had found its way out, but once more it was a forlorn hope.

Presently it dawned on Biljim that for some reason or other the snake could not get away, and he commenced to try and discover a method whereby he could get out of his terrible predicament. At first he had a wild idea of leaping madly to his feet, breaking the tapes of the net, and jumping clear of the bed and its occupant. He dismissed this however, as folly; without a doubt he would be bitten before he had even succeeded in getting to his feet. Another idea—to carefully pull out part of the tucked-in net and so open an avenue of escape for the snake—seemed more practical. Nevertheless, it was very risky, for although he could occasionally feel a touch from the cold body, he had no idea where the head was. It seemed inevitable that he must take the risk, so very carefully he unclenched his right hand and with the utmost caution moved it towards the edge of the bed. Suddenly he heard the snake crawling over or round the saddle at the back of his head, and he checked the

movement of his hand just as his fingers touched the net. His hand remained, as it were, “cupped,” with the palm downwards. A few seconds later he felt a cold light touch on the side of his wrist, and the next instant what was undoubtedly the reptile’s head was pushed in under the palm of his hand. The snake was trying every corner and crevice, seeking an outlet from its prison.

In that instant poor Biljim made up his mind. In the fraction of a second his fingers had clenched in a vice-like grip around the venomous head! Then, like a flash, the man leapt to his feet, the net ties giving way before the force of his jump. Madly he shook clear the clinging folds and staggered free, for by this time he was engaged in a queer and desperate struggle. The snake was a monster of its kind, and amazingly strong. Directly its head was gripped it coiled itself round the man’s arm and throat, and strained with terrific force to pull its head free. Biljim’s right arm was stretched out to its full extent. The snake had managed to pull its head back an inch or two, and the man’s fingers had now a life-and-death grip around the top and bottom jaw.

With all his strength he dug his finger-tips into the soft under-jaw, and hooked them round the jaw-bones to better his grip. Meanwhile, with his left hand, he tore frantically at the two coils of the reptile that imprisoned his throat. Savagely the deadly thing writhed and tugged. The pressure of the coils around his arm was gradually weakening Biljim’s muscles, whereas the snake showed no signs of weakening. After much struggling, however, the bushman managed to unwind the coils from his neck. He dexterously helped the snake to take a fresh turn round his chest, where he did not feel the strain, and had then two hands to deal with the venomous head. Gripping the snake again, close to his right hand—which, though rapidly losing its strength, was still sufficiently strong to hold the head steady—with the left hand he twisted the neck firmly and inexorably till a crack told that he had won! A quiver ran through the big brute’s body and the coils grew slack.

Wearily Biljim shook them off, and threw the dead snake from him. He staggered towards his water-bottle, but before he reached it stumbled and fell in a dead faint.

When he recovered he decided to camp all next day, “just to give the horses a spell and a feed,” as he told some drovers who happened along that track and camped with him next night. But they found the snake, and bit by bit gleaned the whole story from him. The reptile was indeed a deadly desert brown, and measured seven feet six inches in length. I was one of the drovers, so I know.

I met Biljim recently with a Queensland battalion in France. I reminded him of his adventure with the snake, and asked him if he remembered it.

“Jove!” he ejaculated, fervently. “You didn’t think I’d forgotten it, did you?”

From *The Wide World Magazine*

# *Chased By Bees*

by E.F. Martin

*While watching a number of apes the writer, a well-known African traveller, unwittingly disturbed a nest of angry and fierce bees, with decidedly unpleasant consequences.*

**E**arly on one of those glorious African tropical mornings, shortly after break of day, I set out from the quiet bungalow, accompanied by one of my servants, who carried my gun and kit.

Turning westward, I made my way through the still sleeping village of Lokoja, towards the foot of the towering eminence that frowns from its twelve hundred feet over the great valley of the Niger and Benue rivers. We soon reached the base of the hill, and commenced our long and arduous climb. As the rise is rapid, and extremely steep, the view, as we climbed step by step, grew and expanded in the fading twilight of the early morning. Away beyond the converging rivers the ghostly mists were gradually rolling up into the distant hills and valleys on the eastern horizon. The silver, snake-like Benue seemed literally to be rising up out of the haze and glory of the coming day, out of the path of the rising sun, whose rays were beginning to shoot upward, high into the deep and beautiful blue. The grey-green of the shadowy world, spreading at our feet, was delightful in its calm, refreshing coolness, and seemed to be vaguely stirring in its sleep beneath that veil of mystery that lightly, though impenetrably, hangs over all that land. The cool,

gentle breeze of the hillside fanned our cheeks and was very refreshing, as, from time to time, we halted to rest the beating of our hearts. Winding ever upward through rocky glades, we reached what I have always called the “roof of Lokoja”—the last fifty or hundred yards as steep as the roof of a house.

Having mastered this last and toughest part of our climb we emerged on to the flat table-land that, like a park, crowns the summit of this massive hill. Taking a path through the dewy grass leading to the edge of the spur above the village I soon came upon one of the most magnificent sights it is possible to witness—the rising of the sun over the valley of the Benue. It is a scene that, in glory, baffles description; where the dazzling rays drive out in one wild burst all the dark shadows of the night that has gone, and light up the whole vast tableau of rolling plain, winding rivers, and rugged encircling hills with the blaze of day.

Taking the gun from Thomas, my servant, I again turned westward, and crossed the beautiful park-land with its signs of awakening life. Here and there from out of the leafy shadows of some giant trees that were scattered over the table-land the croaking or crowing of some great bird could be heard, and the myriad twitters of countless smaller birds, as they awoke to the knowledge of another day. Perhaps, also, some big-billed creature would, with great heavy-beating wings, dive from some bough overhead and, with ponderous flight, soar away through the morning air to its favourite pool or marshland. More than once a frightened deer sprang leaping away through the grass and bushes. Then the first bee settled upon a flower, and I knew that the sun had touched, at last, the sparkling grassland.

I paused at the farther edge of the plateau, overlooking a great sea of tumbling hills and narrow valleys as far as the eye could see. At my feet the hill fell away in a vast wooded sweep far down into the green valley below. I dropped over the rocky edge and quietly descended, followed by Thomas, through the pathless forest down among the shadows of the western slopes. I had not gone very far when I heard the words “Massa! Massa!” coming in an awed undertone from behind me.

Halting, I looked round to inquire the meaning of the call, when I saw Thomas pointing and gazing with most intense excitement at some object on our right. Looking in the direction indicated, I discerned, some hundreds of yards away, what seemed to be the black forms of several men, all quite still.

Thomas at once volunteered the information that they were “Big bad monkey, sir!”

Being desirous of trying if I could not discover to what species these “big, bad monkey” belonged I approached cautiously, Thomas meanwhile protesting and entreating me to return to the top of the plateau.

Suddenly, about fifty or sixty yards away, a great black ape swung himself out of a tree. With one hand resting on a bough above his head, he stood or rather leaned, in a queer, ape-like, half man-like attitude, the knuckles of his disengaged



hand resting on the ground and, turning his queer, grey face towards me, looked at us intently, with an expression of wild inquiry in his beady eyes. I was certainly rather startled by this sudden apparition, and brought my rifle to the ready in case of emergency.

I soon found that Thomas and I were the centre of a circle of inquiring eyes, as I counted no fewer than seven of these monsters staring at us from behind jutting rocks and trunks of trees. They were all black, with grey faces. Their arms were of enormous length, and the nearest ape seemed to be the size of a big, powerful man. I felt a great desire to shoot at the nearest beast, but two considerations prevented my doing so—the first being a sort of natural disinclination to shoot at any kind of monkey, owing, I suppose, to its resemblance to the human species; the second consideration being the remembrance of what was once told me—namely, that if you kill one of these great apes, the rest will attack you and give you a very bad time of it.

Determining to watch and see what the brutes, if left unmolested, would do, I sought out a rounded mossy stone and sat down upon it, with my rifle across my knees. Thomas seated himself a few feet away from me.

We had not been there two minutes when a vague, dull murmur struck upon my ears. I could not locate it—if anywhere, it seemed to come up out of the valley. Thinking—it some distant waterfall I turned my attention once more in the direction of the monkeys, who were still gaping at us.

With a start, I suddenly noticed that the murmur had become a strange, indefinable roar, and then I knew! A great whirring, buzzing, whirling cloud of bees surged up between my legs, from under the mossy stone, and settled down upon me, on every square inch of my person—exposed or covered.

With a yell of pain I sprang up, beating my face, head, and neck with my hands, and blindly charged uphill, followed by Thomas, who was roaring at the top of his voice his eternal “Oh, sir, sir!”

We dashed on uphill, over boulders and slippery rocks, through prickly bushes, with ever that hideous swarming cloud of stinging bees surging round our heads, past where the apes had been—now scattered utterly, apparently frightened out of their lives by our tremendous and noisy charge. On reaching the top of the slope and emerging from the woods I dashed across the plateau in the direction of a pool I knew of, shielding my aching face and head as best I could.

On reaching the pool, situated in a grove of trees, I flung myself bodily in, followed by the blindly faithful Thomas, and splashed and wallowed in the cool and shallow waters until the last of the bees had gone—drowned, mostly, in the pool where we had tumbled.

# *In the Jaws of the Alligator*

by P.C. Arnoult

*A tragic tug-of-war between a Papuan islander and a monster alligator over the body of his wife, who was snatched from the canoe.*

I had had a very busy day with the islanders. The time for the arrival of the Sydney steamer was drawing near. She was to pick up copra, rubber, sandalwood, and tortoise-shell. The natives were coming in greater numbers every day, exchanging their goods for all kinds of merchandise. On the whole I was very pleased, for a fine cargo was accumulating, and the steamer would bring news from home, and also provisions and articles with which to trade with the natives.

Before retiring for the night I strolled on to the beach to enjoy the cool breeze which had sprung up after sunset and was blowing quietly from the Owen Stanley ranges on the mainland. The only noises to be heard were the murmur of the wavelets on the beach, the insistent hum of the mosquitoes, and now and then the heavy flap of the flying-foxes' wings or their shrieks as they fought one another for some choice fruit.

While watching the streaks of light made by the fire-flies in their antics under the wide-spreading leaves of the coco-nut trees, which were growing to the very edge of the beach, I heard on the water the splash of paddles and also the sounds of hushed voices. I stood still and listened. Presently I discerned a native canoe making

at full speed for my landing-place.

I was rather surprised, and wondered what it could mean. The native village was on the other side of the island, and the natives never visited my station at night unless at my request. Without delay I made my way over to the landing-stage to see what was the matter.

Before I got there, however, the canoe had arrived, and I saw a native lift something out of it and make his way towards my house. I called to him. Hearing my voice, he turned towards me, and a few seconds later had deposited his burden at my feet. The next moment I recognised him, a young fellow known by the name of Ume; who often worked for me, either when there was copra to be made or rubber trees to be tapped. His burden was his wife Taita, who died a few moments later at my feet before I could do anything for her.

And this is the awful story Ume told me, every word of which I believe to be true, for his little son, who was in the canoe with them, made exactly the same statement. Often since, when friends have asked me, "Are the Papuans a brave race? Are they fond of their womenfolk?" I answer them by narrating this story, and leave them to draw their own conclusions.

That morning they had left their village to go to the Ethel River, on the mainland, to gather mussel-shells, with which to make lime to chew with their betelnuts. Arriving at the desired rendezvous, they first made sure that there were no alligators about. Taita then began diving and collecting the shells from the mud on the bottom of the river. When she came to the surface her husband would take the shells from her and stack them in the bottom of the canoe. During the operations the man and the boy kept a sharp look-out for any sign of the dreaded saurians.

This went on until they had enough shells for their needs. Ume then helped Taita back into the canoe, and while she was washing the mud off her hands and arms he busied himself in making preparations for the return journey. Suddenly a cry of pain made him turn round, just in time to see a big alligator, which had approached undetected, drag his wife into the water. The brute had caught her by the right shoulder, and the poor woman was fighting fiercely to free herself from the reptile's hold.

Without a moment's hesitation the man jumped into the water, and, seizing his wife's body, he started matching his strength against the alligator's, each pulling his own way. A more tragic tug-of-war it is difficult to imagine. But the pain was too great for the woman to endure, and after a short struggle she begged her husband to desist. "Let go!" she cried. "Let him have me! He'll drown me, then it will be all over. I cannot bear the pain any longer."

Reluctantly her husband let go his hold, but he did not give up the fight. On the contrary, he told Taita to keep on struggling, and, though entirely unarmed, he threw himself at the brute. He tried every conceivable way imaginable to make the

monster let go its burden. But an alligator's bite is like a bulldog's, and when their teeth have closed on anything they never let go. In despair the husband climbed on to the brute's back and tried to poke its eyes out with his naked fingers. Finding this manœuvre made not the slightest impression upon his strange antagonist, he next tried to open its jaws with his bare hands. He might as well have tried to bend an iron bar. Finally, he endeavoured to break or twist back the alligator's paws, using his knee as a lever, but all to no avail. He exerted every ounce of strength and took terrible risks, but the brute was immovable.

The struggle had now gone on for quite a considerable time, and both he and his wife were getting exhausted. Still the stubborn, relentless jaws were closed and the long, pointed teeth were buried in the quivering flesh, and the small, wicked eyes obstinately blinked.

In spite of the terrible agony his wife was suffering, she was still quite conscious. But her strength was fast leaving her, and the pain was almost unendurable.

"Go back to the village," she shouted to her husband, "and tell them to come and avenge me! Let him drown me, for I cannot stand any more."

Suddenly Ume thought of his lance, which was in the bottom of the canoe. Turning round, he saw that the canoe and his little son of about eight, whom he had quite forgotten during the terrible struggle, were drifting slowly down the river, the current, though sluggish, proving too strong for the boy.

The man knew that if he ceased to worry the alligator it would dive and get away, so he called to his son to beach the canoe on the mud of the bank and bring him the lance. This the boy did, and swam back to the boat.

Now armed, the husband renewed the fight with added strength, and carefully pushing the lance between the roof of the mouth of the alligator and the body of his wife, he stuck it with all his strength down the animal's throat.

So far the alligator's attitude had been one of passive and stubborn resistance, but now, driven to it by the pain, it started lashing the water with its tail and its paws. Only by quick movements did the man escape being torn by those fearful paws. To and fro the great creature swayed in its efforts to get the lance out of its jaws. But the man held the weapon firmly and would not give in. Suddenly, throwing its head up, it opened its jaws and released the woman's body. Then, as if weary of the combat, it swam away at full speed.

Ume recovered the body and with it swam to the canoe. Having only sea-water with which to wash the gaping wounds, and no cloth or bandages to dress them, he hurried back to the island; but the loss of blood and the injuries received had been too great, and Taita died a few moments after reaching the island.

This is only one of the many instances of heroic fights put up by the natives in defence of their dear ones against their commonest enemy which have come under

my notice in Papua.

Probably some of my readers will wonder how the natives obtain lime from mussel-shells. The process is as simple as it is effective. They prepare a stack of dry bamboos. Bamboo is chosen because, while giving a very great heat, it burns clearly, quickly, and leaves very little ash. Upon this stack they heap the shells and then light the fire. When the bamboo is burnt out the shells are roasted. Green banana leaves are then brought on the scene, and in these the shells are wrapped and tied up; then the bundles are placed on live coals, and the steam caused by the action of the hot coals on the green leaves permeates the shells and slakes them. Upon opening the bundles a very fine white lime is found to be the result.

This lime is used with pepper, vine-leaves, and betel-nuts by the natives. They chew the three together. The effect it has upon them is that of a strong stimulant. When they are tired and weary they have a chew of the above mixture, and are quite refreshed.

From *The Wide World Magazine*

# *The Tiger in the Tunnel*

by Ruskin Bond

**T**embu, the boy, opened his eyes in the dark and wondered if his father was ready to leave the hut on his nightly errand.

There was no moon that night, and the deathly stillness of the surrounding jungle was broken only occasionally by the shrill cry of a cicada. Sometimes from far off came the hollow hammering of a woodpecker, carried along on the faint breeze. Or the grunt of a wild boar could be heard as he dug up a favourite root. But these sounds were rare, and the silence of the forest always returned to swallow them up.

Baldeo, the watchman, was awake. He stretched himself, slowly unwinding the heavy shawl that covered him like a shroud. It was close on midnight and the chill air made him shiver. The station, a small shack backed by heavy jungle, was a station in name only; for trains only stopped there, if at all, for a few seconds before entering the deep cutting that led to the tunnel. Most trains merely slowed down before taking the sharp curve before the cutting.

Baldeo was responsible for signalling whether or not the tunnel was clear of obstruction, and his hand-worked signal stood before the entrance. At night it was his duty to see that the lamp was burning, and that the overland mail passed through safely.

“Shall I come too, Father?” asked Tembu sleepily, still lying huddled in a

corner of the hut.

“No, it is cold tonight. Do not get up.”

Tembu, who was twelve, did not always sleep with his father at the station, for he had also to help in the home, where his mother and small sister were usually alone. They lived in a small tribal village on the outskirts of the forest, about three miles from the station. Their small rice fields did not provide them with more than a bare living, and Baldeo considered himself lucky to have got the job of Khalasi at this small wayside signal-stop.

Still drowsy, Baldeo groped for his lamp in the darkness, then fumbled about in search of matches. When he had produced a light, he left the hut, closed the door behind him, and set off along the permanent way. Tembu had fallen asleep again.

Baldeo wondered whether the lamp on the signal-post was still alight. Gathering his shawl closer about him, he stumbled on, sometimes along the rails, sometimes along the ballast. He longed to get back to his warm corner in the hut.

The eeriness of the place was increased by the neighbouring hills which overhung the main line threateningly. On entering the cutting with its sheer rock walls towering high above the rails, Baldeo could not help thinking about the wild animals he might encounter. He had heard many tales of the famous tunnel tiger, a man-eater, who was supposed to frequent this spot; but he hardly believed these stories for, since his arrival at this place a month ago, he had not seen or even heard a tiger.

There had, of course, been panthers, and only a few days previously the villagers had killed one with their spears and axes. Baldeo had occasionally heard the sawing of a panther calling to its mate, but they had not come near the tunnel or shed.

Baldeo walked confidently for, being a tribal himself, he was used to the jungle and its ways. Like his forefathers, he carried a small axe, fragile to look at, but deadly when in use. With it, in three or four swift strokes, he could cut down a tree as neatly as if it had been sawn; and he prided himself on his skill in wielding it against wild animals. He had killed a young boar with it once, and the family had feasted on the flesh for three days. The axe-head of pure steel, thin but ringing true like a bell, had been made by his father over a charcoal fire. This axe was part of himself, and wherever he went, be it to the local market seven miles away, or to a tribal dance, the axe was always in his hand. Occasionally an official who had come to the station had offered him good money for the weapon; but Baldeo had no intention of parting with it.

The cutting curved sharply, and in the darkness the black entrance to the tunnel loomed up menacingly. The signal-light was out. Baldeo set to work to haul the lamp down by its chain. If the oil had finished, he would have to return to the hut for more. The mail train was due in five minutes.

Once more he fumbled for his matches. Then suddenly he stood still and listened. The frightened cry of a barking deer, followed by a crashing sound in the undergrowth, made Baldeo hurry. There was still a little oil in the lamp, and after an instant's hesitation he lit the lamp again and hoisted it back into position. Having done this, he walked quickly down the tunnel, swinging his own lamp, so that the shadows leapt up and down the soot-stained walls, and having made sure that the line was clear, he returned to the entrance and sat down to wait for the mail train.

The train was late. Sitting huddled up, almost dozing, he soon forgot his surroundings and began to nod.

Back in the hut, the trembling of the ground told of the approach of the train, and a low, distant rumble woke the boy, who sat up, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

"Father, it's time to light the lamp," he mumbled, and then, realising that his father had been gone some time, he lay down again; but he was wide awake now, waiting for the train to pass, waiting for his father's returning footsteps.

A low grunt resounded from the top of the cutting. In a second Baldeo was awake, all his senses alert. Only a tiger could emit such a sound.

There was no shelter for Baldeo, but he grasped his axe firmly and tensed his body, trying to make out the direction from which the animal was approaching. For some time there was only silence, even the usual jungle noises seemed to have ceased altogether. Then a thump and the rattle of small stones announced that the tiger had sprung into the cutting.

Baldeo, listening as he had never listened before, wondered if it was making for the tunnel or the opposite direction—the direction of the hut, in which Tembu would be lying unprotected. He did not have to wonder for long. Before a minute had passed he made out the huge body of the tiger trotting steadily towards him. Its eyes shone a brilliant green in the light from the signal lamp. Flight was useless, for in the dark the tiger would be more sure-footed than Baldeo and would soon be upon him from behind. Baldeo stood with his back to the signal-post, motionless, staring at the great brute moving rapidly towards him. The tiger, used to the ways of men, for it had been preying on them for years, came on fearlessly, and with a quick run and a snarl struck out with its right paw, expecting to bowl over this puny man who dared stand in the way.

Baldeo, however, was ready. With a marvellously agile leap he avoided the paw and brought his axe down on the animal's shoulder. The tiger gave a roar and attempted to close in. Again Baldeo drove his axe with true aim; but, to his horror, the beast swerved, and the axe caught the tiger on the shoulder, almost severing the leg. To make matters worse, the axe remained stuck in the bone, and Baldeo was left without a weapon.

The tiger, roaring with pain, now sprang upon Baldeo, bringing him down and then tearing at his broken body. It was all over in a few minutes. Baldeo was



conscious only of a searing pain down his back, and then there was blackness and the night closed in on him for ever.

The tiger drew off and sat down licking his wounded leg, roaring every now and then with agony. He did not notice the faint rumble that shook the earth, followed by the distant puffing of an engine steadily climbing. The overland mail was approaching. Through the trees beyond the cutting, as the train advanced, the glow of the furnace could be seen; and showers of sparks fell like Diwali lights over the forest.

As the train entered the cutting, the engine whistled once, loud and piercingly. The tiger raised his head, then slowly got to his feet. He found himself trapped like the man. Flight along the cutting was impossible. He entered the tunnel, running as fast as his wounded leg would carry him. And then, with a roar and a shower of sparks, the train entered the yawning tunnel. The noise in the confined space was deafening; but, when the train came out into the open, on the other side, silence returned once more to the forest and the tunnel.

At the next station the driver slowed down and stopped his train to water the engine. He got down to stretch his legs and decided to examine the head-lamps. He received the surprise of his life; for, just above the cow-catcher lay the major portion of the tiger, cut in half by the engine.

There was considerable excitement and conjecture at the station, but back at the cutting there was no sound except for the sobs of the boy as he sat beside the body of his father. He sat there a long time, unafraid of the darkness, guarding the body from jackals and hyenas, until the first faint light of dawn brought with it the arrival of the relief-watchman.

Tembu and his sister and mother were plunged in grief for two whole days; but life had to go on, and a living had to be made, and all the responsibility now fell on Tembu. Three nights later, he was at the cutting, lighting the signal-lamp for the overland mail.

He sat down in the darkness to wait for the train, and sang softly to himself. There was nothing to be afraid of—his father had killed the tiger, the forest gods were pleased; and besides, he had the axe with him, his father's axe, and he knew how to use it.

First published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 1970

# *The Leopard*

by Ruskin Bond

I first saw the leopard when I was crossing the small stream at the bottom of the hill. The ravine was so deep there that for most of the day it remained in shadow. This encouraged many birds and animals to emerge from cover even during the hours of daylight. Few people ever passed that way: only milkmen and charcoal-burners from the surrounding villages. As a result, the ravine had become a little haven of wild life, one of the few natural sanctuaries left in the area.

Nearly every morning, and sometimes during the day, I heard the cry of the barking-deer. In the evening, walking through the forest, I disturbed parties of kaleej pheasant, who went gliding down the ravine on open, motionless wings. I saw pine-martens and a handsome red fox. I recognised the footprints of a bear.

As I had not come to take anything from the jungle, the birds and animals soon “grew accustomed to my face”, as Mr. Higgins would say. More likely, they recognised my footfalls. My approach did not disturb them. A Spotted Forktail, which at first used to fly away, now remained perched on a boulder in the middle of the stream while I got across by means of other boulders only a few yards away. Its mellow call followed me up the hillside.

The langurs in the oak and rhododendron trees, who would at first go leaping through the branches at my approach, now watched me with some curiosity as they munched the tender green shoots of the oak. But one evening, as I passed, I heard

them chattering with excitement; and I knew I was not the cause of the disturbance.

As I crossed the stream and began climbing the hill, the grunting and chattering increased, as though the langurs were trying to warn me of some hidden danger. I looked up, and saw a great orange-gold leopard, sleek and spotted, poised on a rock about twenty feet away from me. The leopard looked at me once, briefly and with an air of disdain, and then sprang into a dense thicket, making absolutely no sound as he melted into the shadows.

I had disturbed the leopard in his quest for food. But a little later I heard the quickening cry of a barking-deer as it fled through the forest.

After that encounter I did not see the leopard again, although I was often made aware of his presence by certain movements.

Sometimes I thought I was being followed; and once, when I was late getting home and darkness closed in on the forest, I saw two bright eyes staring at me from a thicket. I stood still, my heart thudding against my ribs. Then the eyes danced away, and I realised that they were only fireflies.

One evening, near the stream, I found the remains of a barking-deer which had only been partly eaten. I wondered why the leopard had not hidden the remains of his meal, and decided that he had been disturbed while eating. Climbing the hill, I met a party of shikaris resting beneath the pine trees. They asked me if I had seen a leopard. I said I had not. They said they knew there was a leopard in the forest. Leopard-skins were selling in Delhi at a thousand rupees each, they told me. I walked on.

But the hunters had seen the carcass of the deer, and they had seen the leopard's pug-marks, and they had kept coming to the forest. Almost every evening I heard their guns banging away.

"There's a leopard about," they always told me. "You should carry a gun."

"I don't have one," I said.

The birds were seldom to be seen, and even the langurs had moved on. The red fox did not show itself; and the pine-martens, who had become quite bold, now dashed into hiding at my approach. The smell of one human is like the smell of any other.

And then, of course, the inevitable happened.

The men were coming up the hill, shouting and singing. They had a long bamboo pole across their shoulders, and slung from the pole, feet up, head down, was the lifeless body of the leopard. He had been shot in the neck and in the head.

"We told you there was a leopard!" they shouted, in great good humour. "Isn't he a fine specimen?"

"He was a fine leopard," I said.

I walked home through the silent forest. It was very silent, almost as though the birds and animals knew that their trust had been violated.

‘And God gave Man dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth ...’

For a leopard-skin coat, value one thousand rupees.

First published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 1972

# *The Regimental Myna*

by Ruskin Bond

**I**n my grandfather's time, British soldiers stationed in India were very fond of keeping pets, and there were very few barrack-rooms where pets were not to be found. Dogs and cats were the most common, but birds were also great favourites.

In one instance, a bird was not only the pet of a barrack-room but of a whole regiment. His owner was my grandfather, Private Bond, a soldier of the line, who had come out to India with the King's Own Scottish Rifles.

The bird was a myna, common enough in India, and Grandfather named it Dickens after his favourite author. Dickens came into Grandfather's possession when quite young, and he was soon a favourite with all the men in the barracks at Meerut, where the regiment was stationed. Meerut was hot and dusty; the curries were hot and spicy; the General in command was hot-tempered and crusty. Keeping a pet was almost the sole recreation for the men in barracks.

Because he was tamed so young, Dickens (or Dicky for short) never learned to pick up food for himself. Instead, just like a baby bird, he took his meals from Grandfather's mouth. And other men used to feed him in the same way. When Dickens was hungry, he asked for food by sitting on Grandfather's shoulders, flapping his wings rapidly, and opening his beak.

Dicky was never caged, and as soon as he was able to fly he attended all parades, watched the rations being issued, and was present on every occasion which

brought the soldiers out of their barracks. When out in the country, he would follow the regiment or party, flying from shoulder to shoulder, or from tree to tree, always keeping a sharp look-out for his enemies, the hawks.

Sometimes he would choose a mounted officer as a companion; but after the manoeuvres were over he would return to Grandfather's shoulder.

One day there was to be a General's inspection, and the Colonel gave orders that Dicky was to be confined, so that he wouldn't appear on parade.

"Lock him away somewhere, Bond," the Colonel snapped. "We can't have him flapping all over the parade-ground."

Dickens was put into a storeroom, with the windows closed and the door locked. But while the General's inspection was going on, the mess orderly, who wanted something from the storeroom and knew where to find the key, opened the door.

Out flew Dickens. He made straight for the parade-ground, greatly excited at being late and chattering loudly.

Dicky must have thought the General had something to do with his detention, or else he may have felt an explanation was due to him. Whatever his reasoning, he chose to alight on the General's pith helmet, between the plumes.

Here he chattered faster than ever, much to the surprise of the General, who was obliged to take his helmet off before he could dislodge the bird.

"What the dickens!" exclaimed the General, going purple in the face—for Dicky had discharged his breakfast between the plumes of the helmet.

Meanwhile, Dicky had flown to the Colonel's shoulder to make further complaints, to the great delight of the men.

"Fall out, Bond!" the Colonel screamed. "Take this bird away—for good! I don't want to see it again!"

A crestfallen Private Bond returned to barracks with Dicky, wondering what to do next. To part with Dicky, or even to cage him, was out of the question.

But Grandfather was not the only one who loved Dickens. He was also highly popular with the entire battalion. In the end, Grandfather decided to ask his Captain to bring him before the Colonel so he could ask forgiveness for Dicky's behaviour.

The Colonel gave Private Bond and his Captain a patient hearing. Then the Colonel consulted his officers and decided that the bird could stay—provided he was taken on as a serving member of the regiment!

Dickens's popularity was not surprising, as he was highly intelligent. He knew the men of his own regiment from those of others, and would only associate with Scottish Rifles. Even in the drill season, when there were as many as twenty regiments in camp, Dicky never made a mistake.

Dickens had a unique method of getting from one part of the camp to another. Instead of flying over the top of the camp, he would go in stages from tent to tent, flying very low, sheltering in each one, then peeping out and looking carefully for

hawks before moving on to the next.

One day Grandfather was admitted to hospital with malaria. Dicky couldn't find him anywhere, and searched and searched all over the camp in great distress. The hospital was a couple of kilometres from the barracks, and it wasn't until the third day of searching that Dickens finally discovered Grandfather lying there.

From then on, for as long as Grandfather was on the sick list, Dicky spent his time at the hospital. An upturned helmet was placed on a shelf for him near grandfather's bed, and Dickens spent the night inside it. As soon as Grandfather was discharged from the hospital, Dickens left as well, and never returned, not even for a visit.

In 1888, the regiment got orders to proceed to Calcutta, *en route* for Burma, where it was to take part in the Chin Lushai Expedition. All pets had to be left behind, and Dickens was no exception.

But Dicky had his own views on the subject.

The regiment travelled in stages, marching along the Grand Trunk Road, moving at night and going into rest camps for the day.

Dickens caught up on the third day. He arrived in camp after a journey of more than three hundred kilometres—dull, dejected and starving, as he still depended on being fed from Grandfather's mouth.

Route-marching and travelling by train (the railway was just beginning to spread across India), the battalion finally reached Calcutta. From there, contrary to orders, Dickens embarked for Burma along with the soldiers.

On board ship, Dickens would amuse himself by peeping from the portholes, and flapping from one to the other. He would also go up on deck, and sometimes even took experimental flights out to sea. But one day he was caught in a gale and had such difficulty getting back to the ship that he gave up that kind of adventuring.

Dickens stayed with his regiment all through the expedition and the campaign. Many of his soldier friends lost their lives, but Grandfather and Dickens survived the fighting and returned safely to Calcutta.

Grandfather, now a Corporal, was given six months' home leave, along with the rest of the regiment. This meant sailing home to England.

During the first part of the voyage, Dicky was his usual cheerful self. But when the ship left the Suez Canal, the weather grew cold, and he was no longer to be seen on the yardarms or on the bridge with the captain. He even lost interest in going on deck with Grandfather, preferring to stay with the parrots on the waste deck.

After the ship passed Gibraltar, Dickens went below. He never came on deck again.

Dickens was laid out in a Huntley and Palmer's biscuit tin, and buried at sea. Not, perhaps, with full military honours, but certainly to the sound of Grandfather's bagpipes, playing "The Last Post".

# *The Moose And Rusty Jones*

by Charles D. Roberts

**N**ot within the memory of the oldest settlers had there been a winter so severe. All the country about the Ottanoonsis and Quahdavic waters was buried under an unprecedented depth of snow. Never before, it was said, had such implacable cold fixed its grip upon the land. Storm piled upon the heels of bitter storm till landmarks were all but blotted out, and the little, lonely backwoods cabins were smothered to the eaves. The scattered settlers gave up, before mid-winter had passed, all effort to keep their road open, and all their necessary travelling was done on snowshoes, tramping their trails seven, eight, nine, or ten feet above the hidden ground. The little trees were submerged from sight, forgotten. The taller spruce and fir towered in snowy domes and pinnacles, except where a rough wind had shaken their branches free of the intolerable burden, and left them standing sharply dark against the wide white desolation.

For the wild creatures of the forest it was a prolonged tragedy, except for those which were so fortunate as to be hibernating, sleeping away the bitter time in their deep holes beneath the snow where the fiercest cold could not touch them. Among the chief sufferers were the moose. These heavy animals, accustomed to select a sheltered spot in the woods for their winter home, and tramp out a maze of narrow pathways all about it leading to the thickets of young birch, poplar, and striped maple, whose twigs furnished them their food, early found it difficult to keep their



paths open. As the winter progressed, they browsed away all the edible twigs and even the coarser branches of the thickets in their immediate neighbourhood. These consumed, they could only reach further supplies, and these all too scanty, by long and painful flounderings through the smothering depths of the snow. Some of these imprisoned moose families succeeded in getting enough forage to keep them alive, if barely. Others, less fortunately situated, slowly starved to death.

And so that winter wore grimly on towards the late release of spring.

At Brine's Corners, outside Smith's Store—which was also the settlement Post Office—young Rusty Jones, so called from the colour of his bristling shock head, was roping parcels, and an oat-bag, a big stone-ware molasses jug, and a kerosene oil tin, securely upon his toboggan. This done to his satisfaction, he pulled on his thick blue home-knit mittens, slipped his moccasined feet into the moosehide thongs of his snowshoes, waved farewell to the little group of loungers in the store, and set out on his four-mile tramp over the buried road to the farm. It was late, already just on sundown—an hour later than he had expected to be. He had waited to get the mail—for there was a story running in the weekly paper (last week's issue) which he was eager to get on with. Now, he thought of all the chores awaiting him at home, after supper, which would have to be cleared up before he could get to his reading.

Half a mile down the road a new idea came to him. By striking away from the road, across the valley, on his left, he could save nearly a mile. In ordinary seasons this would have meant no saving, the intervening country being an almost impassable tangle of swamps and deadfalls and dense undergrowth. But now, he reflected, it would be as easy travelling as by the road. Silly of him not to have thought of it before! Dragging the loaded toboggan easily behind him, he struck off at a long, loping stride through the forest. Boy though he was, he knew that his woodsman's sense of direction and his familiarity with the lay of the land would guide him straight to his destination.

Threading his way through the silent corridors of towering spruce and hemlock, skirting the dense groups of tall, slim white birches, avoiding the snowy swells and mounds which meant, to his experienced eyes, traps for his snowshoes, Rusty Jones struck on across the valley till he was within less than a mile of his father's lonely little farm. Then, in the cold, blue-grey, ghostly twilight, he checked himself on the brink of a deep hollow in the snow, half overshadowed by a spreading hemlock, and found himself peering down upon a huddled group of moose. He had never imagined there were any moose within a dozen miles of him. Yet here, in the tangled recesses of the valley, a little moose family had chosen to "yard up" for the winter.

In the gloom of the trodden and littered hollow he made out their forms—a gigantic greyish-brown bull, a dark, smallish cow, and two yearling calves. They were all lying down; but one of the calves, stretched awkwardly on its side, was

obviously dead and frozen stiff. The others were all staring up at him with pathetic, hopeless eyes, as if too despairing for fear. But presently the great bull staggered to his feet and stood in threatening attitude, ready to defend his charges to the last, even against the most terrible of all enemies, Man. Rusty Jones perceived that he was piteously emaciated, the shaggy hide drooping in creases on his flanks. Rusty's kind grey eyes clouded with sympathy. "Gee," he muttered, 'poor beggars, they're starving, that's what they are!'"

He dropped the rope of his toboggan and started off on a run up the slope, remembering a thicket of birch saplings which he had passed a few hundred yards back. Here, with the aid of the long sheath-knife which he carried at his belt, he gathered an armful of the aromatic branches, the favourite forage of the moose.

When he threw his burden down into the hollow the great bull grunted eagerly, the cow and calf got to their feet as if new life already flowed in their veins, and all three fell hungrily to the feast. Rusty hastened to fetch them another armful.

"There," he panted, picking up his toboggan rope once more, "I guess that'll do yous fer to-night. I'll bring yous some good hay to-morrow mornin'."

When the boy got home, very late, with his story, he found his father and mother sympathetic enough in regard to the cause of his lateness, but adamant as to his promise of the hay.

"We hain't got more'n enough hay to see our own critters through," said his mother, decidedly. "But maybe father'll let you take some straw. Plenty good enough for them kind."

Bob Jones, a huge, lean backwoodsman, known throughout the settlements, for obvious reasons, as "Red Bob," laughed good-humouredly.

"Reckon ye'll hev to chop birch an' poplar for 'em, Rusty," said he. "That's their natural fodder, anyways. But ye're goin' to hev yer work cut out for yeh if ye're going to feed all the starvin' critters in the woods *this* winter."

"That's all right," said Rusty, cheerfully, helping himself liberally to molasses on his pile of hot buckwheat pancakes. "I'll take 'em a bundle o' straw in the mornin', an' after that I'll chop for 'em. Don't worry. I'll see 'em through, all right. If you two had *seen* how pitiful them poor beasts looked, you'd feel jest as I do about it. But of course you're right about the hay. We *hain't* got none too much for ourselves."

Thereafter, for the next few weeks, regularly every other day would Rusty Jones betake himself to the hollow under the hemlock, axe in hand and dragging his toboggan, and leave for his sombre protégés a two days' supply of the twigs and branches which they loved. He found that they preferred this rough fodder to the best cat straw, and even to the few wisps of choice timothy hay which he once brought them as an experiment. By his third visit the bull and the leggy yearling had become so tame that they would come up and snatch the fodder from his hand with

their long, prehensile muzzles. The dark cow, of a suspicious and jealous disposition, was slower to be won; but when won, showed herself more greedy and familiar than the others, pushing them rudely aside to try and get more than her share of the titbit which Rusty took to bringing them in his capacious pockets. Being something of a naturalist, and a keen reader of all the nature stories he could get hold of, Rusty liked to experiment on the tastes of the moose. He found that they liked bread, the staler and harder the better—and corn-cake—and even soggy, cold buckwheat pancakes; while the most tempting gingerbread was scornfully rejected. Sugar they would have none of, but salt they licked up enthusiastically, following him around for more. He tried them with a handful of grain—oats—on a tin plate; but the bull, after an inquiring sniff, blew into the plate a great, gusty breath from his wide nostrils, and the oats flew in every direction. Oats were scarce and precious, so Rusty did not try that experiment again. But the oats were not wasted; for a pair of saucy, smartly feathered “Whiskey Jacks,” or Canada jays—known to Rusty as “Moose-birds”—who frequented the moose-yard, lost no time in picking them up, to the very last grain. Nothing was small enough to escape their bright, confiding, impudent eyes.

Meanwhile the body of the dead calf, rigid and pathetic, had lain ignored in the very centre of the hollow. At last Rusty took notice of it, and decided that it was a blot upon the kindly scene. He decided to get rid of it. Seizing it by the rigid hind legs he started to drag it to the side of the yard, intending to hoist it up over the edge. But the cow, seeming suddenly to remember that this dead thing had been her calf, ran at him with an angry grunt. Startled and indignant, Rusty struck her a sharp blow across the muzzle, and shouted at her with that voice of assured authority which he used with the yoke of oxen on the farm. The stupid cow drew back, puzzled both by the blow and the shout. To add to her bewilderment the sagacious old bull, who had become as devoted to Rusty as a faithful dog, lunged at her so fiercely with his massive, unantlered head that she went sprawling half-way across the hollow. And there she stood, wagging her long ears in puzzled discomfiture, while Rusty laboriously hoisted the awkward weight and pushed it forth upon the upper level of the snow. This accomplished, he dragged it a few yards away and left it behind a white-domed bush, where it would no longer offend his vision. Then he went down again into the hollow and stroked the big bull’s muzzle, and scratched his ears, and talked to him, and finally gave him a generous portion of salt as a reward for his fidelity. The calf crowded up appealingly and was granted a small lump; and then the cow, forgetting her resentment, came nosing in to claim her share. But Rusty, still indignant at her, would only allow her to lick the last grain or two from his palm.

“That’ll larn yeh,” said he severely, “not to be gittin’ so fresh.”

On Rusty’s next visit to the moose-yard, two days later, he was at first surprised

to observe the numerous tracks of wild creatures on the surrounding snow. The neat footprints of foxes predominated, and the slender trails of the weasels. But there were also, standing out conspicuously, the broad, spreading pad-marks of a big lynx. Rusty examined them all intently for a few moments, then stepped round behind the shrouded bush to look at the body of the dead calf. The news of a banquet had spread swiftly among the hungry wild folk, and the carcass was half gnawed away. He scratched his red head thoughtfully, and peered about him to see if he could catch sight of any of the banqueters. Some thirty or forty paces away the tops of a buried spruce sapling had been jarred clear of its swathing and stood out sharply against the whiteness. He eyed it piercingly, understandingly—and presently, through the thick green, made out the form of a red fox, crouching motionless.

In a few seconds the fox, perceiving that he was detected, stood up, and stared Rusty in the eyes with a fine assumption of unconcern. He yawned, scratched his ear with his hind paw, flicked his splendid, tawny brush, and trotted away with elaborate deliberation, as much as to say “That, for you!” till he had gained cover. Rusty, who knew foxes, could picture the furry humbug throwing dignity to the winds and running for dear life as soon as he felt himself out of sight.

“Gee,” he muttered, “that red beggar’s got a fine pelt on him!” He wondered how many dollars it would be worth. He called to mind also those tracks of the big lynx, and wondered what a lynx pelt would fetch. He thought what a scheme it would be to set traps around the dead calf. But this plan he threw overboard promptly with a grunt of distaste. He had always detested the idea of trapping. Then he thought of his gun—which he used chiefly against the marauding hawks when they came after his chickens.

“Easy enough to get a shot at that red varmin, he’s so darn bold an’ sassy,” he mused, still dwelling on the price of that fine pelt. Then his thoughts turned to the owner of the pelt. He had rather liked the audacious insolence of the creature—such a brave piece of camouflage in the face of the enemy!

“After all,” he murmured to himself, “I guess I won’t bother. It don’t seem quite fair, when they’re all so starved, an’ I’ve tricked ’em all into comin’ round here by puttin’ out that there carcass. I better let ’em all have a good time while it lasts. An’ besides, if I fired a gun here now it would scare my moose out o’ their senses.”

Having come to this decision he turned back to the moose-yard, thinking with a deprecating grin: “But *what* a blame fool father would call me, if he knew! An’ maybe he’d be right!”

At last, at long last, the grip of that inexorable winter loosened suddenly, and fell away. As the snow shrank, assailed above by warm rains and ardent suns, mysteriously undermined beneath, the tangled undergrowth began to emerge, black and sodden, from its hiding, and the valley became more difficult to traverse. The moose were soon able to forage for themselves, and Rusty’s visits to the hollow

under the hemlock grew more and more infrequent. They were no longer needed, indeed; but he had become so attached to his charges, and to the sagacious old bull in particular, that he hated to let them slip quite out of his life. It had to be, however; and in this fashion, finally, came it about.

One morning, after an arduous struggle, he arrived, wet and exasperated, at the hollow under the hemlock, to find that the cow and the yearling had gone. But there, all expectant, was the faithful bull, who knew that this was Rusty's usual hour of coming. Rusty had his pockets filled with dry corn-cake and salt, and these the bull devoured appreciatively, stopping now and then to nuzzle the boy lovingly with his long, sensitive upper lip. At last, with a shamefaced grin, Rusty flung his arms about the great animal's neck, and murmured: "Goodbye, you old beggar. Take care o' yerself, an' keep out o' the way o' the hunters when next Fall comes 'round. Gee, what a pair o' horns you must have on that big head o' yourn!"

He turned away rather hurriedly, and started homeward on a longer but less obstructed route than that by which he had come.

He had not gone many paces, however, when he was startled to feel a long muzzle thrust over his shoulder, gently brushing his neck. Noiselessly as a cat the bull had followed him. Deeply touched, but somewhat embarrassed to know what to do with him, Rusty fondled the devoted beast affectionately, and continued his journey. The bull accompanied him right up to the edge of the open, in full view of the farmyard. The farmer was lowering his bucket into the well, and the sharp clanking of the chain rang on the still spring air. The big black and white farm-dog, barking loudly, came capering down the slope to greet Rusty. The bull halted, waving his long ears.

"Better quit now!" said Rusty. "Good-bye, an' take keer o' yerself!"

Not allowing himself to look round he trotted forward to meet the noisy dog; and the gaunt, dark form of the great moose faded back, soundlessly as a shadow, into the trees.

From *Wisdom of the Wilderness*, circa 1900

## *Mustela of the Lone Hand*

by C.G.D. Roberts

**I**t was in the very heart of the ancient wood, the forest primeval of the North, gloomy with the dark green, crowded ranks of fir and spruce and hemlock, and tangled with the huge windfalls of countless storm-torn winters. But now, at high noon of the glowing Northern summer, the gloom was pierced to its depths with shafts of radiant sun; the barred and chequered transparent brown shadows hummed with dancing flies; the warm air was alive with the small, thin notes of chickadee and nuthatch, varied now and then by the impertinent scolding of the Canada jay; and the drowsing tree-tops steamed up an incense of balsamy fragrance in the heat. The ancient wilderness dreamed, stretched itself all open to the sun, and seemed to sigh with immeasurable content.

High up in the grey trunk of a half-dead forest giant was a round hole, the entrance to what had been the nest of a pair of big, red-headed, golden-winged woodpeckers, or “yellowhammers.” The big woodpeckers had long since been dispossessed—the female, probably, caught and devoured, with her eggs, upon the nest. The dispossessor, and present tenant, was *Mustela*.

Framed in the blackness of the round hole was a sharp-muzzled, triangular, golden-brown face with high, pointed ears, looking out upon the world below with keen eyes in which a savage wildness and an alert curiosity were incongruously mingled. Nothing that went on upon the dim ground far below, among the tangled

trunks and windfalls, or in the sun-drenched tree-tops, escaped that restless and piercing gaze. But Mustela had well fed, and felt lazy, and this hour of noon was not his hunting hour; so the most unsuspecting red squirrel, gathering cones in a neighbouring pine, was insufficient to lure him from his rest, and the plumpest hare, waving its long, suspicious ears down among the ground shadows, only made him lick his thin lips and think what he would do later on in the afternoon, when he felt like it.

Presently, however, a figure came into view at sight of which Mustela's expression changed. His thin black lips wrinkled back in a soundless snarl, displaying the full length of his long, snow-white, deadly-sharp canines, and a red spark of hate smouldered in his bright eyes. But no less than his hate was his curiosity—a curiosity which is the most dangerous weakness of all Mustela's tribe. Mustela's pointed head stretched itself clear of the hole, in order to get a better look at the man who was passing below his tree.

A man was a rare sight in that remote and inaccessible section of the Northern wilderness. This particular man—a woodsman, a “timber-cruiser,” seeking out new and profitable areas for the work of the lumbermen—wore a flaming red-and-orange handkerchief loosely knotted about his brawny neck, and carried over his shoulder an axe whose bright blade flashed sharply whenever a ray of sunlight struck it. It was this flashing axe, and the blazing colour of the scarlet-and-orange kerchief, that excited Mustela's curiosity—so excited it, indeed, that he came clean out of the hole and circled the great trunk, clinging close and wide-legged like a squirrel, in order to keep the woodsman in view as he passed by.

Engrossed though he was in the interesting figure of the man, Mustela's vigilance was still unsleeping. His amazingly quick ears at this moment caught a hushed hissing of wings in the air above his head. He did not stop to look up and investigate. Like a streak of ruddy light he flashed around the trunk and whisked back into his hole, and just as he vanished a magnificent long-winged goshawk, the king of all the falcons, swooping down from the blue, struck savagely with his clutching talons at the edges of the hole.

The quickness of Mustela was miraculous. Moreover, he was not content with escape. He wanted vengeance. Even in his lightning dive into his refuge he had managed to turn about, doubling on himself like an eel. And now, as those terrible talons gripped and clung for half a second to the edge of the hole, he snapped his teeth securely into the last joint of the longest talon and dragged it an inch or two in.

With a yelp of fury and surprise, the great falcon strove to lift himself into the air, pounding madly with his splendid wings and twisting himself about, and thrusting mightily with his free foot against the side of the hole. But he found himself held fast, as in a trap. Sagging back with all his weight, Mustela braced himself securely with all four feet and hung on, his whipcord sinews set like steel.

He knew that if he let go for an instant, to secure a better mouthful, his enemy would escape; so he just worried and chewed at the joint, satisfied with the punishment he was inflicting.

Meanwhile the woodsman, his attention drawn by that one sudden yelp of the falcon and by the prolonged and violent buffeting of wings, had turned back to see what was going on. Pausing at the foot of Mustela's tree, he peered upwards with narrowed eyes. A slow smile wrinkled his weather-beaten face. He did not like hawks. For a moment or two he stood wondering what it was in the hole that could hold so powerful a bird. Whatever it was, he stood for it.

Being a dead shot with the revolver, he seldom troubled to carry a rifle in his "cruisings." Drawing his long-barrelled "Smith and Wesson" from his belt, he took careful aim and fired. At the sound of the shot, the thing in the hole was startled and let go; and the great bird, turning once over slowly in the air, dropped to his feet with a feathery thud, its talons still contracting shudderingly. The woodsman glanced up, and there, framed in the dark of the hole, was the little yellow face of Mustela, insatiably curious, snarling down upon him viciously.

"Gee," muttered the woodsman, "I might hev' knowed it was one o' them pesky martens! Nobody else o' *that* size 'd hev the gall to tackle a duck-hawk!"

Now, the fur of Mustela, the pine-marten or American sable, is a fur of price; but the woodsman—subject, like most of his kind, to unexpected attacks of sentiment and imagination—felt that to shoot the defiant little fighter would be like an act of treachery to an ally.

"Ye're a pretty fighter, sonny," said he, with a whimsical grin, "an' ye may keep that yaller pelt o' yourn, for all o' me!"

Then he picked up the dead falcon, tied its claws together, slung it upon his axe, and strode off through the trees. He wanted to keep those splendid wings as a present for his girl in at the Settlements.

Highly satisfied with his victory over the mighty falcon—for which he took the full credit to himself—Mustela now retired to the bottom of his comfortable, moss-lined nest and curled himself up to sleep away the heat of the day. As the heat grew sultrier and drowsier through the still hours of early afternoon, there fell upon the forest a heavy silence, deepened rather than broken by the faint hum of the heat-loving flies. And the spicy scents of pine and spruce and tamarack steamed forth richly upon the moveless air.

When the shadows of the trunks began to lengthen, Mustela woke up, and he woke up hungry. Slipping out of his hole, he ran a little way down the trunk and then leapt, lightly and nimbly as a squirrel, into the branches of a big hemlock which grew close to his own tree. Here, in a crotch from which he commanded a good view beneath the foliage, he halted and stood motionless, peering about him for some sign of a likely quarry.



Poised thus, tense, erect and vigilant, Mustela was a picture of beauty swift and fierce. In colour he was of a rich golden brown, with a patch of brilliant yellow covering throat and chest. His tail was long and bushy, to serve him as a balance in his long, squirrel-like leaps from tree to tree. His pointed ears were large and alert, to catch all the faint, elusive forest sounds. In length, being a specially fine specimen of his kind, he was perhaps a couple of inches over two feet. His body had all the lithe grace of a weasel, with something of the strength of his great-cousin and most dreaded foe, the fisher.

For a time nothing stirred. Then from a distance came, faint but shrill, the *chirr-r-r-r* of a red squirrel. Mustela's discriminating ear located the sound at once. All energy on the instant, he darted towards it, springing from branch to branch with amazing speed and noiselessness.

The squirrel, noisy and imprudent after the manner of his tribe, was chattering fussily and bouncing about on his branch, excited over something best known to himself, when a darting, gold-brown shape of doom landed upon the other end of the branch, not half a dozen feet from him. With a screech of warning and terror, he bounded into the air, alighted on the trunk, and raced up it, with Mustela close upon his heels. Swift as he was—and everyone who has seen a red squirrel in a hurry knows how he can move—Mustela was swifter, and in about five seconds the little chatterer's fate would have been sealed. But he knew what he was about. This was his own tree. Had it been otherwise, he would have sprung into another, and directed his desperate flight over the slenderest branches, where his enemy's greater weight would be a hindrance. As it was, he managed to gain his hole—just in time—and all that Mustela got was a little mouthful of fur from the tip of that vanishing red tail.

Very angry and disappointed, and hissing like a cat, Mustela jammed his savage face into the hole. He could see the squirrel crouched, with pounding heart and panic-stricken eyes, a few inches below him, just out of his reach. The hole was too small to admit his head. In a rage he tore at the edges with his powerful claws, but the wood was too hard for him to make any impression on it, and after half a minute of futile scratching, he gave up in disgust and raced off down the tree. A moment later the squirrel poked his head out and shrieked an effectual warning to every creature within earshot.

With that loud alarm shrilling in his ears. Mustela knew there would be no successful hunting for him till he could put himself beyond the range of it. He raced on, therefore, abashed by his failure, till the taunting sound faded in the distance. Then his bushy brown brush went up in the air again, and his wonted look of insolent self-confidence returned. As it did not seem to be his lucky day for squirrels, he descended to earth and began quartering the ground for the fresh trail of a rabbit.

In that section of the forest where Mustela now found himself, the dark and

scented tangle of spruce and balsam-fir was broken by thickets of stony barren, clothed unevenly by thickets of stunted white birch, and silver-leaved quaking aspen, and wild sumach with its massive tufts of acrid, dark-crimson bloom. Here the rabbit trails were abundant, and Mustela was not long in finding one fresh enough to offer him the prospect of a speedy kill. Swiftly and silently, nose to earth, he set himself to follow its intricate and apparently aimless windings, sure that he would come upon a rabbit at the end of it.

As it chanced, however, he never came to the end of that particular trail or set his teeth in the throat of that particular rabbit. In gliding past a bushy young fir-tree, he happened to glance beneath it, and marked another of his tribe tearing the feathers from a new-slain grouse. The stranger was smaller and slighter than himself—a young female—quite possibly, indeed, his mate of a few months earlier in the season. Such considerations were less than nothing to Mustela, whose ferocious spirit knew neither gallantry, chivalry, nor mercy. With what seemed a single flashing leap he was upon her—or *almost*, for the slim female was no longer there. She had bounded away as lightly and instantaneously as if blown by the wind of his coming. She knew Mustela, and she knew it would be death to stay and do battle for her kill. Spitting with rage and fear, she fled from the spot, terrified lest he should pursue her and find the nest where her six precious kittens were concealed.

But Mustela was too hungry to be interested just then in mere slaughter for its own sake. He was feeling serious and practical. The grouse was a full-grown cock, plump and juicy, and when Mustela had devoured it his appetite was sated. But not so his blood-lust. After a hasty toilet he set out again, looking for something to kill.

Crossing the belt of rocky ground, he emerged upon a flat tract of treeless barren covered with a dense growth of blueberry bushes about a foot in height. The bushes at this season were loaded with ripe fruit of a bright blue colour, and squatting among them was a big black bear, enjoying the banquet at his ease. Gathering the berries together wholesale with his great furry paws, he was cramming them into his mouth greedily, with little grunts and gurgles of delight, and the juicy fragments with which his snout and jaws were smeared gave his formidable face an absurdly childish look. To Mustela—when that insolent little animal flashed before him—he vouchsafed no more than a glance of good-natured contempt. For the rank and stringy flesh of a pine-marten he had no use at any time of year, least of all in the season when the blueberries were ripe.

Mustela, however, was too discreet to pass within reach of one of those huge but nimble paws, lest the happy bear should grow playful under the stimulus of the blueberry juice. He turned aside to a judicious distance, and there, sitting up on his hindquarters like a rabbit, he proceeded to nibble, rather superciliously, a few of the choicest berries. He was not enthusiastic over vegetable food, but, just as a cat will now and then eat grass, he liked at times a little corrective to his unvarying diet of

flesh.

Having soon had enough of the blueberry patch, Mustela left it to the bear and turned back toward the deep of the forest, where he felt most at home. He went stealthily, following up the wind in order that his scent might not give warning of his approach. It was getting near sunset by this time, and floods of pinky gold, washing across the open barrens, poured in along the ancient corridors of the forest, touching the sombre trunks with stains of tenderest rose. In this glowing colour Mustela, with his ruddy fur, moved almost invisible.

And, so moving, he came plump upon a big buck-rabbit squatting half asleep in the centre of a clump of pale green fern.

The rabbit hounded straight into the air, his big, childish eyes popping from his head with horror. Mustela's leap was equally instantaneous, and it was unerring. He struck his victim in mid-air, and his fangs met deep in the rabbit's throat. With a scream the rabbit fell backwards and came down with a muffled thump upon the ferns, with Mustela on top of him. There was a brief, thrashing struggle, and then Mustela, his forepaws upon the breast of his still quivering prey—several times larger and heavier than himself—lifted his blood-stained face and stared about him savagely, as if defying all the other prowlers of the forest to come and try to rob him of his prize.

Having eaten his fill, Mustela dragged the remnants of the carcass under a thick bush, defiled it so as to make it distasteful to other eaters of flesh, and scratched a lot of dead leaves and twigs over it till it was effectually hidden. As game was abundant at this season, and as he always preferred a fresh kill, he was not likely to want any more of that victim, but he hated the thought of any rival getting a profit from his prowess.

Mustela now turned his steps homeward, travelling more lazily, but with eyes, nose and ears ever on the alert for fresh quarry. Though his appetite was sated for some hours, he was as eager as ever for the hunt, for the fierce joy of the killing and the taste of the hot blood. But the Unseen Powers of the wilderness, ironic and impartial, decided just then that it was time for Mustela to be hunted in his turn.

If there was one creature above all others who could strike the fear of death into Mustela's merciless soul, it was his great-cousin, the ferocious and implacable fisher. Of twice his weight and thrice his strength, and his full peer in swiftness and cunning, the fisher was Mustela's nightmare, from whom there was no escape unless in the depths of some hole too narrow for the fisher's powerful shoulders to get into. And at this moment there was the fisher's grinning, black-muzzled mask crouched in the path before him, eyeing him with the sneer of certain triumph.

Mustela's heart jumped into his throat as he flashed about and fled for his life—straight away, alas, from his safe hole in the tree-top—and with the lightning dart of a striking rattler the fisher was after him.

Mustela had a start of perhaps twenty paces, and for a time he held his own. He dared no tricks, lest he should lose ground, for he knew his foe was as swift and as cunning as himself. But he knew himself stronger and more enduring than most of his tribe, and therefore he put his hope, for the most part, in his endurance. Moreover, there was always a chance that he might come upon some hole or crevice too narrow for his pursuer. Indeed, to a tough and indomitable spirit like Mustela's, until his enemy's fangs should finally lock themselves in his throat, there would always seem to be a chance. One never could know which way the freakish Fates of the wilderness would cast their favour. On and on he raced, therefore, tearing up or down the long, sloping trunks of ancient windfalls, twisting like a golden snake through tangled thickets, springing in great airy leaps from trunk to rock, from rock to overhanging branch, in silence; and ever at his heels followed the relentless, grinning shape of his pursuer, gaining a little in the long leaps, but losing a little in the denser thickets, and so just about keeping his distance.

For all Mustela's endurance, the end of that race, in all probability, would have been for him but one swift, screeching fight, and then the dark. But at this juncture the Fates woke up, peered ironically through the grey and ancient mosses of their hair, and remembered some grudge against the fisher.

A moment later Mustela, just launching himself on a desperate leap, beheld in his path a huge hornets nest suspended from a branch near the ground. Well he knew, and respected, that terrible insect, the great black hornet with the cream-white stripes about his body. But it was too late to turn aside. He crashed against the grey, papery sphere, tearing it from its cables, and flashed on, with half a dozen white-hot stings in his hindquarters prodding him to a fresh burst of speed. Swerving slightly, he dashed through a dense thicket of juniper scrub, hoping not only to scrape his fiery tormentors off, but at the same time to gain a little on his big pursuer.

The fisher was at this stage not more than a dozen paces in the rear. He arrived, to his undoing, just as the outraged hornets poured out in a furiously humming swarm from their overturned nest. It was clear enough to them that the fisher was their assailant. With deadly unanimity they pouched upon him.

With a startled screech the fisher bounced aside and plunged for shelter. But he was too late. The great hornets were all over him. His ears and nostrils were black with them, his long fur was full of them, and his eyes, shut tight, were already a flaming anguish with the corroding poison of their stings. Frantically he burrowed his face down into the moss and through into the moist earth, and madly he clawed at his ears, crushing scores of his tormentors. But he could not crush out the venom which their long stings had injected. Finding it hopeless to free himself from their swarms, he tore madly through the underbrush, but blindly, crashing into trunks and rocks, heedless of everything but the fiery torture which enveloped him. Gradually the hornets fell away from him as he went, knowing that their vengeance was

accomplished. At last, groping his way blindly into a crevice between two rocks, he thrust his head down into the moss, and there, a few days later, his swollen body was found by a foraging lynx. The lynx was hungry, but she only sniffed at the carcass and turned away with a growl of disappointment and suspicion. The carcass was too full of poison even for her not too discriminating palate.

Mustela, meanwhile, having the best and sharpest of reasons for not delaying in his flight, knew nothing of the fate of his pursuer. He only became aware, after some minutes, that he was no longer pursued. Incredulous at first, he at length came to the conclusion that the fisher had been discouraged by his superior speed and endurance. His heart, though still pounding unduly, swelled with triumph. By way of precaution he made a long detour to come back to his nest, pounced upon and devoured a couple of plump deer-mice on the way, ran up his tree and slipped comfortably into his hole, and curled up to sleep with the feeling of a day well spent. He had fed full, he had robbed his fellows successfully, he had drunk the blood of his victims, he had outwitted or eluded his enemies. As for his friends, he had none—a fact which to Mustela of the Lone Hand was of no concern whatever.

Now, as the summer waned, and the first keen touch of autumn set the wilderness aflame with the scarlet of maple and sumach, the pale gold of poplar and birch, Mustela, for all his abounding health and prosperous hunting, grew restless with a discontent which he could not understand. Of the coming winter he had no dread. He had passed through several winters, faring well when other prowlers less daring and expert had starved, and finding that deep nest of his in the old tree a snug refuge from the fiercest storms. But now—he knew not why—the nest grew irksome to him, and his familiar hunting-grounds distasteful. Even the eager hunt, the triumphant kill itself, had lost their zest. He forgot to kill except when he was hungry. A strange fever was in his blood, a lust for wandering. And so, one wistful, softly-glowing day of Indian summer, when the violet light that bathed the forest was full of mystery and allurements, he set off on a journey. He had no thought of why he was going, or whither. Nor was he conscious of any haste. When hungry, he stopped to hunt and kill and feed. But he no longer cared to conceal the remnants of his kills, for he dimly realised that he would not be returning. If running waters crossed his path, he swam them. If broad lakes intervened, he skirted them. From time to time he became aware that others of his kind were moving with him, but each one furtive, silent, solitary, self-sufficing, like himself. He heeded them not, nor they him; but all, impelled by one urge which could but be blindly obeyed, kept drifting onward toward the west and north. At length, when the first snows began, Mustela stopped, in a forest not greatly different from that which he had left, but

ever wilder, denser, more unvisited by the foot of man. And here, the *Wanderlust* having suddenly left his blood, he found himself a new hole, lined it warm with moss and dry grasses, and resumed his hunting with all the ancient zest.

Back in Mustela's old hunting-grounds a lonely trapper, finding no more golden sable in his snares, but only mink and lynx and fox, grumbled regretfully:

"The marten hev quit. We'll see no more of 'em round these parts for another ten year."

But he had no notion why they had quit, nor had anyone else—not even Mustela himself.

## *A Warrior From Bhut*

by John Eyton

**H**e was born in a world of white, far up in the mountains—a little shivering thing, no bigger than a mole, in the midst of a camp of dark blanket tents set in the snow. So cold was it that his brothers and sisters did not survive a night, and he had the shelter of his mother's thick warm fur to himself. From the first he was destined for a hard life, for very soon his mother pushed him out into the snow to find his feet, and to depend on his own coat, which grew rapidly. In a fortnight he was no longer a mole, but a little bundle of warm black fur, for all the world like a baby bear; his head was near as big as his body, deeply domed and furred, looming over a small face, with deep-set eyes and a sharp little black nose. When he opened his mouth to yawn, he showed a red cavern to the world, with the beginnings of strong teeth.

He knew early in life that he was born to one task—to watch—and if a stranger approached the tent he would bark defiantly in imitation of the deep, gruff voices of his father and his mother and his cousins, and would keep on barking, till he was cuffed. He came of a breed of watch-dogs, guards of camp and sheep, terrors of night visitors, be they man or jackal; for, once a Bhutia has taken hold, he, will not let go while life is in him.

He grew apace; within a month he was eighteen inches high, and burly to a degree; his fur stood out straight, and thick as carpet, and his body was so heavy that

he tottered as he walked. He had tan points now, on the feet and legs, and jaw, and beneath the eyes. He could worry a bone, too, when he could get it, and was independent of his mother both for food and warmth.

Also, his voice was breaking, the shrill note of childhood giving way to the mastiff bass—and he practised incessantly. He was rolled over daily by his mother to give him muscle, and by his cousins to try his spirit, and he came through the ordeal well. At any rate, he was allowed to live.

Then, one early morning, the camp started for the plains, more than a month's march away. The shaggy, horned sheep were driven into a bunch, and fitted with their little leather saddles and their bundles of merchandise. Then the dogs were called up and the flock driven down the track, while the men and women followed, laden with blankets and gear, spinning their wool and chattering.

The puppy walked with the rest. The first days of jostling in the narrow path on the hillside, with destruction below, wearied him exceedingly; but soon his muscles grew perforce, and he became deep-chested, and shouldered and seasoned. Soon the intense cold was left behind, and they passed through pine woods, shuffling over a path carpeted with needles, above precipices still steep, with silver streams far below. As they descended, greener and greener grew the hills, till one day they pitched their camp below a warm bazaar on the side of Bhim lake, and saw the plains stretching below. Now the ring of the camp was made smaller, lest leopards should raid the sheep, and the gruff barks of the watchers sounded in the night. By the time the moving camp had dropped into the plains, the puppy had put on the lineaments of maturity on a small scale, he was a dog.

Take a bloodhound, and a mastiff, and an old-time otter-hound, and mingle them in one type; make it massive in body, and sturdy in the legs; make it walk with the silent precision of a leopard—slow, with head lowered, and feet meticulously placed; grow a fine crop of thick fur—and you have a fair specimen of the Bhutia dog. He has the colouring of the old-fashioned otter-hound; the domed head and the furrowed jowl of the bloodhound; and the chest, and jaw of the mastiff—with the tenacity of the devil thrown in. His voice is deep bass, a little muffled; he will advance slowly, like a leopard, then spring for the neck with the speed and momentum of a charging boar—and there he gets a strangle-hold.

In character he is morose, apt to brood, and cautious until he has made up his mind; his temperament might be described as heavy, and he does not easily make friends. Though in old age he becomes too dangerous for civilized homes, there is no better watch-dog in the world. He owns only one master.

As is the type, so was the puppy—as independent and self-contained as dog could be.

Three years passed in watching. In winter the camp was pitched in a settlement down in the plains, hear the buzz of the bazaar. Then, when the sun grew fierce and a



thick coat was becoming intolerable, they went up the winding path through the foot-hills, behind the trotting, saddled sheep, clouded in dust till black coats turned grey; on through the pine woods, where the air was rarer, and vegetation more sparse; where the paths ran rugged and steep, and chakor<sup>1</sup> scuttled down the khud at their coming; where villages were perched in the high hills like rooks' nests, and the sheep had to scramble far among the boulders for their grass ... and so to the beyond which was Bhut; there to await the finishing of the grain from the pack-saddles and the carding of the wool, and to take the road again.

It was a monotonous life, but it suited the temperament of the puppy, and so he might have lived to the end ... adventureless, save for an occasional growling scuffle with his cousins, when eyes showed red and fur stiffened, and the mastery of the family was at stake. Master he would surely be, sooner or later, for he was a shade taller than the usual run, a trifle more massive, and he had the jaw and teeth of a hyena—you cannot find any stronger.

So might he have lived, content with a limited mastery, if in the fourth year the party had not dipped down from the hills by a new route, and encamped at Tanakpur.

Tanakpur village lies at the very foot of the Himalayas, where the Sarda River breaks free of its mountain gorge and claims a wider bed of shingle and of sand; though the village boasts a railway station, a timber depot, a water tower, and a hospital, it is nevertheless an absolute outpost of British India. For, set on the high bank of the Sarda, it looks across to the wide land of and green forest that is Nepal. The Himalayas tower over it to the north, while southwards the river scores its channels wider and wider amid islands belted with pale sheeshum trees, as it feels for the plains. As far as eye can see to the south, there stretches white shingle, broken only by these frail, fairy trees, guarding the ribbons of blue water. Of all fair prospects at the feet of the great hills, Tanakpur has the fairest.

It is a gathering-place of many types, for it is the railhead for Nepal and for the hills. Today, market day, its bazaar is gay with merchandise—grain from the Terai; oranges and wool from the hills; brass, in shining pyramids, from Moradabad; bright cottons—crude embroidery—gay caps ... all the finery of the poor.

But the men vary more than do the goods. Rough Nepalese, with high cheek-bones and thick bodies, have crossed in the old ferry-boat—hollowed from a single tree—with their ponies swimming alongside, to barter with shrewd-faced Mohammedan merchants whom the train has brought from Bareilly. There are Paharis from above, and men of the Terai below, yellow with malaria, old before their time, riding listlessly in on their little ponies. Here is a group of smiling Goorkha soldiers discussing tonga-hire with a tall be-medalled Sikh who wears his

grey beard in a net. By the liquor-shop there are Tharus—honest men, imported from the Punjab to till the Terai, being strangely fever-proof. Here a new tongue strikes the ear ... soft and pleasing, unlike the hard Hindi of the hills; it is Pushtu, and the speakers have brought their donkeys all the way from Baluchistan for carrying work on the Sarda Dam. Wild men these, clad in loose garments, and walking with the half-veiled insolence of the Pathan. Not unlike them are the camel-men from Meerut, as they lead their staring charges up the crowded street and smoke the long pipe of a peaceful occupation.

But the strangest of all the motley crowd are the two Bhutia men from the far North, who are standing apart and watching. These men are not of India; there is much of the Chinaman in their faces, without his sluggish aspect; combine the high cheek-bones of the Mongolian with the aquiline nose and sharp look of the North-American Indian, and you are near a description of these two men. Their faces are hairless, and they wear caps of rough leather, turned up all round, with flaps for the ears at night. One wears a couple of cues down his back, while the other has raven hair combed out in a cloud beneath his leathern cap. Their clothing is of rough woollens, and they carry brown blankets over their shoulders, under which peep their cherished necklaces—lumps of amber rough turquoise and cornelian, with pendants of silver and blue. They are twirling their little spindles of wool—for they make their own stuffs—and smiling, when suddenly a hubbub breaks out from the direction of the river below. They listen a moment, as do their neighbour ... then slip quickly away. He of the combed raven hair is the master of our hero, the Bhutia dog.

He had lately been dubbed Sluggard by his master in the language of Bhut for a propensity to claim the privilege of rest for his dignity as head of the family. And Sluggard he looked as he lay that afternoon with his head on his paws, one eye closed and the other set sleepily on the distance across the river. Behind him, the bazaar was all a-clatter, while towards the river the sheep-bells made drowsy tinkling among the trees. All the men were away in the bazaar, and most of the women too, so that he was a solitary sentinel.

Suddenly he heard a stirring among the sheep; an old ram, with jingling bell, fussed into the camp, followed by several ewes; but beyond, among the sheeshum trees, the clamour still continued, and there were sounds of scuffling and of flight.

He was no sluggard now, as he sprang up with a gruff interrogation; listened for the fraction of a second; then shot from the camp, through the trees and past the scared sheep, to the other side of the belt, where rank green grass bordered the shingle.

Then, all at once, he stopped dead, every nerve a-quiver, every faculty alert, and

gave his low, long-drawn challenge. In front of him lay the body of a young ram fresh killed, and beyond the ram, at its throat, lay a leopard, just raising its head from its meal. Back went its ears on the instant, and it grinned angrily, growling as if it were grinding out the sound through a mill, and switching its long tail to and fro.

Like a flash, the Sluggard went in. He made no sound, but simply flew straight for the throat, and when he felt the folds of skin and smelt the acrid smell of leopard, there he stayed. He was picked up, battered, and torn; big as he was, he was shaken like a rat in the enemy's efforts to be free; great teeth snapped at him and bit deep, while the sharp claws ripped his fur and left long lines of blood.

There had never been anything like this thing which he had attacked; weight, muscle, agility—all were against him. But he had one advantage—he had gone in first, and where he had found flesh he would stay.

Growling, snarling, gasping, they rolled over and over, dyeing the loose shingle with blood. The men in the bazaar heard it; fifty were running with lathis, and a hundred more were listening. But the Sluggard's master was first in the field.

He found them locked together on the very brink of the stream—the dead leopard, and the battered, bloody mass of fur, alive, but barely living. For a long time they could not unlock the Sluggard's jaws. When at last they succeeded, he wagged his tail feebly at his master, and went to sleep.

So, in the hearing of all that motley crowd, gathered from the ends of India, the Sluggard became the champion of his race—the only Bhutia who alone had slain a leopard. From thenceforward the people called him Warrior; but his master called him Friend.

From *The Dancing Fakir & Other Stories* (1922)

---

1. Chakor = A species of partridge.



Here are exciting tales of hair-breadth escapes and thrilling encounters in the wild — stories of man's relationships with other living creatures, furred or feathered, fierce or friendly. All the stories were written out of the writers' own experiences. From thrilling encounters with man-eating tigers and crocodiles, to more friendly exchanges between man and beast, these stories will hold you spellbound.

**Ruskin Bond**, well-known as one of India's best-loved and most prolific writers, has been writing novels, poetry, essays and short stories for almost half a century now. Apart from this, over the years he has expertly compiled and edited a number of anthologies. For his outstanding literary contribution, he was awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957, the Sahitya Akademi award in 1992 (for English writing in India) and the Padma Shri in 1999.

*Rupa & Co*