

## THE WILD-BUFFALO HUNT.

My servants, amongst whom were many belonging to the country, seeing me constantly occupied with my gun, told me that in a certain direction—due east of the fortress, in the neighbourhood of a ruined village, barely discernible in the distance by the naked eye, called Seonee,—I might be sure of finding an amazing abundance of game of all kinds, from the wild-buffalo to the hare.

I eagerly jumped at the idea, believing that on the powerful back of my gallant Cape-nag "Ploughboy," I could, weighty as I was, run down and spear the hugest ursa, or solitary buffalo ever seen.

At that time, and long after, it was not an easy matter to pick up an animal capable of galloping for even a quarter of a mile under my welter weight, without almost certain injury to his legs; but owing to the fever I had unfortunately caught at Buckheira, I had been compelled to visit Bombay, at which place I managed to purchase a Cape-thoroughbred, bred by the then Governor, Lord Charles Somerset.

According to English ideas, "Ploughboy" was a powerful cob, standing 14-3, with capital pins, admirable action, excellent temper, high courage, jet black, and rising six years of age. In fact, a most desirable article for a very keen, hard-riding, welter-weighted sportsman.

As all my inquiries had been satisfactorily answered, I determined to obtain leave of absence for a few days, that I might fairly try "Ploughboy's" blood and bottom, after a wild-buffalo; an animal that I had never followed on horseback.

There is no species of game in India more dangerous to encounter—excepting perhaps the rhinoceros—and that animal is never sought after while on horseback, and but seldom thought desirable on an elephant.

The male buffalo is very nearly as long and as heavy as the rhinoceros, and, if possible, more fierce; especially when found single, having been sent to Coventry by the herd.

I had formed a very deceptive idea of its speed, which, considering its enormous bulk, is truly wonderful.

The whole of my ammunition was carefully examined, my guns and pistols re-cleaned, scores of bullets were cast, and the powder dried in the sun, to be quite prepared for action.

I obtained a week's leave of absence from our gallant Commandant, and having through the agency of my establishment obtained a guide to Seonee, I despatched the outer fly of my smaller tent the previous day, and mounted my horse "Thunderer," commencing my journey in the middle of the hot winds, in the "merry month of May," the thermometer being never less than 125° in the shade.

The village was fully twenty miles distant; and the track passed through the almost interminable forest surrounding the fortress. Here and there appeared a small open space, in the neighbourhood of some ruined village, where a few miserable and dejected ryots or cultivators continued, in spite of the devastations of tigers, bears, real gaces, elks, spotted deer, hogs, and other *feræ naturæ*, to carry on their peaceful pursuit of agriculture.

The route was extremely interesting. Sometimes the foot-path led

high contracting parties. But not so! There was still something in reserve. The ambassador had to communicate a petition. "The Rajah has a petition."

"It is granted; what is it?" A considerable time elapsed before he could so far venture on my forbearance as to mention it, but receiving great encouragement from the looks of the natives, and as the important matter must have been mentioned sooner or later, out it came.

But how shall I, how can I, a retired and modest man, nay, the very bean-ideal of bashfulness, unfold the important mystery?

The Rajah had sent his faithful ambassador to acquaint me that I was quite welcome to all the game in his country; that he and all his followers were my bounden slaves; yet he hoped that I would so far favour him as not to run away with any of his royal wives!

Retire, thou most uxorious, doating, and gentle barbarian! prince of the Goand race, retire, happy and contented, to the bosom of your lovely, delicate, and and sweet-scented family, for the powerful Feringee has pledged his knightly word that he will not violate the sacred laws of hospitality, nor pluck a single violet from the garden of love!

Delighted beyond his powers of eloquence, the ambassador again displayed his pearly teeth, and, with suitable prostration at this instance of my huge benevolence, strutted away to calm the tumultuous feelings of his anxious sovereign, by acquainting him with the perfect success of his important mission!

"These people," said the Patail, seeing me gratified with the scene, "permit me to represent, are very ignorant; they are perfectly wild."

"What do they grow?"

"Nothing but a little Indian corn and a few capsicums. They eat any kind of living thing, honey and mows; and if they require anything else, they come to our market sometimes, and exchange their produce for ours."

I inquired of my Goand trackers what they would carry with them to eat while they were in the forest.

They quickly unfolded the rag round their loins, and produced a lump of goor (or inspissated sugar-cane juice), weighing, at the utmost, about a quarter of a pound, stating that they could obtain water in the forest.

They assured my interpreter that they would start immediately, so as to be prepared with intelligence whenever I reached my tent.

One of them, on discovering the buffaloes, was to keep on their track, and the other would return to the tent to guide me to the spot.

They departed on their mission, and left me surrounded by the natives of Sconce.

So long as I lay awake the peasants related the strangest stories of the dreadful destruction caused by the wild beasts around them, and for the first time they mentioned that wild dogs abounded in that neighbourhood, and that they were frequently seen running in large packs (*but mule*) after the largest animals, viz., the sancbur, or elk, and the neelgau, which they tore to pieces, leaving nothing but the bones.

I was not then aware that wild-dogs were to be found in that neigh-

bourhood; but since that period I learnt that they abound in all the central forests of Hindostan, from the higher parts down to Cuttack, where they are frequently caught. Ugly customers are they, I suspect, either to man or beast.

Having breakfasted at daybreak, I jumped on "Thunderer," and rode him about sixteen miles into the forest before I reached my tent. The scenery continued to be similar, and was highly interesting, and the strange desolation caused by the murderous hordes of Pindarees, through a course of years, aroused many thoughts on the various forms of government to which man has been subjected from the earliest records to the present day.

Why this seemingly eternal change of systems? How is it that it is impossible to rule men upon any known system above a certain time? Simply because civilization is eternally changing; and the best government for man, undoubtedly, is that which most rapidly accommodates itself to the spirit of the age. There cannot be such a thing as a permanent system of government, *ex resera natura*—and hence there never has been, although so many have been tried, all having the highest pretensions to durability and perfection.

While passing through the border of a field under preparation for a crop of joar, I was from a distance hailed by a native, with a "Salsam, Sahib! I desire you to hear my petition." I immediately pulled up, and directed the supplicant to approach.

"Sir," said the man, "I have got a weakness here," putting his hand on his stomach. "What medicine must I take?"

On entering into a detail of his symptoms, I ascertained that he was merely suffering from weakness of appetite; and I accordingly prescribed churaita and ginger. He continued—

"It's very hard that I should be obliged to take medicine (!) for I'm not an old man."

"Why, how old are you?"

"I'm only ninety-five!"

"Ah! ninety-five!"

"Why, that's no great age!"

"But you can't be so old; for you don't appear to be above fifty; and besides, you Hindoos don't know your own ages."

"Indeed, Sir, I beg to represent that I am certainly ninety-five. All the village knows my age. This is my field, and do you see that burgot tree?" said he pointing to a middle-sized *Ficus religiosa*, growing about a hundred yards off; I planted that five and forty trusats (or rainy seasons) ago, when I was fifty years old."

This old man was very stout, and actually hard at work with a hoe, preparing his own field for a crop of joar, to be raised during the next rainy season.

I am fully persuaded that the inhabitants of India attain extreme old age; for I have seen tens of thousands both of men and women, whose ages were far beyond my power of guessing.

I continued my perilous ride through the forest, accompanied by some of the haver villagers, and about mid-day reached my tent.

On dismounting, I found that, faithful to their promise, one of the Goand savages had arrived with important news.

He and his hardy companion had passed the night in tracking and following a large herd of buffaloes, and he had returned to my tent, while his associate had climbed up a tree, to command a view of their movements, lest they should wander from the valley in which they had settled for the night.

As I had nearly the whole of a long day before me, I determined on proceeding to my game without loss of time, and so, placing my loaded fowling-pieces in the hands of my servants, with a hogspear in my hand, I mounted Ploughboy, following the Goand, who was accompanied by my saces or groom and a couple of Seonites.

We scarcely passed a hundred yards without either meeting or frightening some large game.

Sometimes a couple of elks, full grown; at other times a pair of yearlings, or two years old, for these beautiful animals are always to be found in pairs, and very seldom singly.

Every here and there we saw pyramidal heaps of elks' dung, standing from two to four feet high; the apices being crowned with the excretion in a recent or green state; and the base of the cone being white, having been bleached by the sun acting on the dew or rain.

The natives assured me that these animals always used the same heaps; adding constantly to the apex; and on returning to Assar Gurb, and referring to Buffon's Natural History, I discovered that this experienced naturalist had long before ascertained and published the curious fact.

On inspecting one of these conical heaps, the natives can in an instant calculate their probability of meeting those animals.

In the deep shady places we roused the *curvus axis*, or beautiful white-spotted deer; in open spots the *neelgæe*, in small herds of a dozen or more. And curious enough, the whole of these animals obey the same law of nature, for on being first roused, they bound away vigorously from the object of their alarm for a few yards, and then suddenly stand still, turn round and gaze at it, as if out of curiosity to discover what frightened them; after which, they recommence their flight.

Our journey throughout was marked by the most profound silence, and we occasionally enjoyed a peep into the valley through open spaces.

At last the Goand made me a significant sign to pull up, which I readily obeyed. He then pointed out the other Goand, perched on a high tree, who speedily joined us, and I saw a large herd of black shining buffaloes, grazing within about 800 yards of our position. There were at least a hundred of them.

"Now," said the Goand, "you must come up to them by degrees, and you must be very silent, for they are very timid, and hear a long way off."

He had scarcely ceased to speak, when the herd ceased to feed, and all their ears were pointed in our direction; proving clearly that we were detected.

Judging that it would be utterly impossible to approach them more closely, although it had been my intention to run them up, instead of across the valley, I immediately dashed at them at a quick canter. On seeing me break cover, they unanimously grunted, cocked their long tails, and set off at their top speed, with a tramp that shook the earth,

and a thundering noise that re-echoed through the valley; I loudly hallooing and joining in the uproar.

My gallant nag behaved in the handsomest manner, pricking his ears and exerting himself to the utmost.

We crossed the valley, where I found the ground as flat as a race-course, at a tearing speed; and ascending the low hill on its further side, after running a full mile, I gained on them rapidly.

Casting my eyes in advance of the herd, I observed that they would soon get into broken ground, and would have then to cross a steep hill, before which time I hoped to overtake them; I therefore kept "Ploughboy" at his full stride; and he, perceiving his task, kept his ears constantly pricked, seemingly enjoying the chase.

I wore on that memorable occasion a pair of tight leather pantaloons, but never in my life was I so much shaken by my equestrian exertions.

The horse impetuously dashed at, over, and through every impediment—whether rocks, brooks, or clumps of densely-growing trees. I had no desire to check his ardour, but I could not help anticipating an immortal smash by a sudden fall.

The ground became fearfully bad; every here and there we met a gaping, dry buffalo pit, in which, during the rainy season, the animals enjoyed their cold mud-bath, to save their skins from the harassing flies; small knots of basaltic rock suddenly emerged from the hard soil, sometimes covered by tall grass, and often quite bare.

Now we had to leap over a narrow but deep gully, to land upon solid rock on the other side; and occasionally to creep most carefully down the steep slope of a rainy season watercourse.

Every now and then we wholly lost sight of our game, owing to intervening thickets, which I was compelled to cross at three-parts speed; and then the management of "Ploughboy's" head and mouth would have given full employment to three stout hands; for during these transits I had not only to guide my fiery nag, but to handle a ten-foot hog-spear in such an adroit manner as to enable me to avoid the low branches, by meeting which we both should have been unavoidably floored. Another narrow strip of flat ground had to be crossed, from which a steep hill suddenly rose; and the herd having reached its base, and beginning to ascend, I redoubled my efforts to join them before they entered a narrow gap which I saw at its summit.

Ploughboy was still perfectly fresh, and pulling strongly at the snaffle; but the buffaloes were very much distressed, and howling from anxiety.

We gained on them most rapidly while ascending, and before the first of them gained the gap (which was so narrow as to obstruct their passage greatly), I was within a spear's length of those in the rear, and just on the point of throwing it, when a two-years' old calf, finding that that he could not enter the herd, which were jammed together in the pass, suddenly turned round and crossed to the left, within a couple of yards of my horse's head, much to his wonderment.

In this awkward position, I found it impossible either to job or throw my weapon; but as the frightened brute seemed determined to run down the hill, I considered that it would be better to allow him

a free passage, for that when there I should then easily manage him.

To my great astonishment, his progress down the hill was accomplished by vigorous leaps, more resembling that of a twenty-four pound shot than the paces of a ponderous animal: and, when I began to follow in his wake, I discovered that if I attempted to imitate his example I should be upset in a moment, the rocky soil being so steep and smooth.

I had therefore the mortification to discover that I must follow at a very slow pace, for my nag stumbled repeatedly; but when I got to the plain at the bottom, the instinctive sagacity of the animal defeated my utmost scrutiny, for his mournful bellowings, on being separated from his kindred, had been cautiously discontinued, and thus all traces of his course were lost. I was therefore most unwillingly compelled to abandon the pursuit.

This happened about 4 o'clock, p.m., when the sun was raging fiercely, and the hot wind blew in an almost suffocating gale. I dismounted, and seated myself on a burning rock, perfectly blown; but my gallant nag pricked his ears, and coolly began to eat the dry burnt grass, as if he were perfectly ready for another gallop.

When I recovered my breath, I climbed up a neighbouring knob, and gave half-a-dozen prolonged and most musical view halloos in the direction from which I had come, and in about half an hour afterwards, the Goand tracked us, and brought my groom and followers up to the discomfited Hurroo.

I remounted Ploughboy, and quietly following the Goand, we reached a lovely clump of trees, in the midst of which I saw a rocky pool of clear water. I again dismounted, undressed, and threw myself into this cool and invigorating natural bath, enjoying its freshness most exceedingly, although at the first plunge I frightened a beautiful cervus axis, or spotted deer, who had been indulging in a nap amidst the dense grass on the bank.

When it was nearly sunset, my servants observing that I showed no intention of leaving my bath, approached to warn me that I had left my tent a long way off, and that it would be prudent to reach it before dark.

As the truth of this observation was undeniable, I vaulted into my saddle, and throwing the reins on the back of my trusty nag, meekly followed the Goands.

En route we saw numerous small herds of wild-buffaloes, grazing at their ease, until they observed our party, when they invariably stood still, and pointed their long ears in our direction.

The numbers of large wild animals, such as elks, peeligaces, and deer, was astonishing.

We reached my tent in safety, and slept soundly during the night, but were occasionally wakened by the shrill, horrid screams of hungry jackals.

In the morning, after eating a hearty *dejeune-a-la-fourchette*, we retreated on Sconee, and reached the village at an early hour.

The rest of the day was spent in conversation with the natives.

The Goonds left me, making a hundred thousand salaams, and declaring me to be worthy of the highest civil dignity.

I procured two Bheels to accompany me as guides to Asseer-Guhh, and early after breakfast we commenced our return.

I must confess that I had been bitterly mortified at my want of success, expecting to hear the usual consolations of "Spear a wild buffalo! Such an idea! A fellow of seventeen stones. Quite absurd! What could put such a thing in your head? I never knew but one man that could do the trick, and he had three of his ribs broken;—but then he *could* ride!"

Hardly was this pleasant train of thought finished, when "Ploughboy" pricked his ears and neighed. I jumped up in my stirrups, and looking a-head, I saw a huge shining urna, or male-buffalo, standing motionless, distant about three hundred yards.

The beast saw me, and commenced his retreat into the depths of the forest.

"Now, then," thought I, "I can regain my character. The ground is better." So off I started, spear in hand, at a hand gallop.

In a few seconds I was almost unsaddled by an unexpected leap, and looking round, saw that my noble nag had jumped over a wild-hog; in a moment I continued my race—lost sight of my prey repeatedly—but tracked him again by his melodious grunt.

My horse was as frantic as myself, and as determined; and as I neared the urna, he bounded like a buck.

Huzza! I am within three spear's-lengths, and he turns down a rocky ravine. Catch him up again—and, as he slowly clambered up its steep bank, up went my sharp spear, and holding it steadily, in a second it was plunged close behind his near-shoulder, into his extensive barrel—giving a sharp dig into my beast's side. The job was beautifully accomplished, and the lord of the forest, giving a grunt of general disapprobation, fell helpless on his side.

I could hardly believe in my success; before withdrawing my spear (which was, to my surprise, as clean as when it entered), it was followed by gushes of dark blood, and in a few seconds a quivering of his limbs proved that he had ceased to exist.

The Bheels were the first to join me, and they expressed their surprise and admiration of my prowess; and begged, in the same breath, for permission to cut the beast up. Of course, this was granted, and they commenced skinning the animal, while his muscles were still twitching.

As the fortress was within sight, and I had little to fear in the remaining part of my journey, I directed them to bring me the hide, and left them to follow.

I reached my post without hindrance, and sat down to my bottle of beer and hot fowl and curry, at my usual dinner-hour.

In the evening the Bheels brought me the hide, and on receiving their boxes, they hinted, in the most delicate manner, that the Feringees drank very fine liquors!

"Oh, I dare say you wouldn't mind tasting them?"

"Jee, sahib!" (Yes, sir.)

I sent for a bottle of gin, which my Khan-saman brought me up

corked. I told him to bring me a finger-glass, and a surice of cold water. He brought me the glass, and returned for the water.

During his momentary absence, I very incautiously placed the vessel in the hands of one of the Bheels, and he, thinking foul scorn of water, instantly applied it to his lips, and, prestissimo! he gulped down about the third part of a bottle at a hasty draught!

I was exceedingly alarmed, lest it might destroy the man; but he turned round to his mate, and said, with a pleasant smile—

"How delicious! Pray, sahib, give him a draught! Oosko pilao maharaj!"

My fears had quickly evaporated, and I gave a second bumper to the other wild man of the woods.

He drained it with a relishing smack, and smilingly said, "Iee vhaee! khoof toffa!" (Yes, brother, that is nice!)

To show how little they had been affected, they asked me for some bread, which was given; and when greedily devoured, they asked permission to sleep, retiring for the purpose into my verandah.

These men had been in the habit of drinking the spirit distilled from the petals of the mona tree, which is most nauseous, but powerful, and frequently more resembling spirits of wine than ordinary tippie.

The race of men called "Bheels," resided in wild villages around Asseergurh: they are, if possible, more fierce and murderous than the Goonds; levying, even after our supremacy, a tax on the native high-ways, similar to that of the black-mail taken on the English borders in days of yore.

They have been in a great degree reclaimed, and I hear that a number of the race have enlisted in our service; but they must feel this to be a great national degradation!

## GROWTH OF TOWNS IN THE FAR WEST OF AMERICA.

BY CAPTAIN MACKINNON, R.N.

A GRAND and comprehensive scheme to construct a railway to the Pacific was projected by Mr. Whitney; but he failed to carry his plan through Congress; and it is now impossible, as the greater portion of the lands he depended on, to construct this gigantic work, has already passed from the control of the federal legislature. One of the greatest and most magnificent schemes in the world is now open to the combined action of Great Britain and America—I allude to a railroad, a world's highway, on the boundary line between the United States and British possessions.

This route is preferable even to Whitney's scheme, as it is some thousands of miles shorter.

With one terminus on Lake Superior, on or near the boundary line, it would then traverse the waters' head which divides the streams flowing towards the Arctic Sea, and those which have their exit southwards; it would then cross the Rocky Mountains at an elevation some