

A  
SKETCH OF ASSAM;

WITH

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE  
HILL TRIBES.

BY AN OFFICER

IN THE REGT. MAJ. GENL. JOHNSON'S REGIMENT NATIVE INFANTRY  
IN CIVIL SERVICE.

With Illustrations from Sketches by the Author.

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## CHAPTER III.

Forests and Grass-Jungle—Tigers, Elephants, Buffaloes, Rhinoceroses, Pigs and Deer—Field Sports by Europeans—Native practice of destroying animals with poisoned arrows—Effects of poison—Wild Elephants caught with a snare in Assam—Secured in a Khaddah or Enclosure at Chittagong—Net Revenue of Assam—Disbursements—Industry—Opium—Slavery—Conclusion.

The enormous extent of forest, and high, dense grass jungle in Assam, exceeds perhaps that of any other country of the same area; and, as a consequence, the herds of wild elephants, buffaloes, deer, rhinoceroses, and tigers, are incalculable. Almost every military officer in civil employ in Assam, having constantly to roam about the country, becomes, if not from choice, at least in self-defence, a keen and skilful sportsman. Herds of one hundred buffaloes each are frequently met with; and though I have known twenty buffaloes shot in one day's diversion, they are so prolific, and the season of four months for sport is so short, that no actual

progress appears to be made in the diminution of their numbers. On some occasions, when a buffalo is wounded and unable to escape into high jungle, he furiously charges the elephant on which the sportsman is mounted in a howdah, and often goes the elephant, or injures the feet or legs of the driver seated on the animal's neck, before he can be stopped in his career; for it frequently takes ten or twelve balls to destroy a buffalo, unless an early shot inflicts a vital wound. The elephant, if well trained, on being charged by a buffalo, merely turns round and presents his stern to the repeated blows of the infuriated monster: screaming out, however, in the utmost fright until the buffalo is shot or scared off by the firing; but a timid or badly trained elephant, on being charged instantly seeks safety in flight, to the imminent peril of the sportsman, should any trees happen to come in contact with the howdah. Buffaloes, however, that have been long undisturbed, generally stand still, and with those looks and raised horns receive the first few shots in utter astonishment, and then seek shelter in the high jungle with the utmost speed. Rhinoceroses are very numerous in many parts of Assam, and are to be found in very high grass jungle, near inaccessible mire swamps, which pre-

elude pursuit, and having thick skins, they are not easily shot. Elephants demand the charge of a rhinoceros as much as that of a tiger, and the grunting noise of the former animal not unfrequently scares even a well-trained elephant from the field. If the rhinoceros succeeds in overtaking the elephant, he bites large pieces of flesh from the elephant's sides or legs, and with the horn on the nose not unfrequently inflicts fearful wounds. Rhinoceroses are tamed in a few months, and may be seen at Gowahatty grazing on the plains as harmless as cows, attended by a single man. When tamed in Assam they may be bought of the natives for 100 or 150 rupees (10*l.* or 15*l.*); many have been sent to Calcutta, and sold for 500 rupees, or 50*l.*; but the expense of boat-hire to the metropolis, provisions, and servants' wages, with the risk attendant on the journey to so distant a market, renders the speculation anything but profitable.

Deer shooting is a fine, healthy, exhilarating exercise for those who are not partial to the dangerous and exciting scenes common to tiger, rhinoceros, and buffalo shooting. It is a mistake, however, to suppose it tame, easy sport. Deer shooting requires much practice: a steady foot and arm is a necessity, and a quick sight and independ-