



A wounded tiger.

THE DANGERS OF SHOOTING BIG GAME.

VIEWS OF SOME LEADING SPORTSMEN.

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WITH DRAWINGS BY G. D. ARMOUR.

AMONG the many topics which arise for discussion in the smoking-room few are more popular than the relative danger of different animals when wounded. About the pursuit of big game, there is a glamour that belongs to no other occupation short of war itself; and for this reason alone, whenever the subject is mooted in a country house or railway carriage, every one present, even if he has never seen any big game outside of the Zoological Gardens, is sure to follow the discussion with rapt attention. Not all of us have the opportunity of listening to such conferences at first hand, and therefore it seemed interesting to obtain authentic opinions from a number of sportsmen intimately acquainted with these things. To the questions, which I put to them, most of those addressed have very kindly answered at some length, and the following extracts from their letters should throw much light on questions often argued with considerable difference of opinion. I have arranged the letters so as to present the arguments in some kind of sequence, though cross reference will be

necessary if any reader desires to compare opinions on the same animal. This plan has necessitated denying a lady her right of place, and for this offence every apology is offered. It has seemed best to give the extracts verbatim, reserving to the last such brief comment and deduction as I have felt qualified to make.

GENERAL A. A. A. KINLOCH, whose acquaintance with the big game of India covers a long period and a wide geographical range, writes:

"Your question as to which I consider the most dangerous animal to encounter when at bay is a difficult one to answer satisfactorily. So much depends upon circumstances, such as the nature of the ground, etc. I have had little experience, having seldom been charged by any animals when on foot. Only elephant, gaur and panther have really 'come for me,' and I have always killed or stopped them. I have, of course, often followed up wounded dangerous beasts, but have generally found them more anxious to escape than to fight. In the open, a good shot who is well armed and keeps perfectly cool should nearly always kill

or turn any animal. Under such circumstances I think that the elephant is probably the most dangerous, as when his head is raised and his trunk coiled, it is difficult to judge the true line for the brain. In long grass or thick jungle perhaps several animals are about equally dangerous. You may almost tread on a wounded tiger or panther before you see it, and it may seize you before you can raise a rifle. The buffalo and gaur have a habit of waiting in dense thickets for their pursuer, and are on him before he can see them. A son of mine was

In a subsequent letter General Kinloch sends me an account of an encounter which his eldest son recently had with another gaur in the Nilgiris:

"He was looking for an old bull that was known to frequent a certain jungle, and suddenly came on it. He fired two shots, and it bolted. Directly afterwards he heard a crash in another direction, and saw another bull making off. Leaving the wounded one to stiffen, he followed up the tracks of the second; but had not gone far before the first one, which had made a circle and was lying in wait, was



A charging elephant (African).

following up a wounded gaur some time ago in very thick jungle when it suddenly charged him, and knocked him over twice, striking the rifle out of his hands. Wonderful to relate, he escaped with a few slight bruises. I have only shot one Indian buffalo on foot, and that one had no chance of charging. From the determined way, however, in which I have seen these animals attack elephants, I should say that no more dangerous antagonist exists than a wounded buffalo in high grass. It is extremely difficult to give it a fatal shot, and almost impossible to escape the deadly sweep of its ponderous horns."

upon him. It trampled on him, breaking one rib just over the heart, and then came back, puffing and snorting. My son had the presence of mind to lie perfectly still; and the beast, after walking several times round him, eventually made off. My son was able to ride home, though in great pain; but was reported to be getting on well. The bull was one that had been previously knocked over by another sportsman some time ago, but had jumped up and escaped after he had actually put his foot on it. This confirms the opinion expressed in my former letter about the danger of a wounded buffalo, an animal

with habits similar to those of the gaur, but more savage, and possessed of a much wider reach with its horns. On the day after the accident my son's shikaris followed up the wounded bull, and, having climbed into trees commanding the spot where it was lying down, finished it with nine shots! It was ascertained that the second of two bullets, which my son had fired at a range of about a yard as the beast closed with him, had entered the head, close to the eye, and passed into the chest."

MR. W. H. GRENFELL, M.P., whose sporting experiences have included the big game of more than one hemisphere, is somewhat reluctant to offer a decided opinion.

"I should say," he writes, "that it was impossible to say which animal is most dangerous when wounded. Each individual would be inclined to consider the particular animal from which he himself had suffered most had the first claim to that distinction. Animals of the same species, moreover, vary very much. You may pursue lions, buffalo or bear, and think them all cowardly till you come across an aggressive specimen of the race that upsets all your calculations. All the animals that you mention* are dangerous when wounded and followed up on foot, but as a rule their impulse is to get away if they can. The position occupied by the sportsman makes a great deal of difference in estimating the danger incurred. To any one perched on a howdah a wounded tiger, however brave, is not very dangerous; but to any one pursuing him on foot he is a very different quantity. Half-tame animals, such as pet stags, which have lost their fear of man, are dangerous; but of genuinely wild animals I should say that the elephant and African buffalo show the greatest vindictiveness and cunning in attack, though you may kill many with impunity before you encounter one which really means business."

MR. J. G. MILLAIS, whose interesting writings and beautiful drawings of South African game have delighted so many sportsmen, puts in a claim for the Cape buffalo, of which I remember seeing a fine head in his museum at Horsham, and leopard, and for a third candidate, his choice of which would occasion some

surprise, were it not for the accompanying explanation.

"I am afraid," writes Mr. Millais, "that my opinion as to the most dangerous beast is not worth very much, as I have killed very few of those with the worst reputation. Perhaps the most tricky animals are the Cape buffalo and the leopard, because you never know how and when they are going to charge. Most other dangerous beasts give you fair warning. I think a great deal too much has been written on the "charging" of beasts, which merely attack when cornered or in defence of young. I remember a big grizzly making a so-called charge from a hundred yards distance and passing within a few yards of me. He was not, in my opinion, really charging at all, but merely taking what he thought the most suitable line of retreat. More men have been killed and injured by leopards and Cape buffaloes than any other creatures. It is not a pleasant sensation to find a big black bull buffalo facing you within a few yards, as I once experienced."

The mention of African game in the two preceding letters will naturally suggest reference to the opinions of so high an authority as MR. F. C. SELOUS, who has, in fact, sent a most interesting reply to my letter:

"In giving you my opinion as to the relative danger to be apprehended from lions, leopards, buffaloes, rhinoceroses and elephants, let me first give you the data on which that opinion has been based. For a number of years during my hunting career in South Africa I kept a very careful record of the game I killed, and I have lately compiled a list of all the animals shot by me from 1870 down to the present time. The numbers of those which you place among dangerous game are as follow: lions 30, leopards 4, elephants 106, white rhinoceros 23, black rhinoceros 26, buffaloes 175. These are what I actually shot myself; but I have helped to shoot several more lions and a great many more buffaloes and elephants, and have seen all the dangers incidental to killing them. Of elephants I killed all I could, as for many years I made a business of elephant-hunting and lived by it, and a pretty hard living it was, with about a hundred miles of walking, in a bad season, for each elephant killed, and

* These were the lion, tiger, leopard, elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros and boar.

a lot of running after and away from some of them into the bargain! Most of my elephants were shot in the early 'seventies with obsolete muzzle-loading guns. Had I been possessed in those days of breech-loading cordite rifles, I should probably have killed three times the number. I shot cow elephants with good tusks as well as bulls, as, pound for pound, their ivory is much the more valuable. But Africa was a wild land in those days, and all the savage manhood of the region was out after elephants, so that any cow elephants with good tusks that I had spared would in all probability have soon been killed by black hunters.

I was on foot, snorting from the pain of their wounds, but I did not regard these as charging. Of buffaloes I have certainly killed and helped to kill well over two hundred, mostly when on foot, and I ought by rights to have had a great number of exciting experiences with these animals. I have, in point of fact, had a few, but not nearly as many as I ought to have had if my buffaloes had had a proper regard for their reputation as the most dangerous of African game. Of leopards I can say very little from my own experience, as I have killed only four of these animals. Of these, however, two charged after being struck; and



Indian buffalo.

. . . The scorn which it is nowadays the fashion to hurl at the old-time elephant hunter, who is pleasantly termed a 'game-hog,' seems to me in great measure undeserved, for if good sport is to be measured by its danger and excitement, there is often better sport in a day's elephant-hunting than in a lifetime of pheasant-shooting or deerstalking. . . . Of rhinoceroses I might have shot great numbers during the first few years of my African wanderings, but I never killed one except when it was wanted for its meat. I have, when on horseback, now and again been charged by a wounded black rhinoceros, and several more have blundered close past me when

an old Masarwa Bushman of my acquaintance used to say that leopards were more savage than lions. The result of my own experiences with the dangerous game of South Africa is that the lion is on the whole the most likely to charge if wounded. Speaking generally, it is the most dangerous animal of that region. After the lion I should regard the elephant as more vicious and readier to charge than the buffalo—that is, taking an average of many cases, and not an individual example here and there of abnormal ferocity. There is, however, this distinction to be observed: that a charging buffalo is more dangerous than a charging elephant, for the latter, unlike the former, will usually

turn when hit by a bullet. The buffalo keeps straight on its course unless the bullet either breaks its neck or penetrates its brain. Either of these desirable results is difficult of accomplishment, as



The African buffalo (showing how the horns protect the brain).

the animal charges with its nose held straight out.

"Touching the rhinoceros, I regard the East African type as quite different in disposition from those I knew in South Africa. In the former region the black rhinoceros is a vicious, inquisitive, and dangerous animal; but in central South Africa, not only did I personally find the animal comparatively inoffensive, but Lo Bengula told me himself that not one of his men had ever been killed by one of these animals, of which they destroyed such numbers between 1872 and 1885 as practically to exterminate the species in northern Matabeleland. In East Africa this rhinoceros appears, from all accounts, to attack whenever it gets wind of a human being, but in South Africa we always found, like Gordon Cumming, that it made off at once on getting a whiff of us. . . . During my twenty-five years' experience in the interior of South Africa far more men, black as well as white, were killed or injured by lions than by any other animal, and more by elephants than by buffaloes."

What Mr. Selous was to the lion of Africa, that was GENERAL SIR MONTAGU GERARD to the tiger of Asia, and his wide experience of many kinds of big game entitles his opinion to the greatest respect. Before coming to the subject of the Indian animals with which he is most familiar,

he tells, without taking responsibility for the details, an interesting story in connection with the tragic death of a good sportsman killed by an African buffalo:

"I have always *heard* that the African buffalo is the most dangerous of all game; and, to judge from the massive hornwork covering the brain, its head is even better protected than that of the Indian buffalo, while it is also said to be particularly cunning. I was told—I forget by whom, and the story may have been varied in the telling—that the late Hon. Guy Dawnay, who was, you will remember, killed by one of these animals a few years ago, had that very morning had two close shaves, one of them with a lioness. He concluded that it was an unlucky day, and it was with a presentiment of coming evil that he started back for the tents, met the buffalo, wounded it, and was trampled to death.

"As to Indian game, both the rhinoceros and buffalo, found in very restricted areas in the north-east of India and Assam, take a deal of killing, particularly the latter. There is, however, this mitigation of any danger that might otherwise belong to their pursuit: that they inhabit such dense marshy reed brakes that they can only be shot from elephant-back, in which position the sportsman runs practically no risk.

"As regards encounters with Indian game in the open, I fancy that a heavy old tiger is about as dangerous as any. Compared with the buffalo, he has the greater ferocity of the flesh-eater, besides which he has been known to attack and kill a full-grown buffalo. I doubt whether there is any comparison between a tiger and a lion. The late Mr. Edwin Ward assured me that the lions of Africa and India are to all intents and purposes identical. Many lions were shot in the late 'sixties in Central India and Gujerat, and it was recognised by sportsmen who knew both beasts that they exhibited none of the ferocity of the tiger. Similar cases have come to my notice, and I have known of lions being hunted about on foot in a way which no tiger would stand. As to panthers, although we hear of a good many accidents with them, these are in many cases due to neglect of proper precautions on the part of sportsmen, who think that they can chivy these powerful brutes about like boys hunt cats.

"A boar is the pluckiest animal that walks the jungle, but his strength is not

in proportion to his spirit. His short blind rush may be avoided even by an unarmed man on foot, and he rarely turns back to charge again, once he has gone past. A good spear may kill the biggest boar single-handed if the ground is fairly open and his mount is good.

"A rhinoceros may be difficult to kill; but he is a stupid, blundering brute, the reverse of aggressive. A bison* is strong, and may on occasion prove formidable; but it is timid rather than aggressive, and in those portions of the jungle which it inhabits there are generally sufficient trees to enable the sportsman to shelter behind them in case of a charge.

"It is the tiger which is more likely to charge home before the sportsman realises his proximity than a buffalo or elephant. The pace of its rush and the cunning with which it conceals itself are both in its favour. Then, too, it is a comparatively small mark, and an old male, weighing perhaps 450 lb., is not easy to stop, while one clean blow from his paw will smash a man's skull as if it were an eggshell. Then its pluck and vitality are almost beyond belief. I have seen a tiger, which had been shot through the body half an hour before with a spherical 12-bore ball, charge straight from a distance of sixty yards across dead open ground up to four sportsmen with nearly a dozen native attendants. All eight barrels were emptied into the desperate brute before he at last dropped to a 10-bore shell, backed by seven drams of powder, in an absolutely vital spot. The dangers of big game shooting have, of course, been in great degree removed by the modern cordite express rifles, with enormous penetration for the thick-skinned brutes, and for the big cats a knock-down blow measured by 5000 foot-pounds!"

The wild boar has a warm admirer in MRS. ALAN GARDNER, who has seen more big game shooting than most ladies, and who is, I believe, at the time of writing absent on a hunting expedition in Africa.

"In my opinion," writes Mrs. Gardner,

"a wild boar is the most courageous of all animals. In the wild beast fights in the arenas of native princes a boar has more than once beaten a tiger in fair fight. As regards the danger to a sportsman following up wounded game on foot, I imagine that there is little to choose between a tiger, elephant, or African buffalo. Save in exceptional circumstances, wild beasts rarely attack man unless they are first wounded, though Sir Pertab Singh once told me that in the spring months at Jodhpore an old wild boar will sometimes charge a man even when not molested."

Perhaps the greatest tribute to the wild boar is that which reaches me from LIEUT.-COL. P. R. BAIRNSFATHER. Most of his leaves were spent in the Himalayas, which furnish no game more dangerous than bears. Of pig-sticking, however, he had the usual experiences of a cavalry officer in India, and of the boar he writes thus:

"It is my conviction that no brute is more fearless or determined. He thinks nothing of his own skin, and even without being wounded will go straight for a man on horseback or anything else, I believe, up to an elephant. There is nothing half-hearted about his charge. He comes straight and strong and fast, and will charge again and again, until he has accomplished his purpose or got his death-



The spring of the lion.

"During my twenty-five years' experience in the interior of South Africa, far more men were killed or injured by lions than by any other animal."—Mr. F. C. Selous.

blow. Nothing can be more businesslike than his charge. I have been driven backwards into a nullah, horse and all, the gallant brute pushing me back foot

* This is the name by which the gaur is known to many Indian sportsmen.—F. G. A.

by foot with the spear fast in his body. If you come to the question of actual danger, this is not, of course, very great so long as you keep in the saddle, but on foot a man would have a poor chance against a charging demon that weighs eighteen or even twenty stone!"

The opinions of these half-dozen correspondents would furnish material for considerable discussion if space permitted. I must, however, content myself with one or two passing comments, which may serve as an indifferent substitute for

charge again and again and unhorse more than one rider before lying still for the last blow of a Spaniard's knife. In districts, too, where the pig is not exasperated by spears, it follows the usual rule among wild animals to escape rather than show fight. Another direct divergence of opinion in the foregoing letters will be noticed between Mr. Selous and Mr. Millais, the former regarding the lion, the latter the leopard and Cape buffalo, as responsible for more deaths in Africa than any other wild beast. It must, however, be borne in mind that this opinion of Mr.



Leopard lying in wait.

the interesting explanations that would have resulted had my correspondents—saving Mrs. Gardner's grace—met in the smoking-room and actually compared their experiences. Touching the wild boar, for example, it will be seen that Colonel Bairnsfather puts a much higher value on its strength and determination than Sir Montagu Gerard; and for this his single encounter with an unusually determined pig may be partly responsible. There are pigs and pigs, and I have, on the pig-sticking ground at Howara, a few miles out of Tangier, seen one pig roll over almost resignedly to the second or third spear, while another would

Selous was based on actual records over a stated period of a quarter of a century while he was in the country, while that of Mr. Millais may be equally accurate if its foundation was the number of such casualties during the later period when he also travelled in the same region.

The candid confession of his elephant-hunting practices which Mr. Selous has made in his letter cannot be read without interest; and it is only right to add that since those vast territories, with their remains of big game, have come more completely under European control, since the Governments of the countries concerned have met in conference with a

view to instituting international measures calculated to save the remnant of the wild animals from extermination, few have been more enthusiastic in support of such timely protection than Mr. Selous himself. His respect for the lion as the most dangerous animal encountered by the sportsman might read as if it conflicted with that of Sir Montagu Gerard, who places the tiger far above the so-called king of beasts for ferocity and pluck; but here again it is necessary to take account of the different conditions

other hand, had no howdah or machan to shelter him from his lions, and he had to shoot them all on foot, with at most the chance of a gallop for life on his best horse.

The point on which most who have contributed all that is interesting to this article are agreed is that wild animals rarely attack unless first molested. As regards the wild boar, however, a note of dissent is struck in the letters of both Mrs. Gardner and Colonel Bairnsfather; and a case of another animal, the Indian



Pig-sticking.

under which they have met with the two animals. General Gerard admittedly knows the lion chiefly in its dwindling Asiatic home. When we find, according to Selous, that the same rhinoceros can show great variation in two regions of the same continent, it is surely possible that the lion of Asia and the lion of Africa may differ completely when confronted by sportsmen. Again, much of Sir Montagu Gerard's acquaintance with the tiger was made from the howdah, and the Indian lion he does not mention having shot at all. Mr. Selous, on the

buffalo, has just come to my notice in the *Pioneer Mail* for February 12th of this year, which came in by the Indian mail as I was writing these notes. According to the account there given, a wild buffalo took up its quarters in a patch of elephant grass in Bhagulpora, not far from the town of Madhepura, and came out each evening to raid the crops. It had apparently developed a very savage temper, and charged every native who came within reach, so that it killed three, and injured five more, before steps were taken for its destruction.

On the whole, after the larger carnivora, it would seem that the animals most to be dreaded by sportsmen on foot are the wild cattle, and of these the order of danger would seem to be awarded to the Cape buffalo, gaur and Indian buffalo. Even our park cattle now and again develop a ferocity which is alarming, though the remnant of the ancient British breeds, such as those at Mr. Assheton's place, Vaynol, of which I gave some account in this magazine three or four years ago, show no wildness save that of keeping as far as possible from the overtures of the photographer. The manner in which park deer will sometimes lose their fear of man and treat him with violence is alluded to by Mr. Grenfell ; but these stand on a different footing from the genuinely wild animals,

and such cases of unprovoked aggression must be classed rather with the outbreaks of savagery which from time to time cause tragedies to occur in menageries and wild beast shows. For practical purposes, a "performing" lion or leopard may, within the confining bars, be regarded as permanently "at bay," while the evidences which are from time to time disclosed as to the methods of education unfortunately leave very little doubt that they must also be regarded as wounded. Those, therefore, who exhibit them stand in the same relation as the sportsman who follows up wounded game, and it is incorrect, without a very thorough investigation of the antecedents, to cite such outbreaks as cases of unprovoked assault on man.



Leopard at bay.