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SPORT IN THE BHOOTAN DOOARS.

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IN the early part of 1870 the fortune of war and the annual relief sent my regiment from the gaieties of one of our largest Presidency cities to the dreary monotony of a small station on the Eastern frontier ; at first we all kicked against the change, for the report of our new quarters was anything but a lively one ; indifferent mat houses, no roads, no society, and a perfect deluge of rain four months out of the year were what we were told to expect : no one knew much about the sport to be had for the seeking, and it was only after constant inquiries on arrival, that I found we had been sent to one of the best spots in the whole of India for large game. Eleven elephants were attached to the regiment, two of them the best howdah animals you would care to mount, and staunch at all game, an invaluable qualification in a country where the density of the jungle and the height of the grass quite shut out any hope of killing game on foot. Our kind hearted Colonel put me in charge of the elephants, and I soon determined to give them a little healthy exercise in the neighbouring jungles. The Deputy Commissioner and police officer of the district were just then going out on a shooting trip, and as I did not know the ground I gladly put myself under their guidance ; the last named official was one of the best howdah shots and sportsmen I ever had the fortune to meet. On 19th February we sent off our heavy baggage, rifles, &c., to F. . . distant 32 miles, and on the following morning all three galloped out with one relay of horses, to camp, crossing the river T. at starting and the shallow waters of the D. stream 16 miles further on ; we also crossed two other minor streams by means of a primitive boat ferry with bamboo platforms, and arrived at F. at noon, finding our traps had been put into a large thatched mat house. Antelope (black buck) were reported near, and in

the evening I took a stroll over a grassy plain and came on a small herd, but missed the only long shot I had at them.

Next morning we mounted our respective elephants, taking five others to beat, and tried the heavy patches of grass jungle near a small stream, our principal object was to get rhinoceros. Our combined battery was powerful; the police officer used a single muzzle-loading 8 bore, charge 6 drs., whilst the Deputy Commissioner and myself had a pair of 12 bores taking from 4 to 5 drs. In the first hour we only put up a few hog deer and pig which were let off; we then moved on to a small patch of "tara" grass, where fresh traces of rhinoceros were plentiful. Instead of going through this, we kept to one side, forming a line at intervals, and sent a native on an elephant to fire the jungle on the other, the grass being dry; the plan succeeded, and presently two large rhinoceroses and a ditto broke out of the cover and headed towards us: we opened fire on them rather indiscriminately; one rhino, however, was badly hit, and the second was slightly wounded by the Deputy Commissioner; the calf was of course not fired at. We took the trail of the first, and the police officer rejoicing in the possession of a good tracker, a Ghorkha, we made the latter dismount and follow the track, keeping close behind him on our elephants. After a short time I saw the rhino lying down, and gave it two close shots; it made off bleeding profusely, and, pushing my elephant along, I gave it two more bullets; the Deputy Commissioner following suit, the rhino then sank on its knees, and a bullet through the head finished the business. The rhino proved to be a female with a large calf. The calf, which had kept alongside of its mother all the time, was killed by a stray shot from the rifle of the Deputy Commissioner. After cutting up the rhino and taking its horns and skin, we returned to camp, the police officer and self each killing a hog deer *en route*. I had the curiosity to-day to measure the length and height of the rhinoceros, and found the former to be 11 feet and the latter four feet 8 inches. On the 22nd we went to some fresh ground near some old water courses, and fired the jungle in several parts, but without any result. Coming on some "Muchis" (a low-caste tribe who live in the District) we gained some reliable information from them, and going to the place they directed us, we fired the jungle and started a very old rhino. The police officer and Deputy Commissioner opened fire on him and sent him towards me, when I gave him four bullets at quarters. He still kept on and we had a most exciting chase, whenever we got a chance; after going his best for a mile, the rhino lay down quite done and we finished him; the horn was 12 feet long and as no one was certain as to who fired the shot, we dre

and the trophy fell to the police officer. Numbers of the "Muchis" came up and gladly took away as much meat as they could stagger under. Their way of preparing it is by cutting the meat into strips and letting it dry in the sun. On our way back to camp two hog deer fell before the rifle of the police officer, who also bagged a florican (lesser bustard). I was rather surprised at the smallness of the horn of the Indian rhinoceros as compared with that of the African species, and of many that I have shot none exceeded 14 inches. The so called horn is a misnomer, for it is in fact really composed of very close hair, hardened by gradual growth and time to the consistency of horn; it is much prized by religious Hindoos, and has a market value of 50 to 60 rupees the seer; the hide when cut and polished makes capital whips.

The 23rd February was a hard day's work. Elephants were sent off at 2 A.M. to some jungle near M., a village of the Muchis distant six miles. We ourselves rode out at 6 A.M. and commenced beating the dense patches of grass jungle on either sides of the adjacent stream. Pea-fowl, hog deer, and florican were abundant, but as we saw fresh traces of rhino, they were not fired at, though, as it turned out, we might have done so with impunity, as we saw no rhinoceros during the day. After lunch by the banks of the stream, we formed line and beat all the likely spots, making towards the village; the police officer bagged a couple of deer, and shortly after a black bear was started; and its ungainly appearance caused quite a panic amongst the elephants. Bruin after charging right and left amongst them, and running the gauntlet of our respective rifles, made off; but was cleverly dropped by a ball in the head from the rifle of the Deputy Commissioner. After a halt at the village, where we skinned the bear, we beat back to F. across a wide grassy plain, in which I bagged a hog deer and the police officer a florican.

Our next day was a blank. The Deputy Commissioner having to go further into the district on duty, agreed to join the police officer and myself at D., a small police station on the way back to cantonments. We shot down to the latter place, coming on very fresh traces of rhino, but only put up the inevitable hog deer. On the 25th the police officer and myself started before daybreak, and made for the river D., which is a deep stream running from the Bhootan hills, and the cover on each sides of its banks was reported full of rhino. We left one howdah elephant in camp, in case the Deputy Commissioner arrived in time to overtake us. Our first beat after fording the river was over a large grass plain intersected here and there by small clumps of bamboo. We started numerous hog deer, pig and pea-fowl; during the beat I killed a pig and the police officer following suit

added two hog deer to the bag. Both these latter were long running shots from the howdah. We next beat a densely wooded nullah bordering the plain, and came unexpectedly on a bear which scattered the elephants and got off with a bullet in his side from the police officer. A rhinoceros broke out of cover almost immediately close to the latter, and though hard hit, made across the plain towards some thick grass jungle, in which, after a long chase, we lost him. We now called a halt, had breakfast and a long talk with some Muchis who showed us where to go to for our next attempt. Acting on the advice given, we made for a small plain on the far side of the nullah we had already beaten, and forming line worked carefully across; the cover which consisted of alternate patches of "tara" jungle, and out of one of these a rhinoceros (a large female) came out. She proved a regular vicious brute, and at once charged my elephant; the latter stood well, and though two of the other elephants turned tail (one upsetting its mahout), mine did not swerve, and letting the rhino come close I gave it two shots, in the head; this turned her; and two more bullets behind her shoulder brought her on her knees; a fifth shot in the head seemed quite to revive her, for she got up and made a desperate rush into the jungle, but soon subsided and dropped on her knees, where we finished her. All this time the mahout who had been upset crouched in the grass and though he had on a conspicuous red jacket and the rhino passed within five yards, he was fortunately not noticed. On our way back we tried again for bruin but failed, and we both made bad practice at the hog deer which kept popping out of the grass like so many rabbits. My leave having expired I shot back next day to the banks of the J. river, killing one hog deer and a pig; and seeing some duck in a small pond the police officer and self carefully stalked them and bagged a brace; in the afternoon we galloped into cantonments. Our bag was as under, and I was well pleased with my first week's shooting in the Bhootan jungles—

4 Rhinoceros.

1 Bear.

8 Deers.

3 Pigs.

2 Floricans.

2 Ducks.

Early in the following March I was again in the "hunting fields," shooting over the old ground near the D. river, accompanied by my friend L. We rode out on the 4th March to the police station, where we found the elephants picketed and kept the night in a mat house, or rather tried to sleep, for the

were so numerous and likewise so convivial that they kept us awake for hours. On the 5th we left early and went over the same ground on which I had killed my last rhino; *en route* I bagged a barking deer (*cervus muntjac*), and on dismounting for my servant to cut its throat the vicious little beast cut his wrist badly with its tushes. The horns were like small antlers, one branch growing out of the frontal bone; I had sent in the meantime one of the mahouts on a pad elephant to get me a bone from the carcass of the defunct rhino of February last, as the native officers of my regiment had begged me to bring them back one. The man had not gone far when we heard him shouting "*gera hai*" (there are rhinoceroses) and pushing our elephants along at best speed, we came on two quietly standing in the grass. I let drive both barrels at the biggest, when they made off. We gave chase and shortly separated. I stuck to the one I had first hit; whilst L. followed the other. My elephant being fast I soon ranged alongside my friend and killed it without much trouble. I then joined L. who had wounded but lost sight of his game. We hunted for a short time, and after some delay again put up the rhino; he could not go far, and I, after a short chase, brought it to bag. After cutting off the horns, we left the meat to swell the larders of the "Muchi" tribe, who on every occasion of a kill swarmed like vultures on a carcass.

The following day I had glorious sport; we went to some ground in exactly the opposite direction of yesterday, and had with us a villager who volunteered to show us game. We lost some time in crossing an enormous swamp; rather nervous work, I was every moment afraid of seeing the elephants stick in the soft spongy morass. We got safely across, however, and I on topping the bank saw a black bear feeding on an ant-hill; it made off into jungle ahead, and though I wounded it, we never saw it again. I next came on a small rhinoceros, and after giving it one shot, lost all sight of it. We followed up, and whilst I was forcing my elephant through very tall and thick bamboo jungle, I came on two rhinos (mother and calf): they went down a run in the jungle, and I went after as well as the dense cover would permit. Again coming on them quite close, I could just make out the big one, and was raising my rifle to fire, when she suddenly turned and charged; my elephant bolted, and when I again brought him round I heard a couple of shots, and on clearing the jungle saw both the rhinoceros lying dead close to L. It appears they had broken out of the cover into an open spot where he was, and enabled him to drop the big one dead with a ball in the head and kill the other one with his second barrel as it rushed past.

This was a wonderful right and left shot—the big rhino had a very fair horn. After a halt for lunch, we tried for buffaloes, numerous traces of them being about, but saw none; a large rhino, however, got up out of the grass in front of my elephant. The cover was so high, that I could only get a long shot as the rhino went across an open spot; though hit, I lost him after a long chase. On our way back we saw two swamphens (the red deer of Bhootan) drinking by the bank of the river, and putting ourselves between them and the cover they were likely to make for, managed to drop them both as they galloped across our front. The following day I had to leave and return to cantonments, our total bag being for three days

4 Rhinoceros.

3 Deers.

On the 11th I again rejoined L. and had a troublesome job to get to his camp, riding out six miles and doing the remaining two on a pad elephant. L. having been joined by the police officer, moved camp six miles further north. My elephant being quite done I had to walk on, getting a guide from some cowherds nearby. The man did not at all relish walking through tall grass jungle at that time of night, for it was quite dark when I started and there was some cause for his uneasiness, for next day on shining over the ground, I saw the mark of a tiger which had evidently kept behind us all the way. I found L's camp in deep repose, roused them up, got something to eat, and they extemporized a shake down for myself, for my bedding was behind. L. and the police officer had bagged on the 9th and 10th three rhinos, two deers, one pig, and a bull buffalo.

We were on the move very early on the morning of the 12th, in fact reached our ground too soon, and had to wait for a heavy rain break. Our beat to-day lay through a dwarf forest and numerous small ravines, with here and there open patches of grass jungle. Whilst going up a watercourse, I disturbed a stag sambar and he ran off with his foreleg as he galloped off; he gave us a most exciting chase as we all got off our elephants, and at last brought him to a stand amongst some tall tree jungle; the antlers were a fair sized pair, far inferior to some I had shot in Central India. The day being very hot, we agreed to make tracks back to camp. L. killed a sambar deer *en route*, and when close to our tents a rhinoceros got up in front of the police officer, and was killed by him with one bullet from his ten bore; the beast had a magnificent horn. In the afternoon we amused ourselves in fishing the stream which ran past our camp, catching a large quantity by the simple method of erecting a dam at one end and driving the fish to the shallow part,

whence we lifted them out with baskets and a casting net; they proved a welcome addition to our lardar.

On the 13th we did not get away from camp till late, but had a regular field day; instead of beating, we tried the plan of setting fire to all the grass jungle skirting the forests, going round to the opposite sides ourselves. I never in all my experience saw such numbers of deer; sambur, swamp and hog deer came bounding out before the fire by dozeus, and had we shot even fairly we ought to have made a large bag. Twice I got off the howdah to see if I could make better practise on foot, and killed a good swamp stag. After burning all the available cover we called a halt. Our respective bags were—L. one stag, swamp deer, one hind sambur; the police officer one hog deer; and myself, one stag hog deer, one stag sambur, one ditto swamp deer. The sun was very powerful, and L. feeling it too much for him went back to camp, whilst the police officer and self beat some likely nullahs for rhinoceros, and by good luck put one up; the police officer fired and sent it out close to me; my elephant was rather unsteady but I managed to wound the rhino so badly that he could not go a yard, and was killed by one of the police officer's pills; the horn was good and very thick. We now hurried home to avoid a thunderstorm, catching up L whom we saw beckoning to us. On going up, he pointed to a huge boa-constrictor coiled up in a honey combed ant-hill; I got off and shot it through the head and we had great fun dragging it out of its labyrinth of holes, the elephants screamed with fright when we harnessed the tail of one on to the boa, and it was with difficulty we could at last manage to get it on a pad, the boa measured, as he lay, 16 feet 2 inches by 20 inches round girth. The next day we all returned to cantonments, shooting down to the T. stream, where our horses had been sent to meet us; the police officer bagged a hog deer and I wounded and lost a black bear. Our sport had been very fair, and from the 12th to the 14th our bag consisted of

- 2 Rhinoceros.
- 3 Samburs.
- 2 Swamp Deers.
- 4 Hogs Deer.

My journal has now been spun out to a great length and I am afraid is also too prolix, but all accounts of big game shooting from howdahs has a tendency to be monotonous, and this must plead my excuse, I will only inflict one more short account and will then take my farewell. Having obtained a week's leave, I left the regiment on 18th March, and sending on four elephants, rode out twelve miles, and crossing the T. river mounted a pad elephant and went to where my camp was pitched near a "buthan" or cowherd's encamp-

ment on the D. stream. The cows and tame buffaloes were very quisitive and kept me awake by constantly rubbing up against tent, one or two more adventuresome than the rest actually putting their heads inside. I never pitched near such neighbours again. In the morning my howdah elephant got loose, and after eating up a few plantain trees, was caught in a village by the mahouts; this delayed my start and shooting. During to-day's work I beat round the sides of the stream, but only killed a swamp deer, and lost a rhinoceros which got off badly hit after a long chase; I tried the experiment of firing a swedged shell at him, but it burst on his shield and only accelerated his pace, on my way through the jungle I came across a Muchi Shikaree, and as he seemed intelligent, I engaged him for the rest of the trip, and he proved a valuable acquisition, being a first-rate tracker. I put his abilities to the test on the 20th by making him track up the rhino hit yesterday, but though we followed for many miles we never saw the brute again. Beating back I came on a small herd of wild buffaloes, killing one cow and wounding and losing another; whilst following the latter a stag sambur got up out of some tree jungle, and I bagged him with three shots; it was late when I reached camp, as the latter had been moved by the advice of my *shikaree* some eight miles due north. The Bhootan hills were plainly visible from my new position, and large plains of grass extended from almost the door of my tent to the foot of the first low ranges; it looked perfect ground for rhinoceros and buffalo. The next morning I left camp and soon after starting saw a fine buffalo feeding in the open; he did not allow us to get within shot, but disappeared in the heavy grass; the latter I fired in several places, and started a small rhinoceros, which hugged the cover till the burning grass almost touched him, when finding it warm to be pleasant, he came out close to me, affording an easy shot, which dropped him; he had a small horn. On return to camp I found an official desiring my presence at head-quarters, which delayed my shooting, as I did not get back to my camp till the 24th. On the 25th I commenced by killing a hog deer, and shot after, whilst crossing a deep swampy nullah, my elephant suddenly sank up to his knees, and in his struggles to get out bent a branch of a tree over the howdah, smashing the side rails to pieces, breaking the stock of my gun, and half killing my servant in the back seat, who had his arm and neck badly bruised. With the aid of a couple of pad elephants we eventually made our way out of the swamp. I patched up the howdah, and having a spare rifle went on beating, killing a large rhinoceros further on; his horn was far the finest I had yet shot, measuring 15 inches. Large numbers

of Muchi, who had been following us and viewing the sport from tops of trees, mounds, &c., came trooping down, and soon cut up and carried away the flesh ; they were so pleased at the prospect of such an unlimited feed, that one of them volunteered to show me a rhino he had marked down, and early next morning taking the Muchi with me I saw the rhino feeding in the open. In the grey of the morning I at first mistook it for an ant-hill, but on making it out with the binoculars, I got off the elephant, wishing to stalk on foot. The grass though burnt, was thick enough to prevent my seeing anything, and I had to mount the elephant again. The rhino had in the meantime gone in to the jungle, but I soon beat it out, and after making one charge I killed it with four shots. The marking on its hide and shields were much wider and larger and it had smaller ears than any of the other rhinos I had killed, whilst the horn was very massive, running into two branches from half way up. These facts led me to suppose the animal was of a different species, and the " Muchi " with me called it a hill rhinoceros. Further on I wounded and lost a stag sambar, and then came on three rhinoceros in heavy " tara " jungle. I could not get them to break out of the cover, and they charged the pad elephant so persistently that the latter at last could not be got to face them. I then went in on the howdah elephant, as I knew he would not bolt. Two of the rhino at once broke away and the third I rolled over, but lost after a long chase, which completely knocked all of us up, for the sun was very powerful. After bathing the elephants in an adjacent stream, I went back to camp, killing a swamp deer (hind) by a good shot as it galloped past. Next day, being Sunday, I rested as well as the mosquitoes and flies would permit. In the evening I strolled through the huts of the " Muchis," and found half of them had gone off to get the meat of the rhino killed yesterday.

On the 28th I tried during the early morning to get on the tracks of the rhino I had last wounded, but failed ; my *shikaree* then hitting off fresh traces, we came on a rhino in very thick jungle ; the pad elephants beat it out close to me and I killed it after a short chase ; it was a female with good horn. I had a long hunt after another which I kept in sight for miles but eventually lost. In the afternoon I burnt large patches of jungle and started a tiger. I lost some time in trying to get him but without success, and the fire had in the meantime come rolling up to us and sent out a rhino, which I killed with little trouble ; the fire swept clean over him, and it was some time before the ground was cool enough to enable me to get down and cut off the horn, which proved to be a good one. I now went back to camp, and when within sight of the tents a tiger sprang out of a small nullah and stood on the bank.

I rolled it over, but much to my disgust never saw it again, as éléphants for some time would not go into the nullah where had dropped, and though I beat up and down till dark, it was no use. I tried for him again next day without success and came home only killing a male hog deer. On the 30th I had a good day's sport, starting long before daybreak, and whilst waiting among the grass the elephants suddenly trumpeted. It was too dark to see what had alarmed them, so waiting quietly, I at last heard a heavy animal crushing along ahead of us. I followed making out something black fired a chance shot. As soon as it was light I went on and saw a bull buffalo hard hit standing about 600 yards off. On seeing us he immediately charged, but I turned him before he got up with a couple of shots in the chest. He then lay down, but gave a lot of trouble before he succumbed to charging repeatedly. I at last got off and gave him the coup *de grace* on foot; his horns were a magnificent pair. I was very lucky with buffaloes to-day, for on firing some jungle beyond another bull came out, but before I could fire rushed into the burning grass, knocked the Muchi who I had sent to fire the jungle into a nullah, and ultimately charged me, but I rolled over before he could do any mischief; his horns were good, but not so large as the first. The 'Muchi' as usual got up and brought all the meat in. A swamp deer (hind) completed the day's sport. I also saw a fine swamp stag and a rhinoceros, neither of which I got a chance. This completed my shooting on the 31st I rode into cantonments having killed—

- 5 Rhinoceros
- 3 Buffaloes (2 bulls).
- 3 Swamp Deer.
- 1 Sambur.
- 2 Hog Deer.

IMPORTANT HINTS TO HOG HUNTERS.

WHATEVER the strength of the party, not more than three hunters should follow the same hog, as a larger number will interfere with good sport by being in each other's way, as well as by preventing the over-matched boar from showing his finest qualities as a fighter, it is when opposed singly or by not more than two horsemen that these qualities are displayed pre-eminently. Another rule equally good is that when a hunter has the hog in his right front and within double spear's length, no other should attempt to come between them; and a third still more important is that under no circumstances