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“MY BHUTAN JOURNAL OF TIGER SHOOTING, &c.,
IN THE WESTERN DUARS OF BHUTAN.”

By T. A. D.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

News of a tiger—the hunt after him. “My first Rhino,” and all about him.

December the 26th, 1864.—I received information to-day of a cow having been killed by a tiger near a village about four miles from my camp. I went out of course, and on arriving at the ground I glanced over it, but did not like the appearance of it at all. It did not to my experienced eye look or promise success. There were too many avenues of escape open for the tiger, unless he was a vicious brute and determined on disputing possession with me.

It was as usual an extensive grass field or tract about a quarter of a mile wide in its narrowest part. It was bounded on the west by a nullah, full of jungle, and that nullah was close at hand, about a couple of hundred yards from the spot where the carcass, or remains of the carcass of the cow lay; to the north there was some bush jungle interspersed with long grass; to the south, behind the spot I had been guided to, there was a good deal of long grass with clumps of trees; and to the east the grass tract extended any distance, with here and there clumps of trees. It was indeed a bad look out altogether; what was best to do I did not know; the tiger need not suffer death unless he had a mind to. He might walk off in any direction without let or hindrance, and without my being a bit the wiser!

At last I hit upon a plan, or rather in sheer despair of anything better, I desired the beater elephant mahouts to go round to the nullah and beat up towards me. They did so, but nothing turned up; of course I expected nothing. I was awfully disgusted at the very beginning. The elephant “Hoosan Piari,” came on the half-eaten carcass of the cow and as usual began her tantrums.—

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kicking up a dust, trumpeting, rumbling, peeping, and thumping the ground with her trunk. The tiger had of course just sneaked away from the spot, as any fool might have known, without her kicking up such a shindy. Notwithstanding that I expected nothing, I was too old a sportsman to be unprepared. I had both barrels of my "bone-smasher" at full cock and was ready for anything, but nothing, nothing, nothing!!! "Now then, beat across from north to south," said I to the beater mahouts, and it is done, and this time, in the very thickest part of the grass, which was missed whilst beating from west to east; another elephant (not "Hoosan Piári") commenced a devil of a row. She shrieked out a loud shrill blast of her trumpet, rushed forward with incredible speed for a few yards, then turned slick round and fairly ran away as hard as she could lay legs to ground, her driver trying his best to stop her without avail, till she got clear out of the jungle! "Hoosan Piári" never ran away from the jungle; she would run about *in* it and set all the other elephants half wild with her own excitement; she would rush hither and thither trampling imaginary tigers under her feet, and if she happened to stumble on a log of wood in the grass whilst so excited she would stop and kick it about like bricks!

I was sure the runaway elephant had not turned tail for nothing, and I hastened to the spot where she had taken fright and I desired all the other beaters to come through it in close line. "Sher Bahadoor," the elephant I was riding, though a steady enough beast, showed some signs of trepidation on entering the thick grass. He angrily shoved it aside with his trunk and with some show of bullying, kicked at the grass as he went through it: I kept a sharp look out but saw nothing. The tiger had been there no doubt; he had *just* been there; but where the devil was he now?

Easier asked than answered, old boy! Well then, I shall look for him myself, so here goes. Assuming the leadership and determined to beat through the jungle myself along with the other elephants, I made them form line as usual, and placing myself a few yards ahead or in advance of the line, I gave a signal and we marched steadily through the grass towards the nullah. As we approached the bank of the nullah I wheeled the line to the left and beat up some nice looking grass lying along that bank—the grass though was beastly high, quite as high as my elephant, and *he* is a nine-footer! We beat along this bank through the grass parallel with the nullah. I was about five yards or so in advance of the line expecting nothing particular, when I saw, with almost utter indifference, something black coming up the sloping bank of the

nullah. I thought it a black cow. "No wonder these fellows cattle are killed," I said to myself, "when they allow them to stray about in this way." I was still looking at the black thing as it slowly crept up the slope of the bank ; I could see but very little of it, but now it seemed to me much longer in the body than a cow. "Oh, it's a large village buffalo," I thought. But by jingo ! it seemed longer even than a buffalo, an awfully large brute it was ! I could only see a part of its side as it slowly and lazily got up the bank. At length it ascended to the top of the bank and there it stood with its full length right *foreinst* me,—yes, there it was, but as the grass was so high and thick I could only see the top of the head with the queer looking horn on the snout, the two long erect ears, part of the neck, the withers, and just the ridge of the croup behind. Why, bless my soul, it's a Rhinoceros !!! "Array dhat ! dhat !" said I to my mahout. (Dhat is the word the mahout uses when he speaks to the elephant to stop) "Dhat ! dhat !" said I, "there's a Rhinoceros !" Unluckily this time I had a smooth bore double barrel in my hand, I had taken it up unthinkingly a little while before, and as I feared I would lose this jolly chance if I waited to change it for my bone-smasher, I let drive two rapid shots at the old Rhino's head and neck. He was no more than thirty or forty yards from me and evidently did not see me ; he was looking straight ahead and standing broadside on to me. He was not a little surprised when my two shots rattled about his ears. He grunted like fifty pigs and shook his head, and turning slap round he hooked it down the slope again in a mortal hurry, and galloping through the nullah he got up on an island in it ; and as I could now see him plainly I let drive two shots from the bone-smasher, both of which hit, one in the fore flank and the other in the hind, just in the fore and hind folds of his thick, almost impenetrable hide. Both bullets entered *well* in ; the old Rhino dropped when my first cone from the "bone-smasher" caught him in the fore flank just behind the shoulder or elbow point ; but to my astonishment when I gave the second dose in the hind flank, he jumped up again and tore away through the bushes in the nullah. He grunted like a whole drove of pigs all the way till he stopped. I pushed on the beater elephants by a *détour* and ordered them to drive old Rhino back. They did so, and back he came from one island patch to another, till at last he was fairly beaten out of the nullah on to my side of the bank. He then saw me and came tearing through the grass at me, but I fired two shots into his head and turned him, and as he retreated I emptied my battery into him, hitting him at every shot. He did not go more than a hundred yards while I was firing at him, and I

believe I gave him most uselessly the last few shots in his stern. He got into a large bush and disappeared from our sight. It had by this time become very late in the evening and it was rapidly getting dark, so I hurried up to the bush and heard the old Rhino puffing and blowing like a grampus inside. I had before this heard a whistling sound which I did not know what to make of, but I have since found out that it is a sure sign of the rhinoceros being mortally wounded. I have heard several sportsmen talk of having shot rhinoceros, but they have never said anything about the whistling, I therefore mention it, as it struck me when I first heard it as something extraordinary, and though I have since then shot a great many and have invariably heard and remarked the whistle, I cannot to this day account for it. All I know is that it is a sure sign the beast is mortally wounded and that now he should be pressed hard by the sportsman, or he may get away and die unperceived a mile off. When you've once heard the whistle stick to your Rhino like wax, you'll get him in a few minutes.

There he lay in that bush puffing and blowing loudly and occasionally whistling, but not an elephant would approach to beat down the bush. At last I made my fellow, I mean my mahout, drive up the elephant I was riding, "old Sher Bahadoor," to the bush and attempt to open a way through it. "Sher Bahadoor" didn't at all like Rhinos, he'd run away if allowed to, but my mahout generally managed to keep him steady. "Sher Bahadoor," who pretended to be, or possibly he *was*, in a funk, reluctantly pulled aside some of the branches, but he had hardly done so when my mahout spied a bee-hive inside and I had just got a glimpse of the Rhino who lay stretched on the earth evidently in the throes of death. My elephant was, however, immediately backed out as neither the mahout nor I liked the idea of being stung by bees.

I was nevertheless determined to take a long fond look at this "my first Rhino," and I made old "Sher Bahadoor" squat, and dismounting, armed with the bone-smasher, I entered the bush just as the Rhino breathed his last. He certainly looked jolly big, and black as a coal, for when I first saw him he had just been after having a bath in some nice clear water in the nullah. It was, however, now getting too dark inside the bush for me to see much, so I ordered the mahouts to bring every rope they had, as I wanted to try to drag old Rhino outside. Some eight or ten ropes, each about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter, were brought and one end of each of these I had fastened to the Rhino's hind legs, and the other ends I had fastened to the elephants outside and they were:

all made to pull together, but bless my soul! the ropes snapped like threads; so it was no go. I then left a couple of elephants with their drivers in charge, with instructions to the latter to chop off the head of the Rhinoceros and to skin the beast carefully where he lay and to bring the head and hide to camp. I then wended my way camp-wards, and passing through the nearest village I told the people in it that I had killed a Rhino close by, and pointing to the locality I bade them take hatchets and knives to the spot and assist the mahouts to chop off the head and to skin the beast; they were of course welcome to all the flesh. This was enough, and I heard afterwards that the inhabitants of the village gathered together round the Rhino, night and dark though it was, like vultures. I got back to camp at about 9 P.M. very well satisfied with my day's sport, although, as you see, at the first go I expected nothing.

December 27th, 1864.—The head and hide of the Rhino were safely brought in last night; they did not get to camp till long past midnight, and this morning the very first thing I did on awaking was to enquire for the trophies, and getting up and wrapping myself in a warm morning gown I went out to see them. The head was an enormous one. It was one of the largest I have ever seen, and the horn was also of formidable size, but I have since shot a Rhino with a better and longer horn. The hide was of enormous extent when spread out on the ground, and I saw the two bullet-holes in the flanks, there were several holes in the stern also, but most of the other shots were in the head and neck. I might well have spared those shots in the head and neck, especially in the latter; this was a mass of solid bone and muscle, and shielded by a thick corrugated hide almost as hard as stone, but not quite so hard, as the bullets had penetrated it, though they did not go in far; of those in the head not one had touched the brain, but they were in various other parts, one in the eye, another in the nose or muzzle, a third (a zinc tipper) had gone into the jaw, it had smashed a tooth there and had left the lead sticking in the place where the tooth had been smashed, but the zinc tip had continued its course onwards and gone and stuck in the other jaw on the opposite side, where I found it, somewhat flattened. This Rhino must have stood between 7 and 8 feet high at the withers, nearer 8 than 7 feet I fancy, and he was in splendid condition. As I have said before, his head was one of the largest I have ever seen. Some time after this I was to have a surfeit of Rhino: I gave up shooting at them at last unless I saw one with a good horn.

(To be continued.)

