

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

By T. A. D.

(Continued from page 68.)

CHAPTER XI.

For Chapters IX. and X. vide *Oriental Sporting Magazine* for December 1870, and January 1871

Change of scene—transfer to the Chamurchi and Buxa Duars—servants deserting—camp pitched at Fallakata—a wild desolate place—tiger said to be under the protection of a Debta,—news of wild buffaloes—bagged a large bull buffalo—ditto a rhino—out on “spec”—blank day wound up by wounding a tiger.

February 8th, 1865, is the date of the next event. A change of scene had also taken place in the meanwhile, as I had been transferred and ordered to take charge of Chamurchi and Buxa (Bakhsha) Duars. As far as I was personally concerned I rather liked the change. Not so my servants, for the two best, Fajjar and Khan Mahomed, bolted from Mynagori as soon as they heard of the transfer—but hang them! I needn't bother myself about them now.

For the nonce I pitched my camp at a place called Fallakata, on the east bank of the Mujnai river. There was a fine open mydan to the east; some rather broken uneven ground covered with lots of light looking wild cardamum jungle to the west. It was altogether a wild, desolate looking spot; and the only human habitations which could be seen were a few huts around which was a sort of rough bamboo fence or enclosure for cattle, near my camp. It was in fact the “head-quarters” of a Guhali or place where milch cows are herded. I was told there were tigers about; but from some superstitious cause the Gowals would not say *where*, though they were very longwinded and garrulous about one tiger in particular, which they said was under the special protection of a certain Hindu Debta (Deity, god, &c.) somewhere in that neighbourhood. One favored locality of the Debta, they said, was a tree which grew out of the bank on the east side of the Mujnai river not far from my camp. They pointed towards the tree, which was about a quarter of a mile from the camp, and I could see that the tree was decorated with a white rag, by way of a flag, streaming from the end of a slender bamboo secured to one of the top branches. The Gowals said that no harm could by any possibility come to that tiger; and that no bullet ever moulded would hit him!

“Quite true,” said I to the Gowals, “true in so far that the Debta has hitherto protected that tiger, but there is one thing you don't know.”

"What is that?" asked one of the Gowals.

"You don't know," I answered, "that the Debta has kept that tiger especially for me. That tiger will be the very first one I shall shoot here. I have seen him in my dreams. He is a very large tiger, isn't he?"

"Yes—oh yes! He's a very large tiger," said the Gowals.

"And you hear him at night going about roaring like thunder, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, quite true—sometimes we can't sleep at night through fear when we hear him roaring."

"Ah! well," said I at a venture, "you won't hear him again. I shall make a calculation about the best day for going out to hunt him up, and then you will have an opportunity of seeing him dead, I have some magical bullets that will go right through him, and now as the Debta has withdrawn his protection, you tell your cowherds to find out where the tiger is, and should he kill any of your cows give me instant information and you'll find that I have told you the truth."

Several days passed, but I heard nothing more, and as there was no more roaring heard at night my friends the Gowals thought the tiger had gone. At any rate no more cattle were killed and I began to think "it was all my eye." At last, on the date specified above, a man came to tell me, *not* of a tiger, but of a herd of wild buffaloes scarcely half a mile from camp. I ordered the elephants, and rode "Sher Bahadur" this time.

I saw the buffaloes a long way off; they were standing in a group, but before I got within range they had lain themselves down, all except one, a mighty bull. I was a good deal favored by the ground. The spot where the buffaloes were was a high plateau of several acres in extent, and they occupied the very middle of it. The east of this plateau was bounded by the bed of the Mujnai, and so much of it as was unoccupied by the current, which at this season of the year was only about forty yards across, was covered by wild cardamum jungle, and it was from 10 to 12 feet lower than the high ground on which the buffaloes were stationed. The ground to the west on which I was, was equally low and in some parts even lower. My elephants were all therefore in very low ground and entirely hidden from the buffaloes. I and my howdah might alone have been visible to them had they chosen to look my way—but they did not—they were all looking the other way, and then the ponderous bull also laid himself down beside his *harem*. By this time I had got within range—about eighty yards or so from them. I then halted, not knowing what else to do. I could not get a fair shot at any of the beasts as they lay there.

with their sterns turned towards me. I thought over it a moment or two, and then ordered my mahout to drive the elephant up the bank, and to stop the moment he got up.

This was done, and as soon as the buffaloes saw me on the high bank they all rose and stared at me for a few seconds. I fired at the big fellow and hit him a tremendous crack, and then they all scampered off towards the river, the big fellow being the hindmost of the herd, and I gave him another shot in his stern which quickened his pace, for he took a spurt forward and got in amongst the herd, which consisted of about twelve or fourteen individuals, but the big fellow could be easily distinguished from the others by his vast size and the height of his horns.

The herd galloped down the slope into the bed of the river and entered the high cardamum jungle where I lost sight of them, the jungle being just high enough to conceal them from my view. I however marked the spot where they had entered it, and I turned away to the right, ordering the beaters to go to the left and to turn the flank of the buffaloes and to beat up towards me.

They did so, and presently after I heard the buffaloes come crashing along through the jungle in my direction, the tall stalks of the cardamum reeds snapped and cracked with the sound of pistol shots as the big heavy brutes came tearing along through them, and old "Sher Bahadur" didn't half like the fun. My mahout tho' managed to keep him steady enough till the buffaloes came quite close and then he could stand it no longer, and would have turned slick round and bolted had not the mahout held him straight. As it happened that he couldn't turn tail, he retreated several paces stern foremost, but facing the foe, gave vent to his alarm by a loud trumpeting. This had the effect of frightening the herd, which then split into two and rushed by me on both sides. I was in the jungle at the time and fired at as many of the buffaloes as I could see, but whether the big fellow was amongst those I now hit I could not tell. They then broke into the open and sped away at full gallop, some going one way and some another. One group of four or five, in which I recognized the big fellow, made for another cardamum jungle about half a mile distant, and that group I followed, at "Sher Bahadur's" best pace. He would fain have shirked, but the mahout pegged into him and made him go. Nevertheless the buffaloes had the best of it. They got to the jungle long before I got to it.

I found it a good deal heavier and thicker than the one I had just left; and as soon as the beaters came up I entered it with them and commenced beating through it in line, and presently after we put up the big fellow again—but now he didn't intend

running away. This place was evidently his stronghold, so he determined defending it to the last, and with an angry snort he came at me like a battering ram, head downwards. I fired straight at his forehead and hit him so hard that he went down on his knees. His skull was very thick and the bullet flattened on it. I then quickly fired another shot into his back. He got up and was rushing by me when I again fired two more shots at him behind the shoulder. These two shots excited his ire, for he turned, charging at the nearest elephant in the line, which bolted, but I effectually stopped the buffalo with two more shots in the neck when he fell a cropper, his horns sticking in the soft earth, and then he rolled over on his side dead as beef. He was a whacking big beast, but for his size, his horns were indifferent. I cannot somehow see the fun of shooting these brutes—there's perhaps one in a hundred that will fight, but then after you have shot him, if he has not a pair of horns extra large they are not worth having, and so "to the dogs with buffalo shooting," say I.

The mahouts got out their knives and daos and commenced hacking off the buffalo's head, and while they were doing so I saw hundreds of villagers coming running towards us from various directions—where they had sprung up from I could not tell, as there was no village in sight, but in a few minutes we were surrounded by a crowd, and the fellows were elbowing their way in, hatchets and knives in hand, each man eager to get as much of the beef as possible. Poor devils! I dare say it was very seldom they had an opportunity like this of plenishing their larders. The buffalo's head was soon chopped off and I ordered some of the villagers to carry it to my camp, while I went on through the jungle on an exploring expedition.

The jungle extended for miles along both sides of a swampy nullah. It was very dense and high, and consisted of wild cardamum and long coarse reedy grass. So dense was it that I could not see the nearest elephants on either side of me. We went on in this way through the jungle for about a mile or more, and heard occasionally a crashing of the reeds on ahead as some mighty beast, disturbed by our invasion of his haunts, broke away in alarm.

We could see nothing for some time till "Hassan Piari," which was the nearest elephant to me on my right, hissed with her trunk and trumpeted. I heard some animal rush forward, but did not know what it was as I could not see it. I called out to "Hassan Pairi's" mahout and asked him what it was. He said he did not know, but thought it was a bear.

I now saw a little open space in front and bade the beaters push on, and to keep the line straight. This was however no easy

task, for not only was the jungle very dense, but the ground below not very level, and we were going up and down, into holes and out of them; and once the ground gave way below "Sher Bahadur" and he went down an awful bump, which gave me a tremendous jolt and rattled my guns about. He recovered himself and I was glad soon after to get into the little open space I had seen.

I bade the beaters get out of the jungle and ascend the high bank on my right. When they had done this I desired them to go on a few paces and then to descend the bank; they did so, and immediately after some great beast came crashing through the jungle in my direction (I was in the little open space above mentioned). He grunted loudly as he came thundering along and I guessed it was a rhinoceros. Out he came at last, and the moment he saw me he turned to the left and galloped along about twenty paces or so distance from me. I aimed point blank at his ribs and let drive two shots into him from the "Bone-smasher," both told with tremendous effect. He snorted loudly, and giving two or three plunges forward he fell with a shrill whistle on his knees in some broken ground. Before I could bring my battery to bear on him again he recovered his erect position, and staggering for a few more yards, he again fell, puffing hard, and among the loud puffs I could hear a whistle occasionally. I could now see the brute quite plainly. He had fallen forward on his belly and lay, or rather squatted, in that posture like an elephant. He tried hard to get on his legs but could not, all he could do was to raise his head. His sides in the meantime were working like those of a bellows, as they became inflated with air and then collapsed as the air rushed with loud puffs and snorts through his mouth and nostrils. I then fired one or two more shots into his head and finished him.

The beaters and I now all congregated round the dead rhino, and I alighted from the howdah to examine him more closely than I had been able to examine the first one. This second rhino was not nearly so large, but he had a sharp well-formed horn, with which he might have inflicted an ugly wound had he chosen to fight instead of run. And much to the amusement of myself and some of the older mahouts, a youngster (one of the beater mahouts) dismounting from his elephant and getting on to the back of the dead rhino as if he were a squatting elephant, gave him one or two digs with the *gajbák* behind the ears and called to him to "Mael Mael!" which is equivalent to the "Tchick Tchick" of a horseman when he wants his horse to move on. We all laughed at this, and I took a liking to the youngster from that moment. Returned to camp late in the afternoon.

February 10th, 1865.—I went out to-day on "spec," and wishing to explore the country, proceeded northwards for about ten miles, beating through the jungles as they came in my way. In all that extent of country I saw but one miserable little village consisting of a few huts and a score or so of human bipeds, men, women, and children included. I liked the appearance of the country however. It was mostly all high land and perfectly open, with fine natural drainage into nullahs and ravines. Numerous herds of antelope of the "black buck" species were scattered over the wide open expanse; and thousands of tame buffaloes and other cattle grazed in all directions. It is a fine country no doubt; and in its present state, for the sportsman, it is a splendid country. It will be profitable too to Government by and bye if proper persons are placed in charge of it, without much red tape to fetter their action and take up valuable time uselessly. How few amongst us are there who know anything of the country and its splendid capabilities—how few are there who are acquainted with the people who inhabit it, and can talk to them in their own language and dialect? It is an indispensable requisite that the officers who administer the country should be able to converse with the people in their own *patois*. If you cannot do this you are apt to go wrong at the very outset, and frequently the wrong done then is a permanent wrong.

The tobacco grown in the country is of splendid quality, I should say it is the very finest in the world. The Havana and Manilla tobaccos cannot compare with it in respect of aroma. It is "fragrant" in every sense of the word; and one kind known as the "Alwa" is very fragrant indeed. The country is capable of producing every kind of agricultural product to be found anywhere in all India. The soil is everywhere of first rate quality, and, though varying in different places, it is all equally rich and fertile. For while you find European fruits such as strawberries, raspberries and pears growing wild in some parts in great abundance, in other places you'll find guavas, pineapples, lemons and numerous other fruits peculiar to Bengal, and I saw hundreds of acres of land covered with the Falsa shrub (*Greivia Asiatica*). The falsa is a very pleasant fruit,—it is a sort of berry, the expressed juice of which makes a delicious sherbet. This fruit is peculiar to the Upper Provinces, where it is a *tree* that produces it, while here in Bhutan it is only a shrub. The Dhak or Pallas tree (*Butea frondosa*), peculiar also to the Upper Provinces, grows here in abundance. I have never seen it as jungle anywhere else in Bengal, but in these Duars there are forests of it, conspicuous at this season of the year from their bright scarlet flowers.

I was not destined to be successful to-day in sport. I bagged a few brace of partridge and a peafowl or two. The antelope were unapproachable and I was never anything of a "deer-stalker."

Returning campwards late in the evening after sunset, we came to a nullah with high banks, and as we were crossing the stream the elephants all stopped to drink. "Sher Bahadur" also stopped, and presently one of the mahouts called to the chupprassy behind me in the howdah and said, "Look up there on the bank, what's that? Isn't it a tiger?"

Yes indeed—it was a tiger? He was seated staring down at us. It was rapidly getting dark, so I took up the "Bone-smasher" in an instant and fired and hit the tiger a tremendous crack; it ought to have killed him on the spot, but it only elicited a roar from him and he disappeared at once, and we all then hastily scrambled up the bank. I saw the tiger again as he was trying to get to some high grass jungle about thirty or forty yards distant, and firing another shot at him I again hit him and broke his shoulder. He limped along on three legs and had just reached the edge of the grass as I got another gun to bear on him, and firing I knocked him over at the very edge of the grass. I urged my mahout to push on towards him before he should disappear into the grass, but it was too late! The brute got into the grass—he had crawled into it unable to get up, and I did not see him again, though I beat up the grass in all directions till it became quite dark. I could not for the life of me imagine how he had disappeared so completely, as if by magic! I expected, however, that I should find him dead there next morning, and I determined to come out to the place again and look for him. As it happened, I returned to camp vexed and out of humour with everything—with myself and all concerned. What will those d—d Gowals say after this! especially if I don't find the tiger to-morrow?

(To be continued.)

BHEEL (LAKE) SHOOTING IN THE COLD SEASON.

BY YOUNG NIMROD.

HAS any one of the various contributors of the *Magazine* favored us with a description of shooting as pursued in the *bheels*, or lakes, of Lower Bengal, in the cold season? None, I trow. This article will, therefore, at all events not lack the merit of novelty, and may possibly induce others to come forward with their

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