

DESTRUCTION OF DANGEROUS AND DESTRUCTIVE ANIMALS IN INDIA.

BY YOUNG NIMROD.

CONSIDERING the amount of attention this subject has evoked in England, and that it has even been discussed in the House of Lords, it would be little short of reticence if the contributors of the only sporting journal we have in this country wholly ignored it, particularly as Indian sportsmen have been incidentally charged with inhumanity in preventing the destruction of tigers, etc., for their own selfish purposes. I have no hesitation whatsoever in emphatically stating that this despicable charge has no foundation at all, as no true Indian sportsmen would be guilty of the dastardly conduct imputed to him. *Au contraire*, Indian sportsmen as a body have done far more in destroying such game than any other class, not even excepting the professional native *shikaris*, stimulated as they are with the offer of rewards, though it must be confessed that such rewards are generally grossly inadequate. A sportsman, be he official or non-official, is regarded with peculiar love and respect by the people of the locality where he may be residing, for he is not only at all times ready to go out at a moment's notice—"ready, aye ready" being his motto—in quest of their four-footed foe, be it a man-eating and cattle-devouring tiger, or a cross-destroying buffalo or rhinoceros, but he liberally fees him who brings the *khubbur* or "intelligence," and if successful in the hunt he generously rewards those who have assisted in it, though they almost invariably pusillanimously desert him on the approach of danger, sometimes carrying away his spare guns, and he is in such a case left to battle with the infuriated beast as he best can, single-handed and unarmed, when death to the brave and unselfish sportsman is almost sure to be the result. This is no fancy picture, but an o'er true one, as witness the death of poor White some years ago by a savage solitary buffalo in the (then) sub-division of Kaligunge, in the Soonderbuns. This much is all that need be said indignantly refuting the calumny against Indian sportsmen.

Equally void of foundation, no doubt, is the cool assertion of one *M.N.*, a correspondent of the *Times*, *in re* Government officers, which runs thus:—"Officials generally prefer to wait many months to see if fresh people are killed" ere granting a reward for a man-eater.

I shall now proceed to consider the measures that might be devised for the destruction of dangerous and destructive wild beasts in India generally, but more particularly in Bengal. On

this head I have a scheme in contemplation, which, I venture with some confidence to assert will, if carried out in its entirety, effectually answer the end in view, at least better than any other plan that has been suggested, to my knowledge. It is of rather a comprehensive character, and may therefore need the aid of the Legislature, though I hardly think it absolutely necessary, to inaugurate the system and its working.

I must state *in limine* as regards the existing scale of rewards, that it is more or less defective, drawn up, as I presume it is, by the Board of Revenue, with some little information furnished by District Officers, who can not *all* reasonably be expected to be *au fait* with such matters, and who can hardly care to consult others on the subject of, what is usually regarded as mere routine work. The correctness of these remarks will be generally borne out by a reference to an article of mine, inserted in vol. II, p.p. 593-598, of this goodly *Maga*, so I need not dwell further on this point, save to observe, *en passant*, that a reward is offered by Government for killing bears in the swampy Backergunge district!

I would recommend the appointment of a Committee in each district to be styled "District Committee for destroying noxious wild animals," the members of which would be composed of certain officials, say, District Magistrate, Civil Surgeon, District Superintendent of Police, the various Sub-Divisional Officers, etc, and a number of non-official residents of the district, such as the several Honorary Magistrates and sportsmen. The Committee would have at the outset to hold a preliminary meeting to consult and propose a suitable scale of rewards for each of the Sub-divisions. It should be held competent for any member of the Committee to certify to the killing of any animal mentioned in the scale of rewards in a printed form prepared for that purpose; and on its being presented at the Sub-Divisional or District Treasury, the amount of the reward should be promptly made over *personally* by the officer in charge, lest the receiver of the reward would have to submit, if paid through the usual channels, to a heavy discount from 25 to 50 per cent., rather than have to dance attendance at the office for several days. It is very inconvenient for *shikaris* to carry about the skins and skulls of animals any long distance, and these, if he wished to avail himself of the Government rewards, he would have to sacrifice, thus losing their value, which is at times larger than the reward. The Government can gain but little by the sale of such skins,* (for the skulls are

* The total amount realized annually by the sale of these skins would be a curious item of information, especially if the number and descriptions of skins were given therewith.—Y.N.

smashed by a heavy hammer expressly provided for that purpose,) and the trifle so gained can well be dispensed with. Besides, this gives the natives an idea that the Government are exacting a bargain, or at least obtaining a *quid pro quo* for the reward, which erroneous impression it would be as well to effectually disabuse.

In order to encourage to the utmost the destruction of noxious wild animals the *shikaree* who has slain a certain number of such, say, 25 leopards or panthers, or a dozen tigers, and so on, should be allowed a small annual pension. To ascertain this with precision, a register of rewards should be kept, wherein should be entered the names, etc., of *shikaris* who have earned rewards, and a copy of each entry should be given to the *shikari* along with the reward he has earned.

The District Committees should, in exceptional cases, be empowered to entertain *shikaris pro tem* in certain localities for the destruction of such animals as commit an immense deal of depredation among the human and *bovine genera*. Such Committees would also be best able to organize grand hunts periodically, which, while ridding the country of the obnoxious *feræ natureæ*, would also promote sport.

The District Committees should, of course, be under the District Magistrate, and Sub-Committees, working under the former, might with considerable advantage be established at the various Sub-divisions, with the officers in charge of them as *ex-officio* Secretaries.

District Committees should ordinarily hold their meetings quarterly, and at the close of the year an annual report should be furnished to Government through the Revenue Commissioner of the Division, who should have entire control over District Committees.

Such are the bare outlines of the scheme, which is, of course, capable of being elaborated, and I have advisedly refrained from entering into minor details of its working, as such matters can be best arranged afterwards. But the plan here sketched is, I submit, a vast improvement on the present system, and it may be introduced if no better one can be hit upon, or, in the words of Horace :—

*Si quid novisti restius istis,
Condius impartiri ; si non, his utere mecum.*

KHULNA, }
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We have offered a few remarks on the suggestions in this paper in The Month.—Ed.