

# TENT LIFE IN TIGERLAND,

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

SPORT AND WORK ON THE NEPAUL FRONTIER.

BEING

*TWELVE YEARS' SPORTING REMINISCENCES  
OF A PIONEER PLANTER IN AN  
INDIAN FRONTIER DISTRICT.*

BY

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COUSINS," ETC. ETC.

WITH TWENTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS IN CHROMO-LITHOGRAPHY.

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## PREFATORY.

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WHEN I wrote "Sport and Work on the Nepaul Frontier," a book which is incorporated with the present volume, I closed it with these words: "If this volume meets the approbation of the public, I may be tempted to draw further on a well-stocked memory, and gossip afresh on Indian life, Indian experiences, and Indian sport," &c. The book was undoubtedly well received. A cheap edition of many thousand copies was struck off by the "Franklin Square Press" in America, and was widely read in the United States; and in Australia regrets have been frequently expressed that the original edition had been exhausted. I am therefore to some extent justified in believing that my Indian gossip has fairly met with the approbation of a large section of the reading public. Hence in the present work I simply resume the thread of my sporting recollections. I have chosen my own way of telling my story and arranging my incidents, so as to add fresh interest, and enlist the attention and the goodwill of my readers as far as possible, and I hope I may have been fairly successful in doing this.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

The Koossee jungles—Ferries—Jungle roads—The rhinoceros—We go to visit a neighbour—We lose our way and get belated—We fall into a quicksand—No ferry boat—Camping out on the sand—Two tigers close by—We light a fire—The boat at last arrives—Crossing the stream—Set fire to the boatman's hut—Swim the horses—They are nearly drowned—We again lose our way in the jungle—The towing path, and how boats are towed up the river—We at last reach the factory—News of rhinoceros in the morning—Off we start, but arrive too late—Death of the rhinoceros—His dimensions—Description—Habits—Rhinoceros in Nepaul—The old "Major Captān"—Description of Nepaulese scenery—Immigration of Nepaulese—Their fondness for fish—They eat it putrid—Exclusion of Europeans from Nepaul—Resources of the country—Must sooner or later be opened up—Influences at work to elevate the people—Planters and factories chief of these—Character of the planter—His claims to consideration from government.

IN the vast grass jungles that border the banks of the Koossee, stretching in great plains without an undulation for miles on either side, intersected by innumerable water-beds and dried up channels, there is plenty of game of all sorts. It is an impetuous, swiftly-flowing stream, dashing directly down from the mighty hills of Nepaul. So swift is its current and so erratic its course, that it frequently bursts its banks, and careers through the jungle, forming a new bed, and carrying away cattle and wild animals in its headlong rush.

The *ghauts* or ferries are constantly changing, and a long bamboo with a bit of white rag affixed, shows where the boats and boatmen are to be found. In many instances the track is a mere cattle path, and hundreds of cross openings, leading into the tall jungle grass, are apt to bewilder and mislead the

traveller. During the dry season these jungles are the resort of great herds of cattle and tame buffaloes, which trample down the dry stalks, and force their way into the innermost recesses of the wilderness of grass, which grows ten to twelve feet high. If you once lose your path you may wander for miles, until your weary horse is almost unable to stumble on. In such a case the best way is to take it coolly, and halloo till a herdsman or thatch-cutter comes to your rescue. The knowledge of the jungles displayed by these poor ignorant men is wonderful; they know every gully and watercourse, every ford and quicksand, and they betray not the slightest sign of fear, although they know that at any moment they may come across a herd of wild buffalo, a savage rhinoceros or even a royal tiger.

The tracks of rhinoceros are often seen, but although I have frequently had these pointed out to me when out tiger shooting, I only saw a very few of the animals themselves while I lived in that district.

The first occasion was after a night of discomfort such as I have fortunately seldom experienced. I had been away at a neighbouring factory in Purneah, some eighteen or twenty miles from my bungalow. My companion had been my predecessor in the management, and was supposed to be well acquainted with the country. We had gone over to one of the outworks across the river, and I had received charge of the place from him. It was a lonely solitary spot; the house was composed of grass walls plastered with mud, and had not been used for some time. F. proposed that we should ride over to see H., to whom he would introduce me, as he would be one of my nearest neighbours, and would give us a comfortable dinner and bed, which there was no chance of our procuring where we were.

We plunged at once into the mazy labyrinths of the jungle, and soon emerged on the high sandy downs, stretching mile beyond mile along the southern bank of the ever-changing

river. Having lost our way, we got to the factory after dark, but a friendly villager volunteered his services as guide, and led us safely to our destination. After a cheerful evening with H., we persuaded him to accompany us back next day. He took out his dogs, and we had a good course after a hare, killing two jackals, and sending back the dogs by the sweeper. At Burgamma, the outwork, we stopped to *tiffin* on some cold fowl we had brought with us. The old factory head man got us some milk, eggs, and *chupatties*; and about three in the afternoon we started for the head factory. In an evil moment F. proposed that, as we were near another outwork called *Fusseah*, we should diverge thither, I could take over charge and we could thus save a ride on another day. Not knowing anything of the country I acquiesced, and we reached *Fusseah* in time to see the place, and do all that was needful. It was a miserable tumbledown little spot, with four pair of vats; it had formerly been a good working factory, but the river had cut away most of its best lands, and completely washed away some of the villages, while the whole of the cultivation was fast relapsing into jungle.

"Debnarain Singh," the gomastha or head man, asked us to stay for the night, as he said we could never get home before dark. F., however, scouted the idea, and we resumed our way. The track, for it could not be called a road, led us through one or two jungle villages completely hidden by the dense bamboo clumps and long jungle grass. You can't see a trace of habitation till you are fairly on the village, and as the rice-fields are bordered with long strips of tall grass, the whole country presents the appearance of a uniform jungle. We got through the rice swamps, the villages, and the grass in safety, and as it was getting dark, emerged on the great plain of undulating ridgy sandbanks, that form the bed of the river during the annual floods. We had our *syces* (grooms) and two peons with us. We had to ride over nearly two miles of sand before we could reach the *ghat* where we expected the

ferry-boats, and, the main stream once crossed, we had only two miles further to reach the factory. We were getting both tired and hungry; a heavy dew was falling, and the night was raw and chill. It was dark, there was no moon to light our way, and the stars were obscured by the silently creeping fog, rising from the marshy hollows among the sand. All at once F., who was leading, called out that we were off the path, and before I could pull up, my poor old tired horse was floundering in a quicksand up to the girths; I threw myself off and tried to wheel him round. H. was behind us, and we cried to him to halt where he was. I was sinking at every movement up to the knees, when the syce came to my rescue, and took charge of the horse. F.'s syce ran to extricate his master and horse; the two peons kept calling, "Oh! my father, my father," the horses snorted, and struggled desperately in the tenacious and treacherous quicksand; but after a prolonged effort, we all got safely out, and rejoined H. on the firm ridge.

We now hallooed and shouted for the boatmen, but beyond the swish of the rapid stream to our right, or the plash of a falling bank as the swift current undermined it, no sound answered our repeated calls. We were wet and weary, but to go either backward or forward was out of the question. We were off the path, and the first step in any direction might lead us into another quicksand, worse perhaps than that from which we had just extricated ourselves. The horses were trembling in every limb. The syces cowered together and shivered with the cold. We ordered the two peons to try and reach the ghat, and see what had become of the boats, while we awaited their return where we were. The fog and darkness soon swallowed them up, and putting the best face on our dismal circumstances that we could, we lit our pipes and extended our jaded limbs on the damp sand.

For a time we could hear the shouts of the peons as they hallooed for the boatmen, and we listened anxiously for the

response, but there was none. We could hear the purling swish of the rapid stream, the crumbling banks falling into the current with a distant splash. Occasionally a swift rushing of wings overhead told us of the arrowy flight of diver or teal. Far in the distance twinkled the gleam of a herdsman's fire, the faint tinkle of a distant bell, or the subdued barking of a village dog for a moment alone broke the silence.

At times the hideous chorus of a pack of jackals wcke the echoes of the night. Then, at no great distance, rose a hoarse booming cry, swelling on the night air, and subsiding into a lengthened growl. The syces started to their feet, the horses snorted with fear; and as the roar was repeated, followed closely by another to our left, and seemingly nearer, H. exclaimed "By Jove! there's a couple of tigers."

Sure enough so it was. It was the first time I had heard the roar of the tiger in his own domain, and I must confess that my sensations were not altogether pleasant. We set about collecting sticks and what roots of grass we could find, but on the sand-flats everything was wet, and it was so dark that we had to grope about on our hands and knees, and pick up whatever we came across.

With great difficulty we managed to light a small fire, and for about half-an-hour were nearly smothered by trying with inflated cheeks to coax it into blaze. The tigers continued to call at intervals, but did not seem to be approaching us. It was a long and weary wait, we were cold, wet, hungry, and tired; F., the cause of our misfortunes, had taken off his saddle, and with it for a pillow was now fast asleep. H. and I cowered over the miserable sputtering flame, and longed and wished for the morning. It was a miserable night, the hours seemed interminable, the dense volumes of smoke from the water-sodden wood nearly choked us. At last, after some hours spent in this miserable manner, we heard a faint halloo in the distance; it was now past eleven at night.

We returned the hail, and by-and-bye the peons returned bringing a boatman with them. The lazy rascals at the ghat, where we had proposed crossing, had gone home at nightfall, leaving their boats on the further bank. Our trusty peons, had gone five miles up the river, through the thick jungle, and brought a boat down with them from the next ghat to that where we were.

We now warily picked our way down to the edge of the bank. The boat seemed very fragile, and the current looked so swift and dangerous, that we determined to go across first ourselves, get the larger boat from the other side, light a fire and then bring over the horses. We embarked accordingly leaving the syces and horses behind us. The peons and boatmen pulled the boat a long way up stream by a rope then shooting out we were carried swiftly down stream, the dark shadow of the further bank seeming at a great distance. The boatman pushed vigorously at his bamboo pole, the water rippled and gurgled, and frothed and eddied around. Half-a-dozen times we thought our boat would topple over, but at length we got safely across, far below what we had proposed as our landing place.

We found the boats all right, and the boatman's hut, a mere collection of dry grass and a few old bamboos. As it could be replaced in an hour, and the material lay all around, we fired the hut, which soon blazed up, throwing a weird lurid glow on bank and stream, and disclosing far on the other bank our weary nags and shivering syces, looking very bedraggled and forlorn indeed. The leaping and crackling of the flames, and the genial warmth, invigorated us a little, and while I stayed behind to feed the fire, the others recrossed to bring the horses over.

With the previous fright, however, their long waiting, the blazing fire, and being unaccustomed to boats at night, the poor scared horses refused to enter the boat. The boats are flat-bottomed or broadly bulging, with a bamboo platform



strewn with grass in the centre. As a rule they have no protecting rails, and even in the daytime, when the current is strong and eddies numerous, they are very dangerous for horses. At all events, the poor brutes would not be led on to the platform, so there was nothing for it but to swim them across. The boat was therefore towed a long way up the bank, which on the farther side was nearly level with the current, but where the hut had stood was steep and slushy, and perhaps twenty feet high. This was where the deepest water ran, and where the current was swiftest. If the horses therefore missed the landing ghat or stage, which was cut sloping into the bank, there was a danger of their being swept away altogether and lost. However we determined on making the attempt. Entering the water, and holding the horses tightly by the head, with a leading rope attached, to be paid out in case of necessity; the boat shot out, the horses pawed the water, entering deeper and deeper, foot by foot, into the swiftly rushing silent stream. So long as they were in their depth and had footing, they were all right, but when they reached the middle of the river, the current, rushing with frightful velocity, swept them off their feet, and boat and horses began to go down stream. The horses, with lips apart showing their teeth firmly set, the lurid glare of the flame lighting up their straining eyeballs, the plashing of the water, the dark rapid current flowing noiselessly past; the rocking heaving boat, the dusky forms of syces, peons, and boatmen, standing out clear in the ruddy fire-light against the utter blackness of the night, composed a weird picture I can never forget.

The boat shot swiftly past the ghat, and came with a thump against the bank. It swung round into the stream again, but the boatman had luckily managed to scramble ashore, and his efforts and mine united, hauling on the mooring-rope, sufficed to bring her into the bank. The three struggling horses were yet in the current, trying bravely

to stem the furious rush of the river. The syces and my friends were holding hard to the tether-ropes, which were now at their full stretch. It was a most critical moment. Had they let go, the horses would have been swept away to form a meal for the alligators. They managed, however, to get in close to the bank, and here, although the water was still over their backs, they got a slight and precarious footing, and inch by inch struggled after the boat, which we were now pulling up to the landing place.

After a sore struggle, during which we thought more than once the gallant nags would never emerge from the water, they staggered up the bank, dripping, trembling, and utterly overcome with their exertions. It was my first introduction to the treacherous Koosee, and I never again attempted to swim a horse across at night. We led the poor tired creatures up to the fire, heaping on fresh bundles of thatching-grass, of which there was plenty lying about, the syces then rubbed them down, and shampooed their legs, till they began to take a little heart, whinnying as we spoke to them and caressed them.

After resting for nearly an hour, we replaced the saddles, and F., who by this time began to mistrust his knowledge of the jungles by night, allowed one of the peons, who was sure he knew every inch of the road, to lead the way. Leaving the smouldering flames to flicker and burn out in solitude, we again plunged into the darkness of the night, threading our way through the thick jungle grass, now loaded with dewy moisture, and dripping copious showers upon us from its high walls at either side of the narrow track. We crossed a rapid little stream, an arm of the main river, turned to the right, progressed a few hundred yards, turned to the left, and finally came to a dead stop, having again lost our way.

We heaped execrations on the luckless peon's head, and I suggested that we should make for the main stream, follow up the bank till we reached the next ghat, where I knew

there was a cart-road leading to the factory. Otherwise we might wander all night in the jungles, perhaps get into another quicksand, or come to some other signal grief. We accordingly turned round. We could hear the swish of the river at no great distance, and soon, stumbling over bushes and bursting through matted masses of grass, dripping with wet, and utterly tired and dejected, we reached the bank of the stream.

Here we had no difficulty in following the path. The river is so swift, that the only way boats are enabled to get up stream to take down the inland produce, is by having a few coolies or boatmen to drag the boat up against the current by towing-lines. This is called *gooning*. The goon-ropes are attached to the mast of the boat. At the free end is a round bit of bamboo. The towing-coolie places this against his shoulder, and slowly and laboriously drags the boat up against the current. We were now on this towing-path and after riding for nearly four miles we reached the ghat, struck into the cart-road, and without further misadventure reached the factory about four in the morning, utterly fagged and worn out.

About eight in the morning my bearer woke me out of a deep sleep, with the news that there was a *gaerha*, that is, a rhinoceros, close to the factory. We had some days previously heard it rumoured that there were *two* rhinoceroses in the *Battabarree* jungles, so I at once roused my soundly-sleeping friends. Swallowing a hasty morsel of toast and a cup of coffee, we mounted our ponies, sent our guns on ahead, and rode off for the village where the rhinoceros was reported to be. As we rode hurriedly along we could see natives running in the same direction as ourselves, and one of my men came up panting and breathless to confirm the news about the rhinoceros, with the unwelcome addition that Premnarain Singh, a young neighbouring Zemindar, had gone in pursuit of it with his elephant and guns. We hurried

on, and just then heard the distant report of a shot, followed quickly by two more. We tried to take a short cut across country through some rice-fields, but our ponies sank in the boggy ground, and we had to retrace our way to the path.

By the time we got to the village we found an excited crowd of over a thousand natives, dancing and gesticulating round the prostrate carcase of the rhinoceros. The Baboo and his party had found the poor brute firmly embedded in a quicksand. With organised effort they might have secured the prize alive, and could have sold him in Calcutta for at least a thousand rupees, but they were too excited, and blazed away three shots into the helpless beast. "Many hands make light work," so the crowd soon had the dead animal extricated, rolled him into the creek, and floated him down to the village, where we found them already beginning to hack and hew the fish, completely spoiling the skin, and properly completing the butchery. We were terribly vexed that we were too late, but endeavoured to stop the stupid destruction that was going on. The body measured eleven feet three inches from the snout to the tail, and stood six feet nine. The horn was six and a half inches long, and the girth a little over ten feet. We put the best face on the matter, congratulated the Baboo with very bad grace, and asked him to get the skin cut up properly.

Cut in strips from the under part of the ribs and along the belly, the skin makes magnificent riding-whips. The bosses on the shoulder and sides are made into shields by the natives, elaborately ornamented and much prized. The horn, however, is the most coveted acquisition. It is believed to have peculiar virtues, and is popularly supposed by its mere presence in a house to mitigate the pains of maternity. A rhinoceros horn is often handed down from generation to generation as an heirloom, and when a birth is about to take place the anxious husband often gets a loan of the precious

treasure, after which he has no fears for the safe issue of the interesting event.

The flesh of the rhinoceros is eaten by all classes. It is one of the five animals that a Brahmin is allowed to eat by the *Shastras*. They were formerly much more common in these jungles, but of late years very few have been killed. When they take up their abode in a piece of jungle they are not easily dislodged. They are fierce, savage brutes, and do not scruple to attack an elephant when they are hard pressed by the hunter. When they wish to leave a locality where they have been disturbed, they will make for some distant point, and march on with dogged and inflexible purpose. Some have been known to travel eighty miles in the twenty-four hours, through thick jungle, over rivers, and through swamp and quicksand. Their sense of hearing is very acute, and they are very easily roused to fury. One peculiarity often noticed by sportsmen is, that they always go to the same spot when they want to obey the calls of nature. Mounds of their dung are sometimes seen in the jungle, and the tracks show that the rhinoceros pays a daily visit to this one particular spot.

In Nepaul, and along the *terai* or wooded slopes of the frontier, they are more numerous; but "Jung Bahadur," the late ruler of Nepaul, would allow no one to shoot them but himself. I remember the wailing lament of a Nepaul officer with whom I was out shooting, when I happened to fire at and wound one of the protected beasts. It was in Nepaul, among a cluster of low woody hills, with a brawling stream dashing through the precipitous channel worn out of the rocky, boulder-covered dell. The rhinoceros was up the hill slightly above me, and we were beating up for a tiger that we had seen go ahead of the line.

In my eagerness to bag a "rhino" I quite forgot the interdict, and fired an Express bullet into the shoulder of the animal, as he stood broadside on, staring stupidly at me.

He staggered, and made as if he would charge down the hill. The old "Major Captán," as they called our sporting host, was shouting out to me not to fire. The *mahouts* and beaters were petrified with horror at my presumption. I fancy they expected an immediate order for my decapitation, or for my ears to be cut off at the very least, but feeling I might as well be "in for a pound as for a penny," I fired again, and tumbled the huge brute over, with a bullet through the skull behind the ear. The old officer was horror-stricken, and would allow no one to go near the animal. He would not even let me get down to measure it, being so terrified lest the affair should reach the ears of his formidable lord and ruler, that he hurried us off from the scene of my transgression as quickly as he could.

The old Major Captán was a curious character. The government of Nepaul is purely military. All executive and judicial functions are carried on by military officers. After serving a certain time in the army, they get rewarded for good service by being appointed to the executive charge of a district. So far as I could make out, they seem to farm the revenue much as is done in Turkey. They must send in so much to the Treasury, and anything over they keep for themselves. Their administration of justice is rough and ready. Fines, corporal punishment, and in the case of heinous crimes, mutilation and death are their penalties. There is a tax of *kind* on all produce, and licences to cut timber bring in a large revenue. A protective tariff is levied on all goods or produce passing the frontier from British territory, and no European is allowed to travel in the country, or to settle and trade there. In the lower valleys there are magnificent stretches of land suitable for indigo, tea, rice, and other crops. The streams are numerous, moisture is plentiful, the soil is fertile, and the slopes of the hills are covered with splendid timber, a great quantity of which is cut and floated down the Gunduck, Bagnuttee, Koosee, and

other streams during the rainy season. It is used principally for beams, rafters and railway sleepers.

The people are jealous of intrusion and suspicious of strangers, but as I was with an official, they generally came out in great numbers to gaze as we passed through a village. The country does not seem so thickly populated as in our territory, and the cultivators had a more well-to-do look. They possess vast numbers of cattle. The houses have conical roofs, and great quadrangular sheds, roofed with a flat covering of thatch, are erected all round the houses, for the protection of the cattle at night. The taxes must weigh heavily on the population. The executive officer, when he gets charge of a district, removes all the subordinates who have been acting under his predecessor. When I asked the old Major if this would not interfere with the efficient administration of justice, and the smooth working of his revenue and executive functions, he gave a funny leer, almost a wink, and said it was much more satisfactory to have men of your own working under you, the fact being, that with his own men he could more securely wring from the ryots the uttermost farthing they could pay, and was more certain of getting his own share of the spoil.

With practically irresponsible power, and only answerable directly to his immediate military superior, an unscrupulous man may harry and harass a district pretty much as he chooses. Our old Major seemed to be civil and lenient, but in some districts the exactions and extortions of the rulers have driven many of the hard-working Nepaulese over the border into our territory. Our landholders or Zemindars, having vast areas of untilled land, are only too glad to encourage this immigration, and give the exiles, whom they find hard-working, industrious tenants, long leases on easy terms. The new comers are very independent, and strenuously resist any encroachment on what they consider their rights. If an attempt is made to raise their rent, even

equitably, the land having increased in value, they will resist the attempt "tooth and nail," and take every advantage the law affords to oppose it. They are very fond of litigation, and are mostly able to afford the expense of a lawsuit. I generally found it answer better to call them together and reason quietly with them, submitting any point in dispute to an arbitration of parties mutually selected.

Nearly all the rivers in Nepaul are formed principally from the melting of the snow on the higher ranges. A vast body of water descends annually into the plains from the natural surface drainage of the country, but the melting of the snows is the main source of the river system. Many of the hill streams, and it is particularly observable at some seasons in the Koosee, have a regular daily rise and fall. In the early morning you can often ford a branch of the river, which by midday has become a swiftly-rolling torrent, filling the channel from bank to bank. The water is intensely cold, and few or no fish are to be found in the mountain streams of Nepaul. When the Nepaulese come down to the plains on business, pleasure, or pilgrimage, their great treat is a mighty banquet of fish. For two or three *annas* a fish of several pounds weight can easily be purchased. They revel on this unwonted fare, eating to repletion, and very frequently making themselves ill in consequence. When Jung Bahadur came down through Chumparun to attend the *darbar* of the lamented Earl Mayo, cholera broke out in his camp, brought on simply by the enormous quantities of fish, often not very fresh or wholesome, which his guards and camp-followers consumed.

Large quantities of dried fish are sent up to Nepaul, and exchanged for rice and other grain, or horns, hides, and blankets. The fish-drying is done very simply in the sun. It is generally left till it is half putrid and taints the air for miles. The sweltering, half-rotting mass, packed in filthy



bags, and slung on ponies or bullocks, is sent over the frontier to some village bazaar in Nepaul. The track of a consignment of this horrible filth can be recognised from very far away. The perfume hovers on the road, and as you are riding up and get the first sniff of the putrid odour, you know at once that the Nepaulese market is being recruited by a *fresh* accession of very *stale* fish. If the taste is at all equal to the smell, the rankest witches' broth ever brewed in reeking cauldron would probably be preferable. Over the frontier there seems to be few roads, merely bullock tracks. Most of the transporting of goods is done by bullocks, and intercommunication must be slow and costly. I believe that near Katmandoo, the capital, the roads and bridges are good, and kept in tolerable repair. There is an arsenal where they manufacture modern munitions of war. Their soldiers are well disciplined, fairly well equipped, and form excellent fighting material.

Our policy of annexation, so far as India is concerned, may perhaps be now considered as finally abandoned. We have no desire to annex Nepaul, but surely this system of utter isolation, of jealous exclusion at all hazards of English enterprise and capital, might be broken down to a mutual community of interest, a full and free exchange of products, and a reception by Nepaul without fear and distrust of the benefits our capitalists and pioneers could give the country by opening out its resources, and establishing the industries of the West on its fertile slopes and plains. I am no politician, and know nothing of the secret springs of policy that regulate our dealings with Nepaul, but it does seem somewhat weak and puerile to allow the Nepaulese free access to our territories, and an unprotected market in our towns for all their produce, while the British subject is rigorously excluded from the country, his productions saddled with a heavy protective duty, and the representative of our Government himself treated more as a prisoner in honour-