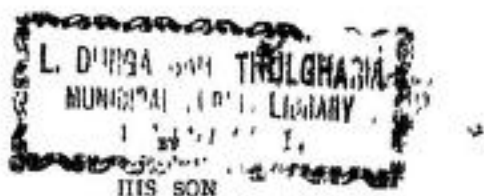


LIFE OF
MAHARAJA SIR JUNG BAHADUR,
G.C.B., G.C.S.I., ETC., ETC.,
OF NEPAL.



THE LATE GENERAL PUDMA JUNG BAHADUR RANA.

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CHAPTER XIII.

WORK AND SPORT.

HAPPY is the country which has no history"; but since such a country is more likely to founder than to flourish, it is best to take the remark with a small modification, and say that happy is the *period* which has no history, for otherwise a country without a history is a country without existence. From 1861 onwards till the very close of Jung Bahadur's life, the history of Nepal is absolutely unhistorical in the sense in which "historicalness" is incompatible with happiness. And hence the historian of this period has to perform a task of the greatest difficulty, for comparatively speaking it is much easier to write the history of a "historical" period than to chronicle the humdrum occurrences of a semi-historical or unhistorical epoch. And this is the difficulty that now besets me, as I proceed in my attempt to record the uneventful events of a period of profound peace.

Towards the close of April 1861, a most queer case was brought before the Maharaja for trial. It was a claim against his own father, brought by one Lila Dhar, for the payment of a sum of Rs. 2,300 said to have been lent to Kazi Balner Singh 24 years ago! The man produced a written bond in support of his claim. Such a claim, made as it was so many years after the death of the alleged debtor, carried suspicion on the face of it; and even otherwise was unteuable on technical grounds of law. But the Maharaja, disregarding every other consideration than that of the honour of his family, at once ordered the payment of twice the principal amount, together with any interest that might be due thereon, calculating at the rate of 10 per cent per

and position confirmed by his touching their foreheads, and so investing them with what is called the *teeka* or caste-mark.

With the advent of the cold weather in November, Jung Bahadur's passion for hunting began to get possession of him, so that during the second half of the month, he set himself to making his preparations for a *shikar*. Orders were issued for the repair of the roads along which he was to pass, and for the storage of provisions at all the places where he was to encamp. The old-fashioned, superannuated *howdahs* and pads were replaced by fresh ones, made on an improved pattern, combining the several advantages of lightness, beauty, durability, and convenience of being folded up for ease in transit. On the 2nd of December, he put his brother Krishna Bahadur in charge of his current duties of the State, and left Thapathalli the next day. His departure from the capital was a public one, salutes being fired, a military escort being furnished, and flags and bunting being displayed. He marched directly to Hitowra, where 975 elephants were in waiting for him. Here he held the annual Panjui of the officers of the Elephant Department, promoting some, dismissing others, and tolerating the rest. And then the *shikar* proper began, with the shooting of seven stags at his first halting-place. The next was Vattha, where he shot his first tiger, and then passed on to Thori, where he shot two more, penetrating the jungles further and further, till he suddenly discovered a rhinoceros at the distance of a few yards on his left. Snatching a rifle from the hands of one of his attendants, he fired two shots in quick succession, both of which hit the brute, who, though stunned and dazed by agony, made off, followed by the Maharaja on and on, till, unable to flee further, he dropped down dead on the bank of a stream. The head was cut off and carried to camp as a trophy.

On the 12th of December, the party pitched camp at Tribeni, a place so named from being situated at the confluence of three rivers, the Narayani, the Rapti, and the Adki Beni. The Maharaja halted here for ten days, during which he shot six tigers on land and one tremendous alligator in water. The place being an important place of pilgrimage, the Maharaja paid his reverence to it by making a gift of one thousand cows to a Brahman named Sheo Prasad Upadhyas. Here he also received a visit from the Raja of Sakuni Raninagar, to whom he presented a beautiful Khorassan scimitar inlaid with turquoises.

On the 22nd, he encamped at Bankata, shooting two leopards and three boars, and on the next day arrived at Parasi, where fortune took a different turn, reversing the usual course of events in a shikar, for one of his best sportsmen was here devoured by a tiger, who stole upon him in his sleep. The Maharaja quitted the place immediately on learning the sad event, and moved on next to the Timan jungles where, in the brief space of eight hours, he killed nine wild buffaloes, and the low Niwars (among whom buffaloes' flesh is considered a delicacy) had a jolly good feast of it.

Arriving at Banki, the Maharaja was amazed at the changed aspect of the neighbouring country, of which Lieutenant-Colonel Siddhiman was the Collector. By his zeal and industry, immense tracts of waste land were brought under cultivation, and permanent arrangements were made about irrigation, by the digging of ponds and the sinking of wells in different parts of the land. In this way large tracts of barren land were converted into smiling fields surrounded by picturesque villages. And thus in a very short time, Banki had become the chief commercial centre of Western Nepal, and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who formerly traded with Nanpara in British territory, were attracted to this new business mart nearer home. Siddhiman was promoted to a

Coloneley on the spot. On the 6th of January 1862, the Maharaja paid a visit to the new village founded by Siddhimau, which he named Siddhipur in honour of its energetic founder.

Hearing that a herd of wild elephants had been sighted at Rajghat, the Maharaja made his way thither, and immediately ordered a circle of men and elephants to surround the game, the while he waited for the arrival of his best *muskis*, Jung Prasad, Barchha, Sri Prasad, and Chandra Prasad. He bagged four tigers as an interlude during this period of waiting. The Maharaja was so impatient that he could not sleep peacefully all that night, and frequently called out to his attendants to know if any fresh news of the surrounded herd had been brought by the scouts he had deputed to bring him hourly information of what was going on. A magnificent perch, capable of accommodating 100 men, was erected at a convenient spot for the ladies to see the game. It was not till the 23rd of January that the hunt could be seriously begun. The hunting elephants were divided into two groups and led into the centre of the enclosure, so as to occupy a position midway between the two herds. Chandra and Sri Prasad were posted on the east to face the wild chief of the eastern herd, while Jung Prasad and Barchha were placed near the perch to encounter the leader of the western herd. The plan was to separate the herds from their leaders, and then to capture as many of the females and young ones as possible, leaving the two *muskis* to fight with Jung Prasad and his comrades. The Maharaja mounted his swiftest elephant personally to lead the western division, others being put in command of the eastern. The pursuits on both sides commenced at 9 A.M. After a short time the western herd was seen plucking off twigs, with their leader on the right, as if to guard them. The hunters split themselves into three parties and, yelling like fiends,

attacked it simultaneously from three sides, leaving the front open, but taking care to keep themselves at a cautious distance, lest they should be struck down by the formidable foe. The herd was thus successfully separated from its leader, and the females and young ones then easily taken. Then followed the pursuit of the *mast*, whose movements had been all this time closely watched by a party of hunters, who now joined by a group of tame tuskers succeeded, after a hard struggle, in drawing him near the perch, where Jung Prasad and Barchha were waiting to give him a warm reception. Seeing the approach of his gallant opponent, Jung Prasad erected his tail, and lifting his trunk high in the air, shot at him with a flourish of trumpet, while the bell round his neck sounded loud and quick, as within a yard of the untamed brute, he suddenly made a stop, and, without giving a moment of warning to his adversary, delivered a blow that shook the huge beast from trunk to tail. The blow was soon returned with full force, and then began the real fight. The maddened beasts crashed down huge trees, as if they were but stubble, and grappled with terrific rage for quite an hour. It was an imposing spectacle, the like of which can hardly be conceived but by those who have beheld the reality. The wild elephant at last gave way, and swaying his head to and fro and blowing a note of rage, turned tail and rushed into the centre of the forest. Jung Prasad being exhausted in the fight, Barchha, who was comparatively fresh, emerged from his covert, and overtaking the fugitive enemy, plunged his tusks into his side, and the fight was resumed. The wild elephant had again to give way and again to attempt flight, in which he was relentlessly pursued by the indomitable Barchha, and surrounded by a cloud of horsemen and elephants, that stood out to intercept his flight in every direction. Seeing further struggle hopeless, the unfortunate rover of the forest laid down his arms with a shrill cry as of pain. Barchha

with dignified grace accepted the surrender, and wound his proboscis round the wild animal's neck, as if to compliment him on his gallant resistance. Presently some twelve or thirteen *mudlagas* (elephants next below the *musts* in fighting quality) closed round him, while a mahout from each elephant slipped down and combined their exertions in fastening ropes round the legs of their gallant prisoner. The Maharaja, after seeing the prize well secured, returned to camp at 9 P.M.

The eastern herd, consisting of nine elephants, had meanwhile also been captured in a like manner, all but two females who escaped through an oversight. On the 26th, the new captures were brought to the camp, where the Maharaja, after giving them suitable names, handed them over to the charge of different *Daroghas*, with orders to tame them and train them in the shortest time possible.

The Maharaja now turned homewards, and whether hunting or halting, he was ever ready to listen to the grievances of the people among whom he passed. On the 25th of March, he was the guest of Wazir Singh Thapa, who entertained him with a deer-stalking expedition. The Maharaja was the only one of the party who fired, and within a few hours he had shot twenty deer, besides three brace of pheasants and a couple of hares. On the 31st of March, he reached Thapathalli, having accomplished a shikar counting 21 elephants, 31 tigers, 7 stags, 1 rhinoceros, 1 boa-constrictor, 11 wild buffaloes, 10 boar, 1 alligator, 4 bears, 20 deer, 6 pheasants, 2 hares, and 3 leopards.

On the 16th of April, the Maharaja paid a flying visit to Sundoryal, where he stayed for eleven days. Here he granted an interview to the three Chinese architects who had been invited to execute the repairs of the temple of Shambhunath and other Buddhist pagodas in the kingdom. The Chinese are specialists in the line of Buddhist architecture to this day. Here he also gave audience to Nawab Birjis Qadr and the

search, whom he at once despatched with a bullet in his chest. In the course of his search, the Maharaja came to learn that the woman, who was the immediate occasion of this bear-hunt, had given a deep cut on the animal's nozzle before she herself was clawed with savage fury. The report was confirmed when he examined the dead body of the brute, and he accordingly gave a reward of Rs. 50 to her. The woman happily survived her wounds to enjoy the handsome reward.

Death now hovering round claimed two victims from among his family one after another. One of his Maharanes, the daughter of a Chautaria chief, who was the mother of four of his daughters, died in child-bed on the 27th of October. Nine days after, he lost another of his wives, the daughter of Tilvikram Thappa, who died of cholera. These melancholy events, coming as they did in such quick succession, were a great shock to his loving heart, and to beguile his sorrow, he left for the Terai as soon as arrangements for a hunting expedition had been completed. He quitted the place early on the morning of the 5th of November, amidst a light shower of rain, that was deemed very lucky, as it always is immediately before a journey.

His first encampment was as usual at Hitowra. It chanced that he could not sleep well the first night, and after tossing on the bed for some time, his attention was directed to a peculiar crackling sound proceeding from a corner of his tent. He jumped out of bed, and discovered a fire—his own tent on fire! Rushing to the spot, he managed to put out the rising flame before it could spread too far, and the whole thing was over before any one knew what had happened. So the auspicious rain did prove lucky after all.

From Hitowra the Maharaja marched on to Sinsri, where during his march he sighted a small herd of deer. He fired two shots as they were skipping off into the jungle, the effect of which could not be noticed immediately, as the

ground was covered with long grass; but on going to the spot it was found that both the shots had done their work, for there lay a couple of deer in the throes of death. He marched on through a wide and wild tract of country, and passed on from place to place, making brief halts and bagging plenty of game at each. While encamping at Budhi Nadi, a most tragic event took place. Two of his soldiers, who had penetrated into the forest in search of fire-wood, were there suddenly attacked by a tiger whose repose they had disturbed. One of them fell an instant prey, but the other fortunately could make his escape to bear the melancholy tale to the Maharaja, who at once hurried to the spot, and found the brute still in his peaceful repose. The tiger, seeing the approach of elephants, made a desperate attack upon one of the elephants close alongside of the Maharaja's own, but before any harm could be done, a bullet from Jung Bahadur's gun pierced his eye, and down he rolled dead on the ground, the biggest tiger he had ever shot.

He had been away for about two months when he reached Nunsar, where information was brought to him of fresh tracks of wild elephants, of whom the shikaris reported to have counted no less than sixteen. Preparations were at the instant set on foot for a *khera*: the doughty Jung Prasad was summoned; stockades were planted; shikaris were posted; the pursuit was commenced; and before long one tall tusker, seven females, and two fine-looking young ones were successfully entrapped.

At Chandratua another sad fatality occurred among his followers, similar to the one that had happened at Budhi Nadi. One of his *khatussees*, while tent-pegging, was carried off by a tiger in the teeth of so many of his comrades who, unarmed as they were, proved of little help in saving the poor man's life. When the Maharaja heard this, he was so excited that he ran in pursuit of the tiger, on foot and

practically all alone, for only three of his attendants, and those too against his wish, followed him. He had not gone far when he saw the shoes of the poor *khalasee* hanging on a thorny bush, having obviously been carried thither by monkeys, a number of whom were shrieking and shouting on the neighbouring trees as the Maharaja approached the place. The screaming of the monkeys was a sufficient indication to the Maharaja of the presence of the tiger somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood. His eyes were wandering in all directions, expecting a sudden sally each moment, when out burst the fierce tiger from a close thicket, where he was still devouring the flesh of his late victim. In a few seconds a bullet had pierced his head from between the eyes, and blown out his brains, so that he dropped down dead without a groan.

On foot through a thick jungle, literally to beard a tiger in his den, was a feat that reminds me of the half-mad Maximilian, who had once similarly walked unarmed into a lion's den. But in Maximilian's case the act was a madman's freak; in the case of Jung Bahadur it was the outcome of a valour that nothing could daunt, for he was as much afraid of a jungle tiger as of a street dog. It is remarkable to notice how this inconceivable degree of courage was shared by his personal attendants, any four or five of whom could attack a huge tiger with their *kulrees* only, if commanded to do so by the Maharaja. Numerous instances could be given of the courage of his followers, which is also illustrated by the fact that small parties of them frequently caught a tiger alive, and presented it to the Maharaja, in spite of his repeated prohibitions to run such risks.

A most striking instance of their devotion to the Maharaja, at imminent risk to their own lives, happened just after the Maharaja's death. His remains were lying just on the edge of the river Baghmata for cremation, when a huge

crocodile was discovered close by, ready to pounce upon the dead body and drag it into the water. Such a catastrophe would have been eternal disgrace to the family, and in fact to the whole country. The soldiers of the Rifle Regiment, numbering about thirty men, immediately leaped into the waters, without even putting off their uniforms, and after a hard struggle with the huge creature in its own element, succeeded in dragging it up on the bank, where it was afterwards shot. It seems difficult to believe that any number of men could have secured a living crocodile in the middle of a river, and hauled it up on the bank where it should be shot afterwards. But fact is fact, and I saw the fact with my own eyes, and still remember it with perfect vividness, for I was twenty years old at that date.

It was now the middle of January 1863, and he had been more than two months away from home, when he was tempted into another *kheda* at Kankai, where one big *must*, one young tusker, and four females were the prize.

But he continued roaming about the jungles for another two months before he went back to Thapathalli, which he reached on the 18th of March, having shot or captured 18 elephants, 39 tigers, 4 tiger cubs, 4 leopards, 5 bears, 4 rhinoceroses, 9 red deer, 6 *Laghina* deer, 9 boar, 3 panthers, besides a host of birds of all species.

References had been made to him, from time to time during his tour, regarding cases for which there was no provision in the existing laws; and as he had no time in the midst of his peregrinations to concentrate thought on new legislation, his first act on returning home was to remove this deficiency of the law by new enactments.

In the multifariousness of his duties he had scarcely any leisure, for not only the Legislature but every department of the State levied the heaviest burdens on his energies, whenever, after a considerable period of absence, he came back