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MY BHOOTAN JOURNAL OF TIGER-SHOOTING, &c.,
IN THE WESTERN DOOARS OF BHOOTAN.

BY T. A. D.

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CHAPTER XIV—(continued).

Rhinos—One bagged and two wounded—Expedition northwards—Fine picturesque country—Debouchure of the Joldbáká river—The Valley of the Tersah—A deserted Bhootea stockade—The short-eared Hare of the Western Dooars—Fight between a tiger and a buffalo.

February 21st, 1865.—News of some rhinos within a mile of camp, I went to the place and found that the jungle on it was mere thatching grass such as you might turn a hare or jackal out of. On the *maidan* to the east were some tame buffaloes grazing. "This is no jungle for rhinoceros," said I to the *khubbariah*, who was mounted on one of the pad elephants, "You must have seen one of those buffaloes grazing in this grass field, and mistook it for a rhinoceros."

"No, no, *dharmavoter*," said the *khubbariah*, "I marked down no less than three rhinoceros here this morning before I went to tell you."

"Where are they now, then?" I asked.

"I dont know," said the *khubbariah*.

"But I will ask those herdsmen, who also saw the rhinoceros, whether the brutes are still here, or whether they have gone."

He then called and beckoned to some herdsmen about a quarter of a mile away, and when the men came up he asked them where the rhinos were? "In there," said they, and they pointed to about the centre of the grass field. "They are asleep there inside the grass."

"Come along, then," said I to the mahouts. We formed line and advanced in battle array, and had barely penetrated some fifty

paces into the grass when up jumped a rhino with a snort turned round to have a look at us. Bang! Bang! went the barrels of the "Bonesmasher" into his head. Down he went on knees grunting horribly, and then as I got hold of another up jumped two more rhinos, they too stood and stared. "I'll take the elephant up to this fellow's broadside," said I to my mate. This was done and I poured in two more shots behind his ear and he rolled over, and then with one tremendous puff that would have blown out the lights of a thousand candles, he gave up the ghost. The other two were still standing where they rose, and loading the "Bonesmasher," and the other gun I advanced toward them. When I got to within some fifty yards of them, I halted and fired, giving one barrel of the "Bonesmasher" to each. Both then turned with no end of grunts and galloped away across the open towards the west. I followed them for some distance and had a few more shots at them but they got clear off and I gave up the chase and returned to camp. The brutes were as tame as old cows and I did not like shooting at them, and won't shoot more if I can help it.

February 22nd, 1865.—My inclination this morning was to explore the country northwards. It was a *terra incognita* to me and I had a strong desire to go and explore it. Whenever I had nothing better to do I ordered the elephants and travelled north. There was something very inviting in the aspect of the country thitherwards. The extensive grassy *maidans* (plains), bounded here and there with open forests, had a very tempting look about them. Further on in the background the forests grew dark and sombre; and beyond them, on a tolerably clear day you would see the lower range of the Bhootan hills beautifully variegated in color: and on a perfectly clear day you would see the splendid panorama of the several ranges of mountains with the highest range in the distance towering high up in the clear azure sky.

A few sketches I made about this time will give you an idea of the general appearance of the country. A great deal of the long grass had been burnt down, and only a few patches were left here and there with the charred and blackened trunks of trees which, a short time back, were luxuriating in the beauty and glory of full foliage. But though they have suffered for some time in being deprived of their lesser branches and stripped of every leaf, and present to the view nothing but their tall blackened trunks and main branches, yet in two or three months hence they will be as beautifully clothed as ever. Now, they stand so prominently as it were, to mark distance for they materially improve the perspective of the landscape, throwing the back ground of

mountains some miles further as it really is from the spectator, than it would otherwise appear to be.

The lower range of the Bhootan hills, though fifteen or twenty miles distant, would at times, particularly at about sunset of a clear evening after a shower of rain, appear hardly more than a few miles from you, and I cannot tell you what a splendid sight would at such times be revealed by the sudden after glow, which is, I believe, peculiar to India, lighting up the snowy range with a rich golden hue, and throwing a beautiful purple tint on the lower chain of blue mountains.

The debouchure of the Joldbaka river, though intrinsically having nothing in itself very attractive when seen on a hazy day, has nevertheless a magnificent background of mountain scenery which a light shower of rain is sure to reveal. The river rushes with great velocity through two gorges, one at each end of a hill, and uniting in a single stream further down, gains further impetus as it careers along over its stony bed. Trunks of huge trees torn up by the roots, and hurled down the precipitous sides of the hill, overlooking the gorges, are driven along helplessly by the impetuous torrent till they are stopped by some obstruction, and then they may be seen after the subsidence of the flood, stranded on sandy shoals or reclining on the bank half in and half out of the water. And the triple range of mountains as seen at the back of the dense dark sal forest, through which the Torsah river finds its way into the plains below, is also a sight well worth looking at.

To see this part of the country as I have seen it at the most favourable season of the year, without a prejudiced or jaundiced eye which confined nothing but barrenness from "Dan to Beersheba," any person would be charmed with it. For a sportsman it was all that could be desired.

I came across the remains of an old Bhootea stockade to-day some miles to the north of Madári cháng, with what intention, or for what purpose it had ever been constructed in such a place I could not conjecture, for there was neither human habitation nor road—not even a pathway—anywhere within miles of it. The natural mound or hillock on which the stockade had been constructed was a picturesque object and I halted to within two hundred yards and sketched it as I sat in the howdah. The foot of the hills could not have been more than about eight miles from this place. A short distance beyond it was a ridge some fifteen or sixteen feet above the level of the country south of it. It was parallel with the horizon, and overlooked a valley in which there was a forest dark, dense, and seemingly impenetrable. Neither glade nor opening of any kind was visible from outside, and I turned from it with

a melancholy feeling I cannot define. I went along the south skirt of this point for some distance and then turned to the south, beating through patches of grass as they came in my way, shooting no end of hares and black partridge.

I have nowhere as yet alluded to the short-eared hare of Western Doars. I turned up a good many to-day and shot a number of them. It is a little smaller than a full-grown common hare, and of a dark brown color with stiffish black hairs interspersed with the fur on the back of the neck and all along the back. It is indeed, to outward appearance a wiry-haired little animal, with any white, not even on the belly or on the inside of the thighs, not even under the tail. It has very short ears not unlike those of a very young squeaker of the wild pig tribe of Bengal, and the flavour of the flesh is *intensely hare*. The common long-eared hare of Bengal is somewhat devoid of this peculiar flavour, but in eating this short-eared hare you fancy you are eating an English one which has been sent out hermetically sealed. It is a strange-looking animal, and I did not know what to make of the first one. I thought it was a fox without his tail, and could not help wondering how Reynard had lost his caudal appendage!

Further on as I was going along through the grass plots, the tops of which were scarcely more than five feet high, I saw a small black buck in the open about a hundred and fifty yards distant from me, staring at the unusual sight of my line of elephants. I knocked him over with a bullet through the head, and he was hoisted on to the pad of one of the beater elephants. The line was again formed on each side of me. We turned more towards the north and went on beating leisurely through the grass. A pretty stiff northerly breeze, not favourable to shooting, had now sprung up, and about a quarter of a mile ahead was a belt of forest tolerably open. It had a strange attraction for me, and I determined on exploring it.

As we trudged onwards through the grass, I could now again hear a strange sound which I did not at first pay much attention to, fancying it was the wind rumbling through my *solah* (Pith helmet.) But after a time as we approached the forest the mahout heard it too, and quietly addressing the mahout beater elephant next to him, he said;

“*Eh! bhái!—itá kishér shobdo?*” This is Bengali of course, but being interpreted into English it is “Oh! brother! what sound is that?”

The answer was “*Kee jáni—*” (what do I know.)

I knew by this at once that it could not be the wind rumbling through my *solah topee*; so I ordered the line to halt, as v

doing so we could hardly have been able to discover what the sounds were, for the elephants made no little noise as their thick legs moved and rustled through the grass.

We listened for a minute or two, and at last one of the mahouts, whose sense of hearing was more acute, said with a certain degree of confidence.

“Yes, yes! there are tigers fighting on ahead there, in that belt of tree jungle yonder. They must have killed some *shikar* and are having a *káziá* (quarrel) over it.”

There was some probability of this conjecture being right, but I thought the sounds were too subdued to be caused by a couple of tigers fiercely battling with each other over their prey. But the tones were unmistakably those of the royal beast. There was the round full one of the tiger's terrible growl commencing loudly and thent becoming subdued into a snarl, would die away in a prolonged whine ; after which all would be hushed for a few moments, to begin again with a snort of passion which was not a tigerish sound, to be followed by a whine ending in something like a subdued roar !

I now pushed on as fast as “Shér Afgan” could go, though I bade the mahout in driving him to make as little noise as possible. As we got nearer the belt of trees the sounds grew louder and on my entering the forest I discovered that the sounds came from beyond. I was some fifty yards ahead of the beaters, and waiting for them just about half a minute, I bade them follow me as quietly as possible, and not to speak a word for their lives !

The belt of trees was not more than sixty or seventy yards wide. I crept quietly through this space without snapping a twig, and on reaching the northern limit I pulled up behind a tree and looked out through the interstices of the foliage into an open space beyond and then I beheld an extraordinary sight.

Not more than seventy or eighty yards from me on the skirt of some long sugar-cane-like grass were a large tiger and a large male buffalo face to face ! The tiger was snarling and growling and grinning and snapping at the buffaloe's nose very much in the same manner as a bull-terrier dog would do at the nose of a cow and he was trying to work round towards the buffaloe's hind quarters, while it seemed as if the buffaloe was doing his best to prevent this and to keep his head and horns towards the tiger, and there they moved round and round, and as the buffaloe's stern was often in these gyrations turned towards me, I saw that one of his hind legs was so seriously disabled that he could not put the hoof of that leg to the ground. They went on in this way for

some time till the tiger ; seeming to lose all patience, and getting an opportunity ; tried to end the contest by giving the buffalo a tremendous blow with his paw on the head ! The buffalo grunted and snorted angrily and made a desperate effort to get the tiger under his horns, for he bent his head down to the earth and shaking it savagely he gored and tore up the ground under him, he was blind with rage. The tiger however, escaped him by springing nimbly aside, and when the buffalo immediately after raised his head he saw the tiger some eight or nine yards off looking at him with the greatest indifference !

Once more the buffalo shook his head threateningly at the tiger and snorting angrily pawed the ground. The tiger looked at these demonstrations with supreme contempt, and at this time a flea or tick troubling him somewhere about the rump, he sat down on his hams and turning his head round towards his tail (as you've often seen a dog do) he began scratching or nibbling the place with the small teeth in the front part of his jaws. He nibbled away for some time and then licked the place. He then gave his head a shake and scratched his ear with his hind paw and in fact busied himself hunting the vermin that troubled him. A tiger is generally covered with ticks,—after this he yawned opening his jaws to their utmost extent, and exhibited his tremendous set of tusks. He then took a long look at the countenance quite the opposite to that in which the buffalo was, and I thought he was going to give it up as a bad job, and as if trying to get the advantage over the buffalo was too troublesome and he was heartily tired of it.

In the meanwhile the buffalo was quietly backing away, step by step was increasing his distance from the tiger still keeping his head to his foe. He was backing towards the belt of trees where I was concealed ; and when he backed away about five or twenty yards he suddenly turned and fled as fast as his three legs could carry him.

This seemed to have been all that the tiger wanted, for in a moment he overtook the buffalo and seizing hold of that unfortunate lame leg just above the back, his unmerciful jaws closed on it with the grip of a vice, while he buried his fangs deep in the bone and muscles. The poor buffalo kicked and struggled in vain efforts to shake off his terrible adversary, and I heard the bone in the buffalo's leg crack between the tiger's jaws ! The wretched animal groaned with the excruciating pain, and seemed to faint sank to the earth exhausted ; and the tiger then by an adroit manœuvre turned the buffalo over on his back. The

then letting go his hold of the thigh sprang in an instant on to the buffalo's chest and buried his tusks in the latter's brisket. There he held on for at least two or three minutes until the faint struggles of the buffalo had almost entirely subsided, and then leaving the brisket he seized the buffalo by the throat, and I could see the tiger's body working like that of a leech as he sucked at the life-blood of the poor buffalo!

The tiger was in the height of his enjoyment when I thought it time to interfere myself, so touching my mahout quickly on the head with my hand without speaking I signed to him to move on towards the scene of the scrimmage. He did so very quietly without even speaking to the elephant. When he had gone a few paces (about fifteen or twenty), I touched the mahout again on the head drawing it back towards the howdah. He stopped in obedience to my signal, and then I took a deliberate aim at the tiger's spine, because I could not see either his head or his neck at the time (the neck is always the best part to hit a tiger in) and fired, the moment after the tiger lay helplessly by the side of his victim,—not dead, but speechless and dying! Another shot or two and he was quite dead.

The beater mahouts now rushed forward, each man pulling out a knife or a *dáo*, and they cut the buffalo's throat to prevent his dying although he was already dead! But a Mahomedan's conscience is always elastic, and on this occasion it stretched to the extent of their saying that as the body of the buffalo was still warm he wasn't *quite* dead, and then they pointed triumphantly to some blood which trickled from the jugular veins!! The mahouts cut off as much of the flesh of the buffalo as they needed, and then after hoisting the dead tiger on to the pad of one of the beater elephants we turned towards camp.

In thinking over this affair afterwards, it struck me that the tiger must have seen the buffalo grazing alone in the long luxuriant grass which was close by the place where I had seen them face to face with each other, that he had unknown to the buffalo crept quietly behind the latter and then seized his hind leg suddenly. That the buffalo had by super-buffalo exertion shaken or kicked the tiger off and instantly turned round and faced the beast, and that it was when they were thus situated towards each other that I saw them, the poor buffalo having shaken or kicked off his assailant at the expense of a disabled leg. On my examining the wounded limb I found the bone completely smashed, and the flesh, muscles and tendons dreadfully lacerated. I found the skin over the buffalo's abdomen also much torn by the tiger's claws; this must have been done when he had hold of the

buffalo's brisket in his tremendous jaws. Why he had got hold of the brisket I cannot imagine, unless it was that in his hurry he had not been able to get at once to the throat.

He was a splendid large tiger and I gave his skin to the Hon'ble Ashley Eden. I kept the skull for sometime as it was extra large and had powerful solid tusks, but eventually I gave it to a friend. I had the skull and horns of the buffalo, too, for sometime, but was obliged to leave it at Julpigoree with a great many other trophies for want of carriage when I was transferred from the Dooars. I had no less than two cart-loads of rhino hides.

(To be continued.)

THE SHOOTING IN BHAGAL.

BY WANDERER.

TEN years had elapsed since I last had the pleasure of stalking the ibex in the glorious hills near Cashmere; and although always intending to go again, yet year by year something prevented carrying out my original plan, and it was only in the summer of the present year, that I again found myself near ground where ibex were to be found. My regiment was permanently located at Dhurmsala, in my opinion one of our prettiest hill stations; it must also have been in former years famous both for large and small game. But that indefatigable sportsman—the Gorkha—has sadly cut down the supply. They (the Gorkhas) are, however, such enthusiastic Nimrods that no one grudge them sport. I found my new station still deserved its old reputation, for in one or two short trips up into the hills, I killed the goral (Himalayan chamois) and saw both thar (wild goat) and black bear, as well as three kinds of pheasants, all within bugle shot of the cantonment. Ibex being, however, what I wanted, I inquired about the best ground to go to. Our inspection being completed I could not get away early, and Pangti, one of the best beats, was occupied before I left. I therefore had to content myself with Bhagal where I had the one advantage of being alone, as ibex were supposed to be so scarce as hardly to re-pay the labour of going to them, hence but few sportsmen troubled that part. The mountainous district of Bhagal forms a wedge between Chumbabot to the west and Kooloo on the east; to the north it is divided from Lahoul by two high dangerous Passes but little used, whilst to the south, the small districts of Bara Banso, and Chota Bhagal, separated by the high range of hills running east from Chumbabot, separate it from the Dhurmsala and Kangra country. For the sur-