

RECORDS OF SPORT IN ASSAM.

(Continued from page 804, Vol. I. of the *Oriental Sporting Magazine, New Series.*)

VARIOUS causes have prevented my continuing my records of sport in Burmah and Assam during the past two years, but having a little leisure now, I resume them, more to give information as to sporting localities than to trumpet forth any great amount of game killed, though like most men who have to search out the habitat of the wild beasts for themselves and are fond of sport, I have had, sometimes, good and at others, very indifferent luck. In Assam there are no native shikarees. The people, if not inimical to Europeans, are the next thing to it. The mouzadars are seldom resident within the limits of their mouzahs; they are principally Brahmins, who have had to pay heavily to some Court official for their appointment, and oppress the ryots in every way. They truckle to such officials as are connected with them, but to others they will render no assistance. So moving about the district is any thing but easy. The people will sell nothing without an order from the omnipotent mouzadar, and as he is seldom forthcoming, the traveller has to take sufficient food for his whole camp for the time he intends to be out; as coolies are not procurable, every thing has to be carried on elephants; none are procurable for hire, and but few are attached to each department. Thus a trip is dependant on the carriage procurable, and few of us are able to be out for more than fifteen days at a time, and have to travel over long distances, as we have to attend to our official work and have to get sport the best way we can, here and there, in a very irregular manner. The generality of elephants are also very unsteady. Thus the chances of sport in Assam are now-a-days far more unfavorable than they were some years back, but we hope for better times in the future.

My last record ended with March, 1868. In that year, after that date, I was out only once. We went to Kookooriah and stopped with Mr. Barry, a hospitable Tea-planter. His house is most favorably situated, it is on a small teelâh or hillock, overlooking an extensive marshy valley in which are to be seen at times herds of buffaloes, some rhinoceros, elephants, deer and occasionally the gyall. With a good glass, it is very interesting watching these beasts from the bungalow. We were out there in June, the grass was rather high, but in the open spots we could see buffaloes lying down. French, the Superintendent of Police, and I went out after them, and we killed two buffaloes, one charged me viciously, and though she got the full benefit of my heavy battery, she never swerved, but struck my elephant with her forehead, only inflicting no damage. The one French killed gave no trouble. The buffaloes here are particularly pugnacious, and I have seen more fighting ones here than elsewhere. The next day, we visited deserted tea-gardens some distance off and shot a vicious old bull-buffalo with only one horn. He tried to fight, but we were too strong for him.

The next day it rained a good deal, so Barry and I remained at home, looking on whilst Gordon and French went out. We could see every thing going on, perfectly distinctly; they killed between them, I think, 5 buffaloes, presently a huge bull stood at bay and charged French whose elephant bolted, nearly throwing his rider out of the howdah; the bull chased him for some 200 yards giving an occasional prod to remind the elephant to keep at his best pace. It was a most ludicrous sight to us lookers-on. French holding on like grim death, his elephant shrieking and bolting and the bull unpleasantly close in full chase, it would make a capital picture. The bull got off as he deserved. The next day we returned to Gowhatty. We saw deer feeding out in the open every morning and evening and took occasional pots at them from the bungalow but never hit. This Kookooriah is a very good place for sport, as it is a certain find for game of various sorts. This year a murrain broke out, and I saw four gyall lying dead, and missed two others alive right and left. Several buffaloes were also lying about dead. A few days ago Captain Jackson and Barry killed a splendid rhinoceros with a horn 13 inches long and weighing two seers and two chittacks, the finest I have seen in Assam; they also killed some buffaloes and wounded two rhinos. The garden is only about 16 miles from this and well worth a visit. There is very good snipe-shooting to be had near Gowhatty. The best plan is to send on your beaters and guns to the 5th mile stone on the Beltolah road and to drive out there about 11. The ground lies on the left hand side and if you hit off the right time, very decent bags can be made, the best time is about the middle of September to the 25th, but it depends a good deal on the season and the quantity of rain which has fallen.

Having work to do on the north bank, Barry, Butter and I left Gowhatty on the 16th January 1869; we had to visit out of the way localities and to verify or otherwise, reports made by native surveyors of the existence of enormous trees, one said to cover an area upwards of a square mile, and other phenomena difficult to credit. We arrived at Sumblepore, 36 miles from Gowhatty, on the 18th. Butter went straight, whilst Barry and I deviated off the road, and we shot a pea-fowl, a florikan and two black partridge. About 4 P. M., just as we were thinking of bathing, a cooly came running in, saying there was a bear feeding out in the open about 300 yards off. We each took a rifle and accompanied by a sub-overseer Subroodeen, a plucky and good sportsman, we sallied forth. On reaching the place where the bear was supposed to be, of course he was nowhere visible, but the cooly took us up to a clump of high grass and showed us marks which were undoubtedly those of a bear. We stood round this clump in disorder and with our rifles on the half cork, talking with each other and lamenting our bad luck in losing this beast, for though very plentiful in Assam and Burmah, I had not seen a bear for upwards of 15 years, nor had either of my companions killed any. Whilst we were thus talking, there was a movement in the grass, I stepped to the right, Barry a little behind me, Butter

to the left, and out walked a fair-sized bear within ten yards of me and looking up in my face like an idiot. In a moment she was lying in a heap howling, Barry and I fired nearly together and doubled her up. Another shot from me and two from Subroodeen did for her. She was a middling-sized brute, very old and emaciated, similar to the black bear of Central and Southern India, but not nearly so large. Had she charged us whilst we were unprepared, she might have damaged some of us, as it was, she had not a ghost of a chance. I was trying for the first time one of two rifles No. 10 bore lately imported by me from Lang, and lovely weapons they are too, central fire breach loaders, short in the barrels and carrying, without kicking, six drams of powder and both spherical, conical and shell bullets and are fit for a man to trust his life to.

January 19th.—We got off in good time to-day and made for the Demoo Nuddee across country. We soon put up five florikan, but it is useless trying to shoot them early in the morning as they are much too *hooshiar* then to get within shot of. A hare got up close to Butter, who was reading, so it escaped; I shot a black, which after lying on the ground some time, got up and ran away. I missed another black, so did Barry. We came across ducks, but could not get near them. We put up sundry pea-fowl, but they all escaped, as when they got up we were either reading or loaded with ball. Reading in a howdah is a horrid, bad habit to get into, and I have lost lots of shots by adopting it and must leave it off. We saw five hog-deer; and I bagged one. We got into that fearfully lumpy ground peculiar to Assam and Burmah over which it is almost impossible to take elephants; at all times, it is very cruel and unnecessarily hard work for the elephants. These lumps are caused by worms, and they are the curse of the country. Always avoid them if possible, seldom any game will be found in such ground. We got into heavy grass, and saw lots of marks of rhinos and buffaloes but not recent ones. We did not get to our camp till 3½ p. m.

January 20th.—Started for Derungah, saw only a few partridges. I bagged three. We also saw hog-deer, but got no easy shots at them, arrived at camp at 11 a. m. In the evening, Barry and I went out. We saw little or no game. He shot a partridge and I a hog-deer. The rascally mouzadar, not knowing I had a purwannah and a court-peon with me, refused us rations yesterday, but he appeared to-day, and was very humble, gave him a good blowing up and reported him to the Deputy Commissioner.

January 21st.—Started at half-past seven for Paka-Marah. These dooars, at some period not very long ago, must have been well cultivated and densely populated, judging by the irrigation channels met with; these are sometimes many miles in length cut to a great depth where necessary, with steep banks and about seven to eight feet broad, rendering it an impossibility in many parts for an elephant to cross over them, thus to-day we lost much time in searching for crossing places, we did not reach camp till 3 p. m. We saw a few marsh-deer, partridges and hog-deer *en route*. I shot two marsh-bucks, one hog-

deer and three partridges, but as the deer have no horns now it is almost a shame to shoot them, and I only did so for food for the camp. Paka-Marah had then two streams running past it, they are both (in 1870) dry now and the village is nearly deserted. There is also a field work here, which was thrown up and occupied by our troops during the late Bhootan War.

January 22nd.—Slight rain this morning. We got off about 8 o'clock *en route* for Kagrabarree, a village of importance and lately the headquarters of a portion of the Revenue Survey. We had scarcely gone a couple of miles when we put up a lot of florikan, but they were very wild, and would not let us get near them. At last one got out of a mustard-field, and Barry and I got off the elephants and followed on foot; but the bird kept getting up out of shot, and flying a hundred yards or so and then settling, I at last lost all patience and as a forlorn hope blazed at him as he got up about 80 yards off. To our astonishment he fell dead; on examination we found *one* shot had gone through his head! Further on we saw more florikan and duck, and I bagged one of each. Barry hit one hard but lost it.

January 23rd.—We had rain towards day-light and determined to halt here, and explore the big tree reported to exist by the native surveyors. We got off about 8 o'clock, and put up many florikan, but they objected to being shot, at last I killed one with a very long shot between 50 and 60 yards off. Certainly the Lang breech-loaders are perfect weapons, and if held straight will kill at very long distances. We could get neither rations, nor see the headmen who had all disappeared on our arrival, a systematic dodge to do us. Now, I see every cooly paid, and also give into the hands of the ryots, who bring rations, whatever they ask. It can't be on the score of insufficient payment or the wanting entirely thereof, that makes these villagers so reluctant to help travellers. I believe they are so fleeced by their headmen, that they have only sufficient grain left for their own consumption, and have none to spare. No officials in Assam travel out of the beaten track, and that only in a desultory sort of way, and so surrounded by native satellites that the ryots have no chance of appealing to the District Officers in person. A more unfortunate province than Assam I do not believe to exist in India, and until it is made independent, and has fresh blood imported into it, it cannot mend; at present everything and every body is in a chronic state of dissatisfaction and disgust.

January 24th.—We had great difficulty in finding our way; we could get no guides, however, we had maps, and steered our way direct, across country. We saw a lot of geese and coolen *en route* and I bagged a teal. We did not get to our camp till 2 p. m., and found the bheel, which was reported to be full of rhino, and buffaloes, a snare and a delusion; our servants lost their way and did not turn up till late.

(To be continued.)