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RECORDS OF SPORT IN ASSAM.

By J.P.

(Continued from page 313 of the *O. S. Magazine* for July 1874.)

April 15th, 1873.—Started in the Panjaub for Baiswah ghat. We had a gale last night, and the flat had to cast off, so we had to go off with our traps in boats. We got off at 7½ A.M. and got to within a mile of the ghât by 12. The Captain very kindly sent us his boats and we landed at the ghât at 1 P.M. Started for Burpettah at 2½ and got there at six: saw a deer *en route* and our servants came across a tiger. Barry accompanied us.

April 16th.—Busy all day getting traps ready for our trip. Found that the large tusker had an awful back, but Campbell kindly lent me his big Muknah. Barry on an elephant belonging to the Bignee Rajah.

April 17th.—Got off about 8 o'clock, Barry and I through the jungle, and our traps by the pathway. We saw several herds of Buffs, wounded three, but only bagged one. We saw several deer but got none; got to camp about two.

April 18th.—Started for Kador Ghooree, near Sonapilly, a hard day's work. I shot a buck hog-deer to begin with, and tied it behind my howdah. We then went on to within sight of Sonapilly without seeing a thing. The villagers, where we breakfasted, offered to show us lots of marsh-deer, so Barry and I separated. He went one way and shot five marsh-deer; I shot two. Near the place MacDonald and I were charged by five buffaloes without provocation on our parts. I saw a fine solitary bull buffalo. I fired my muzzle-loader at him and wounded him; he ran about 50 yards and pulled up in the open. The ground was as smooth as a bowling-green, and covered with feathery grass about 18 inches high. I did not take the trouble to reload, but went towards the buff, who stood facing me; when I got within 60 or 70 paces he shook his head and came straight at me. I was told the elephant I was of

was a perfectly staunch one, so I did not hurry myself to fire, when the beast was within some 20 paces I put up my rifle to fire. It was difficult to know where to aim, as the buff charged with his head well in the air, and his horns thrown back; whilst I hesitated, and just as I touched the trigger, the elephant spun round, the gun went off, and in one second the buff had his head down and closed with the elephant with the impetuosity of a steam engine. Just as he closed I had time to turn round and plant a shell in the small of its back, between the hip-joints, and down fell the buff, but in the scrimmage the hog-deer got loose and hung down the elephants hind quarter; he, thinking it was the buff driving it into him, got ungovernable, and bolted at least a mile before we could pull him up. I tried to haul the deer into the howdah, but having only one hand (as I had to hold on by the other, and the deer was a full-grown one), I could not manage it, and after a great deal of trouble I cut it loose. The buff picked himself up and followed a short way at a walk, looking the picture of all that was savage. I never saw a more splendid beast. The horns were not long but very thick, and his bulk enormous. At last we got the elephant round, and he went back with the greatest reluctance, ready to bolt from his own shadow. The ground was quite open all round except in a slight hollow where there was high grass enough to hide a buff. I knew the beast was too hard hit to have bolted, so made towards this cover, but the elephant as soon as he reached the place where he had been charged refused to budge an inch, and when driven to do so stood still and shook himself, and nearly sent both howdah myself and guns flying. So I had to do the best I could, and after peering about some time saw the buff standing broadside on, but looking very seedy. I gave him a couple of shells in the side; he at once charged; the hattee legged it, and nearly pitched me backwards off the howdah. The buff only charged for about 20 yards and then lay down, and I knew it was all up with him. But nothing would induce the elephant to go back; so I had reluctantly to leave him, and to trudge to our camp at least three miles off. We should have camped at my old place, Soonapilly, and not at Kadur Ghoorie, as all the game is found near the former place, so each day we had to go and come back three or four miles each way, uselessly tiring ourselves and our animals. On arrival at camp found Barry had got there some time before me.

April 19th.—We started early and saw heaps of jungle fowl, but as the village, an immense one, is Hindoo, and the jungle fowl live in and about it in a semi-wild, semi-tame state and act as scavengers, we would have nothing to say to them. On

arriving at the place where I had the fight yesterday, found the buff lying dead. He had never moved. He had knelt down on his fore-knees, his nose rested on the ground and his hind legs were doubled up under him; he looked for all the world as if he was kneeling down to receive a load. The breadth of his back was immense.

We separated, and I came across a rhino, but he would only give me long shots; he was badly hit, but he got across a river and into stuff where he was quite safe. In chasing him I saw two other rhinos, and presently heard Barry fire several shots. On reaching him, found he had killed one of the rhinos dead and wounded the other; this latter we followed up and killed. Neither animals had good horns. We saw fresh marks of elephants and numerous marks of buffs and rhinos. We lost a good deal of time in following up rhino, but the firing had evidently disturbed them, and they were *non est*. During the day Barry shot a hog-deer, a marsh-deer, and a partridge. I got a hog-deer only, and missed some very easy shots.

April 20th.—To-day we had bad luck. The shooting ground is too far from our camp. We saw heaps of marks of rhinos but could not come across the beasts themselves. I shot two black partridges right and left, then a pig, then a hog-deer, then a buck marsh-deer. Barry broke the leg of a marsh buck, but it gave us a long chase, and I am sure we fired at least 50 shots at it before we bagged it. I hunted for the rhino I hit yesterday, but could not find it.

April 21st.—We heard a tiger calling last night, went out early, moving camp to Kamabaree. We saw, soon after starting, a herd of about 30 buffs, but let them go; we then came upon four or five, and amongst them a very large bull, which we polished off. We then chased two rhinos for about three or four hours, but never got up to them—how they dodged us I can't think. I shot a hog-deer for the pot, and near Gatee, Barry came across a herd of buffs, and a cow with a calf threatening to charge him got killed. We reached camp at 2 P.M.

April 22nd.—Went out at 5 A.M. and had bad luck all day. We went at least five miles before coming on any fresh tracks of rhinos, and then we followed up through fearfully heavy jungle and never saw them after all. Not far from home, *en route* back, we saw a herd of buffs; two bulls who brought up the rear on seeing us, charged right down upon us from a distance of 300 yards; we remained perfectly quiet until the leading one was about 50 yards off, then we opened fire, killed one and badly hit the other, but it got away. I hit another buff, and though we followed up a long

way by the blood, the brute escaped. I hit a fine marsh buck with a shell, but it got away. Reached camp at 2½ P.M.

April 23rd.—Rain all last night and half of to-day; our huts flooded; nasty cold wet day. Did nothing; found our servants had been stealing our beer and wines, so counted and repacked everything: intend to move camp to Mattajaarie to-morrow.

April 24th.—Rain again last night; moved camp; got a dāk just as we were starting. We put up two fine marsh bucks and missed them both. We got on to fresh rhino tracks, and followed them up a long way, came upon four in very heavy grass. I could have had good shots had the elephant been steady, but he swerved just as I was about to fire, and all four escaped not even fired at. We shortly afterwards came upon another one, and hit it hard; on following it up came across another, and hit that, but they both got into heavy grass, and we over shot them: we went back and came upon the one we had first hit, and emptied all our guns into him, but he too got into the infernal grass jungle and escaped. Our camp being a long way off, we had to leave these animals and make the best of our way homewards.

April 25th.—Rain all night and early in the morning; we went out after breakfast, but trudged a long way without seeing anything, I then came upon one (*sic*) and had four good shots at him, but he got into tree jungle and escaped. We shortly afterwards came upon fresh tracks, and saw a rhino get up, but before I could get the gun up to the shoulder he disappeared into the heavy grass, but another one took his place; at this we both fired; it fell down but picked itself up and bolted: then another appeared, and this one got well peppered too, but that too bolted: in following up came across one dead—no signs of the other two. We took across counts and got into heavy grass and tree jungle, and after going a long way came across a rhino; my rifle missed fire, but Barry hit hard. We followed up and put the brute up four times, and hit hard each time, but it seemed to bear a charmed life; at last it got into very heavy jungle and I followed, whilst Barry stood on one side in the open. I came upon it, my right barrel missed fire and my left hit as the rhino charged savagely. My hattee bolted with the rhino at his heels, gnashing his teeth, and not above six inches off. The way my hattee hooked it, "was a caution to snakes, I guess." I got hold of my muzzle-loading Lang and made a lucky shot between the ears, dropping master rhino as dead as dead could be; another second and the elephant would have been badly cut. Got home rather late.

April 26th.—A dull threatening day, so we stayed in the hut till after breakfast, and then went after deer along the bed and

banks of the Manass. Barry shot three hog-deer, and I one hog-deer and one marsh-deer ; at the latter I made some very decent shooting. We saw rhino marks, but did not see the beasts.

April 27th.—We started pretty early this morning, and went through tree forest along the base of the hills. Marks of bison and bears plentiful ; we must have disturbed a herd of the former, as their scent was perceptible and their droppings quite fresh. We followed up two rhinos, but they had gone up the dry bed of a nullah, where we could not follow. We then went towards the plains, and came upon two rhinos and a buff in one mud-hole. Killed one rhino and hit the other badly ; we followed up but soon lost the tracks of our beast in that of numerous others. The whole place at times must be full of rhinos, but they have been so molested that at early morn they betake themselves to the tree jungle where they are quite safe from us. Presently we came near the spot where we had killed the first rhino on the 25th. The smell was so abominable that I kept to windward, and though passing within a few yards of it took no particular notice of it, until I heard Barry call out "Look out, tiger." I spun round in the howdah and had just time to see an animal bound from the rhino and make tracks ; he was going away straight from me tail on end. I had one of the heavy No. 10 rifles in hand, with heavy charges for rhino and a steel tipped bullet ; I took a snap shot and shot the tiger through the hip doubling him up and making him roar lustily. There was a deep nullah close at hand densely covered with long grass from 15 to 20 feet high ; into this the tiger crawled, and we knew not what to do : going into the nullah was absurd as we could not see a yard, and how to get the brute out we knew not. I would have given something for fireworks just then. However we trampled down the grass all round, the tiger snarling and pretending to charge us the while, until we had a pretty clear space. We then fired shot after shot to drive him out of his lair, but budge beyond a few feet he would not, and all our bathees were in a precious funk. At last a shell must have burst near his nose, for he partially ran up the opposite bank. We fired at the moving grass, and a lucky shell taking him behind the shoulder did for him. He turned out a fine male ten feet long. To drive this tiger and to kill him had taken us at least two hours ; had we had fireworks five minutes would have done it. We then breakfasted, and went along the base of numerous ghars, and came upon a good sized rhino ; killed him outright and afterwards hit another but lost it. The tiger was sitting on the carcass of the rhino eating away at the shoulder, whence we had removed the shield the day we killed it. If there were no other instances on record,

this one would be sufficient to prove that tigers are not particular in what they eat, and that the theory of their eating only what they themselves kill is a fallacy.

April 28th.—As it threatened to rain all the morning, we did not go out till the afternoon, and then along the dry bed of a portion of the Manass in one hour we shot seven hog-deer and one marsh-deer. I got five out of eight.

April 29th.—We were to make a move inland along the base of the hills, but gave it up at the last moment, as we could not get enough coolies to take our traps along, and all the people funk'd going where we wanted them to follow us. We, however, went some way through the forest along the foot of the hills, marks of bison and bears again most plentiful; we must have been close to them several times, but they hid themselves most effectually. Presently up jumped a herd of about 30 spotted deer, and amongst them some superb bucks. I called out to Barry, who was nearest to them, to fire, but as he did not, I took a shot at one of the bucks, but am sorry to say missed it. In one second they had scattered, and though we jumped off the elephant and tried to follow them, it was no use, and all we saw was an occasional glimpse of a spotted hide bounding along. Though I had shot a spotted deer near this last year, I thought it was one that had wandered from the other side of the Manass. I had no idea they were to be found in such numbers on this bank. What beautiful creatures the spotted deer or axis are, to be sure! We followed up the fresh track of a rhino; came upon it in a mud-hole at the edge of a ghar, and hit it four or five times, but it got into the entangled jungle and we could not go after it: we sent Soopur on a small pad elephant with one of my rifles, but though he saw it several times, the beast had enough life to keep out of shot, and soon got into such jungle that neither man on foot nor the small pad elephant could follow. In the open plain out of a mud-hole up jumped a huge buffalo with one horn only, but that one was an immense one; he meant mischief, but Barry broke the hind leg, and I one of the fore ones, so there was nothing for the poor devil but to stand still and glare us till a well placed shot laid it low. I never saw a bigger buff. It was a pity it only had one horn, had the head been perfect it would have been worth having; as it was we left it. Going homewards, near where we killed the tiger I came upon a rhino and gave it two shots; it ran 500 yards and then fell dead. Barry shot a hog-deer and hit a marsh-deer fairly in the shoulder, but he had not enough powder, and the ball did no great harm. We saw several other buffs, but they would not let us get within shot.

April 36th.—A blank day. We went round the way we came home yesterday, but the country had been disturbed too much and we saw no large game at all. I bagged a barking-deer, the first for some years past, and I also rolled over a buck sambur, but the cartridges were badly made; there was not enough penetration, and the poor brute though hard hit got away; we had no time to waste in following him up: all we saw during the day was one herd of buffs, and they were too chary to let us get within shot. We saw no spotted deer either.

May 1st.—Went straight to Dankagoun. I shot two hog-deer *en route*; got there at 12. In the evening Barry had a dance with two old women, and uncommonly well he got through his part too. I laughed till I cried. A good deal of rain about.

May 2nd.—Rain all night and throughout the day. I got on to a pad elephant, went straight into Burpettah, and got there by 12. Barry came on by easy marches.

May 3rd.—Barry came in, having shot a boar and three sucking pigs *en route*. I had to return to Gowhatty, so went off.

May 30th.—Got back to Burpettah for a few days and went out this morning with Barry; he had two good shots at marsh-deer but missed. It came on to pour with rain I never saw heavier in my life, so we turned homewards. I unloaded all my rifles and covered them over with waterproof. Barry came upon two or three buffs lying in a bheel and hit one—we took up the tracks, but as they led from home we left them. Scarcely had we gone 100 yards when a bull buff charged down on me; he missed me however, and as he passed I gave him a shot in the shoulder; he pulled up and my hathee spun round, giving him a most inviting charge, which he took advantage of. Down he came, but I put the contents of the left barrel into his neck, on which he pulled up, the hathee still continued to bolt. I seized the only rifle I had loaded, when down the buff came again. Down I dropped him again; he picked himself up and came at me once more—my last shot caught him in the neck and stopped him for one second, but the next he closed and sent my hathee flying; before I could reload he turned off and went very grogily into heavy grass jungle, into which my elephant would not follow alone, and my comrade would not back me up, so we had to leave this plucky brute, but although I never heard anything more of it, I fancy he could not have lived, as the four bullets he got from me at close quarters were all Forsyth's shells. I should have liked to have got the animal as he seemed to have very fine horns. He did not injure my elephant after all.

June 1st.—Hunted up the buffalo—saw heaps of blood where

he had been lying down, but did not find the beast, as I had fully expected. Got to Baiker and breakfasted there. In the evening Barry and Campbell went home by the road, I through the jungle followed rhino tracks but lost the beasts themselves; saw where they had been lying, but they had wandered away; came upon buffis and hit one, but my elephant right-about faced and bolted. I got a fine marsh buck just as it was dark; reached Burpettah at 8 P.M.

June 2nd.—Busy all day preparing for a start for the Manass, though it is rather late in the season to do so.

June 3rd.—Started for Baiker, got there at 3 P.M. Saw nothing *en route*.

June 4th.—Started about 9 A.M. after an early breakfast. Got to Dankagoun at 4 P.M., rain almost all the way; got a pea fowl only *en route*. Halt here, as the people report heaps of rhinos about.

June 5th.—Beat up to the Mairu Manass, heaps of fresh marks, but no rhinos, shot three marsh deer; saw some buffis but could not get near them. The whole country getting flooded.

June 6th.—Started for Matagoorie, fortunately took some tins and beer with me. I had to cross about a dozen rivers and a branch of the Manass itself, which I did with the greatest difficulty; all the streams full and every appearance of the monsoon having set in. Yet in 1867 I was in these very Dooars till 22nd June, and saw nothing like the present flood. I got to camp with one servant by the evening, but none of my other traps turned up till midday of the 7th.

June 7th.—I went over the old ground and soon came across a rhino, but no sooner was my elephant within 200 yards of it than it bolted through tree forest, and would not stop under half a mile. My *mahout* Sookur had warned me the beast was unsafe to ride, but I did not believe him. I again came upon another rhino and a similar bolt was the result. I got three hog-deer near camp, but as for shooting rhinos it was absurd, and I gave it up.

June 8th.—The branch of the Manass all but unfordable. I went into the churs and shot five hog-deer and one marsh-deer and one of the pigmy pigs, and I am very sorry now I did not preserve its skin and skeleton, as it is the only one I ever saw or killed. It is a perfect boar with well developed tusks but not larger than a sucking pig.

June 9th.—Found a stray boat, left in her at 8 A.M. and got to Burpettah at 8 P.M., rain all day and I had to sit in a pool of water all day. Thus ended my shooting trip in 1873.