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RECORDS OF SPORT IN ASSAM.

(Continued from page 503 of the Magazine for October 1873.)

REGARDING the Nga Boodein fish, which the Editors remark they were not aware were found in fresh water, having caught them in the sea off Chittagong, I beg to state that there are two distinct species of fish possessing the peculiarity of blowing themselves into a balloon shape, when taken out of the water. I caught heaps of both kinds in the fresh water streams of Burmah, and in the Bay of Bengal when constructing the Cocos Light House. The former are very small and bite terribly. A friend of mine had a portion of a certain part of his body bitten off by one of these fresh water fish, which are a pest to bathers. Those in the sea are very much larger and covered over with tubercles with spiney points. Many of them when inflated would have filled a moderately sized bucket. They had canine teeth, and bit readily at anything inserted into their mouths. Talking of fish, I caught several, whilst at the Cocos, that had regular hooks in their tails by which they could be suspended. What use these hooks could be to them I can't imagine; but there they were. We had a great variety of fish at the Cocos, the rock cod readily took a bait, but they were very tough. The mullets in the shallows afforded us great sport. We used trawl nets, but though we kept the upper portion of the nets a good four feet above the water, the fish used to rush at the net and jump right over it. I have often shot them in the air when in the act of so jumping. I have never seen the red mullet in the East, only the white. Once when having to make an enforced stay at Kyatzoo on the Sittang River, in company with a brother officer and his wife, being hard up for grub, I fed not only ourselves but the villagers with mullet. I used to shoot them by dozens. They come in with the tide in tens of thousands and used to congregate near the banks as thick as they could lie, with their eyes protruding out of the water. I used to be lie in wait for them and

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blaze into them with No. 8 shot, right and left. A whole lot of village boys acted as retrievers, so I seldom lost a fish. The fish when shot sank, but, as the water was shallow the slain were easily recovered. Within five or ten minutes, I again could have my left and right, and again bag from ten to twelve fine fish; and this I could continue whilst the tide was on the flow. These fish are good eating, but the fish that afforded us best sport and was on the whole the best eating, was the Nga Mein. They readily took a fly and often ran to 7 or 8 lbs.; they have few or no bones to speak of. Their flesh in color reminded me of haddocks. These fish are plentiful in Assam, but they do not seem to be appreciated, and few are to be met with for sale in the markets. In fact, Assam is a snare and a delusion as far as fish and prawns are concerned. Considering its immense rivers, the Brahmapooter and its affluents, good fish are wonderfully scarce; but the Assamese race is a peculiarly bad one, and one that excels in nothing, not even in catching fish for the market.

I now take up the records from the commencement of 1871.

I had often heard rumours of spotted deer being found in Assam, but as I had not come across any in my numerous explorations, I took advantage of having to go to the foot of the Bhootan Range to look at a locality where spotted deer had been seen and a few shot, but after all I was unsuccessful this trip, but afterwards shot one where I least expected to find one, on this side of the Mamos, not far from its banks. The ground I travelled over is not bad for general sport, so for the information of future sportsmen who may be stationed in Lower Assam, I append a short notice of our trip.

February 18th, 1871.—We had rain the early portion of the morning, but we crossed at 12 noon by boat and got to Herraparah at 8 P.M.; the distance only 21 miles, but the head winds were very strong, and our progress proportionately slow.

February 19th.—Busy on professional work all day, but in the evening I shot a few snipe and one jack snipe. These latter are very scarce in Assam. Thomas of the Police accompanied me. This vicinity is noted for florikan, partridge, buffaloes, deer, occasionally tigers, and every now and then rhino; but these are very scarce. All over Assam bears are very plentiful at night, but where they come from and where they go to in day time nobody knows, and they are seldom met with by sportsmen, but lots of villagers are mauled by them.

February 20th.—Marched to Hazoo, a very sacred spot, where Bhoteahs, Hindus, and even Mussulmen congregate to worship. The attraction, probably, consists in numerous gangs of dancing

girls, the only ones of their kind in Lower Assam. The few I have seen are very good looking, with good figures, dressing more like up country women, and supporting their figures much in the same way as do the Madras women. Like the generality of dancing girls, they are prostitutes, but are not known to visit Europeans, confining themselves to natives. They are supposed to live in villages composed of women alone, but I doubt the latter statement. We wandered through the village and up to the shrines, but saw no good-looking women nor any indications of their living alone. In fact the village differed in no way, as far as I could see, from other Assam hamlets. *En route* to our camp Thomas shot a teal, and missed a bird that looked to me very like a woodcock. I hunted everywhere for it, but could not flush it again. In the midst of the village there is an extensive canebrake. In this a tiger had killed a cow. We went after it, but could not find it, though there the kill was fresh enough. We went on to a *bheel*, about two miles off, and *en route* saw another kill but again could not find. In this *bheel* I shot ten ducks, and two birds very like ducks, differing in the bill only. The Assamese said these were far nicer to eat than duck, so we had them cooked, but I thought them abominable, though my comrade ate his with relish. On this *bheel* there were thousands and thousands of geese, but there was no getting at them. Thomas shot several ducks, but lost all but one, a shoveller. We got home by dark, and in the evening put up a lot of florikan, but they were too wild to shoot.

February 21st.—We had great difficulty in getting coolies to carry our traps. Had *kubber* of a fresh kill in the village, and thoroughly searched the canebrake, but failed to find the tiger or panther, but then it must have been somewhere, as the kill was quite fresh. We again hunted along the *bheel* where we killed the duck yesterday, and where we saw the kill and florikan, but found nothing. We did nothing but wade through *bheels* all day and saw thousands upon thousands of geese, duck, teal and waterfowl. At one *bheel*, I shot a teal and then a florikan. Further on we saw a lot of ducks, took advantage of a herd of cattle to stalk up to them, and with our four barrels knocked over eight ducks, three being pintail. During the remainder of the day we shot 6 or 8 more ducks and teal, and came across the tamest batch of wild geese I have yet seen; they allowed the villagers to fish within 20 yards of them. They did not seem to mind us either, but as we could not get at them without wading to our middles, we let them alone. We got to Kemblepore about 3 P.M. after a fatiguing march of about 15 miles.

February 22nd.—We beat over the ground where Baker and

Masters shot the tigers last year, but saw nothing, and as the elephants had had a hard day's work the day before, we gave them a rest.

February 23rd.—To Runjiah—9 miles, no shooting *en route*.

February 24th.—Marched to Jumblepore deviating off the road. About 2 miles from Rungiah there is an old fortified town, now, alas! in ruins. It is built in the Burmese fashion. High earthen ramparts, forming an oblong about 2 miles long by one mile broad. This was quite deserted when I first saw it in 1867, but now there are several villages within the enclosure, with a fine river meandering through its centre. Many parts of this old town are full of pea-fowl; and florikan, hog deer, and buffaloes are met with plentifully. Partridges in abundance. Going through this place, we came to a spot where there were no less than four fresh kills and very little jungle to hide the slayer, yet, though we beat about for 3 hours, we saw nothing. During the day I killed 6 black partridges, and Thomas 2 florikans and a hare.

February 25th.—To Doorga-Goung—10 miles. Saw a lot of florikan, but they were too wild to shoot. I shot three partridges, and had some half-a-dozen shots at marsh deer at easy distances, but missed every one. Three rivers pass within an easy distance of this place, they meet lower down and form the river which crosses the Renjiah road at 18 miles from Gowhatty.

February 26th.—Marched to Jargoan—went through frightful jungle full of pitfalls. We had a guide with us or might have come to grief. We saw very few hog deer. I killed one and wounded another; I also shot two hares and five black partridges and two marsh partridges. Saw lots of florikan, but could not get at them. I missed a hare. Got to camp at half-past eleven. Near the village there is a marshy, rudy, strip of land, and out of this bears come every night. Their marks were abundant, but we did not see the beasts themselves. I received a letter from D. who for many years was in charge of this subdivision. He writes a worst fist than I do, but as far as I can make out his instructions, here they are: "From Gaibaree go straight across country to Atasikhat Tea Garden, about 8 miles off; good hog deer shooting the whole way, and every chance of a tiger along the river beds; there is a bungalow here. Thence go to Benbari, good road, twelve miles. Bungalow. Thence beat straight up to Hatti Muttee Kochghar. If you go south of the Bonguron Ghar, you will get lots of marsh deer. Leaving Benbari, you will get to Hatti Muttee Kochghar by 2 P.M. Here there are spotted deer. This is on the Nonai river at its exit from the hills. No village here. Get hold of Mattie Mouzadar of Benbaree; he will be able to give a lot of information

and send shikarees with gun. In Jhargoan Mouzah on the Bor Nuddee there is good bird and hare shooting ; if you cross the river and go into Magi-Choochu you will get first rate hog deer and florikan shooting." My time not being my own, I was reluctantly compelled to give up this programme and to return to Gowhatty direct ; and shot *en route* only some 8 partridges, 3 hares, and 3 florikan. The portion of the Durrung district I went over was any thing but favorable for travelling on elephants, being a mass of hillocks formed by worms, and over which it is useless to go in search of game, as all four-footed animals avoid it, and small game is very seldom found in it. The Nonai and Bor Nuddee are fine streams and I believe good fishing is to be got at the foot of the hills where they emerge into the plains. I had work in the station till the 16th March, when I left for the west along the Trunk Road. I had ample to occupy me till the 24th, when we had a chase after a tiger on the chur opposite the station of Goalparah ! but the brute got away. We saw a few florikans and two deer, but got no shots. I moved on the afternoon to Ajeah towards Luckeepore.

March 25th.—Marched to Luckeepore and got there at 3 P.M. I shot a deer *en route* and wounded another, shot a lot of king curlews for the mahouts.

March 26th.—Busy all day paying contractors and others.

March 27th.—*En route* I shot a partridge.

March 28th.—Marched to the chur opposite Doobree. Just as we reached it we saw a line of 10 elephants advancing towards us. We went up to the line and found that a sporting Baboo from Malwa was out on a shooting trip. He had some fine elephants, principally borrowed from the Moorshedabad Rajah, and had beaten most of the churs from Bugwah and Singamaree to Doobree, and had bagged some 7 or 8 tigers, one they described as a very fighting one, charging prior to being shot at. I had 9 elephants with me, so we joined lines. The Baboo talked some English ; and had a large battery, but no two guns or rifles were of the same bore. He wore a pith helmet and was dressed in the new-going Bengal style, half Native, half English. Before we met the Baboo had seen one tiger, but had not got a shot at it ; our elephants kept good line and were only a few feet apart, but we beat through the whole length of the chur and started nothing but a few pig. The elephants did not trumpet even, or give notice of any thing in the shape of a tiger being about. When we got to the end of the chur, the Baboo shot a pig, and my companion Smart fired at another. We then reformed line and beat back. There came several immense pig in open rideable ground, and there seemed no cover for a tiger to hide in. The Baboo was

in the centre, Smart on the left, and I on the right. Seeing no prospect of big game, and being anxious to try the effects of a shell from the Express, I fired at a big pig and rolled it over, but it picked itself up and went off on three legs with the right shoulder broken. Our line was in capital order, and the elephants not more than ten feet apart, and apparently not enough cover to hide a hare, far less a tiger. But for all that a tiger had allowed the line to pass over him, and not an elephant had shown the slightest signs of fear; by the merest chance a mahout happened to look back, and saw the tiger sneaking away back and gave *khubber*. We faced right about, but instead of beating the animal up properly off went the Baboo and Smart in full chase; the line got broken, and every one appeared to hunt for himself. I yelled till I was hoarse and then gave it up. The Baboo and Smart fired some long shots, and imagined they hit once in the rump. Of course the tiger got away; no traces of him could be found, and when these two ardent sportsmen got tired and pulled up it took us half an hour to collect the elephants and to reform line, and as the heat was awful, directly we came to a piece of water every man and beast was busy drinking, bathing, and cooling themselves. I got tired of looking on, and going up the bank met a tiger face to face. As he turned to bolt, I gave him a shell in the side from the Express, and called out at once to form line, which after a while was done. The Baboo seemed sceptical of my having seen a tiger at all, far less of hitting it. We had not advanced 20 paces when the tiger staggered up quite stupidly to Smart, who put a couple of bullets into his head and he subsided. On measurement, as he lay dead, he measured 9 feet 4 inches, but a high, bulky brute. The Baboo wanted to claim it as the one he and Smart fired at, but even his own mahouts laughed at him, and he gave up his pretensions. Whilst we were padding this tiger one of my elephants, one just purchased, walked off and made for the hills, and we had to stop our shooting and go off full pelt in chase; fortunately, we cut it off from the hills and after 4 hours chase we captured it; its mahout had got off its back and left it to its fate, and although the beast had been in use two or three years, it at once tried to escape. One of our elephants, a dantal, had our breakfast on its back, its mahout found a brother of his with the Baboo's elephants, and quietly left us and followed the Baboo to his encampment in quite an opposite direction, taking our grub with him. After the capture of the elephant we did not reach our halting place till 3 P.M., and had nothing to eat till 4, the man with our breakfast turned up next morning and got well thrashed for his rascality.

March 29th—This morning we again visited the chur, but beat up to the Baboo's encampment at the furthest extremity without seeing anything. The Baboo himself had crossed over the river to visit the Guirachpore Rajah. We found after we had left him yesterday he had come across two tigers, and killed one, a tigress, dead with one ball. We also saw the skins of those he had killed before meeting us. We breakfasted near his camp and then beat back; after going about half way to the Telegraph Office, near the piece of water where I shot the tiger yesterday, I saw a tiger emerge out of the water and walk slowly along. I halted the line and gave him time to settle down. There was not much jungle so I knew he would not go far, we then proceeded to beat him up but though we kept close and had a capital line, and beat in circles, it must have been a good hour before we came upon him; at last, I saw the grass moving, and beckoning to Smart to come round with the line, we got the tiger well within a horse shoe, the open portion of the shoe, being free from jungle and quite open, so he had either to face it or charge down upon us. This latter he preferred to do and came down upon me; as he showed himself, I gave him both barrels from the Express (shells) and he fell under one of the most cowardly of our elephants who, however, did not move or show any signs of fear. It was some little time before the smoke cleared away, and before I could fire again the tiger picked himself up and broke through the line. I gave him a parting shot as he disappeared, but we never got him; the place was full of ruts and pretty heavy jungle, though not much of it. We beat about for a couple of hours round and round. All the surrounding space had been lately burst, so if the tiger had gone from the jungle he must have left foot-prints behind him, but though we searched carefully no such signs were visible, so I conclude he either skulked in the jungle or lay there dead. At all events, he was lost to us forever.

March 30th.—Marched to Chowe Kawah. After we had gone *en route* some two miles, some villagers came up and asked us to shoot a tiger which had killed three cows the evening before; so we turned back, found the kills, but had to go a good three miles out of our way to get to the place, and when we got there I despaired of finding any tiger in such a place, as it was a shaking bog, and a very unlikely place for a tiger to conceal himself; but there the kills were; and we proceeded to beat up the only strip of high land covered with jungle that we could see. It was impossible to take the elephants into the quagmire, so we beat through this strip, and had reached the very end without seeing anything and had given up all ideas of seeing a tiger, when the beast charged me out of the

very worst bit of the swamp. I don't know whether the beast meant to charge or whether it was curiosity on its part that made it show itself, but as she came towards us I opened fire. At first she spun round, but receiving another ball through the side, she charged right down upon us, but was received by such a volley that she had to retreat. We could not see her as soon as she re-entered the swamp, but fired at random, and after a while all was quiet. We know the tigress had not escaped, as we could see all round, but whether she was dead or lying in wait it was impossible to say, and though we took the gудdee off an elephant and tried to force it into the swamp, it could not go through the quagmire. We kept firing occasional shots where we had last seen any movements, but if the tigress was not dead she was determined to show no signs of life. At last we got long bamboos from the village and laid them down on the reeds in the swamp, forming a sort of floating bridge, and along this, though strongly against my wishes and even orders, a mahout ventured, beating the jungle down in front of him, and covered by our guns; and within a very short distance we had the pleasure of seeing a fine tigress lying dead half buried in the water and mud. A rope was passed to the plucky mahout, who tied it on to the dead animal, and one of my elephants dragged it with her trunk, hand over hand as it were, to shore; we padded her at once, and went on our way and got to our halting place about two. Found all our traps had gone to a wrong village and had to send for them. In the evening and early next day we beat about for two tigers who had been killing cattle in the vicinity, but could not find them at home, and having work to attend to elsewhere, I had to proceed to Goalparah next day. The tigress was 8 feet 6 inches long, young and beautifully marked. My next trip was in May, too late in Assam. It is the best month in Burmah, but the rains commence earlier in Assam, and the gad flies are awful, and enough to drive one mad. March and April, or even earlier, are much better months for sport in this part of the world.

(To be continued.)

TIGER SHOOTING.

BY DECCAN RANGER.

IT is long since I contributed towards helping to fill the pages of the *Oriental Sporting Review* with matter likely to interest subscribers to your publication. It is not, however, from disin-