

THE SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE.

Economical Travelling.—Although many English sportsmen spend a "cold weather" in India, returning "Home" rich in the possession of countless skins and horns, comparatively few men of moderate means have followed their example. They hear enviously of the bags made by their friends, of the tiger, leopard, bear, rhinoceros, "sambhur," various species of small deer, crocodiles, "ghural," panthers, "chikoor," black partridge, jungle cock, and game of all kinds, which await slaughter, but for one reason and another they never get beyond wishing that a similar experience had befallen them. Possibly the supposed expense has frightened them—in which case they are labouring under a delusion. For the man who is content to travel second class to Bombay need not spend very much on the journey; and if he is not particular as to whom his travelling companions are, he will effect considerable economy by going second class when patronising Indian railways. For the rest, while on the steamer he will have just as good a time socially as if he had "banged" the additional "saxpences" necessitated by the purchase of a first-class ticket. Numbers of men of good family who are returning to their regiments, or to their "civil" appointments, from leave, having no rupees to waste, are to be found in the second saloon.

while many of the first saloon passengers have little but their dollars to recommend them. That, at all events, is the impression which I formed after going out first class and returning second.

Value for Money.—It is true that the wealthy "globetrotter" does his level best to spoil sport for less well-to-do sportsmen—by overpaying the "shikharis" (native game trackers), whose business it is to locate big game. "Pagett, M.P.," may not mean to do so, but the fact remains that by bestowing a hundred rupees (£6 13s.) on the "shikhari" who has put him in the way of knocking over a tiger when a quarter of that sum would have proved ample, he scarcely can be said to encourage Ram Bux to work for, say, a native infantry subaltern, who has not a "pice" beyond his pay. In fact, in many "districts" the rich man who spends a month or two in India during the winter, and to whom money is little or no object, makes shooting impossible for the Anglo-Indian



Off to camp with the ibex.

in the northern provinces; indeed, the few days which I spent in camp with a friendly "assistant magistrate" in the Lucknow district are amongst my pleasantest recollections of India. The camp was pitched in a mango "tope" (grove), within five minutes' walk of a "jheel" (lake), which was alive with snipe; and a mile further away was another sheet of water upon whose limpid surface teal by the score tranquilly gobbled duckweed, and lazily preened themselves in the fierce Indian sun. At first the elusive snipe baffled all my efforts, and I made the poorest show imaginable; but when I had once learned the knack of firing sufficiently in advance, I managed to account for a fair number, most of which were converted into "snipe" paste by John, my excellent native factotum, who could turn his hand to anything—from cleaning a gun to making Turkish coffee, and from haranguing a lazy "coolie" to skinning a tiger. Had he been an orthodox Mahometan or Hindoo his religion would have prevented him from proving generally useful; but having succumbed to the influence of the good missionaries, he became a Christian, and thus enlarged his sphere of activity. During this never-to-be-forgotten visit, my host and I shot just one hundred couple of snipe, or to adopt the local vernacular, "is-snipe," and when the time came for saying good-bye, the total number of slain teal amounted to fifty brace. Every evening the greater part of the game was dispatched to friends in Lucknow, being conveyed by native runners, who, owing to their peculiar internal construction, can jog along at a shambling amble for several miles without requiring a rest. A few black partridge also were included in the bag; but as this tasteless bird is not worth eating, we only shot them as a test of marksmanship.

Fish Galore.—India, being a land of rivers, there is any amount of fishing to be had; while the "mahseer," a sort of salmon, which flourishes in the mountain streams at the foot of the Himalayas, affords excellent sport. In the rivers near Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, big fish are to be caught, but as they are suspected of fattening on the bodies of Hindoos, which, after being partly cremated, are pitched into the water, they find little favour with the European community. The salt-water fish, on the other hand, are esteemed a delicacy, and the fisherman who spends an hour or two off the coast is pretty certain to return with a well-filled basket. Curiously enough, though comparatively few natives—no matter how enlightened they may be—care for shooting, fishing, particularly the fresh-water variety, appeals to them. Motionless as statues, and as placid as patience on a monument, they squat with their haunches on their heels, watching the primitive little wooden float with lack-lustre eye, until finally they fall half-asleep, fathening without relaxing their grasp on the rod. If the "mutchiwallah" fishes for pleasure, he hands the catch to his cook; but if he seeks to benefit his pocket, he sells the fish to the local "bazaar" fishmonger. It should, by the way, be noted that most of the Indian fish being of poor flavour, they require manipulation at the hands of the "bowarchi" (cook) before they are served up for the white man's dinner.

Where the Riding Man comes in.—If the sportsman also is a horseman, he can have the time of his life in India, for though officers in British cavalry regiments, well-paid civilians, opulent commercial persons, and affluent barristers, keep up the price of horses and ponies in the larger "stations," in the smaller places—where no one is overburdened with rupees, one can hunt, play polo, pigstick,

and race, on a more or less restricted income. At Peshawar, for instance, I met a native cavalry subaltern whose pay, plus an allowance of £150 a year, enabled him to possess three polo ponies, to run a couple of nags at various race meetings, and to hunt with the local pack. In England his means scarcely would have paid his mess bill and subscriptions in the Hussar regiment in which he began soldiering. At Cawnpore I knew a married civilian whose pay—about £480 a year—made it possible for him to pigstick every Sunday morning, and to play a few "chuckers" three times a week. As to the indigo planters, living is so cheap, and they have so many perquisites in the way of stabling and fodder thrown in, that, in a way, they are better off than their fellow-sportsmen. They can play polo, race, hunt, and pigstick on an income which "at home" would do little more than keep them in decent comfort and perhaps allow for an occasional guinea mount with a pack of harriers. There also is the "gymkhana," in the programme of which various mounted events figure—and which is specially designed for the benefit of the sportsman whose keenness is less limited than his bank-balance.

The necessary "Back-pad."—In the main, the kit which serves one in England does duty in the "Shiney," as the troops term India. A thickly-wadded back-pad, however, is necessary, for the man who neglects to protect his spine from the penetrating rays of the sun, runs an uncommonly good chance of bringing his sporting career to a premature close. A wide-brimmed "sola topee" (sun hat) also is necessary.

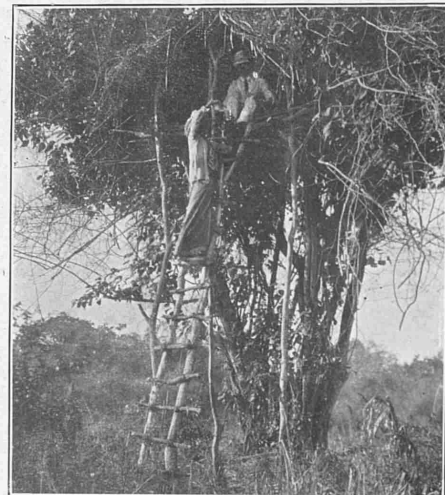
The Horrors of Hotel Life.—As to hotels, even the best of them are so bad that the traveller who has the good luck to be put up by friends, or to be made an honorary member of a residential club, is to be congratulated. When, however, he finds himself "up country," he will be independent of hotels, for unpretentious "dak bungalows" (rest houses) take their



Pig-sticking.—"A sow!" Giving the signal to stop the rest of the party.

with a short purse; the "shikharis," preferring to reserve the best beats for the "Sahib" from England, simply refuse to put less favoured sportsmen on to a good thing. Luckily, there is a way out of the difficulty. The "shikhari," like every other native, goes in mortal dread of members of the Indian Civil Service; he trembles at the "collector's" frown just as the all-powerful official's smile will raise him to the seventh heaven of happiness. Consequently, if the new arrival brings with him a few letters of introduction, which in turn procure him the very desirable acquaintance of officials, he will be in clover. For Anglo-Indians, being famed for their hospitality and good nature, make a point of passing him on—from "station" to "station," and from bungalow to bungalow, while they impress upon the "shikharis" in their district the necessity for treating the visitor with the same consideration that he would receive were he a millionaire. In this way the man who is prepared to spend a modest sum on the tracker who enables him to bowl over a tiger, or a leopard, may enjoy almost as good sport as though he had command of unlimited capital. Personally, my first tiger cost me sixty rupees, the equivalent of £4; but my second day in the jungle was spent in the society of a "shikhari" who, in return for half this sum, found it desirable to put me in the way of bagging a tiger, two leopards, and a "sambhur."

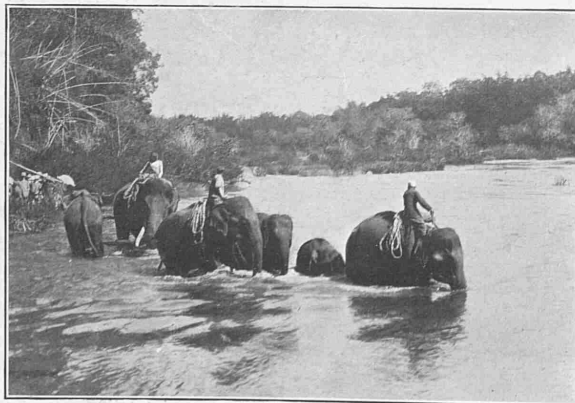
Far Afield.—The sportsman who would shoot every kind of game in India will have to travel. During my stay of four months I had to go as far afield as the Himalayas in search of bear; jungle-cock flourish on the higher slopes; I laid low half a dozen "ghural" (mountain goat) near the eternal snows, and on the way "below"—as the plains are known—I managed to account for a couple of rhinoceroses in the Duars, a tract of country at the foot of the mountains. Black buck, "cheetul," antelope, and other kinds of small deer, are the chief attraction of Oudh; crocodiles conveniently disport themselves on the banks of the River Hooghley, some miles from Calcutta, and during a week's "chikoor" (Indian grouse) shooting, a few "marches" from Simla, I was lucky enough to bring down twenty and a half brace, which, considering the scarcity of the birds and the extreme difficulty of getting within range, was not so bad. Snipe and teal are to be found in their myriads, particularly



A look-out station near the stockade during the capture of wild elephants.

place. The native cook, with the aid of tinned provisions, which the sportsman should carry with him, fresh fruit, a murgi (fowl), and a little curry powder, and freshly-ground spices, can be depended upon to prepare an eatable meal; and if the furniture is on its last legs, the table cloth as coarse as a nutmeg-grater, and the distemper dropping from the walls, it may, at least, be claimed for the "dak bungalow" that it is an improvement on many hotels. That, at all events, was my experience, and on comparing notes with other "globetrotters," I found that my opinion is a general one. Indeed, I only once experienced real discomfort, for my bedding (in India it is customary to take sheets, pillow-case, blankets, mattress, and a pillow wherever one goes) was stolen by the black luggage clerk of the station at which I landed, tired and hungry, one night after a detestable two days' journey over a singularly ill-run railway system. There being nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job, I did what I could with a pillow of vests, a mattress of flannel shirts, and a blanket consisting of an ulster, a mackintosh, and a couple of rugs. I may add—for the benefit of the intending traveller—that my impedimenta also included a medicine chest, in case, like Molly Malone, I "tuck ill of a fever," a small filter, and a supply of cigars of a brand not procurable in India!

The Climate.—From the middle of October till the end of February the climate is more or less delightful—like an English spring, and the sportsman who is feeling "fit" can easily hold out till the middle of April, without feeling the heat to a very alarming extent. The "hot weather," which lasts without a break till late in September, is singularly devilish; and the tropical rain storms, which engulf vast tracts of land, and swell the rivers to ten times their natural size, are responsible for increased heat and wholesale attacks of intermittent fever. Luckily, the man who comes to India on sport intent is independent of sun and water. By arriving late in October, and leaving early in March, he avoids the evils to which the Anglo-Indian flesh is heir. GEORGE CECIL.



Fording a stream.