

## NORTH ASSAM AS A SHOOTING GROUND.

WHETHER the endeavour made by an Assam correspondent of the Calcutta *Asian* to attract those in quest of big game to the eastern province of India will succeed we cannot say, but the bill of fare presented is by no means a despicable one, and though elephants—bar rogues—are exempted, rhinos, wild cattle, both buffalo and metna, together with the lordly samthur, swamp, ravine, axis, and smaller deer, not to mention the big and small carnivori, reads tempting enough. It is true the sportsman need not look for the record bags in point of numbers that Uganda and such like out-of-the-world fields furnish, but as for snipe and general trophies the Brahmaputra valley, all along the terai of its surrounding mountains, presents shooting grounds that should satisfy the most ardent devotee of the rifle, fowling piece, or rod, at the same time in no case would the hunter be out of touch with civilisation. The annual shoot given by his Highness of Cooch Behar, and moderate though diversified assortment of game secured, evidence sufficiently what the untrodden wilds of Assam can furnish, for the site to which operations are confined in the above case is limited to a small portion of that indefatigable sportsman's domain abutting on the Goalpara district, perhaps at the outside measuring 300 square miles. The adjacent jungles, extending for 400 miles to the eastward under the northern hills, averaging perhaps a depth of between thirty to forty, crossed here and there by the mountain streams flowing from Bhutan and the outer Himalayas, and tenanted by the animals above enumerated in such numbers that the forest officers and such prospectors who have ventured within these recesses are chary of dwelling upon their experiences for fear of being classed as Munchausens. It used to be said of visitors to Assam, ere the advent of the tea planters, that you could never believe a man who had once passed the Dhirbir Rocks. Although unexaggerated detailed information is difficult to obtain, the hillmen who come down in the cold weather relate wonderful stories of chance encounters when traversing this wilderness, and the pioneer planters who have established themselves on its outskirts can in a great measure corroborate these narratives. The mere fact of these visitors from the north never travelling through this uninhabited country except in gangs, lends colour to their stories. Not very many years back the Goalpara bazaar was one day cleared by a wild buffalo, and eight miles north of this station, where the forest proper may be said to commence, these animals still abound; the camp, however, for all-round shooting, whether on foot or from elephant, should be pitched well up the Manasa river, not too close to the jungle, as there are a good number of elephants about, and these beasts are unpleasantly inquisitive at night, while even during the day where dense shade abounds on the banks, it is difficult for the novice to distinguish them from the slate-coloured boulders strewn about, as one venturesome district officer experienced who walked up to a cow, not discovering his mistake till a sweep of the hind leg sent him flying into a deep pool in the stream. However, provided with one of the canvas boats painted the colour of the rocks, the cautious hunter can work the banks of this river without undue danger, for though deer, tiger, and lesser animals make no noise when disturbed, when in doubt about the presence of a pachyderm one has but to stop for a minute or two, when the flapping of the ears, which the animal cannot suppress, will betray his whereabouts. Rhino need not be looked for in the immediate neighbourhood of the stream, for it is too clean for their mud-loving habits, but wherever it is feasible to follow up a dirty creek and high grass jungle lines the banks they may be found; buffaloes are betrayed by the circular wallows they make in swampy ground, and are best secured on moonlight nights, for during the day they either lie in the said wallows with merely the snouts above the oozy slush, or retire far up to the forest. Buffaloes, when lying in the mud in the open, are difficult to spot during the day, and though it is always foolhardy to cross open spaces on foot where their presence is indicated, several instances have been recorded by sportsmen after snipe suddenly rousing these beasts in unexpected places. If close to forest you are pretty safe, but some years ago a Mr. White was killed by a bull he had disturbed, though in true jungle. One should never be in a hurry to fire on buffalo even if miles from habitations, as from the domesticated ones' propensities for roaming, and the custom many villagers have of purposely driving their tame cows into the haunts of the wild ones to be served by the bulls, you may chance on getting up to your querry to find a cane or iron ring in the nose, which *contretemps* will cost you at least fifty rupees. Pure wild buffaloes invariably give the yek! yek! when roused, the tame one rarely doing so; but if your attendant shikari is a reliable man, there is not much fear of a mistake, much as the domestic and jungly animals resemble one another. Cows in the winter, having calves at foot, are much more aggressive than bulls, and will resent intrusion by a headlong charge without other provocation than one's appearance; this, no doubt, is due to the novel sight of European dress, for the almost nude native, though keeping a wary distance, can frequently pass

unheeded even across an open swamp. The metna is pretty plentiful up the Manasa, generally remaining near the water for the sake of the more delicate herbage to be found between the rocks. No mistake can occur here, for both sexes are double the size of the ordinary cattle, of a deep chocolate colour with black stripe down the back and no dewlap; besides, village cattle are not driven either up the river or into the forest, as the higher you get up the one, or deeper into the glades of the other, deer become abundant and *per se* tiger and leopard. A great deal has been written about the danger of tiger shooting on foot, but the prospector or surveyor has no alternative, his work taking him up narrow watercourses or through devious jungle paths, and though Stripes, being well fed hereabouts, as bones and occasional masks found bleaching on the ground testify, will generally get out of the way, sudden rencontres do occur mostly with males at this season. If the brute faces and your weapon is a heavy bone smasher, the chest is the best mark, but as soon as you let drive a jump to one side is advisable, for though shot through the heart, as with all the cat tribe, post-mortem muscular action may, as has been recorded, bring him down on you, broadside on; the smashing of the shoulder at the junction of the spine should be the aim; this cripples him at once, and though the roars and struggles are apt to appal one at a first kill the *coup de grace* can be given at leisure: should, as in nine cases out of ten, the tiger turn tail, the back of the skull presents the best shot, or if that is too fine a bead for you to draw upon, the spine at junction of the fore or hind legs does the business. Deer call for little remark, the shoulder or chest being usually presented; samthur when roused among rocks are sometimes difficult to floor on account of their colour resembling surroundings, but the short tail is always in action when the creatures bolt, and the white lining should seal its doom; the stag's horns, though mostly in velvet in the winter, reveal him. The swamp deer lie close, but their bright buff hue makes them easily distinguishable; the spots on the axis are in your favour, but the ravine and the little moose deer are great dodgers, requiring snap-shooting. Rhino, though sometimes come upon in unexpected places, usually require tracking, and though much has been made of the toughness of the hide, if the beast can be made to turn its head and so tighten and smooth out the folds of the neck skin, a mortal wound can be given. As a general rule the rhino is secured by bleeding to death from several hits, but one was shot dead with an old smooth-bore musket in the Teypur district, much to the amazement of the native hunters. The ball entered the mouth, glancing off the molars up into the brain. The above lines, though chiefly based upon operations in the vicinity of but one of the northern Assam rivers, apply equally to all. Get as far from the haunts of man as is compatible with civilised needs, use nothing but heavy weapons, and for three months of the year you may enjoy as fine an outing among big game in the Brahmaputra valley for about £4 per diem as you will in Central Africa or other belauded localities.

O. W. (CALCUTTA).

## BOOKS RECEIVED.

The Opportunist. By G. E. Mitton. (Adam and Charles Black, 6s.)  
 Newspaper Press Directory, 1902. (C. Mitchell and Co., 2s.)  
 General Stud Book. First supplement to Vol. XIX. (Weatherby and Son, post free, 6s.)  
 The Gaffer's Guide and Official Handbook for Scotland, 1901-1902. (John M'Murtrie, Glasgow.)

The following is the cast of the new Savoy opera, *Merric England*, by Basil Hood and Edward Carran, which it is proposed to produce about March 19th:—Earl of Essex, Mr. H. A. Lytton; Sir Walter Raleigh, Mr. Robert Evelt; Wilkins (a player in Shakespeare's company), Mr. Walter Passmore; Simkins (another player), Mr. Mark Kinghorne; Long Tom and Big Ben (Royal Foresters), Mr. C. Torrence and Mr. R. Crompton; a Butcher, Mr. Powis Pinder; a Baker, Mr. J. Boddy; a Thinker, Mr. Rudolf Lewis; a Tailor, Mr. R. Rous; a Lord, Mr. C. Childerstone; the Queen's Fool, Mr. George Mudie, jun.; a Royal Page, Master L. Emery; Queen Elizabeth, Miss Rosina Brandram; Miss Bessie Throckmorton, Miss Agnes Fraser; "Jill-all-Alone," Miss Louie Pounds; Queen of the May, Miss Joan Kiddis; Kate, Miss A. Coleman; Lady-in-Waiting, Miss R. Rosslyn.

MESSRS. GEO. WRIGHT & CO., Westminster Bridge-road, have been favoured with an order from the Sultan of Morocco for one of their beautiful carved tables which took a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition, 1900-1. This is the firm's third order in two years from the Sultan. Messrs. Wright inform us that they have made extensive alterations at the Argyll Hall for the forthcoming match between Dawson and Stevenson which commences on March 3rd. The Hall has been thoroughly renovated, and seating accommodation provided for another 100.

HIS MAJESTY THE KING has just desired that a copy be sent to him of Mr. R. M. Sillard's book, "Barry Sullivan and his Contemporaries," recently published by Mr. Fisher Unwin, London.

OUR portraits from *A Country Girl* on page 938 are from photographs as follows:—Mr. Huntley Wright by Bassano, Old Bond-street; Miss Topsy Sinden by the Biograph Studio, Regent-street; Mr. Willie Warde, Miss Beryl Faber, Miss Evie Greene (central figure), by Geo. Garet-Charles, Acacia-road; and the remainder by Ellis and Walery, Baker-street.

THE "RIEFERER" C.D.F. CONCERT.—Many of London's leading music-hall and theatrical artists have given their services in aid of the *Referee* Children's Dinner Fund Concert, which takes place at the Camberwell Palace of Varieties next Sunday evening. Last year a similar concert realised nearly £100, which was handed to the good cause, and it was voted one of the best concerts of the season. Seats may now be booked at the hall. Mr. E. E. Giles, late manager, and an enthusiastic band of helpers are working practically night and day with a view of making this concert as successful as its predecessor, and it is hoped the public will give them the support they deserve.

THE NATIONAL ANIMALS HOSPITAL: A CORONATION GIFT.—The poor animals are not to be forgotten in the midst of all that is being done to mark the Coronation of King Edward VII. Whilst so many endeavours are being made to alleviate the sufferings of human beings, that Society for the encouragement of kindness to animals, "Our Dumb Friends' League," is making an extra effort on behalf of the suffering animal creation. A few days ago an appeal was made on behalf of its fund for the foundation of a National Animals Hospital, and in response a large sum of money has been promised to Mr. Coke on the condition that he obtain the sum of £5,000 by the day of the Coronation. The need for such an institution as the proposed hospital is so urgent that every possible effort is being made by him to raise the required sum. The scheme is a national one, and no more fitting time than the Coronation could be chosen for the establishment of such an institution, which has never yet existed in this greatest city of the world. All who love animals will therefore surely do their utmost to assist Mr. Coke in raising the requisite amount, and donations should be forwarded immediately to him at 29 Buckingham Palace-road, S.W., and all contributions will be most gratefully accepted and acknowledged. The time is short, but a few large amounts such as that already promised would soon enable this most worthy scheme to be carried out. About £10 in small contributions has already been received.

THE Northern Counties Cross-Country Association embarked on too much of a good thing on Saturday. They ran two long-journey championships at different distances in one day. The same sort of thing has, of course, been done before, both in and out of London; but has invariably proved to be more than the "enough" which is proverbially equivalent to a feast. In this year's Northern Junior Championship twenty-six clubs competed; and of these the Darlington Harriers proved doubly successful, as they also supplied in G. Butterfield the first man home. Chief interest, however, attached to the Senior event, although the competing clubs were only about half the number of those figuring in the Junior race. Unfortunately, before the event was over darkness had set in. Still, a grand finish ensued, for S. J. Robinson, of the Salford Harriers, although beating the field, only managed to finish thirty yards ahead of his nearest opponent, J. Hosker, of the Farnworth Harriers—a runner who has twice taken Northern Championship honours. As generally expected, the Salford Harriers easily won. Their score was 59 points to 82 by the Crewe Harriers, who won last year. Leeds Athletic Club with 91 points finished third.

WATERLOO COURSING MEETING, 1902.—The Committee wishes it to be generally known that the use of stools, ladders, boxes, coloured umbrellas, &c., is strictly prohibited. It is also intended, as far as possible, to prevent noise, especially that connected with betting, which interferes with the comfort of the spectators and the satisfactory progress of the sport, and the public are requested to co-operate in carrying this into effect. The arrangements previously made as to pickpockets and welsers will be continued. The authorised card (giving permission to come upon the Earl of Sefton's land), which will have the hon. sec.'s signature (in full) on back and front, will be sold on the ground by the Committee's staff of card-sellers, at W. H. Smith and Sons' bookstalls at the Central, Exchange, and Lime Street Stations, Liverpool; also, at Southport and Manchester.

BATH AND WEST AND SOUTHERN COUNTIES SOCIETY.—This old-established Society will this year hold its annual exhibition at Plymouth from May 27th to May 31st. The money prizes for stock, produce, &c., amount to £3,296, in addition to medals and plate. There will also be a large display of implements, machinery and articles of general utility, an exhibition of art manufactures, horticultural and poultry shows, butter-making, milking, shearing and shoeing competitions, and performances by a military band. Entry forms, regulations, &c., can be obtained of the Secretary (Mr. Thos. F. Plover, Bath), to whom application should be made at once. Further particulars will be found in our advertisement columns.