

THIRTEEN YEARS AMONG
THE WILD BEASTS
OF INDIA

THEIR HAUNTS AND HABITS FROM PERSONAL
OBSERVATION; WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE
MODES OF CAPTURING AND TAMING ELEPHANTS

BY

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OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE GOVERNMENT ELEPHANT CATCHING
ESTABLISHMENT IN MYSORE

SEVENTH EDITION

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS

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31 GEORGE IV. BRIDGE

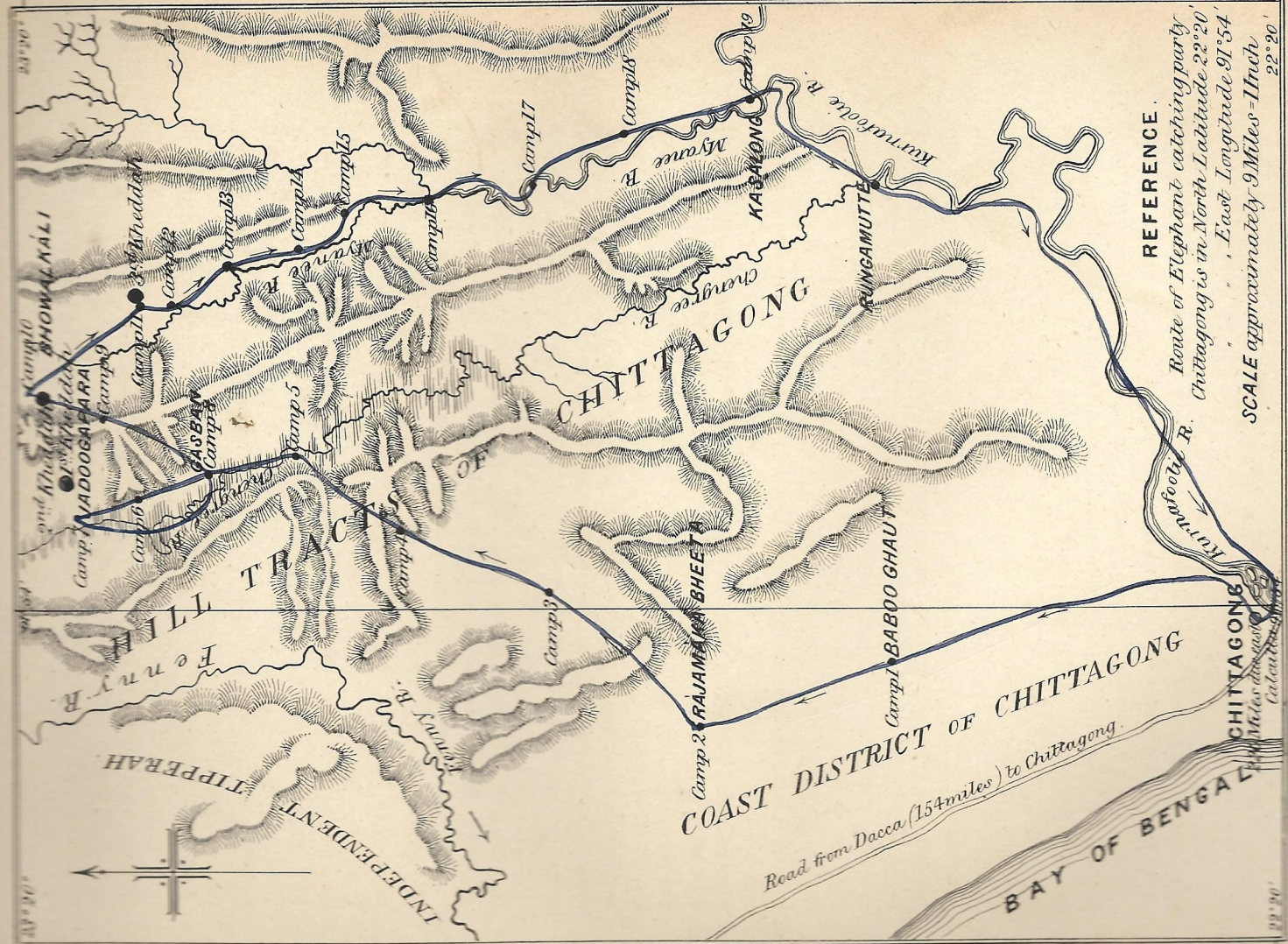
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COMMISSARIAT ARRANGEMENTS.

tacles to be encountered in so wild a country. The head-men in there before, but no European, as the former Kheddah Superintendent went beyond Rungamuttea, the most advanced civilised that direction. As to the maps available, the chief points and of the country only had been settled by triangulation. Regarding it was stated, "Nearly all the hills in this district are covered with a dense jungle; the subordinate streams and hill-features have been sketched."

determined to explore the country in person, as the chance of a new field is one seldom to be had nowadays, and is certainly to be neglected; and the inability to obtain any exact account of the country before us added considerably to the pleasure of the expedition in every point of view. All accounts agreed as to the Chengree and the difficulties of access to small dug-out boats nearly to their sources, and on hundred miles from Chittagong following their courses; and on of transit I arranged our provisioning. The boats, or canoes, conveying the rice, salt fish, &c., required for the people, were procured at Chittagong, and carried about seven hundredweights each. They were filled with water when loaded, and could be dragged over shallow streams conveniently. I engaged sixty, with three men to man each boat and crew *per mensem*, and free rations to the boatsmen proceeded up the Kurnafolie to Rungamuttea, the depot station. I visited this place, making a pleasant trip in a steamer obligingly placed at my disposal by the Commissioner, and arranged a depot there, and had it stocked with two hundredweight of provisions. I placed this under a European named Wilson, a clerk of the name, and carried out the very arduous duty of keeping the depot provisioned, and maintaining communications, most satisfactorily. The amount of provisions required for the two kheddah parties and tame attendants was a little over seventeen hundredweights *per diem*, and the commissariat arrangements required no little attention and

to Jourdava did not recommend that the hunting parties should be sent to their ground by the same course as the stores—the rivers—but that we should march across the hills from Chittagong until we reached the Chengree, where one party might await the arrival of boats from the Myanoo valley, and work in the valley of the Chengree, whilst the other party, which was to be similarly supplied by boats from the Myanoo. Having ascertained that a place called Rajamaka-



REFERENCE.
Route of Elephant catching party
Chittagong is in North Latitude 22° 20'
East Longitude 91° 54'
SCALE approximately 9 Miles = 1 Inch

hills of the higher ranges of the Billiga-runguns, my tranquillity was disturbed by seeing his reverence with his coat off, dragging an elephant's ear in one hand, whilst he carried three feet of its trunk over his shoulder, across the plain towards his tents! This was maddening! I felt that I met him at a serious disadvantage, and I am afraid I approached his lowly tenement in a wrong spirit; it had to be such an extremely humble one, as I had nothing to set off against his tusker!

However, I found him as pleasant a companion as he was a keen sportsman. He was chaplain to the Madras Railway Company, his duty being to visit the various employees at stations along the line where there were no facilities for public worship. My wicked feelings regarding the elephant vanished in his genial society; and when I learnt some time afterwards of the disasters which followed his trip—of his having got severe jungle-fever, the effects of the damp encampment he had chosen at Poonjoor; and that, when on a trip to the Neilgherries to dispel its effects, he had got married, and had been obliged to sell off his battery,—I felt none of the delight which I am afraid I might have experienced at Poonjoor could I have contemplated his future reduced condition.

The narrowest escape I ever had in elephant-shooting happened more than a thousand miles from the scene of the above adventures. It occurred in the Garrow hills, whilst I was in temporary charge of the Elephant Kheddah Establishment in Bengal in 1875-76. Before relating it I will venture to give a short account of these hills, as they are practically a *terra incognita*, even to Europeans in India, not a hundred of whom have ever visited them. The duty which led me into the hills was a prospecting expedition for the elephant-catching establishment. I had with me nine elephants for travelling. The large number in the stud at Dacca enabled me to select good ones, with which I was able to move comfortably and fast.

The Garrow hills are situated on the north-eastern frontier of Bengal, and are bounded by Nepaul on the north, and Assam on the east. They are some 4000 square miles in extent, or four times the area of the Neilgherries. They have only been subject to British rule since 1868; prior to this they were independent and unexplored territory. The lawlessness of the Garrows, who made raids into the low country of Bengal from time to time, eventually necessitated their being placed under supervision. For this purpose an armed police force entered the hills in 1868, and established the present small hill-station of Tura. The hills are now under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. A deputy commissioner, police officer, and surgeon reside at Tura, which boasts of three wooden bungalows, a rough-and-ready style of jail for peccant Garrows, and a compact block of police huts. It

has water "laid on" from the hills above, and neatly-cut walks and rides through the woods near.

Until 1870 this distant abode of the British Lion was defended by a stockade, the palisades bristling with sharp fire-hardened bamboos, whilst the neighbourhood was pleasantly *panjied*. The uninitiated may imagine that this *panjieving* is some ornamental arrangement of the grounds, so I must explain that *panjies* are not a device for the attraction, but for the discouragement, of visitors. They consist of bamboo spikes driven into the ground, almost level with the surface, the earth being scraped away round each so as to form a cup. Hundreds of these are laid in every direction; grass, falling leaves, &c., soon hide them; and if trodden upon they inflict fearful wounds. A place strongly *panjied* is quite safe against night attack or general assault, and can only be approached by a person knowing the locality, or after the *panjies* shall have been disposed of in detail.

The Garrow people are not tall, but are well built, and both men and women have open, good-natured countenances. They are warlike and constantly at variance amongst themselves, feuds between different villages being kept up for many years. They have a passion for human heads, and are in the habit of decapitating their enemies. When a village has possessed itself of the head of a member of another, there is no peace between the two communities until the loss has been adjusted by a head from the original offenders. Open fighting is not resorted to so much as stealth. For this reason Garrows seldom venture abroad but in well-armed parties. They believe that a decapitated person cannot be at peace in the next world until they have got another head for him from amongst his murderers. Consequently a sacred obligation rests upon his friends to procure him one. It may be soon, or not for years, but it must be got in the end. When a long interval of time intervenes, they are accustomed to say that their friend in the next world will have a "very long neck!" Much has been done by the British Government since taking over the hills to put a stop to this practice, and it is now only in vogue in villages distant from Tura, and which are still little influenced by British power. I learnt from Captain Williamson, the Deputy Commissioner at Tura, that if the skulls collected by contending villagers be destroyed, the feud must, by the Garrows' usages, cease, and that he had had an immense number burnt at Tura in presence of the parties interested, though there was no doubt they were but a small portion of the heads still in the possession of the Garrows.

For dress the men wear a strip of cloth round their loins, and the women merely a band of cloth about a foot in width and just long enough to meet round the hips, where it is knotted by the upper corners on the right-hand

side. This perilous species of petticoat is occasionally weighted by the punctilious with four or five rows of beads along the lower hem. The women are well made, and one or two of the younger ones I saw were decidedly pretty. They wear large bunches of brass rings, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, in their ears; this gives a stiff carriage to the head. One beauty, who permitted me to count her ornaments, had thirty-two rings in each ear. I weighed some spare ones; they were sixteen to the pound. The lobes of their ears were distended in consequence, though the weight is partly sustained by a string across the head. The holes through their ears are frequently large enough to admit of three fingers being inserted together, and one fair one had the lobe of one ear torn through; this, strange to say, is considered a point of beauty amongst them. What tortures will not the softer sex all the world over inflict upon themselves in gratification of their vanity! Agonies from which strong men would recoil are nothing to them.

The jungles in the Garrow hills differ widely in character from anything to be seen in the south of India. There is a scarcity of heavy timber, owing to immemorial *joom* or *dhaya* cultivation (the felling of heavy forest and sowing for one or two seasons); consequently, in the absence of shade, grass fifteen to twenty feet high, creepers, canes, and undergrowth of all kinds, flourish apace. There is a large amount of bamboo in the hills, but it is of an inferior kind. There are few places where anything like stalking can be done; consequently, though game is plentiful, it is not a desirable hunting-ground. The game comprises wild elephants, a few rhinoceros, buffalo in the lower valleys, bison, bears, sámbur, barking-deer, two kinds of pheasants, jungle-fowl (*Gallus ferrugineus*; the common grey jungle-fowl of Southern India—*Gallus sonneratii*—is here unknown); the hullook, or tailless black monkey (and at least two other species); and a few minor animals.

The hills are well suited for elephant-catching; the herds are large, numerous, and undisturbed, and the supply of water and fodder unlimited. There would be some little difficulty about labour at first, as the low-country people fear entering the hills, evil spirits and fevers being supposed to be somewhat prevalent. I therefore decided on this occasion not to commence kheddahs in this locality, but it will probably be one of the most important elephant-fields for the supply of the Bengal Commissariat hereafter.

Having made all the inquiries I desired, I commenced my return-march to the plains of Bengal. This was in October 1875. During the first day's march I passed two large herds of elephants; one probably contained eighty individuals. Next morning I was walking in advance of the baggage-elephants when we heard elephants feeding in a valley to our right. The