

THE LIFE OF  
LORD CURZON

*Being the Authorized Biography of*  
GEORGE NATHANIEL  
MARQUESS CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G.

*by*

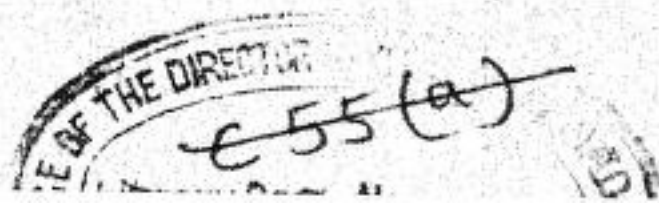
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## A SOLITARY SUMMER

summer of 1899, "to pay a visit to Nepal before long, and I might endeavour to get the Nepalese Government to allow a party to attack Mount Everest."<sup>1</sup>

The Nepalese Durbar, however, proved unexpectedly obdurate, and the most they were willing to concede was the courtesy which they had extended to other distinguished visitors, namely, that of a tiger shoot in the Nepal Terai. With this Lord Curzon had to rest content; and, if he was disappointed at his failure to secure an invitation to visit the capital, he at least looked forward to the recreation which was to be expected from three weeks in camp in the jungle-clad fringes of the Nepalese hinterland. "I am going to have a real good tiger shoot in Nepal in April. I dare say we shall get fifteen or twenty," he told his brother.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Curzon was a very good shot with a gun. "I went out a day or two ago with the great snipe shooter here," he mentioned in a letter in January; "a man named Dodd, who got the record bag last year of 131 couple to his own gun in a single day. The birds were fearfully wild, as there was no sun, but we managed to get fifty couple. Luckily I shot just as well as he did."<sup>3</sup> Before he left India he was himself to achieve a record. In a single day in Sind he shot one hundred and fifty-three duck. "This," he mentioned in a letter, "is said to be the Indian record."<sup>4</sup> Another memorable day was one in December 1903, on which he shot a hundred and twenty-seven duck; "there was never a low bird," he wrote when describing it; "the majority forty to eighty yards in the air."<sup>5</sup> He was an equally good shot with a rifle. On one occasion with a small double barrel Purdey rifle he killed six animals—tiger, bear and deer with six consecutive shots; and at another time, when shooting in Assam with the Maharaja of Kuch Behar, he killed stone dead one after the other three tigers moving at a gallop. The prospect of a

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Mr. Douglas Freshfield, dated July 9th, 1899. It is interesting to learn from this correspondence that the Mount Everest expeditions of 1922-24 had been definitely advocated by Lord Curzon more than twenty years before. "My point of view is in the main geographical," he wrote in the same letter. "We have on our northern border in India the greatest mountains in the world, and yet, owing to various obstacles or reasons, we know next to nothing of them. I should like to see a thoroughly competent party sent out to ascend or attempt the ascent of Kanchenjunga or of Mount Everest."

<sup>2</sup>Letter to the Hon. F. N. Curzon, dated January 17th, 1901.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*      <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, dated December 17th, 1903.      <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

## CURZON, 1901

shoot in Nepal was, therefore, an attractive one, and in spite of his fatigue he experienced some days of intense interest and excitement. One day he pursued and shot a rhino in an almost impenetrable jungle of pampas grass. "I saw the great brute dimly standing in a sort of tunnel that he had forced for himself through the bottom of the grass. He turned and fled. I fired a shot that caught him in the neck and sent him over like a rabbit. Then you never saw such a commotion. He kicked and plunged, and we had to pour at least a dozen shots into him before he was finished off."<sup>1</sup>

But even big game shooting lost something of its zest when Lady Curzon was not there to take part in the day's programme of work or play and to talk it all over with him in the evening. "You have not yet been gone three weeks," he wrote, on April the 3rd, "and it seems centuries." And he spent his spare time writing her long accounts of his doings. Of the bagging of the first tiger he wrote—"I wish you could have seen the whole sight. It was magnificent—200 elephants ringing this little plot of jungle grass and the single beast inside laughing at us for over an hour."<sup>2</sup>

Altogether twelve tigers were shot besides the rhinoceros and numbers of deer, boar, partridges and florican. But the long days in the sun were very tiring, and there was no escape from the discomfort of the plains in April. "I am lying in bed, infested with insects," he wrote on April the 17th. "Millions are swarming all over me, over the sheet, flying pat against the lamp, biting my legs. It has been an odious day; fifteen miles shaking and bumping on a pad till I cried with pain and had to get off and walk in the last part of the march. Then, when we came in, a raging dust storm. Everything choked with dust—had to lie in tents with all chicks down, hot as hell." In his overwrought state the holiday proved somewhat disappointing. "I left Calcutta pretty well played out," he had told Lady Curzon, in his letter of March the 29th. Moreover, he had taken the first shot at two only of the twelve tigers bagged, since, with extreme generosity, he had decided that each member of his staff should have the chance of bagging one; and he was not altogether sorry when the shoot was over. "To-morrow we are off to Naini Tal

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lady Curzon, April 17th, 1901.

<sup>2</sup>Letter dated March 29th, 1901.