

RIFLE, ROD, AND SPEAR IN THE EAST

BEING SPORTING REMINISCENCES

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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LONDON
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1911

say that the hill country that stretches for some six hundred miles along the Himalaya has never been explored. The time is no doubt at hand when the short-sighted Chinese cunning of the policy of closing the country to European travellers will be exchanged for sounder procedure—when fear shall give place to far-sighted confidence in British friendship, and the country take the lead in the development of the vast resources of India, to the infinite advantage of rulers and subjects alike. No one has had the opportunity of exploring to locate the gold that lies hidden somewhere in the hills above, nor—which is more to the immediate point under notice—of collecting knowledge of the fauna and flora of this remarkable region.

Below the Himalaya, in the vast stretches of sâl forest that clothe a great part of the area presented to Jung Bahadur for his mutiny services, elephant, tiger, rhinoceros, buffalo, and every species of game roam freely in their appropriate haunts.

The rhinoceros has indeed grown scarce, as the jungle belt that presumably stretched from Assam to the Indus has been broken into in the course of centuries. Alexander himself could not now kill one near Attock, for the last northern stronghold of the race lies in a small jungle valley below Khatmandu.

I never went after these, as they are preserved

with care, and only disturbed on great occasions. Buffalo I never saw, as I did not shoot the southern and eastern jungles beyond the Kosi, where they live at home in vast swamps and reed stretches.

My only view of those fine animals was during a pigsticking expedition down the river from Calcutta, when we put up a herd headed by a bull with immense horns. B——, who was on Lord Mayo's staff, and I—borrowing rifles—ran forward and lay down on what appeared to be their line of advance; but they turned off another way, and we could get no chance at them.

I have given some account of the other lowland game, but very happy days are undoubtedly in store for the first sportsman to whom the freedom of the mountains above is presented, and to him will fall the pleasure of describing an unknown region and its wild inhabitants.

A native once brought me a huge specimen of a flower, probably some species of edelweiss; and no doubt much of interest to the scientific world will be disclosed as civilised man enters this hitherto jealously closed area.

To my regret, I never was afforded an opportunity of seeing an elephant hunt, as previously conducted in Nepal by Jung Bahadur. Probably the herds that used to roam up the foot of the Himalaya from Assam have diminished in number,