

Notes of a Sporting Tour in India.

LANDING at Bombay on the 10th of November, 1876, I left for Travancore the following day, and, after a tiring journey by rail, bullock-gharry, and canal, arrived at the resident's bungalow, Peermade, on the 17th. I shot over the Cardamon hills in company with the President of Travancore for twenty-six days, having fair sport with ibex, bison, and sambhur, and one or two unsuccessful turns up with elephants. The time of year was not favourable for sport, and the length of the grass and density of the jungle make this country the most difficult to hunt in I ever encountered. I then left for Delhi, viâ Trichinopoly, Madras, and Bombay, and was detained in the latter excessively dull town five days, awaiting the arrival of my "store clothes," the shooting kit of Travancore hardly sufficing for the requirements of such an important function as the Proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India.

At Delhi I met many old friends, some of whom had served in the Brigade, and spent a pleasant week there, as the guest of the Governor of Madras. I reached Calcutta on the 19th of January, 1877, spending a few days en route at Lucknow, where I shot some black buck. I found, on my arrival at Calcutta, letters telling me that a shoot I had arranged on the Godavery had fallen through, partly owing to the bad season in those parts, and partly to the sportsmen I was to have joined being down with fever. I consequently had to stay in Calcutta rather longer than I had intended getting a few days' pig-sticking and buffalo shooting on the Brahmapootra.

On the 15th of February I got under weigh for Assam, and reached Dhubri, after a monotonous journey by river-steamer, on the 20th. I shot this country with C., the Assistant-Commissioner of the district, skirting the Bhootan hills, and got fair sport with rhinoceros, buffalo, pig (the country being perfectly unrideable), and various kinds of deer, besides florikin and black partridge in great quantities. We returned to Dhubri on the 9th of March, and made a fresh start in the direction of the Garo hills; our party having increased to four guns and twenty-seven elephants, and shot the Rumari, Kurigram, and Chingmari churs for seven days, killing deer, pig, small game of various kinds, and seven tigers.

For the death of these last a high reward is offered, so that, at the termination of the shoot, after handsomely tipping the mahouts, we were enabled to hand over the surplus, about 100 rupees, to the nearest infirmary. I returned to Calcutta on the 31st of March, and started for Central India, viâ Agra and Gwalior, on the 2nd of April. The journey, a most tedious one, entailing varied forms of transport—rail, carriage-dâk, bullock-garry, camel-carriage, and horseback. I arrived at Gunah, the headquarters of the 2nd Central India Horse, on the 6th, and Captain G. of the regiment, who managed the party, a well-known shot and rider in India, and I, effected a start for the jungle on the 10th. Our party was unusually small, and the ill-effects of this made themselves felt frequently later on.

The shooting in this part of India is done almost entirely in this wise. Bullocks are tied up in likely spots, usually near the rivers, for some days before the advent of the shooting party, and the tiger is invited to kill as many as may seem good to him. On the arrival of the camp, sowars, who are intrusted with the tying up, and who have gone at daylight to inspect the bullocks, make their report, and, in the event of a "kill," beaters are collected; the guns are posted either in a tree, behind a bush, or on a rock, and the drive commences. The tiger usually gorges himself to repletion, and seldom moves far from his kill, so that his exact whereabouts is tolerably easy to ascertain. The beaters, who are under the charge of sowars of the regiment, receive strict orders on a shot being fired to make for the nearest tree, or other place of shelter, whence they are forbidden to stir till a whistle is blown by one of the guns. Should you kill your tiger, or should he have gone past your post after being fired at, you whistle the beaters up, lest there should be a second tiger or other game in the beat; but should he have turned towards the beaters, you await in silence the arrival of an elephant, on the back of whom you rummage about in search of your beast, and endeavour to ascertain whether he is hit, and what direction he may have taken. Of course a tiger frequently makes for ground where an elephant cannot follow, and in this case the party advance with much circumspection, shoulder to shoulder, accompanied by a few of the pluckiest natives. An unwounded tiger will scarcely ever attack a man, unless he should find him obstructing his path, or have been annoyed by being disturbed at his meals; but following a wounded one over difficult ground is by no means unattended with danger. If a tiger is known to be about, you are permitted to fire at nothing else, and it is often tantalising to see from your perch, bear, panther, and sambhur advancing to within a few paces of you, utterly unconscious of your presence, and wondering what the distant cries and tom-tomming mean. The monkeys and pea-fowl, both of which exist in enormous numbers, are most useful in signalling the presence of a tiger or panther, the former sometimes accompany their enemy from a safe elevation, swearing horribly throughout the beat. A tiger or panther, if minded to do so, can perfectly well pick a man out of almost any tree. Col. G., of the Bengal Army, was twice attacked in this way, during one trip with the Central India

Horse party. On the first occasion, a tigress attempted to climb the tree in which he was posted from behind, and was shot by the next gun; on the second, he blew the tiger's head off, when it was within a few feet from him. An officer in the Artillery and his orderly were picked out of a tree, one after the other, some years ago, by a panther, the former dying of the clawing he received. Leut. Col. W. Gordon Cumming in his 'Wild Men and Wild Beasts,' describes how a tigress seized and dragged down from the tree in which he was also standing, a native who had incautiously spoken when the beast was near. Mr. Sanderson, in his book on India, lately published (perhaps the best book on sport that has appeared for many years), also mentions an instance of a tiger being known to have taken refuge in a tree, from a pack of wild dogs. I remember a Frenchman in Algeria, some years ago, telling me that he had seen a panther spring up a tree, some eighteen feet high, in three bounds, and gather an Arab who had posted himself in it. It is, however, generally desirable to be above the tiger, who looks out for danger, as a rule, on his own level, though you constantly have to take up a cramped and uncomfortable position in your tree. A good rope and a strap are useful helps, while a knife and small saw, to clear away intervening boughs, are useful. You then proceed to make yourself as comfortable as circumstances will allow, and, hanging up your "chagul" (water-bottle) and rifles, await the commencement of the beat. It is as well to make your orderly cut boughs to form some sort of protection from the sun, which is not to be trifled with about noon-time at this period of the year; and sometimes it is good to make a screen, if you are likely to be too conspicuous.

April 10th.—Blank. Two bears, a tiger, and a panther were seen, but afforded no shot.

April 11th.—In the second beat, G. fired at and grazed a tigress, turning her on to me; I dropped her with the 12-bore, when she was within a few feet of me. A cub came trotting up shortly, but my position was so cramped that I missed it clean, and its evil star took it on to G.'s post, where it shared the fate of its mamma. A couple of bears next arrived, into one of which I put a shell. He promptly attacked his companion, evidently believing that the wound had been inflicted by him, and they both went howling back to the beaters, where one was knocked over by a sowar with a carbine. Some heavy firing was now begun by G.'s orderly, who had been intrusted with one of my heavy rifles, at a panther, who, with another tiger cub, was rolled over by G. The tigress measured eight feet three inches; the panther seven feet one inch; the cubs five feet each.

April 12th.—Started at dawn for Ragoghur, taking a bears' cave on the way. A couple, who were just returning from their night's excursion, charged our men and made off, but a she-bear and cub shortly returned and were slain. At noon we visited a second cave, and found two bears lying on the rocks outside, these also were bagged. G. killed a sambhur on the way home, and I wounded and lost a second.

April 13th.—A tigress and three cubs were seen, but slipped off unfired at.