

TRIPS TO THE SOONDERBUNDS.

BY YOUNG NIMROD

Here's an account of this, my second peregrination to the haunts of the denizens of "the beautiful forests," for by such a fairy name it is denominated by the natives. This is an absurd nomenclature. Just fancy an extensive tract of low and swampy jungle land, inhabited by beasts of prey, and whose very air "breathes pestilence around," to be styled "the beautiful forest;" is it not ludicrous in the extreme?

Well! I have yet good cause to join in the complaint of a certain Hibernian author who thus wittily describes his futile attempts to make the blind old jide, Fortune, smile upon him.—

"Though I have long and warily courted the blind ancient dame, Fortune, yet all my endeavors have proved abortive. Each time she passes me, she gives me an ominous frown, and drives the wheels of her chariot over me. Albeit her eldest daughter, Miss Fortune, has been making desperate love to me, and has so successfully netted me, that I am unable to escape her wiles."

I'll not vouch for the above being the very words of the witty son of Erin, for I am no good hand at remembering prose *à rebain*.

Though I sedulously searched in every accessible creek of the Soonderbunds, down to the Southern boundary of Chelah, for rhinoceros, deer, &c. &c., yet I was unsuccessful in bagging, or even seeing any. But on the day of my departure homeward, I obtained *knubber* of a royal quarry being surrounded in a piece of jungle, so remained another day, and bagged him, or rather her, for it was madame. She showed good fight, and in vulgar sporting parlance would be immediately dubbed an "awkward customer." A narrative of how we "fought" and "conquered," will be found in the ensuing paragraphs.

January 22.—Towards the close of evening, heard a great deal of shouting and hullabaloo on the other side of the river. Sent a fellow across in a *dinghee*, to ascertain the cause of the uproar. They quickly returned with the welcome tidings of a royal beast being surrounded in a patch of *suncheire* grass. It seems that the man-eater, having an inclination to taste beef, entering a cow-house made away with a good sized bullock. The cow-herds giving the alarm, the villagers mustered and followed the track, as is usual, on like occasions, with the demi-civilized subjects of the *genus homo* who inhabit the Soonderbunds. Now mind, ye griffs! they went not to beard and slay the royal quadruped in his den, for they were not so temerarious albit no coward: but to search for his lair, and encircle it with nets. Even this job is not of danger, for woe betide the wight, who may unconsciously venture within the grasp of his formidable antagonist. But to return to the subject. They follow the track with a sagacity which would do honor even to an American hunter, and are almost invariably successful. This joyful intelligence cheered my drooping spirits, and I ere consigning myself to the "arms of Murphy," as the Hibernian elegantly expressed—

"Tired Nature's sweet-restorer, balmy sleep,"

and drank a bumper to the success of the coming fight, so says the Diary of the 22d, the eve of the memorable tiger hunt; now to the day itself.

January 23.—Was up at early dawn, (for I always act up to this oft-repeated line "*dulcilo surgere saluberrimum est*," and after sipping a cup of fragrant Mocha, employed the interim in attempting to

"Wield the rod and cast the mimic fly;"

as the hunt would not begin till past 10 A. M. My success in the science of the "gentle craft" was far better than I deserved, for I had been too long a laggard in the "noble art of angling." The fruits of this pleasant recreation was about a score-and-a-half of small fry, which would amply suffice for my breakfast, so ordered master "Carlus" to prepare it "à la cuisine." I fare d'ally. "Le chief de cuisine" had overdone them fearfully; but 'twas lucky that I was no epicure, or, peradventure, the hilarity of spirits might have been suppressed by dire ire, and the "Knight of the grid-iron" received what "Paddy gave the drum." Well after having done ample justice to my breakfast (by far the most hearty meal in the Mofussil), I ordered the boat to be lunched across, and sent for the chief shikaree. A short, sturdy well-built fellow, bearing a remarkable "cute phiz" (as brother Jonathin would say), was ushered in. After making a low obisance, I interrogated him as to several things, and he replied to my multifarious queries, in a straightforward, open manner, which was highly pleasing. He informed me that I had a good hour yet to wait, as the beaters had neither performed their ablation nor eaten; so I got out to inspect the locality, and found the tigress circumscribed in a very small space of ground. She gave sundry growls, and seemed not to relish her position. This plainly evinced that she would not succumb without showing fight. I retired to the boat, inspected my battery, and loaded them with unwonted care, lest any mishap should occur, which would inevitably place in eminent jeopardy our lives and souls to boot.

At last, to my inexpressible joy, the half hour expired, and I jumped on *terra ferma* gun in hand. I shall not give a description of the netting mode of operation &c., for that has already been described in my account of "a Soonderbund Tiger Hunt," (to which I beg to refer such of the readers as may wish to gratify their curiosity); but turn at once to the *finale*, the "glorious finish," as the Fox-hunter would exclaim. Long ere we got her within the small space we intended, she roused herself up with a terrible roar, which must have struck dire terror into the craven hearts of our belligerent force, or rather a portion of it. The bulk of our army were composed of mere spectators, who were employed by us to lend their lungs to augment the general din. It was ludicrous to behold the different phases of fear in different people: some stood rooted to the

ground, petrified with terror; others stood transfixed to the ground they happened to stand on, albeit shaking like aspen leaves; others again, whom fear lent wings, gave "leg-bail." But the main strength of the force were "fool-hardy," perhaps, being under the eye of their master, each wished to emulate the other, but I ordered them peremptorily to desist, for half a dozen had entered the netting, and were literally following the striped *janwar* hair to hair. They may have placed implicit reliance on their charms—but faith, not I—

"But I am at my ancient times—digression!"

So must return to that portion of the theme from which I have rambled.

Well, the tigress got up, and performed two or three circumvolutions, round the circumvolution, but seemed to be puzzled by the netting. The rapid manner in which she performed her circumvolution, prevented me from getting any deliberate aim, and I wished not to risk a snap shot. She then fell upon the opposite side of the netting, and a couple of bags saluted mine ear. I immediately ran in that direction, and found the state of matters to be in a fearful climax. The frail netting had given away, and there was the tigress reared to her full height, poised by innumerable spears, but which the "Sylvan Queen" was breaking as if they were broom sticks. She was slowly, but surely, encroaching towards the men. I knew the *status* of affairs could not last much longer, so placed the barrel of my rifle on her neck and fired (for we were in a fearful close proximity, and her eyes were glaring into my countenance unpleasantly close). This shot placed her *hors de combat*, and another from my favorite Redda, gave her the *quietus*. She then rolled over

"And everlasting shades settled over her eyes."

After the above sublimely terrible scene, I dare say many experienced a feeling of blended terror and surprise, so well described by Homer in the following lines:—

"As when a wretch, who conscious of his crime,
Pursued from murder from his native clime,
Just gains some frontier, breathless, pale, amazed;
All gaze, all wonder"

By the bye, I have almost forgotten to mention that the two shots which were fired prior to my arrival was from my jemadar's double barrel fowling piece. Both shots told, but they neither diminished her rage nor strength. He informed me afterwards that the fearful roaring had unnerved him.

After all the crowd had sated their gaze I measured her. She was above twelve feet, which is by no means small, and her coat was splendid. I had her ripped open and found five young, about the size of mice. All the shikarees were amazed. They assured me that they had never heard or seen of a tigress having more than two or three cubs at a time. This brought a fresh *posse* of spectators, who had another long gaze

Excepting this, and half a score "monsters of the deep," no other shikar of any import fell to my guns.

Now I must wind up, and trust at some future time to be able to let you have some more accounts; but *revoir*.

БНООЛНАН, March 26, 1860.