

A day in the Bheels.

BY YOUNG NIMROD.

From the Indian Field.)

Reader! have you ever condemned duck-shooting? Noted it a deuced dull spot? Perhaps you have, and, if so, be good enough to follow me through the following imperfect narrative patiently; and should I gain a proselyte in you, I shall be amply compensated for the scribbling of a few sheets of paper.

Reader! are you indifferent towards handling the gun? Have you no liking, but rather a disliking, to the smell of gunpowder! Well! even you may be somewhat entertained by perusing the following lines—if you would think of the reeking dish of water-fowl; the delicious odour they exhale, when the cover is taken off; and last, though not least, the exquisite relish they impart to the palate whilst masticating. For I have rarely, if ever, seen a dish of water-fowl not done justice to at table, even by the fair daughters of Eve; but I am treading on forbidden ground so shall make a couple of bows, (one to the reader for my digression, and the other to the fair sex for thus daring to brave their frowns,) and then beat a precipitate retreat.

Reader! have you a predilection for bheel-shooting? Have you spent a few pleasant hours on the smooth and unruffled surface of an Indian lake, enjoying sport? If you have, you may, whilst conning over this article, think over your own exploits, and let us have the benefit of a tale or two through the medium of the column of *The Indian Field*. But enough of this; so I shall on the *prestine thesis*, and borrow a couple of pages or so from the Diary.

The scene of the following retrospection is a night journey from Khooluab, named Musinpore Bheel.

22nd December.—We (self and Green Sleeves) were rather early awakened by the cry of numerous denizens of the Bheel, from the loud quacking of ducks to the gentle twittering of snipes, who were in large flocks passing to and fro over our boat; so, quickly opening the jhamps, we took a hasty view from out of them, and found the Bheel to our right, and the village to our left, enveloped in a dense fog. This was a sufficient indication to assure us that darkness had given place to light.

Rousing our servants from their sound sleep, we dispatched our shiklagar to secure a dinghee, and our khitmutgars to prepare a hasty repast, whilst we donned on our shooting gear.

Both these orders were obeyed with unusual alacrity; for ere we had given the last finishing touch to our toilette, the one had secured a dinghee, with a couple of stout luggee-wallahs as the crew; and the others a breakfast in the shape of a dozen boiled eggs, bread and butter, and last, though by no means least (in my opinion), a couple of enormous bowls of fragrant Mocha. We failed not to do justice to the good things set before us. And with light hearts, and sure hands, we jumped into the frail boat, followed by a couple of attendants bearing our guns and ammunition. Just then Phœbus began to peer her bright phasis above the horizon, scaring away the fleeing fog.

We passed in quick succession several flocks of the different species of plover, but did not molest them, as a single shot would make the whole of the inhabitants of the Bheel take wing, and spoil our sport for that day. We had not proceeded far, when a flock of spoonbill ducks were sighted; so we noiselessly got within range, and emptied the contents of our barrels in the midst of the mass, and a couple of dozen of them full rewarded us. Not bad this, for they were in prime condition; and amid the din of the whole of the feathered tribe, who had taken wing at the discharge of our battery, we proceeded leisurely on.

A flock of the girra-teal were then sighted, and again cautiously approaching within killing distance, we again opened our battery. Well done! 14 brace has fallen, either dead or dying. But, oh! how they dive; we shall lose all, except those that have not a spark of life in them. No, wait a while patiently, and keep a sharp look out, and you will perceive beaks or legs rise above the surface of the water (but which, to an inexperienced eye, appears a twig of weed.) *Sub millah hie; Nie, daethoe bakkee hie*—answered one of the crew, who have jumped down to pick the birds up. *Kooch purwa nye*, we reply, for we can afford to

lose a brace, but by no means, the cool of day, as when the sun is hot the birds turn rather wild.

For some time nothing worthy is to be seen, as they are on the look-out, having somewhat satiated their hunger. But what are those majestic grey birds a great distance off? *Rajh hans*, answers one of our table attendants; *Chup see chullo*, is our response. Now they are close within range, so we are very careful, lest the least noise or movement would scare them off, and thus lose our prize when almost within our grasp. Our guns are steadily levelled at their breast, (for shot will hardly penetrate elsewhere and certainly not kill,) and a couple of bangs from our guns showed one killed and another going away very speedily. Our eyes follow him for half mile; when, no longer able to fly he falls. We order the dinghee forward to the spot, and find the quarry-stone dead.

We have a few more wholesale executions, which last till 11 A. M., and keeps to fill the dinghee. But the accounts of these I will not give, as they will only be a repetition of the first two descriptions expressed in other words.

We then took a few biscuits and a glass of pure water, to satisfy our inward man, and ordered the dinghee's head to be steered homeward. We, all the way returning, were firing at snipe, plover, pigeon, &c., &c., by way of augmenting and increasing the variety of our bag.

When we returned to our boat, we arranged our game in a row, and among the different varieties were to be seen the following—grey-goose, spoonbill-duck, girra-teal, golden plover, long-legged plover, manickjore, others, too numerous to be here named.

The above Bheel is not the best, even in this district, but which is one out of the few I have had an opportunity of visiting.

Snipes are in now, and sprinkling of woodcocks may also be met with. Partridges and hares, this season, are very plentiful, and what is far better, to the epicure, they are beautifully fat.

My excursion to the Soonderbunds I am obliged to postpone for a few days more, as I have been laid up with a slow fever, and do not think it advisable to venture there, until quite convalescent.

Among the host of contributors to the *India Sporting Review*, (when in its palmy days), there are certainly a few alive, very few alas! but still a few, and who, if they would once set up the standard, would certainly have many followers.

In the Commissioner of the Soonderbunds we have Leather Stockings of the defunct *Review*, and who is yet a keen shikaree, and still follows sport with avidity. Leather Stockings! why art thou silent now? I shall conclude by wishing success to myself in the trip to the Soonderbunds so as to have something worthy to chronicle in my next.