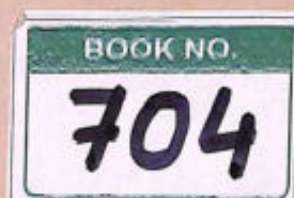




THE PASSING OF THE FOREST GODS

THE PASSING OF THE FOREST GODS



Augustus Somerville



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*This Book is dedicated to all those
Wild Animals that enrich and beautify
our vast Forest Areas and to those
Sportsmen who have striven so hard
and are still striving to protect them.*

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AT MIDNIGHT COMES THE KILLER.

SHIKAR NEAR CALCUTTA.

STRANGE TALES OF SHIKAR.

CRIME AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN INDIA.

MYSTERIOUS CRIMES.

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FOREWORD

Mr. Augustus Somerville has requested me to write a Foreword for this book, for which I thank him. I know the Author well and I am also keen on the subject he deals with, hence, I feel that my personal esteem for the Writer and my own interest in the matter, may prejudice me in saying either too much (being carried away by enthusiasm) or too little (being afraid of over-emphasising the subject). However, as the Author has already written several similar books, well received and highly appreciated by the Press and the Public, I need have no qualms about this.

Mr. Somerville is a well known writer and an ardent Sportsman. His thrilling descriptions of several personal experiences as well as his portrayal of Wild Life in all its grandeur and magnificence carries his Readers to the very scene of his activities and enables them to share with him its thrills and pleasures.

It is gratifying that Mr. Somerville shares my views on the preservation of Wild Life as well as on the conservation of our natural Forests. I feel very strongly (as ventilated in the Press) regarding the killing of animals, (even Cattle Lifters and Man Eaters) indiscriminately, without giving them a sporting chance to defend themselves against a better armed, better equipped and far more intelligent antagonist. After all man is responsible for compelling these dignified and beautiful creatures to take to cattle or human killing. He has deprived them of their normal source of food, he has wounded and incapacitated them by using improper weapons and has finally driven them from their homes by cutting down and destroying the Forests which was their natural habitat. Can it be wondered at that, in reprisal, the Tiger turns against the source of all his misery.

My personal experience fully endorses the Author's view that the Sportsman is the keenest supporter of Game Preservation. A true Shikari cannot but have the greatest admiration for God's most beautiful creation, the flora and fauna, in the wide areas in which he spends his happiest days. Besides he cannot but be very distressingly moved when he hears a baby Bear's pathetic cry, so like a human child, over its dead mother, or witnesses the last lingering look in the eyes of a dying deer. Even when he witnesses the dying agony of a magnificent tiger, bison or buffalo, he is filled with remorse for the part he has played in bringing about its destruction. It is probably this reaction, more than any other factor, that converts a keen shikari into an enthusiastic supporter of Game Preservation.

Mr. Somerville has condemned, in no uncertain terms, the wanton massacre of animals, by those so-called sportsmen who from the comfortable security of motor vehicles and aided by powerful spot-lights, confine their shooting to the destruction of bewildered and terrified animals at night. This is a type of sport that every decent shikari condemns, and from my personal experience I feel that its continued and unrestricted use in our forest areas should be prohibited by every process of Law.

Every reader of this book will appreciate the Author's versatile style and his vivid descriptions of many of his most exciting experiences, but all through these pages he will invariably note the deep and abiding love he has for the poor creatures of the forests. It is this love and his appreciation of the integrity and courage of the simple forest folk, that stands out so convincingly in his appeal for conservation.

Before concluding I again convey my thanks to Mr. Somerville for giving me an opportunity for saying a few words on a subject that we are both deeply interested in. We can still remember, with pride and gratitude, the wonderful Wild Life that it was our privilege to see in those past years of which he writes. If we can but foster this love of our Forest life, influence the feelings and sentiments of the new

generation of Shikaris, who today take our place in Forest and Field, then we may expect a revolution in the coming years that will eventually result in a complete change in our attitude towards Wild Life and in our Game Laws.

Calcutta.

M. L. SEN GUPTA.

21st December, 1964.

INTRODUCTION

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is a well established fact that the keenest supporters of any scheme for the Preservation of Game, are the Shikaris,—the men with the guns.

I am aware of course that this enthusiasm is attributed by many to selfish motives. It is a case of preserving Game, so that more may be shot. But this is not true. Every sportsman will admit that after his first enthusiasm, the understandable desire to secure a record trophy, has worn off, the actual killing of any animal begins to grow distasteful. The feeling is a complex mixture of pity, a genuine love for the beautiful creatures of the forest and the knowledge that these animals are not his to destroy, but rather a sacred trust, to guard and preserve, for posterity to enjoy.

No natural resources are so sensitive to the principles of conservation as Wild Life and probably, no natural sources have suffered more from a persistent violation of these very principles.

In India of the present day, where every aspect of human life and endeavour, has been subjected to the critical eye of Reform, it is pathetic to note the indifference with which this subject has been treated. To preserve Wild Life, an accurate knowledge of its ecology, numbers and status is essential and the economic or commercial value of an animal is not the only standard by which its continued existence should be judged.

There is a common plea, in this country particularly, that where a certain animal is destructive to crops, (the Wild Pig, Nilgai or Chital for instances), it should be ruthlessly exterminated, yet we have ample evidence that the extermination of one particular species of animal, invariably results in the creation of other evils not apparent previously.

Speaking from personal knowledge I have heard, on several occasions, the Forest Tribes deplore the disappearance of Wild Pig and Deer from their locality, on the grounds that the forest lands were no longer so fertile or profitable, as when these very animals, who preyed on their crops nightly, remained.

Moderation is the key note of conservation. Those who know our Jungles have noted with alarm the rapid disappearance of all forms of Wild Life. For this the Poacher is invariably blamed, but that much maligned gentleman has my deepest sympathies. His trade has passed out of his control into the hands of those contemptible creatures, who tour our forest areas from the safety of Jeeps and Lorries, and who, with the assistance of powerful head-lights and torches, blind and terrify our Wild Life, shooting indiscriminately, in season and out. We need stricter Forest Laws. Game Wardens courageous enough to apprehend those who violate them and Magistrates and Police who will see that these Laws are enforced.

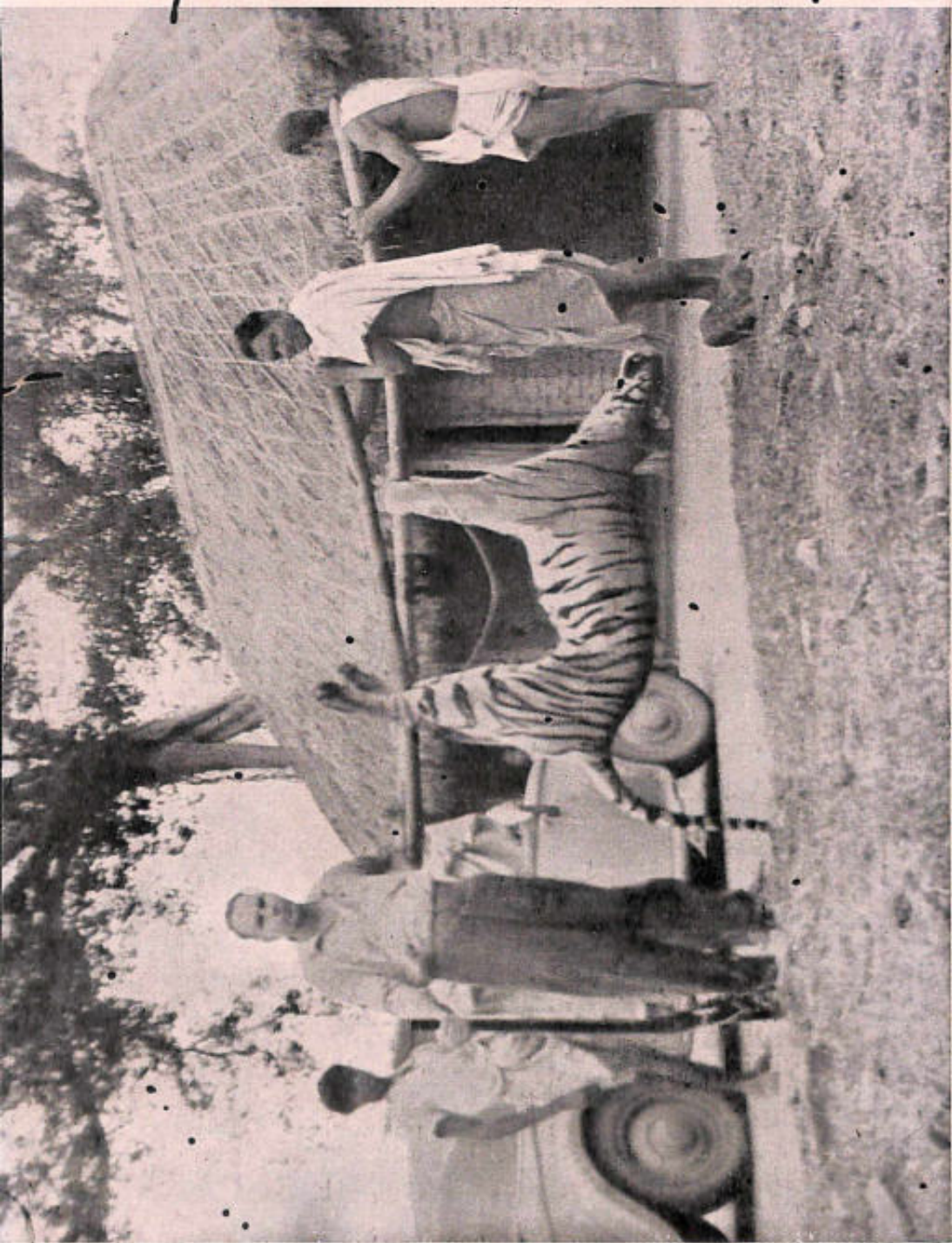
The main purpose of this book is obviously Game Preservation, and on this subject I speak as a Shikari,—the Man with the Gun. To all of us it is painfully evident that most of our beautiful fauna is on the verge of extinction. As the title suggests I deal principally with those animals, who dominate the scene in our Forests. If I have stressed the principles of conservation and been somewhat harsh on our Poachers and those people who have put our local Poachers out of business, I have done so with a sense of urgency. If we are going to save our Game Animals, we must do it now. There is some fatal period reached in the life-history of wild animals when the continuing abnormality of a disturbed existence appears to break their spirit and they are then liable to cease to produce their species. This psychological phenomenon is not properly understood, but it is recognised by persons who have studied wild life at close quarters and to most Sportsmen it is evident that this period is close at hand.

I have been fortunate in securing for this book a Foreward by Mr. M. L. Sen Gupta, M.A. (Oxon) I. F. S., who for many years held a rich and varied tenure of office as the Divisional Forest Officer at Angul in Orissa, where it was my good fortune to meet him and it was largely as a result of this meeting that my interest in Game Preservation started.

Once again I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta) for his kind permission to include in this book such portions as have already appeared in his esteemed Journal. Also, although they are too numerous to mention personally, I wish to thank those Divisional Forest Officers, Game Wardens and Sportsmen, for their valuable advice and assistance in the preparation of this book.

Augustus Somerville.

Calcutta,
The 28th January, 1965.



The Author with his final Tiger. Angul, Orissa.

1 The Tiger

"Unless I can make you believe that there is something practically supernatural about tigers, that they are not just common flesh and bone and striped hide, but a kind of symbol of the jungle, of the cunning and the cruelty, and ferocity and incredible strength and beauty of raw nature there is no use in your going on with this tale."

The above extract from Edison Marshall's well-known book, "Shikar and Safari", embodies or rather typifies the true spirit in which the Sportsman should seek his first tiger.

Coming to us, many centuries ago, from the New Siberian Islands, well within the Arctic Circle, when under a more genial climate, Northern and Central Asia supported a richer vegetation and an abundance of animal life, the Tiger to this day responds, very unfavourably, to the heat of this country. He will seek almost automatically, dense, shady forests, the cool, grassy lands at the foot of the Himalayas and places where the game, commensurate with his size, abounds. In the fierce heat of the summer, he will seek the cool, isolated streams that meander through our forests and will often be surprised, half submerged in some shallow pool at midday.

Description And Size

Sterndale, Pocock and others have all selected the Indian Tiger as the standard by which to describe the general appearance of the animal. Covered by short, coarse hair, the ground tint varies from pale yellow to burnt sienna, the

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whole skin is marked by black stripes, arranged irregularly, from single streaks to broad bands. In some, the brows and cheeks are white; in all, the chin, throat, breast and belly are pure white, but over all the black stripes prevail.

Much of the controversy over the size of tigers is due to the methods of measurement. Today the method of measurement is fixed. The animal is laid on its side. The nose, head, spine and tail are then drawn out in a straight line, without undue persuasion. A peg is fixed at the snout and another at the extreme end of the tail. The body is then removed and the distance between pegs is measured. When measured among the curves, an additional six to eight inches, is usually recorded. Measured between pegs, few Indian Tigers, exceed 10 ft. in length, the average being 9 ft. to 9 ft. 6 ins. and even at this modest length, the number of tigers that tape 9 ft. and over are becoming more and more rare. The height varies between 3 ft. and 3 ft.-6 ins., the weight ranging between 400 and 500 lbs. Females are a foot shorter and about 100 lbs. lighter in weight.

It is Pocock who is credited with the remark that a 12 ft. tiger would need an additional pair of legs in the middle to keep his abdomen off the ground. This is incorrect. I have personally seen a tiger that taped well over 11 ft. while Burke, in his *Indian Field Shikar Book* quotes several tigers that measured 12 ft. and over.

Recently, we had quite a spate of letters appearing in the local Press, confirming that Tigers of 12 ft. and over, (some reaching the record length of 15 ft.) are not so rare as Sportsmen believe. Mr. Atul Chandra Choudhury, a well-known sportsman of Tezpur, Assam, writing to the Statesman on the 21st, April 1963, records several Tigers which he personally shot, one of which measured 12 ft. 3 ins. and the skin of which he still possesses. He also mentions a contemporary sportsman, Dr. Ananta Kumar Barkakati also of Tezpur, who in 1953 killed at Kochmara, on the alluvia of

The Tiger

the Brahmaputra, a Tiger measuring 13 ft. 2 ins. A photograph of this animal is still in his possession.

It has never been my good fortune to shoot a Tiger over 10 ft. in length. I have been "present at "Beats" at which record animals have been killed, but, invariably, the extraordinary lengths mentioned have been due to faulty methods of measurement. When measured "over curves" and not "between pegs" an additional 6 ins. to 9 ins. is usually obtained. Of course there are instances where unscrupulous sportsmen have had the raw pelt pulled, thus obtaining some of the fantastic lengths recorded.

Except when born and reared in captivity, the age of a tiger can only be told approximately. Col. Locke estimates the age of a cub by the condition of the teeth. The milk teeth are usually retained for about six months before the second set or permanent teeth begin to appear. This second set is hollow, the cavities finally closing after about twenty months. He further states that the canine teeth grow up within the hollow of the milk teeth and when these loosen and fall out, the permanent canines are immediately available to replace them. A wise provision of Nature, as without its canines a Tiger is practically defenceless against the attacks of others of its kind, nor would it be able to pull down its prey. At five years the young cub is full grown, then, if he survives the various hazards with which his life is threatened, he will continue to mature in size and weight till he reaches the age of twenty-five years. For the next five years his condition is more or less static, till he completes thirty years, when old age will start taking its toll. This last phase is characterised by a lustreless, faded coat, often badly scarred and in some instances hairless from mange. The hair on his face turns to a dull white, the claws lose their sharpness and crack, while the pads will be splayed out and when seen in moist clay will be lined with cracks and cuts from the wounds he has received from his

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long sojourn in the forest. If not killed at this stage he will wander away and lie up in some secluded cave or dense patch of forest till disease or hunger finally claims him.

Shillingford, the famous Purneah Tiger Slayer, on the other hand bases his calculations on the growth of the cubs. He states :

Cubs one year old	Males 4½ ft. to 5½ ft. Females 4 ft. to 5 ft.
Cubs two years old	Males 5½ ft. to 7 ft. Females 5 ft. to 6½ ft.
Cubs three years old	Males 7 ft. to 8½ ft. Females 6½ ft. to 7 ft.

He further states that at about 3 years of age the cubs lose their milk canines, which are replaced with the permanent fangs. It is at this age that the mother finally deserts them.

Black Tigers

Black tigers are rare, in fact so rare as to be almost mythical. Sterndale reports the finding of the body of a black tiger near Chittagong and later records that in 1927 a notorious Blue Tiger was seen in South China. Being anxious to secure further details of the Black specimen found near Chittagong, I consulted the Curator of the British Museum, who stated, "In the 'Field' 1889 there is a letter by Mr. C. T. Buckland, who saw the specimen in March 1846. He says, 'It was a full size tiger, and the skin was black or very dark brown, so that the stripes showed rather a darker black in the sunlight just as the spots are visible on the skin of black leopard'. The skin was not preserved."

In 1936 a mild sensation was caused in Dibrugarh, (Assam) when it was reported that a "black" tiger, measuring 12 ft. had been caught in a cage and subsequently shot.

The Tiger

A local taxidermist anxious to secure so valuable a trophy, immediately arranged for the purchase of the skin, when it was discovered that the Black Tiger was in fact a black leopard, measuring only 7 ft. Again in 1940 a Black Tiger was trapped and shot in Namti Kharikatiya Village in Sib-sagar Sub-Division. The animal is stated to have been 10 ft. long and was pure black. Local people called it a "Ghong", (*Felis Nebulose*) according to the Assamese Dictionary. From the above it would appear that the occurrence of melanism among tigers is almost as rare as the occurrence of albinism among panthers.

White Tigers

White tigers or near-white tigers are met with occasionally in many forests in India, particularly in areas that are dry and open. It would seem that Nature thus camouflages these animals so that they could blend more successfully with the sand and rocks which compose most of the terrain they inhabit. The district, *par excellence*, for White Tigers is the old Rewa State. Here White Tigers have occurred naturally, but in recent years they have been bred, successfully, in captivity. The success of the scheme is due entirely to the enlightened co-operation of the Maharaja of Rewa, who has set apart the old palace at Govindgarh for the accommodation of these animals.

I am indebted to Mr. E. P. Gee, the well-known writer on Indian Wild Life, for facts relating to the establishment of this palatial zoo. It appears that at a big shoot, held in May 1951, in the Rewa Reserves, a tigress came out during the beat, with four nine-month-old cubs. Of these four cubs, three were normally coloured, but one, by far the largest and strongest, was pure white. The mother and three cubs were shot, but the white one was later captured. This cub thrived in captivity and later a normal tigress was kept with it. Three

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litters of cubs were born to this Rewa couple, all normal coloured, and as it was feared that this normal tigress was incapable of reproducing the white strain, she was disposed of and another female, born in the second litter in 1955, was kept with the father. The experiment was successful and four all-white cubs were born in October 1958. Mr. Gee who studied these cubs at the palace at Govindgarh, states that the cubs were identical with their father, with ashy-grey stripes on a white background, pink pads and icyblue eyes.

The Manchurian Tiger

The people of Calcutta, all India in fact, are indebted to Mr. Khrushchev, ex-Soviet Prime Minister, for their first glimpse of a genuine Manchurian Tiger. These magnificent animals were presented by Mr. Khrushchev to the Governor of West Bengal, who, in turn, presented them to the Calcutta Zoo. They were originally housed at one end of the Lion and Tiger enclosure in the Zoo, and were protected by *Thattis* from the extreme heat of the Calcutta summer, till such time as they could be transferred to Darjeeling. A Notice Board, hanging outside the cage, informed visitors that these animals were classified as "*Panthera Tigris Longipilis Fitzinger (1868)*". Incidentally the "*longipilis*" means, long haired, and emphasises an important distinction between these animals and our local tigers, which are generally short-haired. It is now universally accepted that the Manchurian Tiger was the progenitor of our Indian variety. The great difference in size is accounted for by the fact that while in its Siberian habitat, this animal had to deal with the far heavier animals that once inhabited the central Asiatic region and that after the disappearance of its larger prey from these areas due to climatic upheavals, the Manchurian Tiger gradually migrated towards China and

The Tiger

Northern India, where its huge bulk was unnecessary and where, in fact, its size and length were a positive hindrance in stalking its lighter and far more active prey.

Although its colouring remained the same, the climatic conditions changed so dramatically, that this visitor from the bitterly cold regions of the North, found its heavy coat unbearable and gradually shed its fur for the short-haired coat of its tropical descendants.

The Making Of A Man Eater

No man who values his life and health goes Tiger Shooting in that dismal, malaria-infested swamp, known as the Sunderbuns. In this tropical Green Hell it is an axiom that every Tiger is a man Eater, every Crocodile vicious and unpredictable and every Snake loaded with venom. "Every man who values his life and health", I said, but it is well known that the average Shikari is indifferent to these considerations and it was for that reason, that, taking advantage of brilliant, moonlit nights, clearcold days and a river placid as a village pool, I set out for the Sunderbans. I got my Tiger two in fact, but had I been a little less fortunate, this story may never have been written.

The easiest way to reach the Sunderbuns is to go by Rail to Port Canning. Here you can board the steam Launch that will take you to Gosaba where a country boat may be hired for the actual trip into the Sunderbuns. I did just this and having secured a fairly large boat, I took on water and provisions and set out for a spot recommended by an experienced Shikari. The finest Tigers, I was told, were to be found on the land lying between the Bara Champta and Chota Champta. Here I was advised to erect my machan and sit up over a Wild Pig shot previously.

As the boat drifted in towards the shore, I examined the land with the aid of a pair of powerful field glasses. My first impression was not very hopeful. The land was flat and uninteresting. A number of mud and sand mounds broke up the surface of the site. Solitary trees and clumps of Sundri bushes provided the minimum of cover and I rea-

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lized that the task of erecting a Machan here was almost impossible, however, I had seen worse sites that provided remarkably good shooting and I determined to examine the ground more thoroughly. Edging the boat on to the bank, I landed and after directing the Manjhis to proceed further up the stream and anchor, I set out on foot to inspect the site more closely. Wild Pig tracks were plentiful. Deer appeared to make periodic visits, but of carnivora there was not a sign.

Working inland, towards where a thin fringe of Sundri bushes marked the extreme edge of the forest, which seemed to deepen as the land receded towards the interior, I noticed that the great majority of game tracks led towards an opening in the forest directly before me and towards this opening I made my way. It was not till I had almost entered the forest that I noticed the first Tiger pug-marks. Bending down to examine these more carefully, I received quite a shock when I realized that these tracks were quite fresh. In fact the grass and weeds pressed down by the animal in its passage were still returning to an upright position. Unslinging the .12 bore from my shoulder, I extracted the shot cartridges with which I had previously loaded in anticipation of feathered game and replaced the same with Ball and L. G. I now returned to a closer inspection of the tracks. The pug-marks were of a young male, probably not more than four or five years old. The left-fore-foot appeared to have been badly injured and judging from the favour with which the Tiger was treating this foot, the wound must have been raw still. In fact in several places the foot had not been lowered to the ground at all, the Tiger proceeding on three feet for several yards. Looking up, I noticed that the tracks led directly to the water's edge and towards a low mound of sand and weeds that bordered the bank. I now realized that I was entering on dangerous ground. As there were no tracks returning to the forest, I concluded that the

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Tiger must be lying in wait behind that mound or had carried on parallel with the stream and re-entered the forest further down. I now proceeded with the utmost caution. Bending frequently to check the tracks, which now blended with the pig-slots, I happened to look towards the forest and there caught a fleeting glimpse of a reddish, yellow form slinking between two bushes. I stopped abruptly. It was the old story of the ambush repeated and this time I happened to be the victim. While the male, unable to attack for himself because of his injury hid behind the mound and prepared to rush out with a savage roar so as to stampede back towards the forest any animal coming towards his hideout, the female, concealed behind a Sundri bush would spring on the terrified animal as it rushed past and despatch it. The game was an old and well tried device and I had seen it worked successfully in many a forest. On this occasion however, I decided that the victim would not be stampeded back towards the forest. Slipping the safety-catch off, I advanced boldly towards the mound, prepared to fire at a moment's notice. What I had anticipated occurred. When I was about twenty yards from his hideout, the Tiger suddenly sprang to his feet and rushed towards me, roaring defiance. Unfortunately for him I did not play the game according to the rules. Instead of running wildly back to the forest, I sprang to one side and as he reached to about ten paces of me, I shot him full in the chest. The impetus of his charge carried him to within a few feet of where I stood and I saw at a glance that a second shot would not be needed. From the blood that gushed from his open jaws, it was evident that the heavy lethal ball had smashed both heart and lungs and even as I watched, he struggled vainly to regain his feet, then slumped over, dead. How much better had it been for me, if instead of watching his death struggles, I had remembered his mate slinking through the forest behind me.

The Making Of A Man Eater

With recollection came fear. Hastily I swung round, the gun already at my shoulder and it was only then I realized how narrow a margin, of safety I had left myself. Streaking across the ground, her stomach almost touching the earth, the Tigress came bounding towards me. Fortunately I remembered I had only an L. G. in my left barrel and knowing that my chances of survival depended on this single round, I held my fire. With a peculiar, moaning growl, welling up from deep within her chest, she cleared the few remaining yards that separated us. Bracing myself for that spring, I swung the barrel in her direction, then just as my finger was closing on the trigger, she checked herself, wheeled rapidly and made off in the direction from whence she had come. And then I did a stupid thing. Without considering the consequences, I snapped a shot in her direction. She was too far and travelling too swiftly for me to decide whether the shot had been effective, but at the sound of the explosion she roared savagely and then the intervening Sundri bushes hid her.

As I reloaded I cursed myself for that hasty shot. In all probability I now had a wounded Tigress to deal with and every sporting ethic demanded that I follow her up and finish the work so foolishly begun. At this moment my Manjhis came running up. They had heard my first shot and anxious to be of assistance, had beached the boat and rushed across to where I stood. It was their sudden appearance that had frustrated the Tigress in her final rush and caused her to bound away. Jubilant at my success with the first animal, their faces fell when I described the fiasco of my second shot.

"Let us return to the boat and leave quickly", the Head Manjhi suggested. "That Tigress is burning for revenge and her wound has only made her more savage. Perhaps the Sahib has forgotten that this is the mating season. Her rage

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at losing her mate and now the pain of her wound will make of her a deadly menace."

"You are right Dost Mahomed, I had forgotten, but we cannot leave now," I replied. "As long as this Tigress lives, the lives of harmless Fishermen who come here to fish and gather wood, will be in constant danger. Detail four of your men to build a machan at the entrance of this game trail into the forest. I will sit up tonight and see if I can destroy her".

Leaving them hurriedly, so as to stop all further discussion, I returned to the boat. Here I secured my Rifle, a .375 Mannlicher of which I am particularly fond. Ate a light meal and changing into warm clothes, for the nights were still bitterly cold, I hastened back.

When I reached the site selected, I found that the men had built a machan or rather "a hide" not more than five feet from the ground. To compensate for the lack of height, they had interlaced the sides with weeds and grass, secured from the borders of the stream, so that I was comparatively safe from observation on two sides at least. The front, facing the trail, had been left open and from where I sat I could obtain an unobstructed view of the game-trail as well as the body of the Tiger, which, on my instructions, had been left undisturbed. I was depending on the frustration the Tigress must be experiencing at this sudden interruption of her courtship. Knowing she would not leave the forest till she had made certain that her mate was dead, I depended on her returning to the body during the early hours of the morning to ascertain the cause of his indifference.

That vigil was probably one of the worst I have experienced. No sooner did the Manjhis depart than I set about making the machan as comfortable as possible. My first attempt to enter almost sent the whole rickety structure to the ground, and I soon discovered that the slightest move

The Making Of A Man Eater

would cause the machan to sway in a most alarming manner. To add to my miseries, the Mosquitoes, for which the Sunderbuns are famous, now rose in clouds and literally fell on me in a mass of stinging, biting, concentrated desire. However, I stuck it out and in the early hours of the morning heard her for the first time. It was the Mating Call of the Tigress and there was something so sad and pathetic in that last long, drawn-out note, that I cursed myself again for that hasty, unconsidered shot. I was sorely tempted to fire in the air and so drive her away, but uncertainty of as to the nature of her wound restrained me. This piece of land on which I sat was a favourite fishing site and was also visited by Bee Catchers and Wood-cutters. If the wound was even mildly serious it would fester and later, under the goad caused by flies, insects and ticks, the animal would go partially mad, attacking everything that crossed its path, resulting in the death of many harmless people.

Half-an-hour later, she called again. Then I heard her coming cautiously down the trail. In the uncertain light of the setting moon I could barely distinguish a dim shadowy mass moving slowly down the path and I waited till it came directly opposite my machan, then, raising my Rifle, I sighted a little behind the left shoulder and pressed the trigger. The impact of the 270 grain bullet threw her to the ground, where she struggled for a while and then grew still.

Waiting till the dawn broke I descended from the machan and walked over to where she lay. The Tigress was dead but a careful inspection of her body showed where, high up on her neck, one of the pellets from the .12 bore had entered. The wound was not extensive but in this inaccessible spot, so far removed from the administrations of her cleansing tongue, gangrene would in all probability have set in and in the resulting pain and suffering, this Tigress was a Man Eater in the making.

This incident illustrates how a hasty or ill-considered

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shot may result in untold suffering to the animal fired at and how finally the wound, growing septic, may result in the Tiger being so incapacitated that it can no longer kill its normal food and may in desperation turn on man, not in revenge, as animals seldom bear malice,—revenge being a purely human emotion, but as the result of the cravings of a hunger he is no longer able to satisfy.

3 *Twin Killers*

Lions hunt in Prides or Schools, sometimes as many as six strong. Such co-operation is almost unknown with Tigers. There are of course instances where a Tiger and his Mate will hunt together, but *this* period invariably coincides with the Mating Season or when the two parents hunt to feed their cubs. During the Mating Season, the Tiger will demonstrate his prowess to his Mate to impress her with his strength and skill in killing his prey. This he does to secure her favours and once the period is over he will desert her callously, returning only when the cubs are born to do his bit in providing for the family.

Once the cubs are weaned, both parents eat to excess and later regurgitate at the entrance to the cave, thus providing partially digested food for their young. Later, when the youngsters can use their teeth, they will carry to the cave choice parts of the "Kill" for the cubs. Once the cubs have demonstrated their ability to feed themselves, the male parent will desert them again, leaving to his mate the difficult task of training the cubs in tracking and bringing down wild game. This is a critical period in the life of the cubs, for now the mother inculcates in her offsprings such habits as are common to herself. If she is a Cattle Lifter, the cubs will be trained in tracking and killing cattle and this explains why in some areas all the tigers are Cattle Lifters. The same applies to the Sunderbuns, where it is an established fact that every Tiger is a Man Eater. The Sunderbuns, owing to unchecked poaching by local villagers, visiting Fishermen and Shikaris, has been gradually denuded of all

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wild life. The Tigers, deprived of their natural source of food resort to cattle killing and later when even this source of supply is cut off by the local villagers confining their cattle in stoutly built pens, the Tigers, literally starving, find a prolific source of food in the Fisherman, Bee Catchers and Wood Cutters, who visit these marshy lands daily in quest of supplies.

I was in Bombay, early in April 1963, the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Hoops of Warden Road. This charming couple knowing of my interest in Shikar, had reserved two Blocks in North and South Chaurakund for themselves and had so timed it, that on my arrival we immediately set out for the South Chaurakund Forest Bungalow.

Arriving here on the 14th. April, we settled in and that afternoon set out to make enquiries. The Khubbar was good. Two Tigers were stated to be killing in the vicinity of Chaurakund village where there was a large herd of cattle belonging to the local Patel.

What interested me considerably was the method of attack. Cowherds who had witnessed several of these killings, informed me that one Tiger (the male most probably) would circle the village and lie up in the thick undergrowth near the cattle pen. Here he would remain perfectly hidden, till in the early evening he could hear the cattle returning from the surrounding forest and fields. No sooner were they within striking range than, with a roar, he would rush out and charge straight at the leading bulls. This violent demonstration would inevitably have the same result. The herd would stampede, including the Herdsmen, and rush back towards the forest. Here cleverly hidden was the female. Selecting a fine bull, she would rush from cover and fasten her teeth in the creature's neck, bearing down, till the bull, unable to carry her weight, would stumble and fall. Instantly she was joined by her mate and the pair would drag the carcass into the dense undergrowth, where they would



Mr. and Mrs. Hoops of Bombay, with the Twin killers.



A close-up of the partially devoured buffalo.



The home of Pran Matho—Forest Mystic.



Organising the Beat.

Twin Killers

disembowel it and start feeding. In vain the villagers threw stones and even fired off their muzzled-loaders in the general direction of the animals, but all that this could elicit were a few savage roars and as night was usually approaching, the villagers would retreat to their homes, hoping to rescue whatever was left of the carcass in the morning.

My luck must have been excellent that week. We had barely finished our Chota Hazri next morning, when the Patel came rushing into the Bungalow. One look at his face told us that the news must be urgent, nor were we mistaken.

"Hoops Sahib", he blurted out "Those two Shaitans have killed my best Bull. My people were driving the herd down the Bulungavan Road and at the place where the road skirts the forest, both tigers rushed out and sprang on the Bull, killing it almost immediately. Then, as my men raised a loud outcry and started throwing stones, they seized the carcass and dragged it into the forest. Please come quickly. The Tigers may still be there."

Needless to say we wasted no time. While Mrs. Hoops filled a couple of flasks with coffee, Mr. Hoops and myself selected the guns and ammunition and a moment later we were in the car, driving as fast as we could towards the spot. The Patel who was seated by Mr. Hoops directed him and within twenty minutes we were at the place where the Bull had been dragged down.

Dismounting here we examined the site carefully. The Bull had probably put up a good fight. The ground was torn up in all directions and liberally splattered with blood. The drag was clear and led across a small ditch which bordered the road, towards the heavy forest. Taking up the rifles we followed the drag and some twenty yards within the forest came on the carcass of the Bull. It had been partially eaten and then left and as no effort had been made to hide the carcass, it was evident that the Tigers had only left when they heard the car approaching.

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As there was nothing else we could do, we gave the Patel detailed instructions on tying the Machan and after covering the "Kill" with some thorn bushes, we returned to the Bungalow.

Not being prepared to sit up, I offered to stay behind and bring the car round next morning, but to this Mr. Hoops would not agree. Mrs. Hoops next very sportingly offered me her rifle and insisted I should take her place besides Mr. Hoops on the Machan. Obviously this was impossible. To have left her alone in the Bungalow, without a weapon and without any male protection, was unthinkable, so finally we compromised. Mrs. Hoops was to retain her rifle and after dropping us at the Machan that evening would return to the Bungalow, driving to the Machan next morning.

Fortunately for us the Patel had built the Machan fairly large and there was ample room for Mr. Hoops and myself to sit in comfort. From where we sat a clear view of the kill was possible and it was arranged that while Mrs. Hoops took the shot, I would sit immediately behind him, training the torch over his shoulder at such an angle that it would light his fore-sight as well as the "Kill".

How often have I sat thus, waiting for the sun to set and darkness to claim the forest! There is a calm and a fascination in that short half-hour before the night falls, that has never failed to thrill me. As the night was a dark one and without a moon to light up the scene, every effort was concentrated on hearing the tiger approach. Hour after hour passed. As the night wore on even the twittering and rustling of the little creatures of the forest below us, ceased. In absolute silence we sat, staring into the black wall of darkness around us, unrelieved by even the faintest starlight, when I felt my companion touch my knee. His ears, more sensitive than mine, had detected the presence of some animal, approaching the "Kill". Instantly alert, I raised the torch and sighted along his shoulder at an angle I knew his

Twin Killers

rifle would lie and pressed the switch. The brilliant white beam of the torch cleft through the darkness like a sword. For an instant a sleek yellow form was visible standing besides the carcass of the buffalo and then Hoops fired. There was a low growl, a flash of yellow as the animal sprang for the shelter of the forest and then silence.

For a while neither of us spoke and then I heard Hoops cursing under his breath. "A clean miss" he whispered, but I had my doubts.

Reloading the rifle he handed it to me, whispering, "Your turn now", but I refused to take the weapon. "If you think that shot was a clean miss, sit tight. He will be back in a few minutes."

Once again we resumed our original positions. Fully half an hour passed and not a sound disturbed the night. Cautiously I felt round and retrieved the flask containing the hot coffee. A cup I knew would be welcome, so I handed Hoops the first cup and then had one myself. Just as I was replacing the top of the flask, I heard a deep menacing growl from below. There was no mistake this time. The Tiger had come. I was sure he could neither see or hear us, but the acrid tang of the cordite from the latest shot was still in the air and the animal was voicing his suspicion in no uncertain manner.

Waiting till the sound of tearing flesh and crunching bones reassured us, I hugged Hoops and he raised his rifle once again. When the beam of the torch lit up the scene, the Tiger sprang up and faced us, his eyes gleaming in the light. Unhurriedly, Hoops aligned his sights and fired and there was no need for a second shot. In that brilliant beam I could almost see the impact of that heavy .470 tear its way through the heart and lungs, and the Tiger fell across the carcass of the buffalo, stone dead.

"Congratulations, old man," I said, "that was a perfect

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shot. I only hope Mrs. Hoops hearing this second shot does not come to enquire."

"She will not come" he reassured me. "I warned her not to come till after day break."

With the first light of dawn we heard the ear approaching. A little later there were sounds of a party advancing and Hoops stood up in the machan and shouted to his wife in German, "Halt. Don't come any closer" and I gauged from this that he was still suffering from the excitement of the previous night.

Mrs. Hoops had in the meantime instructed the beaters she had brought with her to open out and approach the "Kill". A moment later they spotted the Tiger and the usual ritual followed. After a few stones had struck the body and no reaction resulted, they rushed up and stood in an admiring group round the body of the Tiger. In the meantime both Hoops and I had descended and while everyone was congratulating Hoops on his splendid shot, I moved away and started a systematic search of the surrounding forest near the dead buffalo. I could not get rid of the feeling that that first shot was not a clean miss, as Hoops believed. I had noted from the machan that the first Tiger had bounded over two *lantana* bushes that obstructed his flight back into the forest. It was while examining these bushes and tracing his line of retreat, that I came on a fresh patch of blood on some of the leaves.

"Come this way, Hoops" I shouted and noting the excitement in my voice, he picked up his rifle and hurried up to where I stood. A single glance convinced him that the first Tiger must have been badly hit. Calling to his wife to bring her rifle and come, we advanced cautiously along the blood trail. All need for caution was unnecessary. About twenty yards from where the "Kill" lay, we found the first Tiger lying dead in a small depression in the ground.

As I had at first suspected that hurried snap shot had

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gone low, hitting the animal just above the kidneys, a wound from which no animal ever recovers. My congratulations on his success at securing two Tigers in the space of less than an hour were genuine, but our satisfaction was as nothing to the joy of the Pâtel who was literally dancing round the tigers, telling them in no uncertain terms what he thought of them for robbing him of so many valuable buffaloes.

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4 *Tiger On The Prowl*

Slinking through the shadows, his protective colouring blending perfectly with yellows of the dried blades of grass, the browns of the tree trunks and the sombre shadows of the darkening forest, I watched him as he crept towards his prey. The buffalo, now thoroughly aware of the approach of his hereditary enemy stood, with lowered head and distended nostrils, watching the surrounding forest intently. As I looked into its terror-stricken eyes, a surge of pity swept over me. This animal knew that death in its most cruel form was approaching, but the ropes that secured it to the ground prevented its escape, so that it had no alternative but to await its end with patient resignation.

Suppressing a desire to snap a shot at the tiger and so save the buffalo, I steeled myself to watch this kill from beginning to end. This unfortunate buffalo had to be sacrificed. The tiger was a notorious cattle-lifter and I had undertaken its destruction in an attempt to save the villagers from further loss of their cattle.

Suddenly, from practically below my machan, the Killer rushed. Only those who have seen the hunting tiger in action can appreciate the speed, the strength and ferocity of its initial charge. I had fully expected the tiger to spring on the buffalo's back, but it did nothing of the sort. With incredible swiftness, it avoided the wholly inadequate horns so pathetically lowered in self protection and in an instant had swept below the buffalo and seized its neck in its powerful jaws. Holding on remorselessly, it bore down, till the buffalo unable to support that great weight, tottered and fell,

Tiger On The Prowl

but still the tiger did not relax its hold, but kept that strangling grip till all signs of life had departed. Thereafter, it dragged the carcass a little nearer to the forest, then settled down for its feed. Swiftly it disembowelled the body, nipped off the tail near the vent and laying aside the viscera, started feeding from the hind quarters. All through this scene I had been struck by the remarkable ferocity shown by the tiger, both in the killing as well as in the eating. Growling continuously, he would look up occasionally and snarl, and I could only attribute this to his fear of another of his species coming to dispute his possession of the "Kill". And now suddenly I remembered that the main reason I had come to this village was too shoot this tiger and not to observe its method of killing and eating. Edging the rifle forward, I took careful aim at his left shoulder, judging the exact position of the heart, and fired. There was no need for a second shot.

I have described the above scene in some detail, not because I mean to imply that a tiger has no other method of killing, but because I have discovered from my own limited observations that that favourite scene of the tiger rushing from cover with a blood-curdling roar, the spectacular leap on the back of its victim, hurling it to the ground and severing its spinal cord, is largely used by writers for its dramatic appeal. The tiger kills where and when the opportunity offers. The breaking of the neck is incidental to the method of attack and the absence of large quantities of blood at the site of the "kill" is not due to the tiger sucking the blood of its victim, but because the initial hold on the neck is so fierce and so secure, that the flow of blood from the severed arteries is inhibited.

Hunting The Tiger

As this book is written from a sporting standpoint, the methods suggested here are such as are usually adopted by

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Shikaris, who are not in the moneyed class. By this I refer to visiting Americans and sportsmen to whom expense is of no consideration. The employment of Elephants, hundreds of Beaters and fleet of Jeeps in which to tour the area, is obviously out of the orbit of the average Shikari; instead we come down to essentials.

The first and probably the most popular is the use of the Machan. The building of this platform in a tree overlooking the "kill" or Bait is perfectly simple, but great care should be taken to see that the machan is practically invisible from below. The tiger is probably one of the few animals who looks up into the trees while passing through the forest. Monkeys provide him with a much appreciated variety in his diet and whenever he detects some of these creatures lurking in the trees overhead, a sudden roar often causes them to lose their hold and fall to the ground. The materials employed should also be obtained from some other part of the forest and not from the vicinity of the "Kill".

The most popular form of machan is the "Charpoy" or Indian string-bed. This can be tied or slung from a convenient branch and when camouflaged with green leaves provides a perfect hide.

Where a suitable tree is not available the only alternative is to "dig in". The pit should be fully four feet deep, the mouth covered with an old cart-wheel or stout branches and sufficiently roomy to enable the Shikari to move around in comfort. The camouflaging of this pit is a delicate operation and should be made to look as natural as possible. I do not recommend this form of "hideout" to the novice. It is an unnerving experience to have a tiger seated within a few feet of you.

Where the tiger has been so obliging as to provide its own bait, the sitting up is simplified, but where the Shikari is obliged to provide a live bait, care should be taken to see that the animal is not tied by the neck, but by one fore-foot.

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Should the buffalo calf, usually used for this purpose, scent the tiger, it will panic and in attempting to rush off will fall down. A stout rope some ten feet long, is most suitable and the apparent freedom of the animal as it moves around feeding, will help to allay any suspicion the tiger may have when approaching the bait.

When the sportsman has been so unfortunate as to only wound the tiger, especially if it is a confirmed cattle-lifter or man-eater, the follow-up the next day is essential. A great deal of course depends on the terrain over which the wounded animal has passed and the blood trail. Unless the Sportsman is a very experienced hunter, the employment of a tracker is absolutely necessary, especially in dense forests. Here, to the inexperienced eye, the trail disappears every minute and the chances are the hunter will suddenly come on the wounded animal, with dire consequences to himself. Never track alone. One or two companions will lend confidence and their presence is essential to guard your rear or sides from a sudden charge. I have occasionally employed buffaloes to beat out a wounded tiger from dense undergrowth. Always keep well away from the lines of retreat of these animals. Stampeding buffaloes are usually more dangerous to the hunter than the tiger itself. There is one axiom to remember always. Never leave the locality till you are certain that the wounded tiger is dead. A badly wounded animal is always a potential man-eater.

The Gun To Use

Finally, which is the best rifle to use on tiger? On this subject we have a host of opinions. Every hunter has one weapon by which he swears. I have mine. I have found from experience, that if the shot to be taken does not exceed twenty paces, the weapon, *par excellence*, is the .12 bore. This gun, if loaded with a 3 in. Alfamax Ball in the right

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barrel and a 3 in. Alfamax L. G. in the left is unbeatable at this range. There is one precaution, however, that must be taken. This gun selected must be capable of hitting a six-inch Bull at thirty paces, each time it is fired. If this is not so, discard the gun and use a rifle instead. The question now arises, what rifle? Here again every Shikari has his own preferences. Here again experience dictates a .375 Holland and Holland Magnum, but so few of us indeed is the opportunity given to use this superlative rifle. In the moderately priced class, the .375 Mannlicher, using the 270 gr. bullet, comes next. I give below the relative ballistics to show the performance of each weapon.

Holland & Holland 375 Magnum.	270 gr. bullet.	Velocity in feet per sec. Muzzle—2650	Energy in foot lbs. Muzzle—4220.
Mannlicher 375	270 gr. bullet.	Muzzle—2250	Muzzle—3030.

In addition the Magnum has three weights of bullets. The .235 the .270 and the 300. All these bullets can be fired from the same gun. Both weapons should be sighted for 175 yards flat. The Mannlicher, excellent as it is, lacks penetrating power, but this is the only rifle that comes within the purchasing level of the average hunter.

While writing the above it suddenly occurred to me, to what extreme lengths we go to accomplish the death of a solitary man-eater, while the simple villager, armed "with nothing more lethal than a spear or a bow and arrow, will accomplish, in probably, half the time, the destruction of this same Tiger, that we, in our arrogance and superior knowledge of high class weapons, ballistics and jungle craft, have prepared and elaborately planned for weeks in advance.

I was at the time staying with friends in the little township of Kodarma, when I heard that a young lad, working

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in one of the local Motor Garages, had, armed only with a spear, destroyed a notorious Man-Eater who had killed his younger brother few weeks earlier. The story was one based on such courage and ingenuity, that I have devoted a separate chapter to its telling.

5 *The Water Hole*

The day's work done, Radhu hurried home in cheerful anticipation of a good meal and the simple joys of his village life. As he neared his home, however, he was aware of an unusual excitement that seemed to have affected the entire village. No sooner did they catch sight of him than, with one accord, they raced towards him, shouting and wailing, and in the van was his aged mother.

Mystified and filled with dreadful foreboding, Radhu hastened to his mother's side. "What is it?" He questioned, trying ineffectually to stop her weeping. "O! my son," she wailed, "your little brother is no more. The cursed Striped One has taken him and I no longer wish to live".

"Hush, Mother, hush", he consoled her, "tell me all that occurred", and gradually he learned the whole pitiful tale. It appears that his younger brother had that morning driven the cattle to the border of the forest to graze. As the day advanced and he had not returned for the midday meal, his mother had gone to seek him. Not finding him with the cattle, she had entered the forest and had there suddenly come upon his body almost completely devoured. Distaught and inconsolable, she had rushed back to the village with the news, when some of the men-folk had come and picking up the pitiful remains, had conveyed what was left of the body to his mother's home.

Radhu stood for a long while before his brother's corpse. He did not speak or cry out, but in his heart there grew a deadly rage and he swore that he would not rest till he had avenged himself on the Killer.

The Water Hole

Thereafter, for several days, Radhu failed to present himself at the workshop in which he was employed. His employers hearing of his sorrow, granted him all the leave he desired and Radhu was free to work out his plan for revenge.

His first thought was to visit the scene of the tragedy. Here he found ample evidence of the Killer's presence and following his tracks he came at length to a small pool at which the tiger drank almost nightly. Here, in the shadows of a high embankment, was the spot at which the animal bent down to lap the cool water and as Radhu studied the spot a terrible revenge gradually took shape in his mind.

Returning to the village, he procured a stout rope and with this secured round his person, he returned to the pool early that evening. Selecting a tree that commanded a good view of the site he climbed into the branches as night fell and secured himself firmly to an overhanging limb. Here he waited patiently and as the early hours of the dawn approached, watched in savage anticipation as the Killer came down to the water to drink and then hurry away to some fresh scene of murder.

For three nights he watched thus and then fully satisfied, presented himself next morning at his workshop for duty. Respecting his sorrow his employers refrained from questioning his long absence and Radhu returned to work in his accustomed place. All that morning he laboured silently, but it was noticed that at the midday break he left the shop, with something concealed beneath his *gumcha* and as he failed to report for duty later, his employers supposing that he had returned home, being too unwell to continue, said nothing.

No sooner, however, had Radhu reached his home than he summoned his mother. "Prepare a meal quickly", he ordered, "and tomorrow, at an hour after sunrise come to the

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pool in the forest. To-night I shall avenge my brother's death, or you will have lost another son".

In vain the old woman tried to dissuade him. Impatiently he ordered her to desist, then taking up his *gumcha* and *chaddar*, the cloth with which he covered himself each night, he took these to the cow-shed where he saturated both with cow-dung. "Now", he thought, "neither by sight or smell will the tiger know I am so close". Then wrapping the bottle he had brought from the workshop in these clothes, he set out.

On reaching the pool, he did not this time hasten to the tree, on which he had spent so many nights. Instead he climbed to the top of the embankment flanking one side of the water and here, directly over the spot at which the tiger came nightly to drink, he sat down.

Carefully he cleared the ground, so that the rustling of no twigs or leaves would betray his presence. His *gumcha* he spread over the stones and on this he lay drawing the *chaddar* carefully over his entire body, leaving no part exposed and prepared to wait for the coming of the tiger.

He had a long wait before him, but he was content. This he knew was the supreme test. If he failed or his nerves betrayed him, death would be the only result. As the night wore on the moon rose flooding the entire scene with a clear, cold light. Sambur and other small animals came down to the pool to drink and as they failed to detect his presence, he rejoiced in the excellence of his disguise, and then in spite of his resistance, the quiet and beauty of the night, lulled his senses and he slept.

Suddenly and abruptly he was awake. He lay perfectly still, scarcely daring to breathe, lest the hammering of his heart should betray him, for in his ears was the gentle sound of lapping and he knew the tiger had come.

Steeling his nerves, so that his whole body grew calm, he raised his head cautiously and peeped over the embank-

The Water Hole

ment. There below him, so close that he could see the rise and fall of its mighty ribs, as he breathed between each mouthful of water, stood the tiger. Slowly, ever so slowly Radhu edged the bottle he had brought with him to the brink of the embankment, and then still more cautiously he extended his arm till the bottle hovered directly over the drinking animal. In his left hand he held the cork and this he flicked gently into the water below. No sooner did the missile touch the water than the tiger sprang erect and seeing the bottle suspended directly over him, bared his fangs in a blood-curdling roar. This was the moment, Radhu had waited for and with a quick turn, he emptied the contents of the bottle into the evil, snarling visage below. In an instant the silence was shattered by a series of agonised roars, as the tiger strove to bury its head in the sand. Then swift as lightning it sprang. Savage claws tore the *gamcha* and *chaddar* to shreds, but Radhu had not paused to watch the effect of his act. With a speed, born of deadly fear, he had raced down the embankment and up into the safety of the friendly trees. Here he perched trembling, listening to the roars of the dying monster as it thrashed about in the sand and then made off, racing blindly and frantically into the forest.

Seated high above the forest, Radhu thrilled to the success of his scheme, and although all was now quiet, he did not leave his perch till the sun was well above the horizon, when he descended and ran to meet his mother.

The old woman, torn with anxiety, had left her home long before sunrise, and as Radhu emerged from the forest, he met her, stumbling and tottering along the rough forest track, her old frame supported by a huge spear. Taking the weapon from her hand he led her gently between two large rocks, bidding her wait, till he returned.

Retracting his steps, Radhu returned to the pool, where he studied the trail intantly noting the direction in which

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the tiger had fled. Slowly and cautiously he followed in the wake of the pain-maddened beast, till he came, finally, to the edge of a deep chasm. Peering over he could discern in the dim light a huge, yellow form lying motionless on the rocks below. Selecting a large pebble, he threw this accurately at the recumbent form, and as the missile struck, but produced no reaction, Radhu knew the tiger was dead. Cautiously he descended and approached the body. With the point of his spear he prodded it in the ribs, and then with a savage, exultant shout, he buried the blade deep into its side.

As the old woman and her son approached the village, the entire population came rushing to meet them. Overnight Radhu had become a hero, but to all their demands that he should tell them how he had killed the tiger, he would only shake his head, till one of the throng noticing the still bloody spear, grasped it from his hand, showing his admiring followers, how with a single thrust the intrepid Radhu had laid the monster low.

When I reached this same village a week later, I heard the story again and again, and being anxious to see the lad, who unarmed, except for a spear, had attacked and overcome a man-eater, I called at the shop. I was as unsuccessful as his village folk. Radhu refused to throw any further light on his exploit, being content with a modest, "Let be, Sahib, the tiger is dead, let him rest".

But I was not content. Borrowing a jeep from the friend with whom I was staying, I motored down to the water-hole. The scene was unchanged. I inspected the place at which Radhu had lain, still marked by the remnants of a few strips of soiled cloth, and then turned my attention to the water's edge. Here were the pug marks, where the tiger had lapped the water. All around the sand was torn up and scattered, but what intrigued me most was the bits of glass that lay around. Stooping to retrieve a piece of

The Water Hole

glass, larger than the rest, I noticed a label attached to the surface. One glimpse at the inscription solved the whole mystery for me, for on that label was printed—"Pure Nitric Acid 100% Proof".

6 *The Panther*

The name, Panther, derived from two words of Greek and Latin origin, meaning "all animals", is the recognized name for animals of this species in India. The term "Leopard" so inaccurately applied to all Panthers, owes its popularity not only to usage, but also to a certain distinction recognized by most sportsmen, that the term panther applies mainly to animals of a greater size and weight.

The term Leopard, although more frequently used, can only be applied accurately to the Clouded Leopard, the Cheeta or Hunting Leopard and the Snow Leopard. Even an authority as famous as Dunbar Brander seemingly avoids the issue, but most sportsmen, including Sanderson and Burke, are more definite on this point. Sanderson considers length the deciding factor. He fixes 6 ft. as the extreme length for Leopards and anything over for Panthers. Burke, however, is more accurate. He states (Indian Field Shikar Book), "Average length of the larger variety (Panther) 7 ft. of the smaller variety (Leopard) 6 ft. 4 ins. The Leopard in fact ranges from 5 ft. to 8 ft. and the average height at the shoulder is about 2 feet."

Among the older generation of Shikaris, (by this I refer to sportsmen who have shot in this country for 30 years or more), the deciding factor is not only the length of the animal, but also the terrain in which it has been shot, and the size and type of animal it usually kills for food. All these tend to influence the decision to designate the animal as a Leopard or a Panther. There are Grass or Village Leopards of which, we in Bengal, have quite a number and

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which seldom exceed 5 ft. in length and live in the vicinity of villages, where they subsist, almost entirely on dogs, goats, domestic fowls and even contest with the jackals, the offal thrown out by the villagers; but are often referred to by local sportsman, as Panthers. These animals are a far cry from those magnificent beasts living in the dense forest and hilly areas in Behar, M. P. and Orissa, which are usually classified as Panthers.

To add to this confusion, there has recently crept into sporting literature a Panther, designated as a "gol-bagh", which appears to occupy a position midway between a Panther and a Leopard. This name I confess is a new one to me. I am familiar with such names as Cheeta Bagh, Chota Bagh, Tendua, Baghera and the like, but had never heard this name before, instead from the vicinity of Hazaribagh and Ranchi had emerged another Leopard, referred to by the local forest people, as Son Cheeta or Golden Leopard. I have made careful enquiries from local Shikaris and the possibilities are that this animal does exist. It is described as a small animal, not more than 4 ft. 6 ins. in length of a pale golden colour, with spots or rosettes barely discernible. The animal is purely nocturnal, timid and elusive and is said to have a marked partiality for young goats, hare, and domestic fowls. I baited many a likely spot with these birds, but never had the good fortune to sight one of these animals. There is a tendency to confuse this animal with the Golden Cat, but this is impossible as this beautiful animal seldom ranges so far from Assam and the Eastern Himalayas, which are its natural habitat.

General Description

It is not known definitely when the Panther entered India. That he originated in Europe is suggested by the fossil remains of Panthers, similar in every respect to our own

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animals, found in the cave deposits of the Pleistocene Age, in Spain, France, Germany and England. The fact that he is found in Ceylon, while the Tiger is not, seems to suggest that he entered India before the Tiger, at a time when the land bridge between this country and the Island of Ceylon still existed.

In appearance he is a sleek, short-haired animal, with a bright, fulvous coat, marked with small, close-set rosettes. It is observed that Panthers inhabiting heavily forested areas, are generally darker in appearance than those found in dry, hilly tracts. It is equally noticeable that Panthers frequenting mountainous areas are generally larger in size and far more powerful than their cousins in dense jungle country. Whether the nature of the country influences the size of the Panther or whether it is the class of animals he is called on to kill that determines his size, is debatable. Obviously a Panther whose normal prey is Sambar, Cheetal and the like, or who on account of the disappearance of game animals, is forced to prey on cattle, must necessarily be heavier and stronger than the Leopard whose normal prey is goats, dogs and the like. Dunbar Brander considers the average length of a Panther as 7 ft. 6 ins. while Burke on the other hand quotes 9 ft. 1 in. as a record. My own opinion is that a Sportsman obtaining a Panther over 6 ft. is fortunate indeed.

Among abnormal phases in colour, black is the most predominant. The Black Panther is not a distinct species, black and normal cubs being born to the same parent at the time of cubbing. This abnormal colour is due to an excess of melanin in the system, which darkens the hair and other parts of the body. Also, there is the popular belief that the Black Panther is the fiercest of all animals. There is a good deal of truth in this. Owing to the sombreness of his colouring, the Black Panther is difficult to detect while passing through the forest. His features assume a particularly ferocious aspect when attacking, an effect heightened by the

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peculiar blue that often tinges his eyes. As cubs they are far more ferocious and intractable and are seldom tamed. Owing largely to the fact that the skin of the Black Panther is a coveted trophy, these animals are hunted with an intensity that forces them to adopt an abnormal cunning and a fierceness in counter attack that is alarming. Also it should be remembered that the Black Panther is practically a social outcast. He does not mix freely with other members of his race. Due to his colour he probably finds it difficult to attract a mate. I have watched over a "Kill" on several occasions, in localities where Black Panthers are said to be numerous, but on no single occasion have I seen a pair of Black Panthers approach a "Kill" to feed. This cannot be said of normal coloured Panthers who frequently hunt in association, particularly during the breeding season.

Mating Seasons

Some years ago, while hunting wild pig in a village in the Krishnagar District, I observed a large number of people gathered on a country road, all intent on some sight in the fields adjacent to the road. Being curious myself I hastened to the spot and there in a clearing, not fifty yards from the road, were two Panthers mating. Quite oblivious to the fact that they were under observation, they raced around, dashed in and out of the adjacent jungles and played quite an amusing game of hide and seek. These love gambols were accompanied by incessant roarings, snarling and mock encounters in which the two rolled on the turf, bit and struck at each other in a frenzy of excitement. Seeing that I was armed the villagers begged of me to shoot the animals, but this I emphatically refused to do, considering it both inhuman and unsporting. Later, when the sexual impulse had been satisfied the animals suddenly became aware of the spectators and raced for the cover of the surrounding jungles.

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Although it is customary to fix the mating periods between February and March, Panthers, like Tigers, appear to have no fixed mating seasons. Panthers will mate whenever the female is in season, but it is noticed that cubs born in the midst of the rains, seldom survive. The period of gestation is about 12 to 15 weeks. Two to four cubs are usually produced. The mother chooses a dry, warm cave high up on the hillside or a patch of dense forest near a stream, for the shelter of her litter. During this period she is remarkably ferocious and will attack on sight anyone approaching her hideout. A female with cubs over six months old, will occasionally be accompanied by her mate and a fresh litter, showing that the female panther is promiscuous, mating whenever the sexual urge is on her and with any male available. This probably accounts for the high birth rate amongst Panthers, which coupled with their ability to survive under conditions that would destroy the Tiger or Lion, make them a real menace in some forest areas.

Panther Calls

Panther calls are distinctive and can never be confused with Tiger calls. The commonest and best known of these is the familiar "Sawing Call". This is produced by a partially open mouth, a succession of deep intakes of air and a hoarse barking cough. The sound thus produced is similar to the thrust and return of a coarse-toothed saw cutting through thin wood. This I am convinced is not a hunting call, but rather an intimation to others of its tribe that it is in the vicinity. The Panther is noiseless and deadly in its hunting and moves through the forest as silently as a shadow. The roar that accompanies its charge or the "whoof" of surprise or alarm he gives off when disturbed on its prey, is similar in every respect to the Tiger, but unlike the Tiger the Panther seldom or ever blows on the carcass to disturb flies or wasps when starting its meal.

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Man Eating Panthers

Living in the vicinity of villages the Panther soon loses all fear of man. It is fortunate he is able to satisfy his hunger on goats, dogs, rodents and even offal, as otherwise, if subjected to the extreme hunger the larger cats have to endure, the Panther would soon degenerate into a man-killer of the worst type. When the craving for human flesh is established, it is probably the result of early training and not expediency. It is frequently noticed that where a confirmed man-eating Panther takes up his abode, others of his tribe quickly adopt this habit. It is possible that the female Panther transmits this craving to her offspring or actually instructs them in the art. It is seldom the after-effect of crippling injuries or extreme hunger. Most man-eating panthers are made, not born, unlike the tiger who may come from a long line of man-eating parents.

Occasionally, however, the craving for human flesh is cultivated accidentally. In Districts where famine and floods are seasonal, the increasing death-rate and the unlimited supply of corpses thrown up on the river banks or left rotting in the fields, provided both the Tiger and the Panther with an unfailing food supply, especially as these seasons also correspond to a great scarcity of game animals. The taste for human flesh thus acquired often converts a game-killer into a confirmed man-eater.

7 *Leopard By Night*

On a recent tour through Behar I spent a few days in a delightful forest Rest House at Mandu. This village is situated about 15 miles from Hazaribagh, on the Hazaribagh-Ranchi Road, and is by no means a Sportsman's paradise. In spite of its vast forest areas, its numerous hills and streams, the country is practically destitute of all game animals, and the most that can be hoped for are a few jungli-murgi, partridge and an occasional hare. I had not, however, come there to shoot, but rather to wait for the rest of my party before trekking further a-field. One evening, while walking down the road that lies to the east of the bungalow, I noticed a party of Sonthals advancing down this road, carrying what was obviously the remains of some animals. Curious to know how the creature had been killed, I questioned the men. The instant, however, that they laid the body down on the road, I recognised the remains of a Leopard kill. The abdominal viscera had been eaten completely, the ribs neatly sheared through, the neck partially severed. The animal which I now saw was a fairly large goat, was quite fresh and on enquiry I was informed that the flesh was being taken to the local market for sale. It always sickens me when I see meat of this description being sold in the village market. Every Shikari knows that the claws of the Tiger and Leopard are so loaded with germs that septicaemia immediately sets in and such tainted meat is positively dangerous to consume, but with the Sonthals and Mundas such trifling defects are of no consideration. It is said of these people that of the two legged varieties they will eat any animal except man.

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and of the four-legged species, only the charpoy (stringed-bed) is immune. Further enquiries elicited the information that the goat had been killed that very afternoon and that the remains had been found in a field near the village. The leopard, it appeared, was in the habit of visiting this village almost daily and had taken several goats, dogs and the like and had on one occasion, demonstrated before a party of villagers working in the fields, so that they had been forced to abandon their tools and fly. Allowing for the usual exaggerations, I realized that this animal was rapidly nearing that border-line stage, when some untoward incident, such as a slight wound or extreme hunger, would convert him into a man-eater. I now heard for the first time that quite a large number of Shikaris had come from Hazaribagh and Ranchi in an attempt to bag the animal, but unsuccessfully. The cause was invariably the same. The animal never returned to its kill, nor did it attack any animal tied out as bait.

"Listen Matho", I said, (all head men of the village are called Matho) "I have had some experience in shooting these animals. If you will provide me with a goat, I will see what I can do. Tomorrow morning, come to the Bungalow and I will accompany you to the spot where this animal was killed". The villagers agreed and departed and I returned to the Rest House and there thought out a scheme that I was confident would deceive even the cunningest of leopards.

The next morning I accompanied Matho to his village and there inspected the site at which the "Kill" had taken place. The goat had obviously been hurrying down to the stream that flowed to the east of the village and formed a boundary between it and a hill on the further side. The corpse had been dragged into the dense bushes that bordered the path leading down to the stream and to the ford across it. Here it had been partially consumed and was later discovered by villagers returning home. While examining the

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site I noticed a bamboo peg that had been driven into the path near the ford and was informed by Matho, that this was the peg to which most of the goats had been tied as bait.

Looking up from the peg to the ford which crossed the stream at this spot, I noticed that the heavily wooded hill on the opposite side of the stream practically came down to the water's edge. Instantly I knew what had occurred and an old proverb came to mind. "In vain is the snare set in the sight of the watching bird". That Leopard had been an interested and amused spectator of all the preparations made to snare him.

Returning to the village I sent for the goat-herd whose duty it was to water his charges at the ford. On his arrival I instructed him carefully. "This evening," I explained, "you will take the goats down to the stream as usual. This white goat that the Matho has given me, you will take along with you. Before leaving, you will hobble both its hind legs and carry the animal down to the water's edge where you will leave it to drink with the rest of the herd, when they have finished you will drive the goats back to the village as usual. This white goat, being hobbled will gradually fall behind, till it is left alone. On no account return or help the animal and above all do not glance in the direction in which I am hiding".

The entire scheme worked out as planned. From my hideout I watched the lad arrive and depart. His charges, having drunk their fill, hurried back to the village and in a short while there was only the white goat, hobbling along and bleating piteously. Intently, I watched both the animal and the ford. Unable to resist so opportune a moment, the Leopard broke cover shortly after. With a single spring he had crossed the stream and rushed up the bank to where the goat was now struggling desperately to escape. I could have snapped a shot at him when first he sprang, but when I saw the size of the animal I was taking no chances. Waiting till

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the thrashing of the dying goat had ceased and the Leopard was preparing to carry it into the shelter of the adjacent forest, I selected a spot just behind the left shoulder blade and fired. I could not have been more than 15 paces from the animal when I fired, but the leap he gave carried him to within a few feet of the water's edge. Here he attempted to rise and cross the stream but in the effort died.

Matko, although disappointed that I was not able to save his goat, was unfainly glad at my success and accepted gratefully the Rs. 15/- I gave him for his animal. I have mentioned this incident at some length, because it illustrated the success that invariably follows unorthodox methods of attracting a Leopard, especially in situations where it is suspected that the Leopard is a keen observer of the preparations made to ensare him.

The Panther And His Kill

I know that the popular conception on an attack by a leopard is a blood-curdling roar, a spectacular spring and the victim is hurled to the ground, with the leopard gripping it by the throat. I have, however, witnessed numberless such attacks, both on wild game and on tethered animals, but invariably the procedure has been a stealthy approach, the leopard taking advantage of the protection offered him by the mottled appearance of his coat. The pause and the careful reconnoitring for the best position before the final rush, and then the swift spring as he darts through the undergrowth, and the deadly and fiendish tenacity with which he holds on to the neck of his victim till all signs of life has ceased. This seems the pattern of attack most favoured by all panthers and this was the method invariably followed by the Naviagoan Man Eater, in the space of a little more than two years accounted for nearly 300 human victims.

Immediately after the Leopard kills and the first pangs

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of hunger have been satisfied, he looks around for a safe place to hide his "Kill". This he invariably does by dragging the body into a deep Nullah or under heavy undergrowth, or a deliberate attempt is made to cover the carcass with leaves and bushes occasionally, when suitable cover is not obtainable the leopard will grasp the animal by the neck and drag it up into the fork of a tree, where he will leave it for further attention.

The leopard usually commences his meal at the stomach or in the region of the breast bone. The viscera, the flesh on the ribs and the fore-quarters are first eaten. The ribs are sheared through with remarkable precision and it is only after all this portion of the carcass has been consumed that the neck and head are attacked.

A Panther may commence his meal in the region of the buttocks, as with the Tiger, particularly if the animal killed is a large one and this habit is a good indication of the size of the Panther.

I have observed that a Panther, if fired at and missed, will often return to his kill after an interval, but this is not the practice with Man-eating Panthers. These animals seldom return to a human "Kill" once they abandon it or are driven off. As in the case of the tiger, it seems as if the taking of human life endows the Killer with some special intelligence that protects it from harm. One thing is certain, the man-eater is infinitely more cunning and suspicious than the ordinary cattle lifter.

8 *Pran Matho, The Forest Mystic*

I am never able to write about the forests of Behar, Orissa or Madhya Pradesh, without becoming involved in some superstition or legend of the forest people. Every Shikari knows of the Puja or ceremony held by most tribes before they undertake any drive or beat through the forests in quest of game. This ceremony, which reaches an apex just before the Annual Beat, held by most of the tribes in this area, is performed in simpler form in most villages when the youngmen go out on a hunting expedition. Most Shikaris have been present at these jungle pujas and have most likely been induced to part with cash for the purchase of the necessary ingredients with which the ceremony is performed. In ninety cases out of a hundred the Puja ends in singing, dancing and drinking and the sportsman, although assured by the presiding priest that he has now the protection of the gods and his quest is bound to be fruitful, is none the worse or better for the experience.

A cynical disbelief is the normal attitude of most sportsmen, and I was no better till I had a personal experience that convinced me that there are times when these ceremonies are effective and that the Pujari or Pran Matho, when in a trance does supply reliable information as to the movements of game.

Many years ago, before Hazaribagh became a town almost as densely populated as Ranchi, I was shooting in this district. We were moving down a road known in those days as The Old Chatra Road. A few miles before we reached

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the dilapidated Dak Bungalow at Katkamsari, we were induced to leave the main road and follow a cart track into the dense forest on the left of the road. No vehicle, except an old Ford (Tin Lizzy) would have attempted the road but even so, the going was so rough that we were obliged on several occasions to make a wide detour across the fields, to reach our destination, a small village called Jori, situated at the junction of two streams in the heart of the forest.

The forest was teeming with game. On every side we saw Sambar, Cheetul and Nilgai and in the sandy beds of the various streams we crossed were ample evidence of the presence of carnivora, yet in spite of Beats, sitting up over Bait and tracking, not a single animal had fallen to our guns. The position was becoming pretty desperate. We had been at the village for three days and our tinned provisions were exhausted nor could anything edible, mutton, chickens, eggs or bread be purchased at the village. As for the game, this seemed to have vanished and we were seriously contemplating giving up the shoot and returning to Hazaribagh, when one night a queer looking individual walked into the circle of our campfire and sat down. We looked at him in surprise. Thin to the point of emaciation, his bony frame was covered with a ragged woollen pullover, on his head he sported a cotton forage cap, while protecting his legs from the bitter cold were a pair of faded, dungree slacks.

As for a while, he did not speak, I turned to Biku, our Head Shikari and enquired.

"Who is this man, Biku? He does not look like a Shikari. Ask him what he wants."

"He is the High Priest of the village, Sahib. A well-known Pran Matho, said to be gifted with strange powers. It is said he can call any wild beast from the jungle."

"Then ask him to call some for us. We have had no luck so far."

The stranger listened to Biku for a minute or so and

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then turning he addressed me personally. "It is customary when strangers come to this village, to give the goddess a small gift. She is displeased and until Puja is made the animals will stay away."

I recognized the pattern immediately. "Tomorrow Puja will be made and there will be a small gift for you as well." I replied, "Biku will purchase all that is necessary." Immediately the man rose and bowing to all of us, left as silently as he came.

Next morning early, Biku led us by a well used jungle path to where on the outskirts of the village, stood a frail structure on a platform some five feet high. The roof, composed mainly of grass and straw was supported at the four corners on Sal posts. In the middle of the platform stood a crudely fashioned figure of a winged horse with a nude female on its back, the whole daubed with yellow and vermillion. This I learned later was the image of Mai Mahadeo, the presiding deity of most forest villages. When we arrived, the Pran Matho was already seated before the image, deep in contemplation. At first he ignored our presence, but after a while, when he considered that he had impressed us sufficiently, he made a sign to Biku, who immediately came forward bearing a basket from which he first extracted a venerable old Cock. From his bedraggled appearance, it was obvious that this rooster had long past the age when he was of any use to the hens. Taking up his "Tangi" (axe) he struck off the bird's head and permitted the blood to fall all over the image. He next produced a bunch of freshly gathered Sal leaves, selecting one, he smeared a small quantity of blood over the leaf and carefully set it besides the Sadhu.

From the same basket he now extracted a piglet and a kid. Both these animals could not have been more than a couple of months old. Slitting their throats, he again sprinkled part of the blood over the image and as before selected two Sal leaves on which he applied some of the blood. These

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also he laid besides the Sadhu. Only when this part of the ritual had been accomplished did Pran Matho take any active part in the proceedings. At a sign Biku now approached and handed the Priest a mug half full of Mowah, the potent local brew of the forest tribes. This was duly blest, a few drops sprinkled over the image and the Sadhu then proceeded with the main portion of the Puja. Taking up the blood-smeared Sal leaves he placed them in his mouth. Chewing nonchalantly for a few minutes, he swallowed the lot with the aid of a long pull from the mug and thereafter proceeded to go into a trance. I watched him carefully, being highly skeptic of all this *hocus pocus*, but when he opened his eyes and I could see only the whites, I had to admit that his trance was genuine. Immediately he started to speak and the Shikaris gathered round listening intently to all he had to say. This part of the proceedings I was unable to follow as the man spoke rapidly and in his own dialect, but I learned from Biku that he was giving detailed instructions as to where the various types of game were to be found. Most of this I soon realized was well known knowledge and it did not need the expenditure of something like twenty rupees and a highly elaborate ceremony, to produce this information. Some of this scepticism must have been in my face for when he recovered and noticed the contempt with which I now viewed the whole ceremony, he addressed me angrily, his eyes flashing with resentment.

"So the Sahib is displeased with my divination. He thinks that this Puja has been a childish farce. But I warn him, our forest gods are not to be despised. To-night they will demonstrate their power. Let him erect his Machan anywhere he pleases and I will send the animals of the forest to the tree on which he sits, but let him not waste his time firing, for bullets will not harm them".

At this I laughed outright, for I have always considered myself an excellent shot. "Listen, Pran Matho," I replied,

"send your animals and for every shot I fire and miss I will pay you five rupees" with that I turned and left, leaving our heaters and Biku to settle the matter with the Sadhu.

I had erected my Machan at the extreme end of a clearing directly opposite the village. The site was ideal, as not only was the Makai (Indian Corn) ripening, but the heavy forest, a short distance away, provided all the necessary cover for any animal approaching the spot. By sundown I had taken up my position and awaited, with some misgivings I must admit, Pran Matho's boast that he would send the animals of the forest to my tree. By midnight I was still awaiting. Not an animal had broken cover and the old cynical contempt with which I had always regarded all these mystical procedures, was returning, when suddenly a dark object left the fringe of the forest and came cautiously towards my machan. The moonlight was brilliant, but the ground mist had started to rise and it was not till the animal was within some ten yards of my machan, that I recognised it for a magnificent Sambar, his horns gleaming white in the moonlight. Carefully aligning my sights, I waited till he turned broadside to me, then fired at the exact spot I knew where his heart would be. All that happened was a startled grunt and the clatter of hooves informed me that I had scored a complete miss.

Amazed and disgruntled, I carefully reloaded. I could not understand how I had failed to secure a clean kill and I wondered if the curse the Pran Matho had placed on me was really beginning to work. I dismissed the thought as fantastic.

Puzzled and I must admit rather worried, I anxiously awaited the arrival of another animal at my Machan, but so occupied was I with my own thoughts that it was not till I heard a succession of grunts immediately below me, that I cautiously peered over to see a Sloth Bear busily lashing away at an ant hive at the foot of the tree on which I was

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perched. Here is a chance to retrieve my confidence I thought and settled down to take a shot that I knew would be impossible to miss. Waiting till Bruin had demolished the hive and had practically buried half his body in the interior, while he sucked up the juicy termites, I aligned my sights carefully at the junction of his shoulders and neck. A bullet placed here I knew would not only sever his spinal cord, but as his head was towards me, it would travel down and disrupt both heart and lungs. As I have said before the moonlight was brilliant. My sights were clearly defined, so resting the barrel on an intervening branch, I took careful aim and gently squeezed the trigger. So close was the animal that I distinctly heard the impact of the bullet as it struck the ant-hive and Bruin with a squeal of fright, rushed away towards the shelter of the forest.

The result of that miss so unnerved me that without a moment's hesitation I rolled up my blankets, slung my gun over my shoulder and prepared to descend. As I leaned over the edge of the Machan looking for the ladder, I noticed a huge Wild Boar busily completing the work of destruction begun by the Bear. So unnerved was I that instead of shooting from where I stood, I leaned down and retrieving one of the empty shells from the floor of the machan I flung it at the Boar, who made off promptly, while I descended and hastened back towards the Tent.

Next morning I rose a little before dawn and taking up my rifle I loaded it carefully and sought the path leading to the Temple. Although it was scarcely light, I noticed the old Sadhu bending before the Image deep in prayer. Going up to him I tapped him lightly on the shoulder. He turned with a start and then as he recognized me, smiled cynically. "I trust the Sahib had good sport last night. Twice I heard him fire." Without a word, I pressed three five rupee notes into his hand and as he looked at me in surprise, I pointed to the Image, "Tell her I am sorry. I

should never have scoffed at her power". Immediately his face softened. Taking the notes he laid them at the foot of the image and for a while seemed lost in prayer. Suddenly he turned to me, "Mai Mahadeo is pleased at your generosity. Take your rifle and carry on down this path till you come to a clearing in the midst of the jungle. There you will find your reward". As if impelled by some mysterious power, I shouldered my rifle and hastening down the path I came to the clearing indicated. As I left the shelter of the forest a magnificent Cheetul stag sprang to his feet and stood for a moment staring at me, then sprang away. Without a moment's hesitation I threw the rifle to my shoulder and fired. There was ample meat in the camp that day.

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9 The Vanishing Lion

The Asiatic Lion, as distinct from the African species, is known zoologically by the rather imposing title of 'Panthera Leo Persica, Meyer', the racial name 'Persica' being given to Lions found in India, Persia and Mesopotamia. The difference between the African and Indian species is so slight that it is only after careful observation that this can be detected. On an average the Indian Lion had a scantier mane than the African, but this is compensated for by a fuller coat, a long tassel of hair at the end of the tail, pronounced tufts of hair on the elbow joints and a fuller fringe of hair on the belly. In size there is little to choose between the two. The average length of both Indian and African lions is between nine or ten feet, although there are several recorded instances of African lions taping 12 feet. Burke in his "Indian Field Shikar Book" gives two instances of lions shot in the Gir Forests that taped 9 ft. 11 inches, and 9 ft. 5 inches.

General Description

The characteristic colour of the Lion is a tawny yellow, although in individuals it is sometimes yellowish brown and in some rare instances a sandy grey. The colour of the mane may be the same as the body or it may differentiate by the predominance of brown or black hairs. Occasionally, the intermingling of black hairs is so marked, that it gives rise to the term, "black maned lion". The mane of the lion is

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said to start growing when the animal is 3 years old and to be complete at 6 years. Lions, like tigers, mate all through the year or whenever the female is in season.

Lions, when mating, seldom eat. For a week or more a mating couple will retire into some secluded spot and there the devotion of the male is remarkable. He watches her every move with an intensity that, were it not for its devotion, would be pathetic. Let the female but turn her head for a moment, and the lion will gaze earnestly in the same direction. If she rises, he will rise with her as well. When she sleeps at night, he will lie at her feet or if he is not repulsed, will lie with his back pressed lovingly against hers. But what a difference when this brief courtship is over. No longer is he considerate of her feeling. With a snarl he will drive her from the "kill" till he has satisfied his hunger first. When the cubs are born, he will desert her and she has perforce to be content with others of her own sex or an unmated lioness who assumes the character of a nurse and watches over the cubs.

In the Gir forest mating is usually confined to October and November and the cubs are born between January and February. Cubs born during the rainy season seldom survive. The Lioness has her first litter when she is $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 years old and produces two to three cubs at a time. The period of gestation is 108 days. The cubs, when born, are spotted and striped, indicating a progenitor midway between a leopard and a tiger. These markings fade with growth but are still faintly discernible in adult animals. Matings between a Tiger and Lioness rarely occur, but when this does happen, the offspring is called a "Tigon". When the male parent is a Lion, the offspring is called a "Ligon". Eric Hardy, F. Z. S. records an instance which he observed at a zoo in Manchester (England) when the mating occurred between a male Manchurian Tiger and an African Lioness. Two cubs were born at Dresden zoo in Germany in 1932. They were

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first sent to Carl Hagenback's famous zoo in Hamburg, but in 1936 returned to England when one of the cubs died in 1941. As is to be expected with hybrids, the "Tigon" is much larger than its parents and looks more like a lioness. It is whiter below and has faint traces of brown striping, chiefly on its hind legs. It has tail rings and is black behind the ears like a tiger, but it roars like a lion.

How Lions Hunt

In this respect the Lion follows the same procedure as the Tiger, but as he hunts largely by day, he depends more on his skill at concealing himself and on the speed of his attack. Lying in the vicinity of water-holes, salt-licks and game trails, he patiently awaits the approach of an animal. When the victim selected is sufficiently close, he rushes from cover with a roar and springs on its back. His weight and the force of the initial impact, hurls the animal to the ground, where savage fangs seize it by the throat and hold on remorselessly till all the signs of life have ceased. In districts where game is scarce, the Lion, by virtue of his tendency to form family groups, will co-operate with each other to hunt game. The Lioness, being lighter and swifter than her mate, will select a mound of earth or bush, behind which she will lie in wait. The Lion, consorting with other members of his troop, will approach the game slowly, keeping in contact with each other with low grunts and slowly drive the animals towards the spot where they know the females are concealed. Once, within striking distance, these females will rush from cover and spring on as many of the animals as they can reach, thus providing food for the entire group. Once the animals have been killed, the females and cubs will retire to a short distance and there await till their Lord and Master has consumed what is popularly known as "The Lion's share". He will then retire and the rest of the troop

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will rush in to feed. The Lion is no fastidious eater. When hungry The King of Beasts, will fill the royal stomach with carrion or even offal thrown out by local villagers, to such straights has the senseless destruction of all game animals brought him.

The Passing of the Lion

The Lion from the earliest times has always held a distinguished place in the history of Nations. The ancient Egyptians dedicated this animal to their God Shu and goddess Sezmett, both of whom are represented with lion heads. The lion rampant, is a well-known symbol on the flags of many nations, while we have in India the State Insignia of the Dharmachakra supported on four sides by lions.

Originally the Lion inhabited Northern Greece and Macedonia. Its range extended through Persia, Mesopotamia and the plains of Northern and Central India. The war exterminated the lions of Persia and Iraq, where a few Asiatic Lions still lingered in the deserts of the Upper Euphrates and Arabia. Today the Lion of Juda is extinct in modern Palestine, extinct in all Asia Minor. In India Lions are found only in the Province of Kathiwar (Saurashtra) and there only in the Gir Forests. Man, that ruthless killer, who exterminated the lions of Europe and Asia, is mainly responsible for bringing these poor, harassed creatures to the verge of extinction in India. Due mainly to the efforts of the Board of Wild Life in India, the Lion has found sanctuary in the Gir Forest, where he is strictly protected, but here even, the slow remorseless advance of civilisation has driven him further and further back. The lands surrounding the Gir Forest have in recent times been thrown open to cultivation and the farmers, to protect their cattle that invariably stray into the forest areas, do not hesitate to shoot any lion that wanders into the cultivated area. To

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such an extent has this poaching grown, that Government, realising the futility of trying to preserve these animals solely in the Gir Forest, has created the Chandraprabha Wild Life Sanctuary, 43 miles from Varanasi (Banarás), as a New Home for the Indian Lion. This Sanctuary which covers an area of over 39 square miles, was established in January, 1954. The Sanctuary is bounded on the south-eastern side by the Chandraprabha River, which boasts two picturesque falls at Rajdhari and Deodhari. Stocked with wild game of all types, this beautiful site offers the wild life photographer a splendid opportunity to photograph game in their natural habitat.

The Gir Forest

This home for the Indian Lion, lying within the old Junagadh State, consists of nearly 500 square miles of rugged, undulating country. Covered in parts with stunted teak trees, palas, babul and bhor, the plain is bare and open during the summer months. Water is scarce, being limited to a few deep pools in the dried bed of the Hiran River. These are the sites at which the lions gather and game concentrates. This also is the finest time of the year for viewing these noble animals. It is estimated that the total number of lions residing in this forest is about 100, but judging from accounts of those who have recently visited this forest, the number has dwindled alarmingly in recent years, due possibly to interbreeding, and half that number would be a fair estimate.

A Pride of Lions

I visited the Gir Forest many years ago. Regulations were not so strict then and it was possible to drive over the open fields right into the heart of the Sanctuary. I remem-

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ber it was a beautiful moonlit night, calm and serene, when we visited this site. Concealing both the jeep and ourselves in a dense bamboo thicket, we settled down to wait the coming of the Lord of the Forests. All night we heard the animals roaring, but saw none, till the early hours of the morning, when from a clump of scrub jungle, a huge male, with two females in attendance, broke cover. It was then I had an opportunity of viewing a male lion in all his regal panoply. He stood fully 3½ feet high at the shoulder and could not have been less than 10 feet in length. There he stood motionless, facing us, his neck and shoulders covered by a magnificent mane. For a while he gazed directly at the spot where we lay hid, then, lowering his head, he roared. As that deep, terrifying voice, mellowed by distance, flowed over us, I seemed to detect a note of sadness, a message of farewell in its cadence. For a moment I saw a huge arena and on the blood-stained sand, struggling bodies, slashing and stabbing with savage intensity, then once again that deep voice boomed out, "Ave. Morturi te salutant." (Hail. Those who are about to die salute you).

10 *Bhaloo, The Wise*

Extolled in legend and song, there is scarcely a village in India, where the children are not thrilled with stories of how Bhaloo rescued the village belle from the clutches of fierce Dacoits or how the Sadhu, lost in meditation, had his life saved by the timely intervention of the Bear. Among the forest folk the Bear is venerated for his sagacity and intelligence and the Sonthals and Bheels firmly believe that it is often due to the information given to them by the Bear, that the Sambur and Cheetal manage to escape the nets and pits cleverly set for their destruction.

I can remember vividly, even to this day, my first introduction to a Bear. I was at the time, a little fellow, not more than four years of age, living in a spacious bungalow situated in the centre of, what was then the heart of the Indigo producing area of Malda. To be exact the place was referred to locally as Kala-Dehera or the Black Swamp. This was on account of the dark, purple residue that dyed the surrounding marshes from the washing of the Indigo plants after their preliminary soaking.

It was fairly early in the morning and the constant rattle of the little drum, which every Bunder Wallah (Monkey Man) carries to announce his approach, brought the children rushing to the verandah in eager anticipation of an amusing show, nor were they disappointed. When this decrepit, itinerant player approached the bungalow, we noted with surprise that he led, not only the usual pair of monkeys on a gaily coloured string, but following solemnly behind came, at first, a large white goat and then a Bear.

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My excitement was intense. This was the first time I had seen a Bear and far from being afraid I was filled with eager curiosity to view, at close range, this huge shaggy animal. The ancient play went its appointed course. The monkeys performed their antics, the goat walked solemnly round the ring carrying the monkeys on its back and the Bear performed its grotesque dance to the vast amusement of all the children both from the house and the adjoining village. Exhausted, probably, by the heat as well as its strenuous efforts to please its audience, poor Bruin came to rest at the feet of his Master and within touching range of where I stood. What possessed me, I do not know, but without a moment's hesitation I stretched out my hand and timidly patted his shaggy coat. The normal reaction to this should have been a snarl and a swift slash from razor-sharp claws, but the Bear, turning round to see who had touched him, looked in my face and finding it was only a child, turned away indifferently. This was all the encouragement I needed. My Mother had an infallible remedy for keeping noisy children quiet. This consisted in a huge sandwich, so overloaded with jam, that the messy stuff would ooze out on all sides. This toothsome morsel I promptly laid before the Bear. He sniffed it in surprise, then liking the first tentative taste, he promptly proceeded to consume it with evident relish. My Mother had in the meantime realized what her son was up to and was about to swoop down on me and rescue me from what she must have supposed was instant death, when the Bunder-wallah made a sign to her to stand still. He then rose and still rattling away on his little drum, called to his charges and moved away from the spectators. The Bear with one last lingering look behind, to see if I had any more of this delectable stuff, followed meekly and my first encounter with a wild animal was over. Later, my bottom still smarting from a vigorous application of the hair-brush, I leaned out of the window and in a

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childish treble, called, "Bye, bye, Bhaloo" but the Bear did not even deign to look back.

Whatever the psychological effect of that first encounter with a Bear may have been, I am not sure, but, from that day, although I have had innumerable opportunities to shoot these animals, I have never fired at one, but this I have noticed, through the years, that as "Beat" after "Beat" drove past me and the terrified animals came rushing through the forest, the number of Bears that hurried past my machan grew steadily less and less, till to-day, to sight a Bear in a "Beat" has become the exception, not the rule.

This is a great pity. The Sloth Bear is the one animal that is intimately our own. Found only in Peninsular India and parts of Ceylon, it does not occur in other parts of the world. This great shaggy beast, so familiar to all of us in this Country is being ruthlessly destroyed. As it lives in hilly, rugged country, subsisting mainly on roots and tubers, it does no damage to crops. Its favourite food is wild honey, grubs and termites. It is harmless to man and will only attack when molested or surprised. The oft repeated excuse that the Bear is being crowded out of its natural habitat by the advance of civilization is incorrect. The terrain occupied by the Bear is unsuitable for crops or human habitation, so the only cause of its disappearance is the ruthless shooting indulged in by present day shikaris. The Bear is not even a sporting animal in the true sense of the term. His poor sight and still poorer hearing, make him easy to stalk. When wounded, he screams in the most pitiful manner and takes so long to die, that any sportsman, who has had the misfortune to shoot one of these animals, seldom repeats the incident.

Much is said about the beauty of a Bear's skin, but unless the animal is very young, the hair is coarse and scraggy. Its colour offers an irresistible attraction to mosquitoes and

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when used as a rug in the house or on the back seat of the car, it is a prolific source of insect bites and the like.

When studied in its natural habitat, the Bear is a joy to watch. A natural comedian, his antics, especially in a Mowah Grove, when replete with Mowah and slightly intoxicated, are indescribably funny.

Some of the largest Bears on record have come from the wild, hilly tracts of Behat and M.P. The average size of a Sloth Bear is from 4 ft. 6 ins. to 5 ft. 6 ins. The tail is a ridiculous four to five inches in length. For its size the animal is remarkably heavy, averaging from 170 to nearly 300 pounds. Burke records a Bear shot in the Burka Duars that taped 7 ft. 1 in. and several others well over six feet. Monsters of this type are seldom if ever met with these days.

The Bear produces its young in the coldest part of December or January. It seldom has more than two cubs, who are blind for the first three weeks. This is the period the mother Bear is really dangerous and will attack on sight. She hides her young in deep, dark caves and nurses them till they are able to fend for themselves. They frequently accompany her on her nocturnal rounds and when tired will climb on her back, clinging tenaciously to the long hair between her shoulders. When captured young they grow into affectionate pets, but are extremely dirty in their habits.

That the Bear is being shot out is obvious from the way it is disappearing from our forest areas. They are great wanderers and do not thrive in captivity. The only way the Bear can be preserved is by introducing him into our numerous Sanctuaries and National Parks. Here they may have a chance to survive the senseless destruction to which, on account of their clumsy movements, their inability to sense the presence of danger and their curiosity, makes them particularly liable.

11 *The Elephant, Wild And Free*

There are two species of Elephant in existence, the African and the Indian. The Indian Elephant is the only species of its kind found in this country, yet geological remains suggest that no less than seven species of Elephant existed in India in remote periods.

The African Elephant is bigger than the Indian. It has huge ears and the trunk is provided with two fingers at its extremity. The Indian Elephant has only one.

Recent discoveries have shown that the Indian Elephant is closely related to the Mammoth. This ancient animal was not the fabled "Mountain of Flesh" it was popularly supposed to be. The height of the better known Siberian Mammoths was an average 10 ft. which is also the height of the Indian variety, while its concave forehead and smaller ears were similar to the Indian Elephant. Under its tail and protecting its anus from the cold, was a thick flap of skin. The Indian Elephant has a similar flap which acts as a protection against insects. This is not found in the African variety.

General Description

The Indian Elephant rarely exceeds 10 ft. 6 ins. at the shoulder, the average height of an adult male being 9 ft. Females are one foot shorter. Twice the circumference of an elephant's forefeet gives a fair indication of its height. This rule however, does not apply to young and immature animals. The colour of an elephant is greyish black. The chest,

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forehead and ears are often covered with flesh coloured spots.

Present day sportsmen seldom keep any accurate record of the size of the animals shot by them, so I am compelled to quote from records kept by W. S. Burke, in his classic Indian Field Shikar Book for such records as are mentioned here. G. P. Sanderson scouts the idea of a 10 feet elephant and states that 9 ft. 10 inches is the largest he ever saw, but in Sterndale's "Mammalia" we have the recorded height of the famous Bulrampur fighting elephant of bygone years which taped 10 ft. 7 ins. at the shoulder.

Mr. T. Dixie, District Engineer, Chaibassa, records a famous Rogue which he shot at Jagernauthpore, 29 miles south-west of Chaibassa on the 17th December 1917. Old residents of Jamshedpur (known in those days as Kalamati) will recall the terrible fight put up by this rogue and another elephant a few miles away from the town. Mr. Dixie states that the height of this elephant was 10 ft. 9 ins., but that the tusks were only 6 ft. 8½ inches long. He was blind of his right eye and had a very large hole in his right side, probably caused during the fight.

Tusks : Usually, only the males have tusks. Tuskless males are called "maknas" and are very large in build, with well-developed trunks. The size and shape of the tusks vary in individual animals. A length of four feet is considered quite a prize. With the price of ivory at a record height, the shooting, trapping and even poisoning of males with tusks of only a few feet, is quite common. Gone are the days of record tusks. The Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society records a pair in the Royal Museum at Siam that taped 9 ft. 10½ ins. Record tusks of this length are no longer found in the country.

Freak Tusks : Mr. Armaund Denis in his fascinating book, "On Safari" records the strange case of the elephant with four tusks. It appears that the Pigmies of the Ituri Forests have long held the belief that an enormous elephant

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once roamed those forests. This animal they referred to as the King of Elephants. This story was considered a myth, till Mr. Denis received definite information that a local native had sold four tusks to an Ivory Dealer, all of which he claimed had come from the same animal. Following up this information, Mr. Denis succeeded in locating the native and induced him to bring in the skull of the dead animal. Later, the skull was cured and the four tusks duly fitted into the original cavities. All four tusks were approximately eight feet long and thin, with the ivory heavily scarred and pitted. The first two weighed 22 kilos, the third just over 23 and the fourth nearly 24. The tusks were normal, except the fourth which curved inwards instead of outward as tusks usually do. These tusks, fitted to the original skull, are still to be seen at the Explorers Club, New York.

Teeth: While tusks are the main object for which elephants are shot or trapped in this country, the teeth are also of considerable interest to sportsmen. At its present stage of evolution, the elephant has discarded all its canine teeth and incisors, except the pair in its upper jaw. These have developed into tusks. As to the grinding teeth, the elephant develops six molars in each jaw during its lifetime, but the grinders are so large and the jaws so short, that there is never room for more than two at a time, one entirely and the other partially exposed above the gums. As the new tooth forms in the rear of the jaw, it gradually replaces the preceding tooth as it wears away, forcing it out of the jaw. This peculiar process provides sportsmen with a fairly accurate means of judging the animal's age. The first milk molar is shed at the age of two years. The second at the age of six, the third at nine, the fourth (or first adult tooth) between the 20th or 25th year, and the fifth at sixty. The sixth and last serves the animal for the rest of its life. The appearance of these molars are peculiar, consisting of a series of ridges across the crown of the tooth. This is caused by the wear-

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ing away of the dentine. The entire molar is composed of a series of plates, each consisting of a flattened mass of dentine, invested by a layer of enamel, the whole bound together in a solid mass of cement. As the softer dentine wears away, the harder enamel appears in a series of transverse ridges riding across the crown of the molar. The number of these ridges vary. In the Indian Elephant, the sixth or last molar may have as many as twenty-seven ridges.

Another interesting detail about elephants are their feet. The Indian Elephant has normally five nails on its forefoot and four on its hind. These nails are comparatively small and crinkled, their impression only traceable on very wet soil, but the composition of the foot itself is remarkable. When placed on firm soil, the toes are splayed out and the circumference of the entire foot increased considerably, but when the animal is traversing soft mud or silt, where on account of his great weight he is liable to sink and be literally bogged down, the act of withdrawing the foot, immediately releases a pad of loose flesh, adhering to the base of the foot, which causes the entire foot to shrink and makes possible the withdrawal of the foot from the cavity made on entering. This accounts for the fact that so few elephants are ever trapped in marshy soil.

Elephant Walks

The Elephant usually proceeds at a sedate walk, but when alarmed he is capable of proceeding at quite 20 miles an hour, a speed that is not noticeable on account of his huge size, but, as many a sportsman has discovered to his cost, he is capable of covering long distances in record time. At climbing up and down steep hill sides he is remarkably agile. An excellent swimmer, he has one peculiarity that is seldom noticed. When compelled by circumstances to plunge from a height into deep water, the elephant will pause on the edge

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of the bank. Here, after surveying the water for a moment or two, he will deliberately proceed to inflate himself. During this process his circumference visibly increases and when he considers he has reserved enough air to ensure his buoyancy, he will plunge into the stream and swim across. This is a process which he employs when bogged down in marshy soil or quick sands. This increased buoyancy enables him to free himself from the tenacious grip of the quivering sands. A personal experience will illustrate this.

Some years ago I was with a hunting party in what in those years was the heavily wooded foothill near Angul. We were proceeding towards the Mahanadi River, intending to cross over to Daspalla, where rumour had it a Man-Eater was terrorising the local folk. As we approached the stream, through a cutting in the embankment, we noticed the fresh tracks of a small party of elephants. In fact in some places the freshness of the dropping indicated that the animals had only just passed. Sending the Shikari ahead to spy out the land, he returned within a few minutes to inform us that the animals were almost directly opposite us on the river bank. Fortunately the wind was in our favour, so advancing as cautiously as possible, we crept up to the edge of the forest bordering the stream and peered over. Not more than fifty yards from us and standing right at the water's edge was a party of elephants, about six in number. The elephants were all concentrated on watching the antics of one of their party who was standing in the stream and submerged to a depth of about four feet. The animal was evidently in great distress. Making frantic efforts to turn round, it only succeeded in sinking deeper into the water. Finally it threw itself bodily on to the water and in this position, floating partially, it managed to free its legs from whatever was gripping them. A few poserful lunges carried it to the back where it emerged literally trembling with exhaustion. All this time, contrary to popular belief, its companions made no efforts to assist,

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but once it emerged from the stream, they gathered round in a body and moved off down the stream to another spot where they entered the water and swam swiftly across. Curious to learn what had happened, I walked down the bank to the spot where the elephant had attempted to cross. A warning shout from the Shikari stopped me and that individual came running up. Selecting a small rock from the many lying around, he tossed it, on to one of those churs that form so frequently in these rivers. The rock landed with a splash and settled on the sand. For a moment nothing occurred, then suddenly the entire surface of the chur became agitated. The rock, trembling like a sentient thing, began to sink and in a few moments disappeared from sight and I realized with horror that a few more steps would have taken me on to a belt of quicksand, one of those treacherous spots that make of these rivers a living nightmare.

Elephants seem to prefer country where the terrain is hilly or undulating and covered with tall forests. As their main food supply is bamboo, they are always to be found in areas where bamboos grow in profusion. Intolerant of the sun, they sleep during the hot afternoons, coming out in the evenings and early mornings. During the night they leave the shelter of the forests and approach villages where they do much harm to standing crops, banana plantations and orchards, being especially partial to Jack Fruit, Dorian and various tubers. An adult elephant will consume 600 to 700 lbs. of green fodder per day.

Elephants drink up to 40 galls. of water daily. During periods of drought, when local streams and pools are dry and water unobtainable, elephants have been known to seek out depressions in the beds of dried-up streams and there, using tusks and feet, have dug holes three to four feet deep and there wait till moisture has percolated into the pits. Here also, on excessively hot days, they will lie down on the moist sand, seeking partial relief.

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Elephant herds have one peculiarity which often results in their destruction. When undisturbed they follow a regular routine. Drinking and feeding in accustomed places, moving in single file, they are inclined to adhere strictly to a regular, well-defined track, which invariably follows the easiest and shortest path across country. These trails are known as Elephant Paths or Elephant Walks and it is along these trails that Poachers await the oncoming herd with home-made guns, poisoned arrows and the like. These are the paths along which deep pits are dug and the animals, terrified into sudden flight with the aid of flaming torches, drums, and gun fire, fall into these pits and are later destroyed. In Burma elephants will wander into bamboo forests at a height of 10,000 ft. while in Sikim their tracks have been observed at 12,000 feet.

Social Habits

The elephant is a remarkably social animal. Herds of from ten to fifty are frequently met with in the vicinity of tall forests. Extremely adaptable they are found in the cold, dense forests of Burma and Sikim or in the hot, humid jungles of Orissa, Mysore and parts of Bihar.

Most herds consist of family members. Led, usually, by an old and experienced female they will wander over a vast extent of land. It is remarkable how within the structure of their own herd, individual members will conduct themselves remarkably like the various members of any of our Social Clubs. The old and blase' married members will congregate and feed together, while the young bachelors will frolic independently. The young will keep with their mothers or other cows, who appear to have taken on the task of protecting and nursing them, and this duty is not taken on lightly. Some years ago, while in Mayurbhanj, Orissa, I was staying at a beautiful, little Forest Bungalow at a place

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called Lulung. Situated on the top of the hill the Bungalow was a favourite resort of fishermen keen on Mahseer, of which the stream that flowed at the foot of the hill was said to be teeming. One evening while resting on the verandah, which overlooked the adjacent stream, we were constantly disturbed by the trumpeting of a solitary elephant. Eager to ascertain what had disturbed the animal, we wandered down to the foot of the hill and led by the shrill trumpeting, passed through the forest to emerge on a sandy clearing on the banks of the stream. Here an amazing sight met our gaze. Standing in the middle of the clearing was a young cow elephant. Between her forelegs and probably not more than six months old, was her calf, but this was not the detail that held our attention. Crouched on the sand and not more than twenty feet from where she stood, was a tiger. Every now and again a deep menacing growl would rumble up and the calf, terrified at the sound, would attempt to escape from between his mother's legs, but each attempt was firmly but gently frustrated by her trunk. Although we had approached as noiselessly as possible, the keen eyes and hearing of the Tiger immediately detected our presence and with an angry roar it immediately bounded away into the forest. Frequent trumpeting from the adjoining hills, now informed us that others of the elephant herd were hastening to the mother's aid and so we retreated back to the Bungalow as well. The Tiger had evidently come on to the elephant and her calf shortly before our arrival. Afraid of attacking the calf while under its mother's protection, he had contented himself with growling and approaching the pair in short rushes, hoping that his approach would so terrify the calf that it would ultimately break away from its mother's side and so provide him with a very satisfying meal. Even an elephant fears a tiger and it speaks volume for the mother's courage and devotion that she stood by her off-spring during that terrifying ordeal.

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Elephants appear to manage old age better than most animals. I have seen an old tusker in the Sambalpur Division, guarded and tended by a couple of youngsters of the same herd. At the first indication of danger, these guardians would sound a harsh warning and then hurry the old elephant off into the dense forest, prepared to defend him should any hunter dare to follow. Why this particular elephant was so protected I have no idea, but the local Shikaris maintain that elephants know that they are hunted for their tusks. It is significant how, as soon as they detect the presence of hunters, the entire herd will turn and face in that direction. The old Bulls, especially those with valuable tusks, will move into the centre, where the females will ring them, as if protecting them from the approaching menace. Old Hunters affirm that this is not done because the elephants know that their tusks are sought after by the Hunters, but because the females, fearing the extinction of the herd if the males are killed, protect them as well as the young animals, by building a barricade of their own bodies round them. I have seen this done on two occasions and it was significant that the Muknas also took up their position with the females.

There is another and oft repeated tale, showing the sagacity of these animals, and the extraordinary social instinct that inspires the entire herd, that when one of their members is dangerously wounded, two young males will force their bodies against each side of the wounded member and thus supported will lead him into the forest and away from danger. How far this is true I am unable to say, never having seen it actually done.

There is a story that comes to us from Africa, that in one instance, a herd of elephants constantly harassed by poachers, with poisoned arrows, realizing that the poachers only selected the males with large tusks, retreated into the densest forests accompanied by a member of wounded animals and that when these poor harassed creatures

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succumbed to the effects of the poison, the rest of the herd, wrenching out the tusks from the jaws of the dead animals, shattered them to bits on trees and rocks, thus making pursuit a valueless effort.

Breeding Seasons

The Elephant does not appear to have any fixed breeding season. Most elephants drop their young at the end of September and as the period of gestation is 20 months, it is apparent that the large majority of elephants mate in March or April. There is a belief that if you spy on mating elephants, the male is so enraged that he will immediately attack. I do not know the reaction of Wild Elephants, but in N. Bengal where I had an opportunity to watch the elephants in the Tea Gardens, no such display of temper occurred. Elephants are affectionate beasts. I have watched the male courting the female, rubbing his head against her and caressing her with his trunk. During the actual act of mating, the female goes down on her knees and the male covers her from the rear. Their trunks are frequently entwined, but whether this is done due to sexual excitement or to ensure the stability of the male, it is difficult to say.

Only one calf is born at a time, although there have been rare instances of twins or even triplets. The young calf will walk a few hours after birth and averages 2 ft. 10 ins. in height. It suckles with its mouth and not through the trunk as some people suppose.

MUSTH

Many years ago, Sportsmen and even those who had made a study of the subject, were convinced that Musth in Elephants was due to sexual frustration. The fact that this condition appeared during the months of March and April,

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a period that coincided with the mating period, seemed to indicate that this contention was correct. Subsequent observation has shown, however, that frequently male elephants in close contact with females during this period developed this condition, and further observation led to the conclusion that Musth, while undeniably having some bearing on sex, was due to a specific disease, which appeared to attack some of these animals during this period, much as flu' will attack humans at certain seasons during the year.

The physical manifestations of Musth are very noticeable. With the onset of the disease, glandular enlargement beneath the skin causes the entire temporal region to swell up, exaggerating the whole appearance of the head, particularly in old Bulls. Subsequently a thick, oily and dark coloured exudation oozes out of the pores on either side of the face, between the eyes and the ears and flows down the cheeks. This discharge is of a caustic or irritating type, because it is noticed that when this occurs, the elephant will bathe the parts frequently, often applying moist earth to the cheeks to allay the irritation.

Rogue Elephants

I have often heard sportsmen discussing how a wild bull in Musth has terrorised an entire area, killing people and ravaging crops and villages. This is incorrect. The wild elephant in Musth is seldom dangerous. Far from becoming a lone bull, he will frequently seek the company of the cows and it is noticeable with what kindness and consideration the cow elephants will treat him. During this period he possibly consumes some tuber or plant that has a soporific effect on him, because his whole demeanour changes and he appears to be in a drowsy, contemplative state, standing solitary and quiescent by some pool or stream. If the water is deep enough he will sink into its cool depth and submerge his



Mr. Fitch (U. S. A.) with his trophy and two trained Shikar Elephants.



His Highness
The Maharaja
of Mysore and
Mr. Dennis
Conan Doyle
(son of the
famous author)
with a record
Bison shot in
the Mysore
Forest.



Mr. Willi Dörr of Germany with a wild buffalo shot over a water-hole.

The Elephant, Wild And Free

entire body, often lying here for hours at a time, or will content himself with squirting water over his body and head. When in this state he is seldom dangerous. It is the elephant in captivity that is the most troublesome and treacherous. He will attack and kill his mahout or anyone coming within reach of his trunk. He has to be firmly secured with ropes and chains and fed on a restricted diet. During the worst paroxysms of the disease he is given large doses of opium to calm him down.

Rogue Elephants on the other hand are in quite a different category. The rogue elephant is seldom in musth when he starts his killing. Among the many rogue elephants I have seen shot, I have invariably noticed that these animals were suffering from festering wounds, inflicted by shot guns, light bore rifles and in some instances by arrows and spears. It must be remembered that the elephant is a very intelligent creature, possessing a prodigious memory. When shot at and seriously injured, he will make off and conceal himself in the most inaccessible places. The younger generation of sportsmen seldom follow up and destroy a wounded animal and these provide the most prolific source for rogue elephants. It may be six months before an elephant, badly wounded in stomach or thigh, will succumb to his injury and during this period of pain and suffering, his anger and resentment against those who originally inflicted the wound grows, in proportion, till, at length, he will emerge from the forest and burning with a desire for revenge, will attack the nearest village, destroying crops, trampling down the frail huts of the villagers and with consummate cunning lie in ambush for the villagers near some isolated pool, bathing ghat or forest path. From this point of vantage he will suddenly rush down on them, seizing them in his trunk he will dash their brains against the trees or trample them underfoot. For a few weeks this rampage of terror goes on till he finally succumbs to his wounds or is shot.

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Hunting the Elephant

The act of shooting an elephant just because of its tusks is to me a deed of unpardonable vandalism. It is true there are instances when the destruction of the animal becomes unavoidable, as in the case of a proclaimed rogue and it is then that the Hunter should know something about the anatomy of the elephant and the most vulnerable places in which a bullet will produce immediate and painless death. I will not attempt to describe the rifle, *par excellence* as this is a matter of personal preference, but any high class weapon of .375 bore and above, throwing a bullet of 300 grs., will bring about the destruction of the animal speedily.

The main difficulty is where to hit the animal. The majority of shots, in India at least, are taken when the animal is feeding in dense bamboo clumps. Once the direction of the wind has been ascertained every precaution should be taken to approach the animal as noiselessly as possible. The bright eye that he turns so significantly in your direction, is miserably weak, so that objects barely a hundred yards away, are seen only in blurred outline, but it is with his acute sense of hearing and smell, that he becomes aware of your approach. Once the ears fan out and the trunk is turned rigidly in your direction, it is easy to see that your presence has been detected and located. The next instance the trunk is doubled back behind the tusks and that thundering irresistible charge begins. At the first signs of the charge do not hesitate on the manner of your departure, but if your nerves are equal to the occasion, then select the boss, conspicuous on the forehead and just above the trunk, and place your bullet there. Immediately after firing, spring to one side, as often the impetus of the charge will carry the animal past the place at which you are standing. There are many other shots, the most favoured being the depression

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between the ear and the eye, but this all depends how the animal is facing. Never, on any account, shoot an elephant in the body. This type of shot, even if aimed at the heart, is rarely fatal and an elephant shot in the body, even with a heavy rifle, is a Rogue in the making and a potential killer.

Elephant Graveyards

This is a legend that is common to both India and Africa. The Indian Elephant if allowed to live its normal life, will survive to about 100 years. Considering our vast forest areas and that the elephant population is about one fourth of the African, it is not surprising that Hunters in quest of elephant, rarely come across the bones of an animal that has died of natural causes. But the legend still persists. When an elephant, or for that matter, any animal, feels death approaching, he will leave the herd and wander away to some secluded spot, where he will lie down and patiently await the end. To find this spot has been the ambition of every Ivory Hunter. The natives aver that the craving for water as well as for seclusion, drives these poor creatures to seek deep isolated swamps or dense forest retreats, but it is significant that the bones and tusks of these animals are seldom found. Occasionally one comes across the massive head bones of an elephant buried deep in the soil. The smaller bones have of course been eaten by scavengers, but a careful examination of the skull invariably reveals that the tusks have been hacked out, showing that the animal had been killed by Hunters or Poachers. The truth is that the Elephant, like all other game animals in this country is being rapidly shot out. Herds of fifty or an hundred animals are rarely seen and considering the length of the life span of the animal, the number of animals leaving a herd to die in some solitary, isolated place, are so few that the creation of a

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regular graveyard to which these animals retreat, is scarcely possible.

Mr. M. Krishnan, the well known writer on Indian Wild Life, to whom I referred this question, replied as follows :—
“Mr. K. Krishnamoorthy, of the Kerala Forest Service, a keen naturalist especially interested in elephants, has an interesting theory on this subject. He has shot a few proscribed rogues and twice he noticed that the mortally wounded animal made for the nearest stream which it entered, standing in deep water to die”.

A similar preference is mentioned by Sanderson and Sir Victor Brooke. Considering the number of deep streams that intersect our forest areas and their ability to dispose of all elephant remains in a short time, the possibility of finding regular Elephant Graveyards is remote indeed.

Hunter, however, discounts the whole theory. The reason he states why so few elephant tusks are found in the forest, is that the Porcupine has a peculiar penchant for this type of bone. A pair of Porcupines will reduce a ninety pound tusk to a five pound stub within a few hours, while the bones, composed of softer material, rapidly decompose in the damp, marshy soil of the forest.

12 *Elephants In Bondage*

For over a month, scouts, shikaris and villagers had come in a steady stream to the Palace, bearing tidings of the movements of the Elephant Herd. Deep in the forest, safe from all interference, a large body of elephants moved from one bamboo clump to another, feeding and resting. The young Bulls challenged and fought each other, the cows, grazing placidly, tended the young, while one magnificent Bull, assuming undisputed leadership of the herd, led them to where in the densest part of the forest they could settle down. It was the month of September and many of the females were heavy with young.

The leadership of this splendid male was not only unchallenged, but it was all the more amazing, for it is always a wise old female who leads the herd, but when, with the aid of a pair of powerful field glasses I studied this animal and noted the formidable pair of tusks that graced his upper jaw, I was able to understand his immunity from attack.

I was at the time visiting Mysore, a guest of one of the Maharaja's Staff and it was mainly through his influence that I was able to obtain an invitation to witness the Kheddar due to be held early that year.

In those specious times, when Kheddars and Elephant Hunts were the proud privilege of Maharajas and Ruling Princes, an invitation to witness one of these Drives was a courtesy seldom refused.

I had arrived well in advance of the actual date of the Kheddar and anxious to obtain as complete a picture as possible of the methods employed, I accompanied one of the

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leading Mahouts on a trained Elephant, on a systematic tour of the forest.

Once the main herd had been located, its position and numbers noted, the Shikaris planned both the approach and the drive. In this instance they were fortunate. The Herd, under the leadership of the splendid animal I have already mentioned, was moving steadily towards a section of the forest, that, although densely wooded, was open to the East, where a stream fully hundred yards wide, intersected this portion of the forest. This stream they decided to make the eastern boundary of the Drive and accordingly clearing and fencing of this area was started.

From all the neighbouring villages, workmen armed with axes, ropes and wire, swarmed into the forest, a site was selected some 100 yards square and the erection of the stockade was begun. First a barrier, composed of stout sal posts, set three feet apart and embedded firmly in the ground, was erected. Interlacing these posts and rising to a height of over 10 ft. was a further barrier of split bamboos, which enclosed the entire area. At one side of the stockade and directly opposite the stream, an entrance about thirty feet wide, had been constructed and fitted with a doorway, consisting of stout sal bullies, firmly lashed together and suspended over the entrance. Guide ropes fitted to the top of the gate and lashed to an adjacent tree, kept the gate suspended. Later, men armed with axes, would be stationed on adjacent trees and when the herd had been driven into the enclosure, these ropes would be cut allowing the gate to fall into position, thus sealing all attempts at escape. The whole of the gate as well as the entire stockade had been cleverly camouflaged with leaves and branches, so that it was difficult to distinguish it from the rest of the forest.

Within the stockade itself, a large number of stout posts, some three feet high, had been firmly planted in the ground

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and dispersed all over the enclosure. To these posts had been attached ropes and chains, in readiness for the Drive.

As I made a final survey with Tara Singh, the Head Mahout, I realized what man's ingenuity and ruthlessness could devise for trapping these beautiful but powerful creatures, till now free and independent, but shortly to be chained and driven into bondage and slavery. In particular I visualized that magnificent animal, so proud of his strength and leadership, who in a few short hours would stand within this stockade, straining at his bonds, his heart broken with the shame and ignominy of bondage.

It was 3 A.M. a few mornings later when Tara Singh came to my tent to rouse me. Already the huge encampment was alert and a feeling of suppressed excitement filled the air.

"Hurry, Sahib," he whispered, "the Scouts report that the herd is restless and already their leader is drawing them further into the forest".

I dressed hurriedly, swallowed a cup of scalding tea and when Tara Singh brought his elephant to the entrance of my tent, I mounted swiftly and in silence. I now noticed that a heavy rope had lashed across the pad on the elephant's back. To this rope had been fitted a number of loops to act as hand-holds. If the going was rough, these loops would be of great assistance in maintaining a seat on the pad.

As we proceeded through the dew-drenched forest, it soon became apparent that Tara Singh was driving his mount towards the centre of the Drive and into the lead. On both sides of us were strung out some fifty trained elephants, moving noiselessly towards the wild herd. It was now I noticed that Sal posts, painted white had been planted at regular intervals among the trees. I knew anything white is anathema to a wild elephant and that he will shy away from any obstruction painted that colour. Around these posts were clusters of three or four men, armed with unlighted

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torches. Noticing my curiosity, Tara Singh whispered, "These are the 'stops', Sahib. They have been placed in two converging line along the path the Beaters hope to drive the elephants. At the head of this path is the entrance to the stockade and once the "Beat" starts, the men will drive the elephants down this path into the enclosure. Trained elephants will bring up the rear, preventing stragglers from breaking back into the forest. But get ready. We are now almost in sight of the herd".

Bending forward, he picked up a rifle that had been resting on the pad almost at his feet and handed it to me. "When I tell you, fire a single shot directly over the herd". That will be a signal to the beaters that everything is ready and the Drive will start. After that reload and keep the rifle handy. Elephants are not the only animals that will be driven out. If you see a Tiger breaking back, shoot and shoot to kill. A single Tiger, raging back through the forest, could disorganize the whole beat, thereby costing us the loss of several valuable animals."

We now started moving forward more cautiously. The fringe of the forest was a short distance ahead and already, in the uncertain light of dawn, I could glimpse a large open plain, in the centre of which, grouped together and milling round in some confusion, was a herd of over a hundred animals. The trained elephants I now noticed had opened up and were hurrying round the rim of the clearing to form up in the rear of the herd. Waiting till they had taken up their positions, Tara Singh raised his hand and called out "Fire."

The crash of the explosion shattered the stillness of the forest and the echoes had barely died away, when from the opposite side of the clearing came the solemn roll of a hundred drums, advancing slowly and growing louder as they approached, "Operation Kheddar" had started.

The entire herd was now thoroughly alarmed, milling

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round in the utmost confusion. Jostling each other, they converged on the centre where they stood in a compact mass. And now the leadership of that magnificent Bull was apparent. For a moment he stood undecided, then with a harsh, trumpeting call, he sprang into forefront and the entire herd patiently followed.

Tara Singh now urged his elephant to the fore. As soon as his elephant appeared on the edge of the forest, the entire herd stopped in surprise, but the leader, seeing at last something on which to vent his rage, threw up his trunk and trumpeting his challenge, charged straight at us. Now indeed the tables were reversed and the entire herd came thundering in his wake and I realized the strategy underlying this undignified retreat, for Tara Singh, without a moment's hesitation, turned his elephant and raced back the way we had come. How I thanked the wise forethought that had fitted those loops to the pad rope. Without their assistance I would have been swept off the back of the elephant and crushed to death under the feet of the following herd.

Gradually, however, the tempo of the charge abated and I now noticed that Tara Singh was deliberately guiding his elephant towards the entrance of the stockade. Behind us came the Beaters with their drums and on each flank, the Stops with their torches now aflame, were steadily converging on the herd, which now ran between parallel lines of Beaters. Behind us and bringing up the rear, were the remainder of the trained elephants, driving the animals before them, intercepting those who attempted to break away and rounding up the females and calves who fled in utter confusion.

Although the entire extent of the Beat, from the time we had rounded up the elephants and the final drive into the stockade could not have been more than ten miles, the operation lasted practically the whole day, running according to plan with a wonderful precision and ease.

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At the very entrance, however, the first hitch occurred. The leader of the Herd, who till now had persistently followed Tara Singh's mount, hesitated. His astute brain warned him that everything was not in order. Turning round he started forcing his way back and the entire herd accustomed to following his lead, did the same. This is where I saw the marvellous training of the pad elephants. Moving like a well organised and trained force, they wheeled into a compact formation and in a body advanced on the leader, forcing him back. Armed with heavy chains they lashed out mercilessly at every elephant who opposed them. Unable to resist the pressure and intimidated by the shouts and drums of the Beaters, the herd turned once again and streamed past the gate into the palisade. At a signal from Tara Singh the look-outs raised their axes and struck, the massive gate slid into position and all retreat was cut off.

All this while I had been watching the Leader. Confused and bewildered by the shouts of the men, the beating of the drums and the trumpeting of the terrified animals around him, he stood uncertain in the centre of the enclosure. The instant however, that the gate crashed down he seemed to realize that all exit had been sealed off and that he was trapped. At that moment he appeared to go mad. Lifting his trunk high above his head, he trumpeted his rallying call. So shrill and impelling was the sound that the entire herd moved towards him. And now I saw him do a gallant thing. Waiting a moment, as if to satisfy himself that all his companions were present, he moved swiftly to the fore. Here he paused. Then lifting his trunk once again in a scream of rage and defiance, he charged straight at the closed gate. No structure made of wood could withstand the impact of those tons of maddened flesh and as the huge body charged head-on into the gate, the entire structure collapsed and with a scream of defiance, he and several of the younger

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bulls charged through and made for the river a few miles away.

Tara Singh, wise in the way of elephants did not let this manouevre stampede the rest of the herd. Shouting to the Mahouts on the other elephants to form up before the collapsed entrance and prevent any of the other animals from escaping, he turned his elephant and urged it with voice and goad in instant pursuit. From its very inception that race was hopeless. Rejecting his new found freedom, the leader and his now sadly depleted following, reached the stream far ahead of us and swam across. Tara Singh brought his mount to a halt on the belt of sand fringing the stream and gazed across the water, to where in the depths of the forest on the opposite bank, the fugitives were now safely hidden. To have followed was useless and as night was now fast approaching any hope of tracking the elephant in the darkness was impossible.

As we stood there in silence watching the opposite bank, the bushes parted suddenly and the Leader emerged, standing on the sands in clear view. Up and down the stream he looked, seeking the rest of his company and then as if he knew that they would never come again, he raised his trunk and sent out one last despairing appeal, and in that heart-breaking cry was all the agony, the sorrow and frustration of his defeat at the hands of man.

Bending forward, Tara Singh grasped the rifle from my hands. As he flung the butt to his shoulder, my own hand closed down firmly on his arm. "Don't fire, Tara Singh," I pleaded. "Let him go. In one fell stroke he has lost his mate, his off-springs and his companions, leave him at least his life."

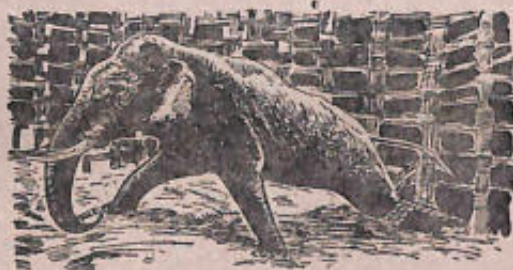
Tara Singh thrust my hand away impatiently and turned with an angry retort to face me, but something he saw in my eyes caused him to turn away and address the elephant.

"Go quickly", he shouted. "A soft hearted fool has

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begged your life at my hands and I have never yet refused a friend a favour" with that we turned and made our way back to the stockade.

Arriving here we found the place alive with activity. Gangs of workmen were busy repairing the breaches in the walls. The gate had been set back in place and strongly fortified and already preparations were being made for roping the animals within the enclosure. The tying of these animals is an amazing display of co-operation between men and trained elephants. I have mentioned the stout stakes driven into the ground all over the enclosure and fitted with ropes and chains. As soon as the elephants had been driven into the stockade, trained animals selected a captive. Advancing abreast they drove him towards one of these stakes and while they pressed against him on both sides, young lads would slide down their legs and slipping ropes or chains over the ankles of the captive would tie him firmly to the post. The system was to tie the right hind leg to one post and the left foreleg to another. Thus bound it was impossible for the animal to free himself by tearing the posts out of the ground



"Struggling in vain to free himself"

In this position he is kept for a week or more without food or water, till he becomes so exhausted that he can be released without fear of his doing any injury to himself or his mahout. Later he is fed and watered by hand, till he grows accus-

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tomed to the presence of man. His final training for hauling logs and other tasks is a long, drawn-out process undertaken by trained elephants and mahouts. Fortunately for these poor creatures, man has now realized that this work can be done more speedily and efficiently by a single crane, lorry or jeep and operation Kheddar will soon be a relic of the past on a par with slavery and the traffic in human beings.

Early next morning I made one final survey of the stockades with Tara Singh. The previous day's catch had been quite a large and profitable one and this old martinet was vastly pleased, thinking of the fat bonus that awaited him. As we came to the rear of the enclosure, a plaintive wailing struck my ear. "What is that, Tara Singh?" I enquired. By way of explanation he led his mount up against the wall of the stockade and I looked over. On the ground, her head and limbs grotesquely twisted, lay a dead cow elephant. Besides her, moaning pitifully, was her calf, not more than two months old. Even as I looked the little fellow tried ineffectively to move one of his mother's legs to get at her teeth. He was hungry and could not understand why this huge creature, so gentle and considerate before, was now deaf to all his entreaties. I heard Tara Singh sigh behind me. "This is to be expected, Sahib. With so many animals crowded into this enclosed space, some poor cow is bound to be killed, some helpless calf crushed."



"Moaning pitifully besides his dead mother"

13 *The Wild Buffalo*

In the hierarchy of Forest Lords I would give pride of place to the Buffalo and the Wild Boar. I know it is the Lion, who, on account of his noble and imposing appearance, is termed the king of Beasts, but for sheer bravery, tenacity in attack and a wholesome contempt for personal danger, the Buffalo and the Wild Boar know no equal. The courage of the Wild Boar is well known and perhaps I am aggrandising the wild Buffalo, because that is the one animal who nearly terminated my career as a Shikari.

The sportsman in quest of record heads, is foredoomed to disappointment. This animal has practically disappeared from peninsular India. In the lower section of south east Madya Pradesh, in the States of Bastar and Jeypore, there are a few animals left, likewise in the marshes and grass forests of the north-west corner of the Mahanadi River in Orissa, he may find a few. Record heads are a thing of the past and it is only in Assam, where if his luck holds, he will be able to secure a passable specimen.

In appearance the wild Buffalo is very similar to the domestic animal, the only characteristics that distinguish him are his enormous horns and his size. He stands about 6 ft. at the shoulder and weighs nearly a ton. The horns grow to almost fantastic lengths. In the British Museum there is a single horn that tapes, on the outer curve, 78½ ins. It came from Africa, but was later proved to belong to an Indian Buffalo. Allowing a foot for the forehead, the complete horn probably measured from tip to tip, over 14

The Wild Buffalo

feet. Undeniably the best horns come from Assam. "F.D." ("Asian" 1st July 1884) records 13 feet, 4 ins. along the outside curve and "N.S.K." in the same journal (3rd August; 1880) gives 12 feet, 9 ins. and 34 inches girth as the dimensions of a fine Assam male. Today no specimens such as these exist.

The Buffalo is a dangerous beast to encounter. He will attack on sight and a single sweep of those powerful horns will tear a man in two. His hearing, sight and smell are all acute, and coupled with this he has an astute brain. When wounded and followed he has been known to rush ahead of his pursuers and then to double back on his own track and hide behind dense cover. When the trackers pass the spot behind which he is hidden he will emerge silently and charge down on them in wild fury. Permits to shoot this animal are seldom granted, except in Assam, but it is not the sportsman who is responsible for the disappearance of the Indian Buffalo. Rinderpest contracted from domestic cattle who wander all over the forest and infect not only the Buffalo but also Sambar, Chetul, Nilgai, have practically wiped out the Buffalo. The only possible way to save the Indian Buffalo is to drive the few remaining specimen into National Parks, where they can be rigidly controlled and protected from contact with domestic animals.

My one and only encounter with a wild Buffalo had a dramatic sequel and, as I said before, nearly terminated my career as a Shikari. I remember the date well. It was on the 23rd December, 1938. I was camped with a number of friends at a favourite shooting ground near Bamra. In those specious days this area, well watered by the Mahanadi was covered with dense grass and was the favourite resort of Buffalo, Gaur, Sambur, Wild Pig, and in consequence attracted quite a few Tiger. The day previous I had been down on the sand churs of the Mahanadi, trying to secure a crocodile, numbers of which used to bask in the sun in the

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early mornings. While there I noticed wedges of Geese flying inland and remembering the vast marshy tracts lying south of our Camp, I determined to visit the spot in the early morning and secure a very pleasant surprise in the shape of Roost Goose for our X'Mas Dinner. •

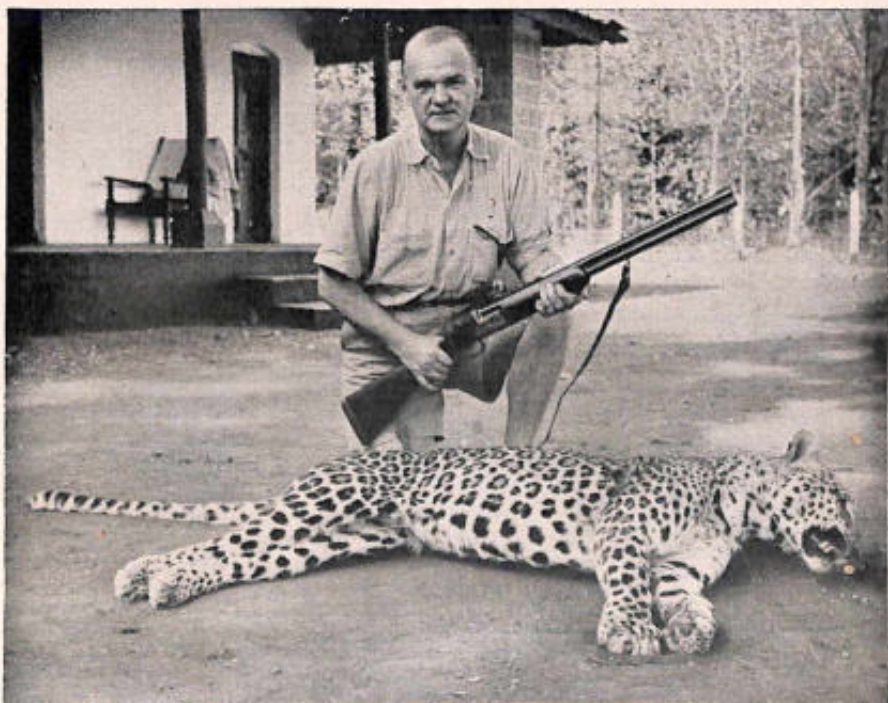
Just before dawn, I took my .12 bore and knowing that geese were hard to kill, took several B. B. Shot cartridges in addition to the usual type. Reaching the edge of the marsh just as dawn was breaking, I found the entire area covered with a dense mist. This was ideal for my purpose, so hunting along the banks, I was fortunate to discover a "Dug-out". One of those primitive boats, made from a hollowed-out cocoanut tree, the bowl of which is wide enough to sit in and is used for the purpose of fishing and poling, while the thin end is also hollowed out and stopped with mud and grass. This provides a measure of stability to this primitive craft and it is amazing with what skill and speed even the young fisher-lads can pole this craft through the weeds and the shallowest of pools.

As I had some experience in handling one of these craft, I immediately got in, not however without shipping a fair quantity of water and getting myself thoroughly wet, and proceeded to pole myself out to where in the middle of the Jheel I knew the geese and duck would be feeding.

Moving cautiously through the dense reeds which barred my way, I emerged on a narrow water-way, down which I proceeded smoothly, till it emerged on a clear pool, well into the centre of the Jheel. Pausing on the edge of the clearing, I surveyed the scene carefully. Before me were about twenty geese all bunched together and so busy feeding they did not notice me. Scattered all over the surface of the pool were a number of black mounds which I took to be mud banks and so engaged was I in watching the geese that I actually took no notice of them. Realising that once I was detected the geese would take off, I poled the dugout cauti-



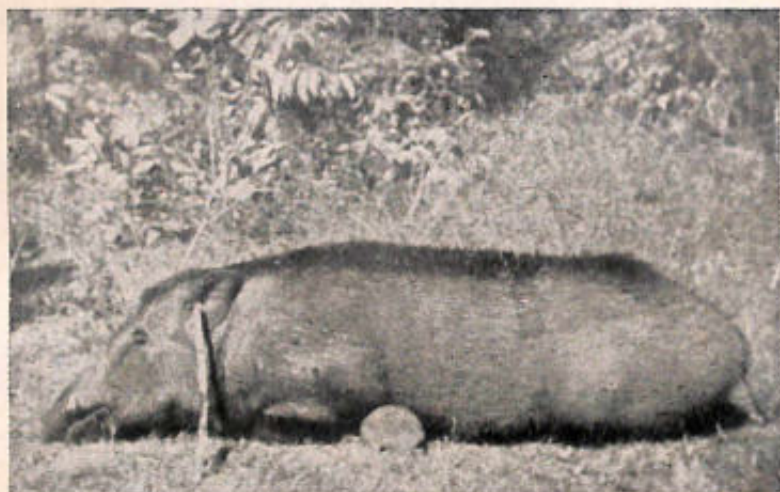
Willi Dorr of Germany with the Bison shot by him.



Mr. Hoops with the Panther.



T. W. Didier Serre with beaters and trophy.



A close-up of the trophy

The Wild Buffalo

ously round the edge of the reeds, keeping well under cover till I came opposite the birds and then crept forward. The mist assisted me considerably so that I was able to come within 20 yards of the geese before firing into their midst and so close were they to each other that I had the satisfaction of seeing two birds flutter for a moment and then lie still. I had just thrown the birds into the well of the dugout when happening to glance up, I saw six huge, black animals gazing at me intently. Those mud banks were buffaloes sleeping in the water and those two shots had brought them up, fighting mad. Fortunately I did not lose my head. A quick survey of the scene showed me that the opposite bank was over a mile away and I had no chance of reaching it before these animals would overtake and kill me. The only thing was to get back the way I had come.

Reading this, you may not appreciate the difficulty I was in. To retreat was out of the question. To advance seemed foolhardy. I was confronted by a rapidly narrowing ring of six infuriated buffaloes, so I did the only thing possible, I sat tight.

The ruse may have succeeded. As all further movement ceased and seeing only the dugout, a craft with which they must have been familiar, lying peacefully on the water, the females who composed the majority of the herd, as I recognized by their slender horns, lost interest and started browsing again. But one old Bull, probably the Leader of this group, was not satisfied. Slowly he forced his way through the swamp towards me. I realized that I would have to take immediate steps to avoid him or he would shortly have laid his head in my lap. Lifting the pole cautiously, I propelled the dugout slowly away from him and towards the entrance of the water-lane which I could see lying directly before me.

Everything was going splendidly. The old Bull watched my retreat curiously and I could see that he also was los-

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ing interest. And then that damn dugout must wedge itself between some reeds and a mud bank. Pressing down on the pole firmly, I tried to force the dugout over the obstruction, but the more I pushed the firmer it stuck till I realized that the instant the Buffalo saw me, he would come at me like a steam engine. However, as there was no help for it, I gradually eased myself into a sitting position, then grasping the pole I wedged it into the mud and slowly stood up. The instant I was erect, what I had anticipated occurred. The Buffalo gave one startled snort and then came straight at me. A .12 bore loaded with B.B. Shot would have as much effect on a Buffalo as a pea-shooter, but I had no alternative. Waiting till he was about a yard from me, I fired directly into his face. The effect was amazing. Blinded and terrified, both by the impact and the sound of the shot, he dropped to his knees, burying his head in the water. I knew that this respite was only momentary, so backing the dugout off the mud bank, I swung it round and made for the opening before me.

In a few seconds I reached the water-lane and plying the pole with every ounce of strength I had in me, I was soon skimming over the water towards the shore and safety. Behind me, maddened by pain, that Bull came after me. Like a Dreadnaught he breasted the water, driving everything before him and such was his strength and his rage, that he gained on me rapidly. I was beginning to despair of ever reaching the bank, but urged on by fear and the certainty of a terrible death behind me, I plied that pole so frantically, that a moment or two later I felt the dugout slide over the mud and abandoning everything I sprang out and raced for the shelter of the forest. I knew that once I reached the trees and worked my way between them, the Buffalo with his wide sweep of horns would have no chance to get at me. Only once did I glance back and then almost stopped in sheer surprise. That animal could not have been more than ten

The Wild Buffalo

yards behind, and every bound of his powerful body brought him nearer. In my extremity I thought of an old trick. Tearing the jacket from my shoulder I drapped it over a bush, and then sprinted for the shelter of the forest which was now only a short distance ahead of me. As I had anticipated, the Buffalo reached the bush and seeing my jacket, attacked it with fiendish rage. With one powerful sweep of his horns he sent the garment flying in the air and then, as it fell, he attacked it with horns and hooves, reducing it to a ragged piece of cloth. I had by now entered the forest and selecting a place where the trees seemed to grow close together, I wormed my way between them till I came to a fallen log on which I sat down. My heart was racing and my whole body trembling from exhaustion, but the respite allowed me was short. A minute or two later I heard the buffalo entering the forest. With his massive shoulders he was pushing aside the undergrowth, searching like a terrier for a rat, but as I knew he could neither smell nor see me, I sat tight.

Suddenly all sound ceased. Even the forest seemed to hold its breath, waiting for the final denouement. At length tired of waiting I rose cautiously and moved towards the village, which I knew lay a short distance away. Instantly that Buffalo was up. He had heard the slight sound I had made forcing my way through the undergrowth and was once again on my trail. Again I stopped. Immediately the buffalo stopped and I realized the animal was tracking me by sound alone. My position was pretty hopeless. I could not go through these forests noiselessly, the undergrowth was too thick and every move of mine was copied by the infuriated animal behind me. Various plans occurred to me. A wild dash through the forest. Shouting for help. All these I abandoned as useless. Exhausted and uncertain of my whereabouts I knew that the Buffalo would eventually overtake and kill me. Looking round I noticed that the forest

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thinned out to my right. Going down on my hands and knees I crawled through the undergrowth as stealthily and noiselessly as a Leopard. For once my luck held. No pursuing crash warned me that I had been detected. Moving thus cautiously, I must have traversed some 20 yards of dense undergrowth and could see before me the edge of the Fire Line. Thinking I had definitely shaken off my pursuer, I was about to spring to my feet and dash for the safety of the clearing, when some premonition of danger, an urgent warning to wait, caused me to sink down motionless again. Slowly I looked round. Nothing before. Nothing behind. Surely I was mistaken. Was this only an excess of caution born of fear? And yet I was certain there was something. A sinister warning that tautened my whole nervous system. And now, for the first time I heard it distinctly. Drip, and then a pause, then once again, drip. My eyes probed the gloom on both sides of me. "What could it be?" I wondered. There was no rain, no possible source from which this moisture could be coming. Sick with apprehension I raised my gaze to the thick curtain of leaves all round me. Even as I looked, a huge blob of blood fell with a sickening splash on the centre of a dried sal leaf directly before me. For a moment it hung suspended, then like a hideous red spider it crawled over the leaf and fell to the ground with soft-drip.

Like a hare, hypnotized by a snake, my eyes followed the path of that red blob to its source and there, glaring down at me, was the huge evil face of the buffalo. My shot had literally torn out one eye. From the lacerated nostrils a thin stream of blood oozed continuously, to fall slowly, drip by drip, to the ground, but it was the remaining eye, fixed on me with a deadly malice and blazing hatred, that held me motionless for a few brief seconds. Then with a single yell, I bounded to my feet. Neither thorns nor bushes impeded my flight. I was impervious to the cruel lacerating of my flesh, or the back lash of the branches. Literally hurling myself over every

The Wild Buffalo

obstacle, I sped for the Fire Line and safety. Behind me I heard a deep, menacing snort and in a moment that buffalo was thundering on my track. As I neared the edge of the Fire Line, I noticed a deep ditch, some four feet wide. Over this I sped, scarcely noticing the obstruction and a moment later was racing down the Fire Line, towards the village.

The thunder of hooves behind me, warned that I had not yet escaped my pursuer, but succour was coming in a novel and simple way. As I rounded a bend in the Fire Line I saw before me a large herd of village cattle driven down this same track towards the grass-lands bordering the jheel. In a moment I was surrounded by lowing cattle, bawling calves and could hear the shouts and cries of the herdsmen as they drove their charges along. Here was safety at last and I stopped. Faint and tottering with exhaustion I reached out my hand and leaned on the friendly hump of a motherly old cow. A moist, warm muzzle was placed in my palm and I could almost have kissed that questing nose, so great was my relief. The buffalo, realizing the impossibility of reaching me in that press of cattle, had paused a moment on the edge of the Fire Line and then with a snort of rage had turned and raced back.

Late that same afternoon, I returned to the edge of the Jheel accompanied by my two companions, but this time suitably armed. There were no trace of the Buffaloes, but we found the dugout where I had abandoned it, with my gun and the two geese, still lying at the bottom of the boat. So we had our X'Mas Dinner after all.

14 *The Gaur Or Indian Bison*

This magnificent animal popularly known by local Sportsmen as the "Indian Bison" is familiarly referred to as the "GAYAL" in Orissa. It should not, however, be mistaken for the Gayal or Mithun found in Assam, Cachar and neighbouring States, also in Burma. The Gayal, although very similar to the Gaur in shape and colouring, is much smaller in size and its horns are almost straight, spreading outwards, averaging only 11 inches.

The Gaur is found all over India. It is plentiful in Assam but probably the finest horns come from Mysore. Massive in form with a deep heavy body, its limbs and hoofs are small in comparison. Its ears are fairly large, while a ridge running along the back, terminates midway between the shoulder and tail. Its greenish yellow horns are flattened towards the base and curved throughout, the black tips being turned inwards and slightly backwards. Old males are almost black, the younger animals are dark brown, young males and females being more rufous. A notable feature is the lighter colouring of the lower parts, while the legs from above the knees and hocks to the hoofs are white. The muzzle is pale and the head to the nape of the neck is ashy grey.

The sportsman will find the Gaur grazing in small herds in places where the grass is green and plentiful. The animal is timid and shy and avoids the proximity of man. Only old Bulls adopt a solitary method of existence and these are the unfortunate creatures that are singled out and shot.

The horns of the Gaur, when preserved, with the com-

The Gaur Or Indian Bison

plete skull and mask, make a very impressive trophy and this is probably the only reason they are shot. The animal itself cannot be classified as "sporting". It seldom if ever attacks and only when wounded and persistently followed, has it been known to turn on its pursuers. Although timid and shy, the Gaur has resisted all attempts at domestication. The village folk will often drive their cattle towards the spot where a solitary Bull is known to be grazing in the hope of obtaining a superior breed of cattle, but what all this does is to help in spreading rinderpest among the rest of the wild herd. This is one of the main reasons why it is essential that the Gaur should be encouraged to enter National Parks. The animal has many interesting ways and soon accustoms itself to the presence of visitors if unmolested.

As I have stated above, the finest horns come from Mysore. I was one afternoon in Manton & Co., Gunsmiths, Calcutta, selecting a new Rifle, when a couple of visitors entered the Show Room. Mr. Greengrass, well known to the customers at Manton's, enquired their business and from him I learned that they were the Maharaja of Mysore and Mr. Denis P. S. Conan Doyle, son of the famous Author. Mr. Conon Doyle was on his way to Mysore in quest of a record Bison head and in this he was fortunately very successful, as the photograph reproduced here shows. Little did I realize as I discussed the many aspects of Big Game shooting with him that this splendid youngman would be struck down with a heart attack a few days after securing the trophy he coveted.

The average height of a Gaur is 5 feet, 9 inches at the shoulder, though Col. Pollock records a specimen he obtained at 6 ft. 10½". The average horn measurements are 2 feet, 7 inches, the maximum being in the neighbourhood of 42 ins.

While shooting in the old Keonjhar Feudatory State, Orissa, with a party of friends keen on securing a trophy, I noticed an extraordinary display of animal intelligence and

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co-operation. We were after a herd of about twenty animals, mostly females, in the midst of which was a Bull, with a very fine sweep of horns. As we advanced towards the group, they started to mill around, obviously afraid of our approach. The country was flat, without forests of any kind to which they could have retreated for shelter, when the females realizing that escape was impossible, ringed the Bull in a solid compact mass, making it impossible for us to get in a shot. Later when we realized that it would be difficult to shoot this Bull without injuring one of the females, we retreated. The instant we left the site, the females broke up their cordon and permitted the Bull to get away, which he speedily did, galloping away towards a low ridge of hills which bounded the dense forests towards the East. It would seem as if the females realized that it was only the males that the Hunters sought and were prepared to interpose their bodies and so protect him and the future of their race.

I have seen the same thing done in the case of Buffalo, especially where the persistent shooting of males has threatened the herd with extinction and those who know, have assured me that the female Elephant adopts a similar procedure to protect the tuskens in the herd.

I have mentioned the above, because I have heard many experienced sportsmen suggest that the Forest Department should declare a "closed season" on the shooting of males in all classes of Deer, Antelope and other horned animals, who are shot principally for the trophy. I know it goes against the grain of the average sportsman to shoot a female, but when this is done only to give the herds a chance to develop and improve, the thinning out of the females in each herd, will give the few remaining males a chance to impregnate the females and produce a sturdier strain.

15 *Scavengers Of The Forest*

Nature, probably, has evolved the most perfect scheme for keeping our forest areas clean. That is, of course, till Man arrived to upset the balance of nature and destroy just those very animals and birds on which Nature relied for carrying out her scheme.

THE VULTURE

This hideous and repulsive bird is probably the best known of all our scavengers. He is also in many ways the Shikari's friend. Every sportsman knows that where the Lions and the Tigers go, a host of lesser animals follows in their track, awaiting humbly the crumbs that fall from the royal table, but while such animals, such as the Hyaenas, the wolves, the Jackals and even the Red Dog, slink through the forest, nocturnal by habit and difficult to detect and follow, the Vulture flaunts his find in the open skies, informing man and beast that below him lies the carcass of some animal.

A spiral of vultures circling low over one of the hills that flank the Forest Bungalow at Mundu in Daltonganj (Palamu) led me to where a natural kill lay. There was no road, not even a forest track, that led to the summit of the hill and so I had to force my way through dense jungle. As I neared the spot, over which the vultures still hovered, I noticed a number of these birds sitting on the branches of the surrounding trees. Immediately I stopped. Vultures will feed in company of Hyaenas, Dogs, and Jackals but

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when carnivora are present, they will keep at a respectful distance. Advancing as cautiously and noiselessly as possible, I approached the carcass. There before me lay a Sambar, but more interesting still was a large Leopard, so engrossed in his meal, that he failed to hear me approach. That Leopard provided me with one of the finest skins I had secured in this district.

Many people wonder how a Vulture detects the presence of a dead animal. Vultures have no sense of smell, so that the oft repeated explanation that the carcass is detected by the wind carrying the scent of decay to the wheeling birds, is without foundation. Vulture have probably the keenest sight of all wild birds except the Eagle. Their method of detection is simple and efficient. Flying at various heights, they literally charter the country. When a vulture detects an animal lying in the fields, he will immediately circle closer, watching intently for any signs of life. Immobility is, however, not the only criterion by which he judges the death of the animal. Red is a colour that has a deep significance to the Vulture, but not as a colour. Experiments made with stuffed animals laid in the field were ignored by the vultures, but no sooner had a little red paint or even a strip of red flannel been added to the corpse, the vultures immediately alighted. Carnivora, obviously know this and the desire to hide the kill from circling vultures induce them to cover the body with leaves and branches. The instant the first vulture dips down towards the body, he is detected by another circling at a greater height, who proceeds to follow suit and this process goes on till all vultures within range follow the original bird who detected the body.

Never will a Tiger or for that any other animal lie down under a tree frequented by vultures and it is noticeable that the tree itself soon withers and dies, so caustic is the nature of their droppings.

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THE KING VULTURE

This truly regal bird is, for some obscure reason, seldom seen now-a-days. Its appearance is so striking that once seen it is seldom mistaken for any other bird of the same size. I had an opportunity of studying this bird at close quarters when crossing a paddy-field one day. Noticing about fifty vultures sitting in a circle round the carcass of a bullock, I approached cautiously. The birds, contrary to their usual custom of savagely attacking the carcass, were sitting motionless, as if waiting a command to begin the feast. It was now that I observed a solitary vulture standing besides the body. His appearance was so remarkable that I observed him closely, taking particular note of his plumage. Over two feet in length, his feathers were of a glossy black, tending towards a brownish hue on the lower back and rump. As he stood facing me, I noticed his crop was a dark brown, surrounded with white down, while large white and downy patches appeared on each thigh. This in turn was flanked by conspicuously bare, red patches on each side of the crop and in front of each thigh. Most striking was his head and neck, which were bare of all feathers and of a deep, beef-steak red with white wattles behind each ear. The Bill was curved and powerful, dark brown in colour, above which the fierce eyes, reddish brown and yellow, gazed steadily ahead. Later, when the bird took off, I noticed its black plumage, its large red legs, its head and neck of the same colour, with its white wattles and thigh patches showing most conspicuously. The wings I noticed were rather pointed in flight, with a whitish line showing through them. This bird is known locally as the Raj Gid or King Vulture and so great is the fear and veneration in which he is held by his lesser companions, that no vulture will dare to approach the corpse till he has satisfied his hunger.

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HYAENAS

The Hyaena, like the Vulture, is one of nature's provisions for keeping our forests clean. Following in the wake of all predatory animals, he will wait patiently till the Tiger or the Leopard leaves the "Kill" after which he will proceed to clean up whatever remains of the carcass. Although he will never dispute the ownership of a carcass with a Tiger, I have personally watched two Hyaenas, attack and drive off a Leopard from a "Kill" they were devouring. These animals although reputed to be cowardly will, when driven to extremes by hunger, not only kill for themselves, such small animals as goats or calves, but will attack men in defence of their property or young.

The Spotted Hyaena is not found in India. It is the striped variety with which we are most familiar. He stands about 3 ft. high at the shoulder and has an overall length of about five feet. I have found Hyaenas all over India. Their tracks are common in the vicinity of villages, in sandy nullahs or on the outskirts of jungles. The foot-print is very similar to a dog's except that the forefoot is much larger than the hind which has a peculiar outward twist. The pug marks should never be mistaken for a panther as the imprint of the nails are always clearly discernible. The front legs being much longer than the hind gives the animal an awkward slouching appearance when travelling. His coat is a cream or buffy white which at times turns to grey in summer. The head is tawny buff. Transverse stripes of black or brown cross the body and limbs, but these appear to fade out in the winter coat. It should be remembered that a Hyaena has only four toes on its fore and hind feet. The digit corresponding to the thumb and big toe are absent. Even a casual examination of the skull of the Hyaena will reveal the massive jaws and teeth, as well as the developed muscles which enable this animal to crunch the heaviest

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bones when devouring the carcasses of large animals such as Sambar or Buffalo.

THE RED DOG

I am probably doing the Red Dog an injustice in associating him with scavengers. Although the Red Dog usually kills its own prey, they are not averse to eating the carcasses of animals abandoned by Tigers or Leopards, but I am inclined to think they only resort to this type of feeding when game is so scarce as to drive them to the necessity of eating anything edible, even the offal thrown out by villagers.

When I was a young man I was constantly receiving the same advice from older and more experienced sportsmen. "Whenever you meet a Red Dog, shoot without hesitation. This animal is the greatest Game Destroyer in all our forests". Since then I have modified this opinion considerably. When compared to those pseudo-sportsmen whose only method of hunting is by Jeep spotlight, the Red Dog is a gentleman in comparison.

If you have once seen the Red Dog, there is no possibility of mistaking it for a Village Pi or any other animal. His colour, as his name indicates, comes in various degrees of red, but his coat is invariably red. Although its height is an average of 20 ins., the animal itself is built low to the ground. This is due to short, heavily muscled limbs, admirably adapted to swift and sustained running. The tail is its most distinguished feature. Red like the rest of the coat, the tail from its terminal half, is covered with coarse black hair, ending in a decided brush. Its method of hunting is ruthless. Depending not so much on speed, but on endurance, the Red Dog will follow its quarry for miles, never letting it have a moment's respite. When thoroughly exhausted and only able to stagger along, the pack will close

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in and literally tear it to pieces on the hoof. I have heard of instances when a Sambar, followed relentlessly by a pack, for several hours, has at length succumbed when its entrails were trailing on the ground. This may sound hideously cruel, but it is the Law of the Jungle and this has probably given rise to the antipathy evinced by sportsmen in respect of the Red Dog. The opinion that when the Red Dog enters the Jungle from the North all Game quit from the South is not quite correct. I have met the Red Dog in many of the forests in Central India and have found them living in the vicinity of Sambar, Cheetal and other Deer.

The Red Dog breeds in the winter and has from two to four pups, all of which are sooty black from birth. The young of Hyaenas, Jackals and Foxes are easily tamed and make affectionate pets, but the Red Dog remains aloof and as soon as it is able to fend for itself will disappear into the forest and join a pack.

JACKAL

This cowardly thief is probably second only to the Red Dog as a game destroyer. There is nothing that he can kill and eat that he will spare. Jungli Murgi, Partridge, Hare and the young of most animals he will attack savagely during the absence of their parents and it is largely due to the depredations of Jackal packs that our game birds and smaller animals are disappearing. As a scavenger he is invaluable and like the Hyaena will follow in the wake of carnivora waiting only till the bigger and stronger animals have departed before he starts cleaning up the remains. He will contest with the Vulture for any carrion or rotting corpse found in the river banks or in the fields. He is the most susceptible of all wild animals to Rabies. When mad, even the Tiger will run from him and it is through him that large numbers of village dogs are infected with the disease.

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His appearance is so well known that it seems redundant to describe his coat and size, but I doubt if one in a hundred Shikaris could give any accurate description of his coat. Rufous, inclining to darker shades above, he is paler below. His under fur is usually a reddish brown, which is more distinct in his tail, which terminates in a black tip. The jackal is very subject to albinism and melanism, and during the winter months often boasts a strikingly beautiful coat.

It is the beauty of his winter coat that frequently gets him into trouble and recently quite a trade has sprung up in Jackal skins. The method adopted by Gypsies and local trappers for obtaining this fur is so interesting that I have described it in some detail below.

THE JACKAL CATCHERS

In pre-partition days, there was on the old Eastern Bengal Railway a station called Parbatipur. It was here that most Calcutta Shikaris came on Sundays and holidays for shooting wild pig. The forests, a few miles from the Station, teemed with these animals and as the terrain was totally unfit for pig-sticking, it was mostly by beating, that these animals could be driven into the open where they could be shot easily.

It was on one of my visits to this station, that I came across a Gypsy Encampment deep in the heart of the forest. I have always been interested in these strange people and noticing that most of the men were seated round a small fire in a clearing in front of their tents, I strolled across and after greeting them courteously, inquired what they were doing so far from the town. In reply, an old man, evidently one of their leaders, informed me that they were encamped here, catching jackals and to confirm his statement led me to a tent before which a large number of jackal skins were pegged out drying.

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"But," I exclaimed in surprise, "you have no traps, guns, or bow and arrows with which to kill these creatures, how do you trap them?"

"I will show you Sahib," said the old man, smiling at my amazement. "We were just about to set out when you arrived and if you will accompany us we will show you how the jackals are caught".

In company with the rest of the men I moved out through the forest and had proceeded about half a mile then we came to a clearing, about a hundred yards wide, that separated the forest into two parts. In the middle of this clearing was a solitary tree surrounded with a dense growth of bushes. Halting on the edge of the clearing the entire party hid themselves in the undergrowth, while one man, with two dogs on the leash, crossed rapidly to the solitary tree. Here he concealed himself and the dogs and we settled down to wait. After about fifteen minutes, the plaintive wail of a solitary jackal sounded clearly through the forest. This was followed a few moments later by another long, drawn-out cry, concluding in the characteristic yapping of the hunting animal. Another pause and then suddenly a fierce altercation broke out in the brushwood under the solitary tree in the clearing. So perfect was the imitation that, had I not known there was a man concealed there, I would have imagined that two jackals were fighting over some carrion at the foot of the tree. But I was not the only one who was deceived, even as I watched the spot where the man, with a branch in his hand was agitating the bushes to resemble the threshing about of the fighting animals, two jackals left the forest and trotted towards the bushes. An instant later they were joined by two more and as the tempo of the altercation increased, they made a concerted rush towards the bush. This was evidently the moment that the Jackal Caller was awaiting and he released his two dogs. These animals, perfectly trained, rushed towards the approaching jackals and in a moment all

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four were in full flight towards the protection of the forest. But they never reached this shelter. As they approached, several dogs, which the party had brought with them, now rushed out of the forest and joined in the attack. Completely surprised the jackals broke and rushed individually for cover. Two of them were speedily overcome and pinned down by the dogs, till one of the men, armed with a club, rushed out and destroyed the struggling animals.

Returning to the camp, the skins of the two jackals were carefully removed and pegged out while the carcass of the still bleeding animals were fed to the dogs.

The old man explained the situation to me later. There is a regular trade in jackal, fox and hare skins. Once a month a dealer calls at their camp and purchases the skins. These are later sold to a Furrier, who has the skins beautifully cured, bleached snow-white and trimmed. Later these skins are dyed a silver grey, gold or brown and then sold to some beautiful young girl who craves an expensive fur to adorn her charming neck.

All of us cannot afford Silver Fox, Mink or Snow Leopard, so what is wrong with the humble jackal. When his skin emerges from the skilful hands of the Furrier, it is just as beautiful as the imported article.

16 *Hunting The Wild Boar*

Probably no animal has been more extolled in legend and song than the wild boar. THE OLD HUNTING SONGS of Germany, Austria and Norway are filled with references to the idomitable courage, the fierceness and strenght of this splendid animal ; while in India the Pig Sticking Clubs retain to this day many a rollicking song in praise of the Boar. Alas for the animal and alas for the sporting spirit of huntsmen in this country, both are rapidly disappearing. No longer does the Shikari mount a horse and with nothing more lethal than a spear in hand, set out in quest of his quarry. To-day he secrets himself in a well camouflaged hideout and awaits patiently till some unsuspecting pig comes timidly to the Jheel to wallow, when with a single shot from a heavy rifle, he claims his victim, nor does he let the sporting element influence him in the least. Once he has secured his animal, he places it on his car and hastens to the nearest market to convert his trophy into hard cash. I often wonder if our ancestors seeing the dizzy heights to which sport in this country has risen, cover their heads with celestial sack-cloth and sprinkle their bodies with cosmic dust and ashes.

Description And Size

The Wild Boar is widely distributed, ranging over practically the whole of India, Burma, and Ceylon. Its colour is black, mixed with grey, rusty-brown and white

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hair. A full grown male stands at about 36 ins. at the shoulder. The average length is five feet and weigh about 200 to 300, pounds. With regard to the length of the tusks or tushes, my own experience has been that in places such as Bengal, where the soil is soft and marshy, the pig digs mainly with its snout. In consequence its snout is large and tough, with tusks of only three or four inches, but in Behar or other places where the pig have to dig in hard, rocky soil, the average tusk is seven to nine inches in length. Both the tusks in the upper and lower jaw are usually well formed and curve outward, projecting from the mouth. A 12 in. tusk can be considered a trophy.

The wild pig is the most productive of all the Ungulata. They breed throughout the year, the period of gestation being four months. Four to six are born in a litter. The mother shelters them in a heaped-up mound of grass or branches which she builds before she litters. The young are brown in colour, with light or dark stripes.

The wild boar often grows to an enormous size. The biggest boar on record is the one shot on the 25th November, 1907 at Khummoo (Kashmir) by Gen. Rajah Sir Amar Singh; here are the measurements: Height at shoulder 39 inches; length from nose to vent 68 inches; girth 61 inches, circumference of collar 50 inches; tushes, 5½ inc. weight 700 pounds. (I quote Burke's Indian Field Shikar Book)

Monsters, such as the above, are no longer found in India. In fact, speaking from personal experience, I doubt if there are any wild pig left within a fifty mile radius of Calcutta. When the Sonthals, Bheels and Mundas in their thousands left their homes in Behar to invade West Bengal in search of employment, they cleared our forest areas of all the pig, hare and other small game that once provided local shikaris with excellent sport. In their wake came the Refugees, and these people finalised the issue. Ruthlessly hacking and cutting, they laid waste our forest areas so that

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to-day, game of every type has fled from West Bengal and the local Shikari has to depend on the very doubtful sport he can still secure in the forests around Ranchi, Hazaribagh, and Palamu, if he lacks the time for an extended tour of the forest areas in districts far removed from Bengal.

I have mentioned the wonderful courage, endurance and stamina of the wild boar and I will cite one personal experience illustrating this.

I was shooting near a small village on the Jessore Road known as Duttapukur. Local Shikaris had brought the news that pig had been seen in the marshes and paddy fields a few miles north of this village and I set out with two friends to investigate the "Khubbar". Reaching the village early in the morning, we organised several "beats", but although these were carried out perfectly, the net result was, nil. If there were any pig in the coverts we beat through, they were certainly not breaking cover. While these beats were in progress, I noticed one remarkable fact, that while the men visited every scrap of jungle in the vicinity, there was one particular patch of dense jungle that they avoided strenuously. Later inquiries elicited the fact that this particular bit of forest was the hideout of a solitary or "lone" boar whose reputation for attacking and severely injuring any intruder was well known. In spite of offers of higher rates of pay we could not prevail on the beaters to enter this patch of jungle and when one of the older men of the village added that this place was infested with snakes, that capped the argument.

That evening as we were about to return empty-handed, one of the Shikaris suggested that, as we had waited so long, we might as well sit up at night at the edge of the paddy field and wait for this lone boar who was known to visit these fields regularly.

As there was nothing else we could do, we agreed and as the night was a clear moonlit one we selected three good

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sites and there made ourselves as comfortable as possible. I had chosen the middle position and had seated myself on a large mound of paddy straw, called in these parts, a *jhalli*. From this slightly elevated position I had a clear view of the field before me and could also see where my two companions were seated. At about midnight I noticed a huge boar coming slowly across towards us. He first passed my companion on the right and then gradually approached me. Just as I was hoping that he would pass near enough for a shot, he diverted slightly making his way directly towards my companion on the left. I waited tensely, hoping that he would not move off, and when he was about twenty yards off, my companion on the left fired. The boar must have been wounded badly for he fell immediately but a moment later struggled to his feet and made off, staggering and falling frequently. From where I was I saw my companion leave his position and give chase. As he neared the animal, he switched on his torch and fired again, but probably missed, for at the same instant the animal swung round and charged directly at him. Like many a far more experienced shikari, he had made the fatal error of not reloading his gun before setting out in pursuit of his animal. Having no alternative, he started to run in frantic haste towards me, but before he had covered a dozen yards the boar was on him. With a single sweep of its powerful head, it had hurled him to the ground, then swung round for the return charge that would have ended in his death. Fortunately for him, as he fell his torch was jerked out of his hand and lay a few feet away, still burning brightly. As the boar turned, it must have spotted the torch and connecting this with the cause of its injury, rushed at it and seizing it in its powerful jaws, started to crunch the cylinder till the light expired. I had by this time reached the side of the injured man and as the boar turned to attack its first victim, I fired. The heavy ball, crashing into the side of the animal at that close range, hurled it to the ground.

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Nevertheless in a moment it was up and charging directly at me. It could not have been more than five feet from me when I discharged my second barrel, loaded with L. G. directly into its head. The impact of those heavy slugs at that range was so terrific that it literally blew its skull apart.

The sound of the firing had roused the villagers who came running to ascertain the cause. Once they saw the wound and the state my companion was in, they hurried back to the village and returned with a "Khatia" (string bed) on which they laid the wounded man and conveyed him back to the car. As medical aid was not obtainable in that desolated spot, we raced back to Calcutta and soon had our friend in the capable hands of the emergency staff of the Medical College. To this day he sports a scar that extends from a few inches above his ankle to his knee, while I have as a trophy of that eventful night, the battered and crunched body of the torch.

17 *A Monarch Passes*

Before describing the events that led to the passing of this noble animal, I should like to say a word about the Sambar in general.

Our Indian Sambar (*Rusa Unicolor*, Kerr) is the largest of all our Indian Deer. It is heavily built with a shoulder height of nearly 5 feet. A full grown stag often weighs between 500 and 600 lbs. Its colouring is a uniform brown, with a yellowish or greyish tinge, though often in old stags this colour is darkened considerably, so that from a distance the animal appears to be black. This colour is a good indication of the age of the animal, which is said to reach its prime in its ninth year. The greatest beauty of the Sambar Stag lies in its antlers. The average length is 26 ins, but a head over 30 ins. is considered excellent. Of famous antlers, the Indian Record is said to be held by the late Nawab of Bhopal, details of which are as follows. Left horn 50½ ins. Girth 9¼ ins. Right 48 ins. long, girth, 9½ ins. Tip to tip 24 ins. Points 3 plus 3. Record heads of these dimensions are practically unobtainable these days, but the antlers measured by me personally, after the Sambar described here was shot, are as follows. Right, 46 ins. Left, 48 ins. Girth, 8 ins. Other dimensions were not recorded, but as there was no D. F. O. or other official of the Forest Department present to verify these dimensions, the record is valueless.

Sambar seem to favour forested hills in the vicinity of cultivation. They subsist mainly on grass, leaves and various kinds of wild fruit. Nocturnal by habit they retire



Machan built by poachers for watching elephants.



All that remained of a wild elephant when the Poachers decamped.

whose eyes reflected the light, irrespective of sex or age. Harassed in this way it was not surprising that the animals deserted the forest to take refuge in adjoining forest areas. People seldom realize the damage these so-called sportsmen do to our rapidly diminishing game.

One evening, hearing from some local shikaris that there was a Water-hole deep in the heart of the forest, to which an occasional Tiger or Leopard came, we determined to visit the spot in the hope of getting a shot. It was quite late, when after a fruitless wait, we set out on our return journey and as the path led through heavy forest, switched on our headlights so as not to miss the track. We had not proceeded more than a mile or so, when suddenly as the track veered sharply to a side, we saw, illuminated clearly in the beam of our lights, a splendid Sambar Stag, blinded and confused, standing motionless in the centre of the path. As I thrilled to the sight of the beauty and grace of the animal, I recalled an old eleograph that hung over the Mantle-piece in my childhood home, entitled the "Monarch of the Glen". The scene depicted a snow-bound stream somewhere in the heart of the Scottish Highlands, overshadowed by towering ice-clad mountains. On the banks of this stream stood a solitary Stag, with just one hind in attendance and I could not help noticing how appropriate this title was to the present scene before us if we only substituted "Forest" for "Glen". At this moment the light went out and we heard the Sambar rushing through the forest.

"That was a wonderful opportunity you missed Walter," one of my companions remarked.

"No, my friend," he replied, "I did not miss an opportunity. To have shot that poor, bewildered Stag, blinded by our headlights, would have been a dastardly deed. I am a sportsman not a Butcher".

"Bravo Walter," I joined in, "I wish we had a few more Sportsmen like you. Do'nt worry. You will have your

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chance again and I hope under more congenial conditions." Little did I realize how long it would be before that opportunity came again.

In October 1964, I heard once again from my Austrian friends but this time the accent was on Tiger, not on Sambar or any lesser game. But this time as on the last occasion, their timing was again faulty, and they did not arrive till late in the month. I made every effort to secure a good Tiger block, but we were too late and had to be content with what was left. To the affable D. F. O. at Chattra I explained the position. Eager to assist, he suggested that we should for the time being, accept a Block at Sheorajpur, adjacent to the Village of Lumta. That evening we were installed in the Meeting House, situated on the road that runs from Chattra to Daltonganj. The site was a beautiful one. On all sides we were surrounded by low, heavily wooded hills, teeming with Pratrige, Jungle Fowl, Kakur and other small game, with an occasional Leopard thrown in to lend zest to the hunting.

At first we were helpless, being entirely new to the territory. Later however, we were fortunate in securing the services of a keen, young shikari, working in the Block Development Office, who was familiar with the forests. Through him we secured the necessary animals for tying out as Bait, but our luck seemed to be entirely out, till one morning this young Shikari enquired if we would care to shoot a Sambar. A magnificent animal, that had evaded all the sportsmen who had tried to secure it. Something in his description of the Sambar, struck a familiar cord. "Walter," I cried, "this animal is our old friend the Monarch. Here is the opportunity you have been asking for to show your ability as a stalker." Thereafter, all activities ceased and we concentrated on this Sambar. Night after night, we visited the cultivated fields in the vicinity, without ever getting a single glimpse of the animal. Then, suddenly, our luck

turned. One morning, returning home at daybreak, we were crossing a stream, when in the moist sand, clearly defined was a huge hoof-print. Following up the trail, we soon came to an inlet in the dense jungle, where, at the foot of a hill, the tracks showed the Sambar and his hinds were accustomed to entering. This was enough. We now laid our plans. The young lad we had secured from the B. D. O's office informed the villagers that the Sahibs would pay a good reward to anyone giving us news where the Sambar fed at night. The plan soon bore fruit. One morning, long before sunrise, a Villager arrived at the Meeting House to inform us that he had seen three Sambar feeding in his Mackai (Indian Corn) Field that morning. We set out immediately. All other guns were debarred, Walter alone carrying his .375. Arriving at the field, we could see in the dim light three shadowy forms moving slowly towards the edge of the field nearest to the hills. Our plans were soon laid. Walter would make a detour, cutting the animals off from access to the hills and take up his position on the path leading to the inlet at which these animals entered the forests bordering the hills each morning. My job was to hurry on to the opposite side, while a companion followed in Walter's wake to turn the animals back should they take fright and turn in the opposite direction. It was as well we did so, for it was this "stop" who was instrumental in finally driving the animals on to the gun. The remaining villager was to follow openly in the rear of the animals, whistling and talking to himself, but all in the restrained key, so as not to put the Sambar to flight.

The plan worked beautifully. No sooner did the villager appear at the opposite end of the field than the animals started to move towards the exit. My own efforts were of very little value. None of the animals appeared to notice me, but when the villager finally appeared in the middle of the field, the Hinds, for the first time gave their warning whistle. Instantly the Stag was in full flight. But instead

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of making for the hills where he would have rushed on to Walter's rifle, he turned and raced down towards where the second "stop" stood. Stepping out of cover and waving his arms as he did so he succeeded in driving the Stag back towards the hill and so incidentally on to Walter and his rifle. There was only one sharp crack and I heard the fall of a heavy body. The Monarch was dead.

As I stood besides the body, looking down on those magnificent limbs, now so still in death, I was conscious of a deep sense of regret. Never again would these woods and hills echo to his clarion call, never again would the villagers in some isolated village, hear the thunder of his hooves as he raced across some moonlit clearing, nor would we pause motionless, thrilled at the sight of him standing besides some lonely water-hole, lording it over all his kind, undisputed Monarch of his leafy kingdom.

18 *The Tiger And The Spirit*

Our Indian Jungles are so intricately mixed with Legends, superstitions and SPIRIT Manifestations, that it is impossible to discard their existence, when describing the forest people and the wild animals they hunt. Although I have tried to eliminate these tales, considering them unsuitable material in a book dealing with various aspects of Game Preservation, still, I find their influence too strong to be entirely ignored. Europe has her Werwolves and our natural counterpart are Wertigers. The oft-repeated story of the Man-eater with the spirit of its victim riding on its back, is only a localized version of the Werwolf.

Many years ago, I happened to have visited a family of Tea Planters living in the picturesque little station of Tindaria. One evening while commenting on the beauty of the scenery and how perfectly their bungalow blended with the surrounding hills, I was informed that this was not always the case.

"You see," the Planter informed me, "we did not always live in this bungalow, but in that old ruin you must have noticed about a mile further down, on the road that leads to the Station."

I had in fact noticed this ruin and especially the beautiful Walnut tree that struggled up from the dense vegetation that covered, what was most probably a rockery, that had been built at the further end of the garden.

"Yes," I replied, "I did notice the old Bungalow or rather what is left of it. Old ruins fascinate me and if there

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is no objection I should like to visit the spot and satisfy my curiosity."

I noticed both the hesitation and the quick look that passed between the Planter and his Wife and then the Planter was all geniality itself.

"Of course, old man. Certainly visit the spot, there can be no possible objection, but keep a sharp lookout. These old ruins are infested with snakes and various other unpleasant things," so early next morning I took a stout stick and wandered off in the direction of the old Bungalow.

Reaching here, I first manipulated the catch that held the crumbling gates together, then entering, what I immediately recognized as the path leading to the front verandah, I beat the clustering grass and weeds aside and entered the bungalow. At the front door I stopped. A single glance at the roof showed me that even a slight puff of wind would send the shingles crashing down and as I feared that my entering on the crumbling floor-boards would only precipitate matters, I cautiously retraced my steps. At the edge of the verandah I paused to look around and my glance went automatically to that beautiful Walnut tree I had previously noticed. To reach this spot was a bit of a job, so overgrown with weeds and grass had the path become, but I eventually succeeded in forcing my way through and was thankful to rest in the cool shade of this splendid tree. As I had at first supposed the tree sprang from the centre of a large rockery. Although overgrown with jungle, I could still trace the formations of the rocks, but what intrigued me was a small clear space at the foot of the tree which appeared to have had the attention of a Mali recently. Examining the site closely I was amazed to discover a marble slab, cracked and disfigured, which had originally covered a small grave. In vain I tried to decipher the faded inscription cut into the marble, but I did gather that the occupant of the grave had died some thirty years previously.

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My curiosity, now, thoroughly roused I hurried home, determined to question the Planter and his Wife, but I had no opportunity to do so till that evening after dinner, when I heard the extraordinary history of that lonely grave.

Reluctant at first to discuss a subject that seemed distasteful, the Planter at length consented, when his wife pointed out that many people still lived who remembered the incident and that I would in all probability receive a false or garbled version of the story.

"You must remember," he said, "that we first lived in that old ruined Bungalow. Why we left and came here has a distinct bearing on the story I am about to tell you, but at the time I was not in-charge of this Tea Garden. My predecessor was also a Scotsman who lived, with his wife and sister-in-law in this old Bungalow. His sister-in-law was employed in Mission work and was absent most of the time, being engaged in teaching in various schools near Darjeeling. Possibly the old couple felt the loneliness of the place keenly, particularly the wife, for she induced her sister to send for her daughter from Scotland to come out and make a home with them.

I forgot to mention that the Asst. Manager was a young Swede, a brilliant engineer and a most likeable fellow, who shared part of the bungalow with them.

The young girl duly arrived. She was just over sixteen years and from accounts I have had, a very beautiful girl. As you rightly suppose the young Swede fell madly in love with her and as he was well connected and had every prospect of succeeding the Manager on his retirement, the Mother raised no objections to their engagement.

As I have said before this Swede was an excellent fellow, but he had one weakness and that was his drink. This, coupled with a violent temper, made him a most objectionable and dangerous man to thwart when drunk.

Everything seemed to be going splendidly, till the

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Christmas of the year that the tragedy occurred. That year the Jymkhana Club in Darjeeling gave a big Dance to which all the neighbouring Planters and their families were invited. Their old Ford Car, specially oiled and cleaned for the great occasion, was immediately commandeered and the whole family prepared to take off, the Swede driving. At the last moment, however, it was found that the young girl was suffering from high fever, an attack of malaria possibly, and could not go. The mother offered to stay and nurse her daughter, but the girl would not hear of it and insisted that the party should not be broken up because of her illness. The upshot of it was that the whole family took off and the girl was left alone with only her old Ayah and the servants to attend to her.

Thereafter the actual sequence of events are hopelessly confused. At about 2 A.M. that Christmas Morning, the girl's mother still anxious about her daughter, insisted on being taken home. A hunt for the Swede failed to produce him and the Planter thinking that he had gone off on a spree with some of his young friends, determined to drive the car himself. Leaving the Club at about three that morning, he did not arrive in Tindaria till well after sun-up. As they approached the Bungalow the distracted servants came rushing to meet them, crying that the Miss Sahib was very ill. Within the girl's bedroom they came on a scene of complete chaos. The girl herself was lying on her bed quite unconscious and a glance at her body showed that she had been subjected to the most brutal treatment. A Doctor hastily summoned from Kurseong, did whatever he could but warned the Planter that the child was in a precarious condition and should be removed to the Sanatorium at Darjeeling immediately. This was easier said than done. Medical transport in those days was still in a rather primitive state and as her condition rapidly grew worse, it was finally decided to let her rest in the Bungalow till she showed some signs of improve-

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ment. Three days later, the poor child died and the grief-stricken mother remembering how her daughter had loved to spend her days in the cool shade of that Walnut Tree, had her body buried there. The tomb was later erected by me. To save the family useless embarrassment, the affair was hushed up, but the incident so upset the Planter and his family that he asked for permission to retire and a few weeks later sailed for Scotland. Of the Swede nothing was heard from that day onwards, nor could any trace of him be found.

I was at the time employed as Manager of a Tea Garden immediately below Lebong. As the Firm needed an experienced Manager I was transferred to Tindaria and took up my residence in the old Bungalow.

Now you must not think me callous, but I was most dissatisfied with the way the case had been handled and determined to do a little detective work on my own.

A few judicious enquiries showed me that the Swede had left the Gymkhana Club shortly after he had deposited the family there. At what time he reached Tindaria is not known, but it is suspected he jumped one of the goods trains leaving Darjeeling at night for Siliguri and so came home. Careful questioning of the Ayah revealed the fact that she had left her Mistress asleep and had retired to her own quarters. Early that morning she and the servants were roused by the sounds of screaming and they had in a body rushed towards the Bungalow. On the verandah they had met the Swede rushing out of the house. He appeared to be demented and shouting and swearing in the most alarming manner. The Ayah, who happened to be in his path as he emerged, he thrust aside violently, but the woman stated positively that she had a good look at his face, the right cheek of which appeared to be burnt and scarred dreadfully. The poor girl, she affirmed, must have in her extremity, grasped a brand from the fire in her room and struck

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the Swede across the face. This was the last anyone had ever seen of him.

Now I know that at this point I should have dropped the matter myself, but I am cursed with a most persistent curiosity and I continued making enquiries, till one morning one of my garden coolies, brought me a bundle wrapped in paper, the contents of which he said he had found in the forest. I opened the bundle in my office and was horrified to find a Dress Shirt within. The garment was torn and soiled and covered with blood, but what intrigued me most was that the shirt had been torn with teeth and claws. This was not the work of dacoit.

And now a new type of misfortune came on me. My wife who is Scotch and fey, kept complaining that she could not sleep at night owing to the pitiful groaning and moaning that kept on issuing every night from the room in which this poor girl had been assaulted. Later, our servants took to absenting themselves at dinner-time, saying that they could not come into the house, as every night they could see the Chota Memsahib standing under the Walnut Tree where her grave was. Then came the final blow. One night there was a terrible uproar just outside our Bungalow. I took up the hurricane lantern and rushed out, thinking it was one of the usual drunken brawls, only to be brought up sharp by the sight of a body lying at our very gate. The man had been attacked and killed by a Tiger. In fact as I raised the lantern over my head to look for the rest of the party, I noticed two glaring yellow eyes watching me for the undergrowth across the road. That finished it and I wrote to the Firm that I would not stay in that Bungalow another day, but that if they wished to retain my services they would have to build another bungalow further up the hill. This was how the new Bungalow came to be built and I must say that all trouble seemed to have ended when I shifted into my new quarters.

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Now, the Planter continued, I do not wish to labour this story, but there is just one more incident which is a personal experience and I leave you to judge its implications.

We had been living in our Bungalow for over a year. There was always the usual crop of rumours of a Man-Eater operating somewhere in the vicinity, but as long as the tiger confined his attentions to the coolies in neighbouring plantations, I took no particular interest in him, but one morning a deputation of coolies met me to complain that one of my men had been killed and as worse luck would have it, in the compound of the old Bungalow. This place was in ruins, in fact most of the timber for my new place had come from this house, and I was daily expecting to hear a crash that would inform me that the roof had caved in.

Accompanying the deputation, I went to examine the spot where the coolie had been taken, and you can imagine my feelings when I realized that the man had been struck down within a few feet of the girl's grave.

Now, even since the girl had been buried there, I had instructed one of my Malis to keep this grave clean and remove all surrounding jungle. Heavy work and the opening of further territory for planting tea bushes, had so occupied my attention that I had neglected to see whether my orders were carried out and it was left to this fresh tragedy to bring home to me that my Mali had not been near the place for over six months.

The man was duly dismissed and the place cleaned up and I went a week later to see how the work had been done. As I walked round the old grave, noting how time had, in that damp climate, rotted away the masonry and disfigured the marble slab, I stopped in amazement. In the centre of the marble slab was the clear imprint of two tiger pads. The animal must have been resting on the centre of the grave the night before.

This got my back up. Not only had this infernal Tiger

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killed one of my men, but he had the impertinence to rest on a grave within sight of my Bungalow. From numerous other impressions on the moist earth round the grave there were indications that this animal came here frequently and I determined to sit up that very night and welcome him.

A machan was soon put up. At eight o'clock, heavily clad and protected by a waterproof, for the nights were rainy and bitterly cold, I took up my position. It does not take long for darkness to settle on these hills, but I had a brilliant moon to assist me and while there was still light enough for me to see, I placed the rifle in readiness for a quick shot, loaded and slipped up the safety-catch and making sure that the torch was correctly aligned, settled down to wait.

Now I want you to understand that I do not believe in spirits. The only spirits I am familiar with are those that come out of a bottle filled in my country, but that night I was given "the works".

People who have lived in these hills will remember how the mists gather first in the valleys and then come creeping up the sides of the mountains, till everything is obscured in a thick blanket of vapour. Slowly this white shroud settled over the ruins, blotting them out of the landscape. Here and there a light struggled bravely through the gloom and then disappeared and by midnight the whole hillside, the tree on which I sat, even the ground below me was blanketed in fog. Fortunately a slight breeze now sprang up, tearing the mist to shreds and through the rents in the fog I could catch glimpses of moonlight, lighting up various parts of the garden and the old bungalow. Hearing a slight noise I glanced down and then froze. Standing at the head of the grave was a white figure. My better judgment told me that this was only a wisp of mist, lit up by the moonlight, but at that time better judgment and I were rapidly parting company. With my heart racing, I watched this figure move slowly along

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the tomb-stone, pause for a moment, then drift towards the rododendron bushes, where it disappeared, and now, for the first time I heard it. Little louder than a sob but so pregnant with misery, so loaded with hopeless yearning, so infinitely pathetic, that instantly I leaned over the machan to look for its source. That sob I knew was human, the suppressed cry of a soul in mortal agony. Nor was I mistaken. As the moon-light lit up the grave I saw a figure kneeling on the marble slab, its head bowed in despair, its arms stretched out in pitiful appeal. Although the head was turned away from me I saw the face clearly and there, distinctly marked on the cheek, was the scar of a recent burn. Poor fellow, I thought, "he has come here to kneel on her grave and beg her forgiveness" and although he was a murderer, my heart was filled with sympathy. Leaning further out of the machan, I was about to call out to him, when the creaking of the machan must have warned him of my presence. In an instant he had sprang to his feet and swung round to face me and in that same moment I found myself staring into the evil, snarling visage of the Man-eater. So surprised and terrified was I that without conscious volition, I seized the rifle and throwing it to my shoulder, sent a bullet crashing into that hideous face. That Tiger died hard. I watched the huge writhing form on the grave below. In a few minutes the violent paroxysms passed and the body started to tremble. The contracted limbs relaxed and then stretched out in final surrender, but in that last instant the great beast sighed and I, sitting on the machan above would have sworn that in that sign was thankfulness, resignation and peace.

19 *Wild Game Calling*

Many years ago, to be precise, two years prior to the commencement of World War Two, I, in company with a few local sportsmen, conceived the idea of starting a Wild Life Society in Bengal. The result of our deliberations was the birth of the Society for the Protection of Game in Bengal and chiefly as a meeting place for our members the Bengal Gun and Rod Club came into existence. Many sportsmen will remember the Club situated on the banks of the Nawee Khal on the 11th mile of the Jessore Road.

In those happy pre-war days, life was easier, game abundant and guns and ammunition easily obtained. The success of both enterprises was thus assured from the start. Some kind of Reserved Forest or Sanctuary for the activities of the Society was first essential. An appeal to the Old Bengal Coal Company resulted in the latter permitting us to use a small section of the Company's forest at Durgapur on the 111 mile on the Grand Trunk Road. An attempt was made next to re-stock this forest with such small game as Cheetal, Wild Pig and the like, while the already existing stock of Jungli Murgi, and Partridge made this site quite an interesting spot for the Society's Members to visit at week-ends. In the meantime a steadily increasing membership enabled the Club on the Jessore Road to blossom out into a centre to which local members could come of a week-end for an overnight stay, so as to be in time for an early start for the adjacent marches, which, in those days, were teeming with Snipe, Duck and even Wild Pig. In this instance also

an appeal to the Calcutta Tramway Company, resulted in that Company supplying the Club with an old Tramcar body, which was speedily fitted with bunks, a lavatory and kitchenét, and many were the happy nights spent in its cosy interior.

This ideal state of affairs could not possibly continue. In a few short years came the War. The majority of our Members were drafted to various centres of combat and the attendance at the Club thinned out to such an extent, that it was impossible to maintain even a skeleton staff and we were compelled to close down. Owing to the generosity of several members of the Society, which was also in a moribund condition, the site on which the Club was built was maintained, thus preserving this spot for future use.

Finally, came Peace and with it the expectation of a renewal of the activities of the Society and Club. But alas ! All it needed was a final and crushing blow to terminate its existence. Independence brought the partition of Bengal, and that in turn brought the horror of the Great Calcutta killing. In the train of that tragedy came the Refugees in their thousands. West Bengal was flooded with a hungry desperate mob. Private property lost its sanctity. On every side forests were cut down and destroyed. The marshes and jheels, the home of our game birds and the haunt of wild pig, were drained and put under cultivation, and we foolishly thought that once these people had settled down a new era of peace and prosperity would come to West Bengal. But even in this we were mistaken. Like a never ending stream the Refugees from East Pakistan kept flooding the province. To add to the congestion, thousands of people from Behar, attracted by high wages and easy leaving, left their homes and flooded into West Bengal and soon there was not an acre of land that was untenanted. Even so, the game may have survived, but the Santhals, Bheels and Mundas that came rushing in, were also skilled hunters and in a short time

there was not a Hare, a Wild Pig or any of our lesser game that was not slaughtered and added to the pot.

With all these disadvantages, local sportsman did not despair. Bengal, they realized was now destitute of all game birds and animals, but the vast forests of Behar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa still offered considerable sport. His car made these places accessible and he foolishly hoped that he would still be able to enjoy a few days of sport. Then suddenly came the restrictions, on guns, rifles and ammunition. Prices shot up and he had, reluctantly, to admit that he was beaten.

Game preservation societies, while deploring the senseless destruction of forests and the killing of our few wild animals, foolishly derived a vicarious pleasure from the thought that with the restrictions on guns and ammunition, the game would have an opportunity to survive and even to increase, but they forgot the Poacher with his bow and arrow, his trap guns, his nets and snares. These people reaped a rich harvest and soon the markets of Calcutta and elsewhere were being flooded with the flesh of game birds and animals.

The closing of the Club and the disbanding of the Society brought home to many sportsmen the necessity of maintaining some kind of meeting place where those interested in preserving Wild Life could meet and discuss various methods for protecting Game, not only in their own Province but also in those fortunate districts where a remnant of Wild Life still existed. The necessity of such meetings resulted in the formation of small independent groups of sportsmen, who met at friendly Clubs, or in the homes of people interested in the subject, where discussions were held and measures suggested. These took the form of letters to the local Press or articles on Shikar, all embodying suggestions for protecting our fauna. These meetings and suggestions had one valuable result. They brought together many

old Shikaris whose experience was invaluable in formulating a number of recommendations on the Preservation of Wild Life, which could, when conditions were more favourable, be submitted to the All India Conference for the Preservation of Wild Life, for consideration at their Annual Meetings.

The limitations of this Chapter makes it wholly inadequate to discuss this vast subject in its entirety, but for those who are interested I would recommend a reading of the Proceedings of the All India Conference for the Preservation of Wild Life, held in New Delhi on the 28th, 29th and 30th January 1935 a copy of which could be obtained from the Secretary of the Bombay Natural History Society.

Writing, however, from the standpoint of the Shikari, the Man with the Gun—the question of Game Preservation resolves itself into very simple proportions. Every sportsman will admit, especially those who have shot in this country for years, that the number of game animals is lessening rapidly, in fact in various areas, types of game for which those particular tracts were famous, have practically disappeared. In Behar, the Nilgai in particular, is definitely on its way out. Sambar are no longer as plentiful as they used to be, while in Orissa, Buffalo which once frequented the grass lands and marshes, is now a rarity. To the hunting man there are some factors that are the causes of this destruction. I will enumerate them serially.

First : Discounting for a moment the damage done to animals by the Poacher, the greatest destroyer of Game is that contemptible creature, who by some flight of imagination, calls himself a Big Game Hunter and who depends mainly on a Jeep fitted with powerful headlights to do most of his hunting. This sub-human is to be found in all our Forest areas, particularly in Reserved Forests or in the vicinity of Sanctuaries or National Parks. Relying on the wonderful manoeuvrability of the Jeep he will, with a few companions of a similar type, tour through the forest from

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sunset till dawn. Without hesitation he will rush along game trails, down *nullahs*, across open fields and even force the car through the trees in the more densely wooded areas. Aided with powerful torches he will probe every nook and corner and the instant he spots the gleaming eyes of some poor creature sheltering in a secluded corner, he and all his friends will open fire with every gun, irrespective of the fact that this animal may be a female with young, or the season is closed for the shooting of that class of animal. I have visited Blocks in various sections of Behar where the entire terrain is criss-crossed with Jeep tracks and on enquiry have learned that certain people living in the vicinity of the forest and possessing a Jeep, prowl through the forests nightly, shooting indiscriminately, with the result that most of the Blocks in that area are destitute of game. I am sure I express the opinion of every decent sportsman when I condemn this type of shooting as contemptible. Every Divisional Forest Officer should prohibit, very firmly, the use of Jeeps in Reserved Forests at night. If a sportsman obtains a permit to shoot in a particular Reserved Forest and depends on his car or Jeep to convey him round his block, there is no objection to the use of this method of conveyance by day, but it should be impressed on the Forest Guard that if he permits a Shikar party to tour the forest at night in a Jeep, he will endanger his job, Road Blocks would be invaluable in preventing this type of shooting.

Secondly : Sitting up over Water-holes and salt-licks at night and shooting with the aid of spot lights, should be prohibited. This was the method invariably adopted by Poachers, but these poor people, are now in a definite minority. Their position and trade has been eclipsed by the people mentioned above. As a sportsman I have to admit that the shooting of carnivora by this method, although not very sporting, is a decided necessity now-a-days. Jim Corbett demonstrated on several occasions how it was

possible by pin-pointing the sound of the approach of an animal, he was able to shoot accurately, thus obviating the necessity of a torch, but sportsmen of the calibre of Jim Corbett are seldom met now and I am afraid that for the majority of shikaris, when sitting up over a "Kill" when the animal awaited is a Man-eater or Cattle Lifter, the use of a torch is a necessity. The shooting of Sambar, Cheetal or other lesser game over a water-hole or salt-lick by this method should be prohibited.

There are many other unsporting ways of getting your game and these I have mentioned in the chapter on Poachers and their Ways, but there is an anomaly in the Rules governing the issue of Arms and Ammunition that is inconceivable to most sportsmen. While every effort is being made by Government to curtail the issue of guns, rifles and ammunition to legitimate sportsmen, Government will permit the issue of shot guns during certain seasons to the ordinary villager. These are known as Crop Protection Licences. I am aware that there has been much discussion on cutting down the length of these barrels to 12 ins. But everyone knows, including the Forest Department and the Police, that all guns obtained under this Licence are used, almost exclusively for game destruction. The suggestion that these guns should be recalled after the crops have been gathered is good, but once the crops have been gathered and the fields cleared of all standing crops, the game also moves away. This is the time that all these guns should be recalled. To wait longer is fatal. Once the game moves into the forests, the villagers use these to shoot over water-holes and the damage done to the game is considerable. I have discussed this problem with many sportsmen who are all of the opinion that the withdrawal of such Licences entirely would be detrimental to the interest of the villagers, but there is another solution and one that would probably meet with the approval of the Forest Department.

GAME WARDENS

I am second to none in my admiration for the excellent work done by officers of the Forest Department, but candidly, I do not think they have the time or the ability to watch over the game in the forests under their control. A Game Warden's job should be whole-time. The man appointed should be an experienced sportsman, preferably a retired Government Servant, and a man whose previous occupation has given him a sense of responsibility. One who by his social status and standard of living could occupy the position of a Divisional Forest Officer. His duties should be divorced entirely from the Forest Department and should be devoted entirely to the welfare of Game Birds and Animals in his jurisdiction. On the Game Warden should be placed the responsibility for the issue of Crop Protection Licences. Elephant and Tiger Control should be left to him as well. The appointment of such a man would leave the Forest Officers free to carry on their onerous duties with regard to the supervision of Forests under their jurisdiction, while to the Game Warden should fall the responsibility of protecting the Game from Poachers and from unsporting practices of visiting sportsmen. The supervision and maintenance of Forest Rest Houses should also be part of his duties as well as assisting visiting sportsmen who have paid for the privilege of shooting game in the various Blocks under his supervision.

There is another anomaly in our Game Laws that has puzzled many a sportsman. Government has fixed the Closed Seasons for various types of Game. This is excellent and a great help in the preservation of our fauna. Such being the case why do our Forest Department still throw open the Forests for shooting during these months and further, why are there no restrictions imposed on the sale of guns, rifles and ammunition during this period? If we had

Wild Game Calling

a sporting public conscious of their obligations, shooting during the closed season would be unheard of, but, unfortunately, we are a long way from that ideal condition. There has been a lot of discussion on the subject of prohibiting the sale of horns, skins and flesh of wild animals and birds. If a Closed Season was rigidly enforced any person found selling such articles during this period should be immediately arrested and fined.

National Parks

A National Park to be effective, or for that matter any reservation that promotes the protection of wild animals, must be opened to game of all types. Once the human element has been excluded, for these animals the entire environment changes. Man is the one common danger to all species of animal and it is mainly to protect themselves from this universal danger that all animals tend to move further and further away from human habitations. Once man is removed we see an extraordinary reorientation as it were taking place. No longer do the animals watch out for man. Instead they watch each other and in this process tend to gather in distinct species. There is very good reason why the antelopes and deer tend to graze in common pastures. Why the Elephants, the Bison and the Buffaloes select the same marsh lands. One species excels in hearing, another in sight and another in smell and when feeding in close proximity, they create a very effective warning system against their common enemy the Tigers, Leopards and other carnivora.

There is another question that is being constantly asked. Once a National Park or Big Game Reserve has been created, what is the policy regarding a definite head of game? Is Nature allowed to take its course or do the Wardens kill a limited number of Carnivora or other predatory animals, such as Red Dog, Hyaenas, Wolves and the like to keep the

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balance of Nature ? With the exception of the Red Dog, Game in India has very little to fear from the attacks of carnivora. The problem is not to shoot to maintain the balance of Nature, but to preserve all types of animals so as to maintain a balance ruthlessly upset by man.

There is of course the question of disease. This is a real problem. All over our forest areas the village folk drive their cattle into the forests to graze and when an epidemic of Rinderpest breaks out in any village, the damage done to our Deer, Antelope and other species of game prone to infection, is incalculable. Here again the National Park offers the best type of segregation for wild animals.

One other consideration. All sections of Society today are interested in Wild Life. A National Park that is run on modern lines, should offer accommodation, catering, well developed roads, and Watch Towers from which wild animals may be studied in their natural habitat. These advantages supply an additional attraction for Tourists whose influx does so much towards making these Parks self-supporting.

20 *J' Accuse*

My Friend,

Although you have not been aware of it, I have followed and tracked you as noiselessly and as skillfully as you have followed me. Often as you traced my footprints through the sand in some shady nullah, I have crouched on the bank above, one leap and I would have struck you down, but years of experience and watching the fate of others who took this chance has convinced me that it takes only a few seconds for death to strike at your hands, so I watched and waited, for surely my day will come.

Many years ago, when I was scarcely eight months old, my mother led me to where hidden in a deep nullah was the carcass of a buffalo she had killed the previous day. The instant I saw the body, I was afraid and growled a deep warning. Someone had dragged the carcass from under the bushes where she had hidden it, into the open and this worried me. But my Mother had not eaten for days and I foolishly whimpered my delight, when I smelt the fresh blood and meat, for I also was faint from hunger. It was while we were feeding ravenously on the juicy flesh, that the whole scene was lit by a dazzling white beam of light. I looked up amazed and the next instant a deafening report from the overhanging trees drove me to the shelter of the surrounding forest. As I sprang away I heard my mother roar in agony and caught a fleeting glance of her as she struggled on the sand besides the corpse of the buffalo and then I was

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hidden deep within the forest. Trembling with fright I waited, watching the pale dawn chase away the shadows of night, till at length the sound of many voices echoed through the trees and timidly I crept back. A great crowd of people surrounded the spot where my mother lay. There was much talk and laughter and there for the first time I saw you. You were leaning on your rifle, watching the beaters lash my mother's body to poles brought for carrying her. Your hat was tilted back from your forehead and the sight of your face was etched deeply on my memory, so that I never forgot you. We tigers are incapable of revenge which is a purely human emotion, but as I studied your face, so placid and unconcerned, as you watched my mother's body being lashed to those poles, I wondered if, one day, I would sit as unconcerned besides your body as it lay in the sands before me, and with that thought the terrible fear of your kind that had been born in me, gradually faded. Softly and noiselessly I crept away and passed like a shadow through the forest, till I came to our lonely little cave on the hillside.

And now for me came a period of great suffering and sorrow. You must remember I was only a little fellow. Without my mother's strength to protect me and her knowledge to guide me, I was soon starving. How I survived those terrible months I have no idea but often as I lay in some covert watching the wild fowl and the hare, for these were the only creatures I could kill, your face would come before me and gradually there was built up in my mind such a fierce hatred that I longed for the day when I would be strong enough to attack and defy you. And so the years passed.

It was in the days of the great heat. A pitiless sun drove all moisture out of the forest. The streams and the water-holes dried up. Forest fires, started by your kind, were blazing everywhere. Maddened by heat, by thirst and

by starvation, I threw all caution to the winds and in the glaring light of midday wandered down to a small village that nestled at the foothills. Here I hid myself and watched men draw cool, delicious water from a deep well and pour this in a drain that conveyed it to the surrounding fields. The sight of this flowing water was too much for me. Softly I left my shelter and crept down to the drain where I lapped the water in extasy. The men saw me. In a moment there was a great uproar and they fled in all directions. I was amazed. I had not harmed them nor was it my intention to harm any of them, all I needed was a little water to slack my raging thirst. I drank my fill and was about to retire when from the village came a party of men, who advanced toward me cautiously. I watched them intently and was thankful to observe that none of them carried the weapons you took with you into the forest. Relieved in mind I turned and hurried back towards the forest, when suddenly something struck me high on shoulder, piercing my flesh and burying itself beneath my shoulder blade. This was the first time I had been struck by an arrow and the shock and the pain drove me mad. In a moment I turned and roaring defiance, charged back at the attackers. They scattered and fled in all directions, but I had singled out the one who had shot the arrow at me and him I pursued. With a few bounds I reached him and as I sprang on his back, he went down, screaming with fear. In an instant I had seized his throat and as the warm blood came gushing out, he shivered and died. I was amazed at the ease with which I had killed this pitiful creature. He seemed to have had no strength or resistance in him, but My Friend, the taste of that warm blood had also sealed my doom. Instinctively I knew that I had been branded. Henceforth the hand of every man would be against me. I was now that creature, the terror of the forests, a Man-eater.

My Friend, I know that one day your bullet will find

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me, but before I die will you come with me through these forests that we both love.

Often I lie on the hillside opposite your home and watch the yellow light streaming out of your window. Once many years ago, I approached your home cautiously and peeped into that same window. As I did so I sprang back amazed. On a table, snarling at me viciously, was my Mother's pelt. It was a thing of beauty and I was proud. A few weeks ago I wandered by that window again and anxious to see that well loved skin, I looked for it everywhere. At last, in one remote corner, withered and torn, with the glossy hair half gone, I saw the skin. It was now used for the dogs to sleep on.

Do you remember the Sambar you shot? I had followed that same animal for months, but always hesitated to attack. Those magnificent antlers would have pierced me through and through, if I had bungled that first leap. But you coveted that beautiful trophy and when I saw its head gracing the wall over your mantle-piece, I was proud. It showed that you appreciated the beauty of the wild things you killed. Last night, as I crept by your garden, I noticed that same magnificent head now bereft of all beauty, the horns chipped and broken, had been relegated to the kitchen varandah fit only for the cook to hang his soiled linen on.

I don't wish to sadden you, but come with me to the forest to-night. The moon is at its full and on every hand is the magic and beauty of trees in full bloom. This dried water-course we have just crossed is the nullah down which you traced me many years ago. The water will never flow here again. Further up is a concrete dam which diverts this water into a huge reservoir, and all the land below, once so fertile, green and beautiful, is now parched and dry. But sit here a while and listen. The night is full of the whisper of leaves, but something is missing. Yes, you are right. Never again will you and I hear the "Bell" of the Sambar or

J' Accuse

the timid call of the Cheetal. Those hills and valleys, so beautiful in the moonlight, are now deserted and still. There was a time when I and my kind wandered proudly through these forests and our boastful roars shook the night. Do you ever hear us roaring now? While once we fed and grew sleek on the flesh of the creatures of the wild, today we must content ourselves with the miserable disease-ridden cattle of the villagers. And all this misery is due to you and your kind. Man has cut down the forests, dammed up the streams, shot out the game, leaving all my kind to starve and when in desperation we retaliate, we are banned as Man Killers or Cattle Lifters, a menace that must be shot on sight. Remember this when you see me lying dead at your feet. Man is the most ruthless of Killers. He needs neither our skins for clothes, nor our caves for shelter, nor our flesh for food. He kills just for the joy of killing.

MAN EATER.

21 *Poachers And Their Ways*

Poachers I have found from observation, now confine their activities almost exclusively to National Parks and Sanctuaries. There is a reason for this. In reserved Forests they have to compete with Sportsmen (those fortunate few who manage to secure a block), Forest Officers, their friends and relatives and those so-called sportsmen who tour the Forest lanes at night, in Jeeps, shooting indiscriminately. In National Parks and Sanctuaries they have no such competition, but very sensibly enter into a "gentlemen's agreement" with the Durwans and Forest Guards, who see to it that they are not disturbed.

In Bengal, where every vestige of game has practically disappeared, all the Poacher can do is to concentrate on the Wild Pig, still to be found in isolated spots. It is an eloquent testimony of the existing state of affairs, that to shoot wild pig now, the sportsman has to procure a Licence. Formerly this animal was classed as "Vermin", and its destruction encouraged. Today he is a valuable asset to the Poacher, who can sell the flesh in our local markets at a very high rate.

Recently I was asked by friends to accompany them on a pig shoot to a site not far from Calcutta. I was not only surprised but also extremely skeptical. I am perfectly well aware that Wild Pig do not exist within a fifty mile radius of Calcutta, but more for the outing than for anything else I decided to take advantage of the offer. We left the City early in the morning and it was not till almost four o'clock

that we reached our destination. The site was ideal. Vast fields under paddy, now almost ripe, with dense clumps of bamboo dispersed all over the area. Not wishing to delay, as darkness would shortly be on us, we insisted on proceeding to the spot at once. An examination of the site on which the pig had been most active, was disappointing, as it was obvious from the extent of the diggings, that the number of animals were few. Seeing our disappointment, the shikari offered to take us to the banks of a Khal that traversed this area. Here he assured us we would find ample evidence of pig. The suggestion seemed a good one and we accompanied him, across the fields, to where this stream lay. Both banks of the Khal were densely covered with vegetation and a class of water-lily (kutchu) much appreciated by pig. As it was obvious we would have to sit up that night, and trust to a full moon, to do our shooting, I wandered round looking for a suitable place to sit. It was while so engaged that I was amazed to find the bloated body of a pig lying by the water's edge. Anxious to see whether the animal had been shot or had died from natural causes, I examined the carcass carefully and was horrified to discover that half its jaw had been literally blown off. The wound had not been inflicted by a bullet, of that I was certain.

The rest of the party had by now arrived and we questioned the shikari on how this animal had been killed. He examined the animal and pointing to the ghastly wound on its jaw and neck, calmly informed us that the animal had been killed by a bomb. He proceeded to explain.

Local poachers in quest of meat and not having the necessary weapons to shoot the animals, employ a devilish device for destroying these poor creatures. There is a class of cracker, known in Bengal as a Bhui Patakar or land cracker, a perfectly harmless cracker in its original state, but capable of being developed into deadly bomb. The construction of this bomb is quite simple. Into a small paper bag is

first collected a number of stone or flint chips. To this is added a quantity of fulminating powder and the whole is tightly bound with long strips of cloth. When dashed on the ground the cracker explodes with a loud report and in this form is practically harmless. The poacher however is not satisfied with this. Placing this cracker in another bag, he adds gun-powder, glass chips, old nails and bits of wire. The whole is then tightly bound with strips of cloth. When the bomb is ready he surrounds it with pieces of hand-bread (parata), and dips the whole into a thick solution of molasses. Proceeding to a spot that he knows is visited frequently by wild pig, he places the bomb on the pathway and returns home. That night, some pig hurrying down the path discovers the bomb. Seizing it in his powerful jaws, he proceeds to crunch it. The pressure ignites the fulminating powder within and the bomb explodes, blowing away his lower jaw and part of his snout. The agony of that poor creature can be imagined. It is seldom killed outright, but rushes about squealing and thrusting its head into any pool of water it can find. If it does not die from the effects of the explosion, it wanders round helplessly and finally, after several days dies of hunger and exhaustion.

The wanton cruelty of this act stirs the indignation of every sportsman. This method is not confined to Bengal, but is practised by Poachers in Behar and M. P. and yet the law is helpless to punish them.

I have mentioned the above instance just to emphasize the ruthlessness of these people, but it must not be supposed that they confine their attention to Wild Pig only. In the Sunderbans they are most active on the churs and marsh lands to which the Wild Pig come in large sounders. This is also the haunt of the Cheetal and the demand for vension in the markets of Calcutta are so heavy, that the Cheetal has been practically wiped out. It is an axiom that every Sunderban tiger is a Man-Eater. With the Cheetal practically extinct and the

Wild Pig retreating further inland, the tiger is forced to live on the miserable cattle one sees in this area or on man. The Fishermen and Honey Gatherers are the principal sufferers. Fishermen are frequently taken from their boats, although these, for safety sake, are usually anchored in midstream. Tigers growing desperate with hunger frequently swim out and seize these unfortunate people from the decks on which they usually sleep and there is seldom any attempt at rescue. The Honey Gatherers are most susceptible during the day. A Honey Gatherer will spot a flight of bees returning to the hive and keeping his eyes fixed on them will race along the banks and through the forests till he locates the hive. Obviously he cannot see where he is going and there are instances where a honey gatherer has been so intent on following the bees, that he actually tripped over a sleeping tiger. The consequences to himself were fatal but his death provided his companions with sufficient time to escape. There is a strange and somewhat amusing story about these Honey Gatherers. It is not always necessary for them to follow the flight of homing bees, to locate a hive. Occasionally they are assisted by a little bird known for its partiality for honey. This bird evidently knows that the men are after honey and being afraid of the savage attacks of the bees, he will lead the men to the nearest hive where he will await his share of the booty. This he does by a shrill twittering, flying just a little ahead of the men and returning frequently to see if he is being followed. The Honey gatherers however, aver that if a man deceives the bird by not leaving a portion of the honey-comb or gives up the attempt to find the hive, the bird will deliberately lead them to where a Tiger is hiding or on to a snake, in revenge.

In Behar, M. P. and other jungle areas the Poacher concentrates on Sambar or Cheetal. The nets are fixed at an angle of 45 degrees from the ground and often extend for over a thousand yards. When the Beat starts the terrified animals

plunge wildly through the forest, selecting Game Trails in front of which the nets are usually set and once entangled in the nets, they thresh about getting more firmly caught, till the poachers arrive and despatch them with spears and clubs. Where these people consider it too risky to organise a Beat, they adopt a very cruel and wasteful device. This consists of a thin steel wire, strung, between two trees and usually across a path leading down to a water-hole or salt-lick. Any animal traversing this trail at night, finds himself caught by a running noose attached to this wire. The more he struggles the tighter the noose gets and he is usually dead by the morning. Occasionally, however, especially in the case of larger animals, such as Sambar, his frantic struggles result in snapping the wire and he rushes into the forest with a long strand of wire trailing behind him. The bushes and undergrowth that impede his progress also help tighten the noose, till he finally succumbs from suffocation or perishes after days of suffering, when the thin steel wire cuts through the skin and produces a painful and mortal wound.

Where the use of Nets, Beats and the like will betray his activities, the Poacher uses a very clever device. Selecting an arrow, fitted with a heavy barbed head, he will remove the barb and carefully replace the same on the head of the shaft, using only wax to keep it in place. To the lower end of the barb he will attach a strong but thin steel wire, some three feet long. The free end of this wire is next attached to the middle of the shaft and carefully wound round the entire length of the arrow. Once the arrow is discharged the barb becomes fixed in the animal, while the shaft dislodged by the impact, frees itself from the barb and unwinds itself, to trail along by the side of the fleeing animal. Being tied to the centre the shaft acts as an anchor, fouling shrubs, roots, etc., and thus impedes the escape of the animal, till he is finally overcome by the pursuing Poachers and killed.

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In Orissa the accent is of course on Elephant. The tusks of these animals provide a valuable inducement for the Poacher. The law protecting elephants is rigidly enforced and a Permit to shoot one of these animals can only be obtained in the case of Rogues or those animals that make it a habit of destroying crops and terrorising villagers. The well-known device of digging a pit, in the centre of which a sharpened stake is driven and on which the elephant is supposed to be impaled, is no longer used. In all my wandering through Orissa I have never come across one of these pits and on enquiry was informed that the device entails too much labour, it is seldom successful and the chances of detection are too great. Instead the Poachers resort to the ancient device of the poisoned arrow. I am indebted to Mr. Alan Moorhead's deeply interesting book, "No Room in the Ark" for details of how this poison is made. Mr. Moorhead of course is talking of Poachers in Africa, but I find that the materials used and the method of preparation is very similar in this country. In Africa the poison is prepared from the twigs and leaves of a bush known as the *Acokanthera Friscoreum*. The tree is said to resemble an olive tree and is easily detected from the number of insects, birds and small rodents lying dead at the foot of the tree. A preparation is made from the twigs and leaves of the tree, which are collected fresh and then boiled for eight or nine days. The resulting brew smells like liquorice and has the consistency of pitch. In India the same procedure is followed, but the tree from which the ingredients are taken is known locally as Sidjuha. There is no known antidote for this poison and so virulent is its action that in Behar a thin soup is made from the leaves and berries. This is poared on the water in some small pool known to be full of fish and within a few minutes the fish can be seen rushing to the surface, gasping for breath. At this stage they are removed, slit open and the entrails removed. If done quickly, the

fish may be eaten without fear, but I could never summon up enough courage to try it.

I was once in Myurbhanj (Orissa) where a herd of elephants were ravishing the fields in the vicinity of my Camp. Anxious to see how the local villagers drove these beasts away, I induced the Head Man to permit me to sit up with his hunters on the machans they had specially constructed for this purpose. These machans were spectacular affairs, built on trees or on supporting posts and never less than 20 feet above ground. Arriving at the site I was shown up a slim ladder to the platform, where I found three men already seated. They had bows and arrows and in the centre of the platform was a small bowl filled with glowing coals. I was handed a couple of arrows to inspect. These consisted of the usual bamboo arrow, one end of which was fitted with a steel head some three inches long, but with no barb. This the men informed me would be placed in the fire, till red hot and when the elephants arrived they would be shot into their hind quarters. Once hit the pain is sufficient to scare away an elephant from those fields for months. When however, I asked to be shown the other arrows carefully hidden and wrapped in leaves, this was politely but firmly refused. These arrows I later learned were the poisoned arrows used for shooting tuskers. The point is barbed and lavishly coated with poison. The barb itself is fitted to the shaft with wax and as soon as the arrow hits, the shaft falls off, leaving the barb in the flesh of the elephant to do its deadly work. An elephant hit with a poisoned arrow usually dies within a couple of hours, but some linger on and rush into the deepest forest to die eventually. The tusks are hacked out by the Poachers and the body left to rot or be devoured by Jackals, Hyeanas and Vultures. Picked clean the bones are carted back to the village and sold to Vendors who trade in Ivory and other forest products. This explains why so few of these bodies are ever found and as Forest

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Guards are as susceptible to bribes as any other profession, the Poachers themselves are seldom traced. I should like to say a word, however, in defence of the Poacher. Probably every adult male and some of the women also, living in villages on the border of our Forest areas, are Poachers. I have seen the damage done to standing crops by elephant herds and the villager has my sympathies. The Forest Department, overworked as it is, cannot be expected to protect these people. What is needed is an old and experienced Game Warden, with a small staff, who can concentrate on Game Control. We have heard a lot about the appointment of Elephant and Tiger Control Officers, but none of this has matured. The appointment of old and experienced Sportsmen (if necessary, even in an Honorary capacity) would help considerably, not only to control the Game but also to eliminate the Poacher, both European and Indian.

22 *Big Game Photography*

To-day, the Sportsman after Big Game is as interested in his camera as he is in his Rifle. The growing popularity of Big Game Photography is due in a large measure to the realization that our game animals are being shot out rapidly. The creation of Sanctuaries and National Parks, where animals can be studied at leisure, has also stimulated the interest of all sections of the public in Wild Life and the camera, with its modern developments and the undeniable thrill that a successful "shot" of wild animals in their natural habitat, gives the sportsman, has induced many a Shikari to lay aside his rifle in preference to the camera. There is also the humane angle to be considered. Those magnificent antlers, the towering bulk of the nature elephant with his gleaming tusks, the Tiger, sneaking down to the water-hole to slack his thirst, the cubs gamboling at their mother's side, are all caught and faithfully recorded by the camera. And later when these same scenes are boosted up to life size and projected on the screen in actual colours, the thrill of the moment is always present. Compare this with the poor, mangled corpse lying at your feet and you will appreciate some of the disgust that the average sportsman feels at this unnecessary slaughter of all types of Wild Life.

The Camera

The camera, like the rifle, is a matter of personal preference. Whether you use the humble Box Camera or one

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of those superlative jobs fitted with wide-angle and telephoto lenses, the selection of the camera is one of personal choice. I am no photographic expert and in the choice of cameras I have experimented till I have hit on the model that suits my peculiar temperament. The day of the big camera is definitely out. For the sportsman, already burdened with a rifle, water-bottle and haversack, the compact 35 mm. camera is the most suitable. A telephoto lens is essential for all shots that need stalking from a distance, while the wide-angle lens is necessary for groups of animals, like Cheetul, Elephant Herds, etc. For all this work, I have found that the camera *par excellence*, is the 35 mm. "Minolta" with a 1.8 lens, and a telephoto attachment, of 200 mm. If to this is added a Wide Angle lens of 1.4 you will need nothing more for all ordinary field work. This camera can of course be supplied with a number of supplementary gadgets which enhance its usefulness, but the lenses I have mentioned are very satisfactory.

The Hide

Having secured your camera, loaded your car, bluffed the Boss into giving you a few weeks leave to visit a dying Aunt, you set out. Your first essential duty is to visit the District Forest Officer and obtain from him a permit to visit the selected Sanctuary or National Park, or if you have determined to combine a Big Game Shoot with photography, the Reserved Forest that offers the largest selection of animals.

Arriving here you immediately proceed to the Forest Rest House and get yourself comfortable. If you have brought your servant, all is well. But if you have reserved this space in the car for your Girl Friend, then your troubles are just about to start. That evening you will be visited by the Chowkidar or the Forest Ranger who will detail the

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boundaries of the Block you have reserved. Next will come the local Shikari. This worthy will give you a glowing account of the game in your vicinity. His face will fall and he will look bewildered when you try to explain that you are keen on photographing animals and that the shooting can wait. Later, as you wax eloquent about Water Holes, Game Trails and the like, he will brighten up and when you mention that Tiger is the main animal you wish to photograph, his face will be wreathed in smiles. "If it is Tiger you want Sahib, then come with me. I know every Tiger in this district personally".

Building The Hide

TRY and remember that the creatures of the wild owe their immunity from attack to their ability to hide. In the art of camouflage they are experts. The wild animals, even the birds, that visit a particular water-hole, know the approaches, the surrounding scenery and even the bushes and reeds that grow on the banks, perfectly. Any change is immediately noticed and is the signal for a hasty retreat. Your first duty, when you have finally selected the particular water-hole or stream, where the tracks of wild animals lead you to suppose that this particular spot is regularly visited by game animals, is to study carefully the approaches to the site. Your next duty is to examine the edges of the bank nearest to the water. This will enable you to judge the direction from which the animals come to drink, the class and number of animals visiting this spot and finally whether your hide should be built on the ground or on the surrounding trees. If you are after carnivora, then the machan is the only place from which a photograph may be taken, but if you are content with Sambar, Cheetul and the smaller animals, then a Hide is essential.

Standing at the spot, that the tracks indicate is the place which most of the animals leave the forest to approach the

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water, select the site for your Hide, directly opposite, but slightly to one side of the approach. Here mark off a clearing about five feet square, leaving a blind of natural foliage about two feet thick in front of the Hide. Next clear all the undergrowth inside this enclosure. Four poles, cut from some other part of the forest should be planted at the four corners and the entire enclosure camouflaged but not with leaves and branches as these when dry and turned yellow will give the entire Hide away. Many Shikaris carry a roll of gunny cloth, five feet wide and about 20 ft. long. This has been previously painted a dark green and further decorated with branches and leaves in various shades of brown. This should be strung from the four poles and the entire area enclosed. Be sure that the entrance to the Hide is from the back or at a side. Within the Hide itself, a liberal amount of dried straw should be strewn or a thick Durrie (carpet) laid down. This will deaden all sounds of movement. A low stool, a tripod for your camera, and a flask containing tea and you are ready for a long vigil. The opening in front of the Hide from which to photograph your game, is always a tricky business. Slits six inches long and about three wide, should be cut in the gunny. These should be provided with flaps, so that only one slit is open at a time, through which the photograph is being taken. Any movement within the Hide is immediately detected. All obstructing foliage from in front of these slits should be carefully removed. Once erected, the Hide should be left *in situ* undisturbed. You have quite possibly made several mistakes, but after a while the animals and birds grow accustomed to this queer contraption and pay no further notice. This is the time you select for sitting in.

It may also occur to you, as to why this particular Water-hole should be selected by animals to quench their thirst, when you have known that within a few miles' radius, there are several such water-holes offering equal facilities to

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thirsty animals. The answer is simple. Instruct your shikari to "salt" all other water-holes in your immediate vicinity. This is best done by selecting a number of poles or dried sticks, about four feet long, one end of which is slit to a depth of about a foot. In this slit is fixed a sheet of white paper or a white cloth. The other end is buried in the centre of the pool, sufficiently above the water to let the flagged end wave freely in the breeze. If all the pools in the immediate vicinity of your "hide" are treated thus, animals approaching the pool and noticing the flag, will immediately make off, till they come to the pool selected by you, which has no warning flag and here they will drink their fill and incidentally give you an opportunity to photograph them. This device is generally only employed when photographing animals at night.

Obviously a "Hide" as described above would be of no use in photographing carnivora, which are mostly nocturnal. Besides this the use of such a "Hide" near a water-hole at night, where the visits of carnivora, especially Tiger, are anticipated, would be dangerous. The only alternative is the use of a machan or "Hide" built on a tree near the site, from which a photograph may be obtained. The chances of a Tiger or Leopard coming to the water-hole during the day are remote indeed, and the use of artificial illumination is the only method by which a good photograph may be obtained.

Mr. F. W. Champion, I. F. S., Author of "The Jungle in Sunshine and Shadow" is probably the greatest exponent of this art of photographing Wild Life by artificial light. Fortunately for the amateur, we now have Flash light Bulbs, automatic releases, such as the "Electrolease" which enables the photographer to release the flash and make the exposure at any distance from the camera. These gadgets are expensive and probably out of the reach of the average Shikari, and consequently the sportsman has to rely on his own initiative to rig up a contrivance to fire the flash when



Caught by the flash.



A Tame Hyaena cub.

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the animal arrives at the water-hole. The Trip-wire system is the simplest and best. Most cameras have the Release Trigger synchronised with the Flash Light so that the exposure is made at the same instant as the Flash is fired. A Trip Wire connected to the trigger on the camera and laid across the path to be taken by the animal, will fire the Flash and make the exposure the instant of contact, but obviously only one photograph can be taken at a time as each exposure necessitates the photographer leaving the Hide or Machan to come to the camera to reset the trigger, change the Flash Bulb and move the film to the next position. When photographing carnivora, this is not a very happy arrangement. Care should be taken to see that the camera, itself, is carefully concealed. The trip wire should be laid across the path at a height and/at a sufficient distance from the front of the camera to include not only the animal but also the path and some of the surrounding forest. The camera should be focussed at the spot where the animal will make its first contact with the Trip Wire. As to the exposure, I have found that when using a Film (Black & White) of .35 Din, an exposure of $\frac{1}{30}$ of a second, with an apperture of f .8 is usually satisfactory.

This question of the correct exposure is best decided by a method of trial and error. In the privacy of your own compound, set up a scene similar to that at the water-hole. Measure your distances carefully. Fix the camera and trip wire as you would do at the actual site and then when it is sufficiently dark, take your dog and walk down towards the camera. The dog will release the flash and the resulting photograph will show definitely if your timing and apperture is correct. This experiment will also enable you to judge the best distance at which to set the trip wire and the angle at which the finest results may be obtained. A bit expensive, but in the end very satisfactory.

Having taken the photograph of the year, you will

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naturally wish to sell the same. Most Daily papers, Monthly or Weekly Magazines accept interesting photographs for their pictorial sections, but remember if you have sent a photograph to a particular paper, don't send another copy to another publisher till you know that your first has been definitely rejected or accepted. Nothing is more irritating to the Editor than to find that the illustration he has given such a prominent position to in his paper also appeared in that of his rival. Remember also that a photograph of one live Tiger is worth more than ten photographs of dead Tigers taken at the same spot.

The best and most acceptable size is 6 inch x 4 inch. glossy, black and white. In the case of coloured photograph it is best to send the coloured transparencies direct, so that the Editor can make his own selection.

And now for a personal experience which I think will be valuable for Sportsmen keen on photographing wild animals.

The day had been blistering hot. A thin smoke haze hung over the forest, and accentuated the heat in the valleys. An ideal day I thought for animals to come down to the water-hole to drink. Taking my camera I hurried down to the particular water-hole I had selected for this purpose. Pausing at the edge of the water, I was electrified to see, sunk deep into the spongy earth, the impression of two huge pug marks. This is it, I thought and immediately set about fixing up the camera. Selecting a site that gave an uninterrupted view of the game trail, I fixed my camera firmly to a stake driven into the ground. Carefully I covered the camera as well as the flash light with grass, selected from the vicinity. The lens and the reflector I left uncovered, then fixed the trip-wire to the trigger, and led it across the path, some ten feet in front of the lens. As I knew my quarry was a Tiger, I tied the trip wire to short stakes, fixed firmly at the side of the track and about a foot off the ground. When this

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had been done to satisfaction, I returned to the camera, removed the dust-cap from in front of the lens and carefully focussed the camera at a point where I judged the body of the Tiger would contact the trip-wire. I now carefully wiped the lens, adjusted the apperture and speed of the shutter and having replaced the dust-cap, hurried back to the Forest Rest House. Here I consumed a hasty meal and informing my companions that I would be out for the night, I took a flask of hot coffee and hurried back.

Arriving at the water-hole, with the help of my torch, I carefully rechecked the apperture and speed of the lens, then set the trigger. Cautiously I climbed on to the machan and settled down to watch all night if necessary, till the coming of the Lord of the Jungles.

The night was moonless. Faint glimmerings of starlight filtered down through the trees and lit the white path of the trail in ghostly patches. Intent and eager I watched, till towards dawn I heard him coming. I have often watched under similar circumstances, with a Rifle across my knees, but never had I been so thrilled. I heard him pause and sniff the air. The man smell was still heavy on the bushes through which I had passed when setting up the camera and for all the poorness of his scent, he could still detect my presence. I heard him pause twice and then apparently satisfied, he came on. Instantly the bushes immediately in front of me were lit by a brilliant flash. I heard him growl deeply and then he was gone rushing through the undergrowth, but in that flash I have seen for one brief second, his snarling lips, and eyes glaring in surprise and fear and in the light of my torch a tail held straight behind him as he cleared the bushes in rapid flight.

As impatient as a novice, I waited till the first pale light of dawn lit the scene, then I slid from my perch and rushed to the camera. As I took it up cautiously, brushing aside the grass and leaves that had camouflaged it so successfully,

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from those keen eyes, I froze with shock. The picture of the year had never been taken. The dust shield still covered the lenses, just as I had left them. A little less haste, a little less excitement and I would have remembered this simple detail and so saved one of the finest pictures I had ever had the opportunity of taking.

If You Have Enjoyed This Book — Then Read
AT MIDNIGHT COMES THE KILLER

AUGUSTUS SOMERVILLE

With a skill and vividness that only actual experience can bestow, the Author, of this and many other books on Shikar, gives the Reader a true and passionately absorbing epic of Forest Life, a masterpiece of story narration and vivid description. Ever since Corbett wrote his memorable book, "Man Eaters of Kumaon", it is doubtful if another book portraying so accurately the night life of the Indian jungles has appeared.

Drawing extensively on his many and varied adventures, the Author describes, as only those who have actually experienced it, can describe, the mystic hush that settles over the forests at sun-down, the grim and terrifying silence of the jungles at midnight and the nerve-racking roar of the Killer as he attacks his prey in the early hours of the dawn.

Realizing that the only acceptable bait for a confirmed Man Eater, is man, he describes how, when all other devices had failed, he was forced to offer this dreadful alternative. The methods employed, the skill and daring that along could ensure the success of such a scheme, are so vividly told, that the Reader is gripped with the tenseness of the situation.

Tigers and Leopards are not the only Killers the Author writes about. Lying motionless and well concealed in the murky depths of many a forest pool, lurks the Mugger, awaiting his unsuspecting victim.

Superstitions and legends which influence so dramatically the lives of our primitive forest folk, are narrated with

interesting details, while the happier and softer side of jungle life is not neglected.

The book is replete with information of vital interest to Shikaris, especially the concluding chapter which describes, in detail, the methods of preserving the skins of Tigers and Leopards as well as the horns of Sambar and other Deer.

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