

## TIGER-HUNTING IN MYSORE.

BY H. CATON WOODVILLE.



AFTER Prince Albert Victor had left Mysore, during his recent visit to India, I remained in that city for about four weeks, to paint during that time a life-size equestrian picture of H. H. the Maharajah. He had promised that I should get some

tiger-shooting, and we daily expected to receive news of a "kill" somewhere in the neighborhood. By a "kill" is meant when a tiger has attacked and carried off a cow or any other animal, when the news is at once sent off to that effect for the sportsmen to come and shoot it.

My time passed very pleasantly mean-

while, working during the hottest part of the day, with, in the evening, polo or drives, and sometimes performances of native plays in the Maharajah's native theatre, which is built in the best of Western style, with very good scenery and machinery indeed, varied now and then with an interesting nautch.

The tiger is not such a very great misfortune to the neighborhood where he happens to have fixed his abode. His chase gives pleasure, excitement, and exercise to the many hard-worked officials, whose lives would be those of uninterrupted routine were it not for this recreation. It is also of great assistance to the district officials, as it makes them much better acquainted with the people under their charge, and they get to know out-of-the-way places which, but for this sport, they would never have visited.



ON THE WAY TO THE TIGER-SETTING.

The tiger is a very necessary evil in India, and were it not for him, deer and wild-boar would increase to such numbers that the cultivation of the land would become an immense hardship, and almost an impossibility; he keeps them within bounds, and relieves the ryots from watching their fields by night in the unhealthy localities.

We are accustomed in England to hear constant war preached against this animal for its total extermination; but this ought only to be in cases of the destructive cattle-killer or man-eater, and those ought to be got rid of at any cost. The villagers are always extremely careful of their good cattle, watching them well and keeping them grazing on the border of fields where they are working, and would be very sorry if the tiger were exterminated; of course they themselves are often carried off by man-eaters. But tigers of this class are luckily very scarce.

Tigers are still numerous in the state of Mysore, and panthers have often been killed in the city itself quite recently. I

believe that in Mysore the largest tigers in India are to be found. Some have been killed quite lately by sportsmen measuring nearly ten feet six inches from the nose to the tip of the tail. There are two kept by the Maharajah in the courtyard of his cattle-stables that measure very little short of that.

Time was going on and the picture almost completed, so that I quite despaired of having any sport. I had an off day now and then from my work to chase the black buck, of which there are many there, and capital sport they give you, too, stalking them on the plains. You have to go for them with as much if not more care than the Scotch red deer, and they are equally good venison to eat, too. I shot a good many of them, and their graceful tapering heads are now adorning the walls of my studio. One day I shot a hyena, but her hide was not worth taking. I also bagged a couple of wolves in the grounds of the Upper Residency.

At last news came of a "kill" about sixteen miles from the city, and the Ma-

harajah made at once all arrangements for an early start on the next morning. He is one of the most liberal-minded native noblemen in India, and in every way his manners and habits are those of an exceptionally well-mannered European. This cannot always be said of the native gentlemen of India. He was educated after the late Maharajah's death, during his minority, by Colonel G. B. Malleson, C.S.I., his guardian. He is quite English in all his ways, although Hindoo by religion, and an excellent musician.

At an early hour the next morning we met at the palace for an early start. The company consisted of H. H. the Maharajah, G.C.S.I.; Lord Claud Hamilton, A.D.C. to her Majesty the Queen; Surgeon-Major Benson; Mr. Meiklejohn, Resident Magistrate; Mr. Vinicombe Davey, Mr. Charrington, Mr. McHutchin, and myself. We mounted the Maharajah's drag, and with a small escort of H. H.'s body-guard, were soon on the road to the jungle.

It was about sixteen miles to the place of our destination, and we changed horses four times, so that the distance was covered in about an hour and a half. How pretty and yet how strange to the eyes of the European were the dark-skinned escorts in their scarlet tunics, with red and white pennants fluttering from their lances! The Maharajah was dressed in the latest of coaching coats, with a crimson and gold turban, driving his four-in-hand in the English coach. Truly a mixture of East and West! We passed the race-course on our right, and on the left the flat-topped Chamundi Hill, the retreats of the European residents during the hot weather peeping out amongst the shady tops of the trees; past green and watery rice fields, villages with their happy-looking inhabitants standing in the doorways of sun-baked clay houses. But the longest road has a turning, and the end of ours came very soon, and we came to where the jungle—that is, a lighter belt of forest that we had to first penetrate—joined the road, and here we mounted our ponies and rode off to the place of the "kill." Several mounted elephants, but I preferred a pony, as on him you can go where you want to and stop when you like. We passed several small villages in the jungle, simply clusters of a few huts, and always decorated with little green triumphal arches, made of palm

branches and colored streamers of calico, erected in our honor. The villagers met us with joy cries, blowing enormous cholera-horns that nearly deafened us forever after. Some of the vegetation was most beautiful—groups of teak, palm-trees, and wild vines, intersected with large clumps of the feathery bamboo. The road, winding over and round small hills, gave us views of miles and miles of country covered with dense forest. At last we were met by a native magistrate of the district, who reported that the tiger was surrounded by beaters at the "kill," and only waited our pleasure to be killed himself. We had to dismount, and a walk of half a mile brought us to a small clearing, where some eighty natives were erecting *mechdus*, or small platforms, for us to shoot from, all chattering like monkeys, and making as much noise as possible. The Maharajah and the old hands at this business looked disgusted, and the native magistrate was secretly cursed by all. However, we made a try when the stands were ready. These had been erected in a line about fifty yards from each other, and were so low that we could easily swing ourselves to the top of them; in fact, only about six feet from the ground. They had no screens, and altogether were very shaky. After we had taken our places, the discharge of an old matchlock, the bullet of which we heard whizzing in our direction, gave the signal that the drive had commenced. A most unearthly row was started; yells and hootings, blowing of cholera-horns, and beating of tom-toms were heard in every direction, and we were getting really interested and full of excitement and expectation. A solitary hare hopped past us, but of course was allowed to go unmolested. The driving seemed to be carried on, though, in a very disjointed and unorganized sort of way, and on one side the noise ceased altogether, leaving that part quite open. It proved afterwards that no tiger had been killed or hunted in that particular neighborhood for some years, and the ryots were utterly unaccustomed to their work, and numbered not one trained shikarri amongst them. The native magistrate who had organized the affair had not taken any trouble in the matter, or we had been too hasty, and ought to have waited a day or two for better arrangements to have been made. The drivers themselves appearing



A CHARGE AGAINST THE NETTING.

showed that our tiger was *non est*, and we had drawn a blank! Empty-handed a return had to be made, but hope of success in a few days, when the Maharajah would have got his experienced trackers at work, kept us in good spirits. We passed the "kill" on our way back; it was a very fat cow, and the tiger had dragged her for nearly half a mile into very dense jungle. He had partly devoured her already. The villagers said he had lain by her the whole morning, and had escaped by mid-day, when the

noise and chopping in erecting the *me-cháns* had commenced.

The driving had been done in a very inefficient and careless manner, the ryots huddling together in order to form a better square with their spears in the event of a charge. The Maharajah, on reaching home, at once ordered the netting to be sent to the ground to surround the tiger on his return. This "tiger-netting" is never used naturally on the grass plains of Nepaul, but only, I believe, in the state of Mysore, where it is abso-

lutely necessary, although it may seem unsportsmanlike, as the jungle is so impenetrably thick that it is the only way to bring the game to bay. The nets, of which many are used, are made of half-inch rope of coccoanut fibre, with a nine-inch mesh, and are each about forty feet long by twelve feet in width. They are used in two different ways; one is to surround the tiger with them at night, and the other is to place them in a line and drive him into it, as he will then try to break through, and so entangle himself that he is easily speared by the natives. The only castes who take part in this sport are the "Oopligas," who use spears with handles about eight feet in length, with blades three inches wide and twelve long. It is a very curious thing that tigers never attempt to jump over these nets, which they very easily could do; panthers have often been known to jump over. When the tiger has been safely netted in, he is kept there for two or three days, and often shot through the meshes without a chance being given him to try and regain his freedom. The nets are held up by forked sticks inclining towards the interior, and the end near the ground is well pegged down and logs of wood turned inside it, the remainder being turned up so that for four feet above the ground the netting is doubled. He is driven into a *cul-de-sac* formed of this netting, and the end is then quickly closed, forming a circle of about three hundred yards in diameter; then all underwood is cleared around it in a belt of about ten or fifteen feet in width. After this parties with choppers enter the enclosure and cut two paths crossing each other, so that by watching these the exact locality into which "Stripes" has moved can be easily ascertained. This cutting of paths inside an enclosure, with an enraged animal wandering about, very hungry perhaps, and furious at being caged in, would appear to those who do not know his nature to be foolhardy, and inviting certain death to some, at any rate; but as long as the men keep well together, a tiger will not charge upon them. Should he have received a wound, it is very difficult to persuade the natives to venture inside. The Maharajah had given orders for a cow to be tethered not far from the old "kill," to provide the tiger with a new attraction in the shape of fresh beef; and, sure enough, after four days of patient

waiting, news was brought that at last he was really safely enclosed, and all preparations made for some certain sport. So we again drove out, the day after receiving the tidings, with guns and rifles, eager for the prey.

On reaching the nets we found all activity and bustle; crowds of ryots were at work perfecting the enclosure, armed with their long broad spears. The nets had been erected by a small pond surrounded with beautiful trees and foliage, intersected with the bamboo and palm. The villagers had kept large fires burning, but in spite of these the tiger had charged the nets several times during the night, trying to break through. The whole arrangement this time was under the care and direction of the Maharajah's brother-in-law, and he had been up the whole night long keeping the men up to their work. The bush inside was very dense, and it was impossible to see through in any direction for more than two or three paces. The tiger was now keeping very quiet, and no sign was seen or heard of him. The *mechans* were five in number, built on each side of the pond, and it was proposed now to open the nets on that side for the tiger to pass out and take his chance for freedom, running the gauntlet of our fire; of course he would have to cross the pond, which was only a few feet deep at the most, and which he could easily clear in a few bounds. We all took our places and prepared a warm reception for him. On the first stand were the Maharajah and Lord Claud Hamilton; on the second, the Dewan or Chief Minister of State of Mysore, who had only just that minute arrived, and myself; on the third, Mr. Charrington; on the fourth, on the left side, facing the opening, Mr. Meiklejohn and Dr. Benson; on the fifth, Mr. Vinicomb Davey and Mr. McHutchin. Suddenly, with a loud rush, a rocket was discharged by the Master of the Horse into the bush; then an awful row was started all round, with tomtoms and cholera-horns; shots in plenty were fired with matchlocks. But "Stripes" took not the slightest notice of all this and remained immovable; rocket after rocket was sent into every nook and corner, but without any result, and as the time was drawing near for our return journey we were again expecting a blank day; and our surmises proved quite correct. We began to fear that the tiger only



SHOOTING THE TIGER.

existed in the imagination of the natives, and they had enclosed only the bush, and reported his night charges simply to give us hope.

However, after a few more ineffectual attempts we had to give it up, and hope for better things on the morrow. The next day saw us really started in time, and we reached the nets a little after mid-day, and this time we were firmly determined to enter the enclosure on foot and "beard the tiger in his den," should he again prove obdurate to all other persuasion. The *mecháns* were much improved by the addition of screens of branches and bamboo, and the netting had been carried on from the opening, forming a broad road across the pond with its swampy banks, and at the same time preventing the tiger from attacking the *mecháns*. As before, large fires had been kept burning the whole night, and again several charges against the netting had been made, and the *ryots* said they could easily have speared him several times; but of course they had strict injunctions to the contrary. We walked all round the netting, but could not get a glimpse of the tiger anywhere. We were just on our way to the *mecháns*, when a wild screaming and yelling took place on the side opposite the opening; we all rushed round, and just got a glimpse of the brute as he disappeared again into the thick cover; he had again made one of his charges to try for freedom. The Maharajah now decided to reduce the cover inside the enclosure, and about fifty men were ordered in with billhooks and hatchets for that purpose; but many of them shirked this, as the tiger was by this time getting very hungry, having been enclosed without the tempting bait of the cow that was tethered for him, and, of course, no food was placed inside the enclosure for him. We, in the mean time, sat down to a light breakfast of green coconuts and fresh figs.

Many of the wives and daughters of the men who were inside chopping away were surrounding the netting, some calling to encourage them and some to caution them against being too foolhardy and rash. Once there was a tremendous panic inside, and all of them came flying back, tumbling over each other pell-mell, and taking no notice whatever of the Master of the Horse, thinking the tiger was after them. It was most comical to see them

trying to get over or under the netting in the most frantic hurry. This, of course, had all been made fast and secure by being very firmly held down by logs of wood, etc., and in their hurry they became quite blind in their endeavors to get through. Some had an arm or a leg through, others their heads, and all wriggled like so many eels in a similar position. One or two tried to climb over, but the netting collapsed with them, and covered them in a tangle of ropes. Their comrades *outside* the netting meanwhile were greatly delighted, and thought it great fun pushing them back everywhere when attempting to get out, and adding to their fright as much as possible, reminding one of the beasts in a menagerie being stirred up with a long pole. Of course it was anything but a pleasant position to be in for these nearly naked natives, had the tiger charged them, since they had only a billhook as an arm of defence and a simple loin-cloth as their only covering. After a while, finding it had been only a false alarm, they quieted down a little, and were persuaded to go on with their work of reducing the bush inside. After sufficient of this had been done, the encircling nets were reduced to that amount in circumference, and we were all summoned to take our places, as on the day before, on the *mecháns*. The natives took up their positions, and we assumed the most comfortable attitude, with our rifles at hand ready, as we might now at any moment get a shot, there being every reason to believe the brute would soon leave the cover. Again the Master of the Horse sent a number of rockets into the bushes, the cholera-horns and tomtoms going on with renewed energy all the time, while now and then there was a discharge from a matchlock. The tiger now began to feel really uncomfortable, and uttered short savage cries and roars, and kept wandering from one part of the cover to the other, all the while grumbling to himself. Suddenly we thought the time for a shot had come. Inside the net where the opening had been made was a small clearing of about twenty yards in diameter, and she—for we could now see that it was a tigress—advanced to the centre of it, lashing her sides furiously with her tail, and marching up and down. She evidently mistrusted the open too much to risk a sortie. Then with a most graceful bound she cleared quite twenty-five feet, and en-

deavored again to break through just under Meiklejohn's stand. We had agreed only to fire when she had left the enclosure and should pass the stands in the open, so he did not fire although it was a great temptation, as he could easily have done so. A few pricks with the spears and a firebrand dashed into her face soon made her retire again. She did not remain inactive for long this time, though, as she soon made another charge on the opposite side, and collared the saree of a woman who had been quietly sitting with her back outside against the netting, eating a green cocoanut. She quickly unwound herself out of her dress, and ran yelling away, dressed in nothing but her *chotee*, which is a little jacket reaching just below her armpits. These natives, although by nature the greatest cowards, are yet incomprehensibly careless in all their ways. They will walk about at night when perfectly dark in their gardens and fields that are known to be infested with cobras and other poisonous reptiles; and not possessing sufficient forethought to carry a lantern, or not caring to take the trouble, naturally often meet a horrible death in this way.

The tigress, in her rage, tore the garment into ribbons, taking no notice of the petty annoyances given to her with spear points and sharpened bamboos, and with a triumphant look over this small victory, slowly walked back into the bush. How grand she looked in her freedom! In size, she appeared to us at the time quite as large as one of the Mysore cattle, that is, of about the same size as a Kerry bull. She certainly was very large, and no longer young. After perfect silence and inactivity on her part for about half an hour she suddenly appeared in the open by the entrance again, and made a most determined attempt to get through the right side just under the Maharajah's *mechán*, seizing in her teeth through the meshes a long cloth of a native that they wear on their shoulders. The man, fortunately for himself, clasped a small tree that stood a little way off from the netting, but the cloth refused to unwind itself, and we thought he was doomed to be drawn within the tigress's reach, he all the while howling and screaming in the most energetic manner.

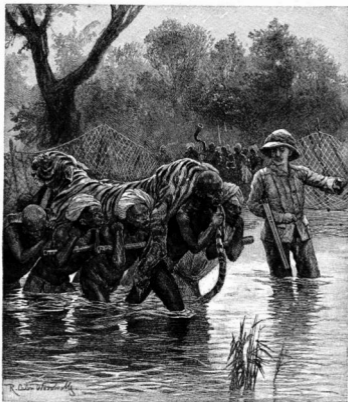
The Maharajah would now have fired, but could not do so with safety, as there were too many natives in close proximity

who were flitting about in front of his rifle, and they took no notice of his commands to get out of the way, but kept on dancing about, shrieking, and prodding at the tigress with their spears, making a perfect babel of din and confusion, until the Master of the Horse, discharging a rocket within a foot or two of her face, sent her howling back into the bush in double-quick time, where we could hear her wild plunging about, evidently trying to get some of the sparks out of her eyes. She did not keep quiet for long there, as she soon appeared in the opening, and with a few long, quick, and graceful bounds made for the swampy part, and plunged into the pond, trying to make for the jungle beyond. The firing as she passed each *mechán* became general, but she showed no signs of being even wounded as she entered deeper water and disappeared altogether into a belt of Spanish cane. Naturally we became very much excited, and began to fear that we had lost her, as she might have made her way quietly through the reeds into the jungle beyond. A few of us, now perfectly indifferent to all danger, jumped from our strongholds to cut off her retreat and to track her in the pond. It was an anxious and exciting moment for us, as she might have broken out upon us at any moment then, and attacked us on quite equal terms. Benson, who was slowly making his way directly in her track in the pond, suddenly came upon a large body in the muddy water and stopped, examining it with his foot, and then bending down and feeling it with his hand. "Here she is," he shouted, "stone-dead!" and, sure enough, she was lying at the bottom of the pond, with life quite extinct. We all, with the exception of one, claimed the honor of having fired the fatal shot, and laid claim to the skin. The exception, as the tigress rushed past his *mechán*, had his solar topee pushed over his eyes in the act of bringing up his rifle to his shoulder by his companion's elbow in a similar movement.

Benson shouted to the natives in Hindostani to come and bring up the body to terra firma. Half a dozen men soon brought her out on a kind of improvised bamboo litter, making all the time the curious cry that they always make when carrying their heavy toddy jars or other big burdens.

Many may scoff at this kind of "sport,"





BRINGING THE DEAD TIGRESS OUT OF THE POND.

and think it such as no true sportsman ought ever to allow himself to be associated with; but in defence of this tiger-netting I must say that unless done in this way, it must be left altogether alone. The jungle in this part of Mysore abounds with large bushes, each covering many yards of ground, and with the most pertinacious of thorns, through which no human being, unless he wriggled himself flat on the ground, could possibly pass. In Bengal and Nepal, as I said before,

tigers are hunted with elephants, but the country there is open, and covered only with grass six or eight feet high, and no trees. In this part of Mysore an elephant with his howdah could not possibly pass amongst these low trees, which scarcely allow room in some parts for even a man to walk upright; and for this reason beating for them is almost always unsuccessful, as it always gives the tiger a chance, of which he is not slow to avail himself, of sneaking out of the way. So

the only two methods that are practical really here are "netting," and sitting up all night in a tree by a "kill" waiting for the tiger to return to his food. Almost all sportsmen have tried this latter, and generally been disappointed, as I was in another part of India, and have always solemnly vowed that each occasion should be their very last, only to be found at it again on the very next opportunity. Some really like this solitary watching, but it has very many drawbacks to its enjoyment. Several Indian sportsmen, who have killed their forty or fifty tigers, have told me they had been nearly always unsuccessful with it. It is very wearisome work sitting from about four o'clock in the afternoon until daybreak next day, always on the alert to see something that does not come; and with the darkness mosquitoes come in quantities, and perhaps a scorpion will ferret you out, or, worse than all, you may be visited by the red ant. It is very uncertain when a tiger will return to the "kill." He may do so as early as three or four in the afternoon, or just before daybreak, or not at all, often being frightened away, perhaps by some unforeseen circumstance. The slightest rustle will make him stop, and once his suspicions are aroused, he will not venture near. To shoot him on foot by stalking is an impossibility. The sportsmen will occasionally come upon a tiger when after other game, and may then have a chance of a shot. If there are a few men who keep together, a tiger, even if wounded, will think twice before charging into the middle of them, and will always shirk the last ten or fifteen feet. None but the most foolhardy or utterly ignorant would venture to follow

a wounded tiger into long grass or very close cover, where it has every advantage, and the hunter may be seized before he has time to raise his rifle. One of the tiger's greatest aids in his attacks is his voice, the sudden coughing roar of which is paralyzing to the coolest, and of course for a certain shot the nerves must be perfectly steady, with "no flinching."

Our tigress, when laid out, proved to be a very fine large brute, measuring just over ten feet from nose to tip of tail; and we found, to our great chagrin and sorrow, upon her being cut open, that in about another fortnight she would have given birth to four young ones. This accounted for her timidity and dislike to leave the cover, and no doubt she was not as active as she might otherwise have been. We found that only one shot had struck her, and this was right into the middle of her forehead and into the brain, and had been done with a twelve-bore; so there could be no further question as to who had really killed her, and all doubts were thus set at rest, as, with the exception of one, all were using .450 or .500 bore Expresses. That exception and lucky man was Mr. Vinicomb Davey, who had a twelve-bore rifle, and a capital shot it proved itself—fairly in the middle of the head, the hardened bullet smashing through the skull and lodging deep in the vertebræ of the neck, penetrating some five inches of solid bone in its course. This was a capital performance for a so-called ball-gun.

The sun was now getting low, the tigress was placed upon an elephant, and we mounted our horses, well pleased with our exciting and interesting day, for the homeward journey.