

Painted for OUTING by Marc Lucas.

(See "A Tiger Hunt," p. 3.)

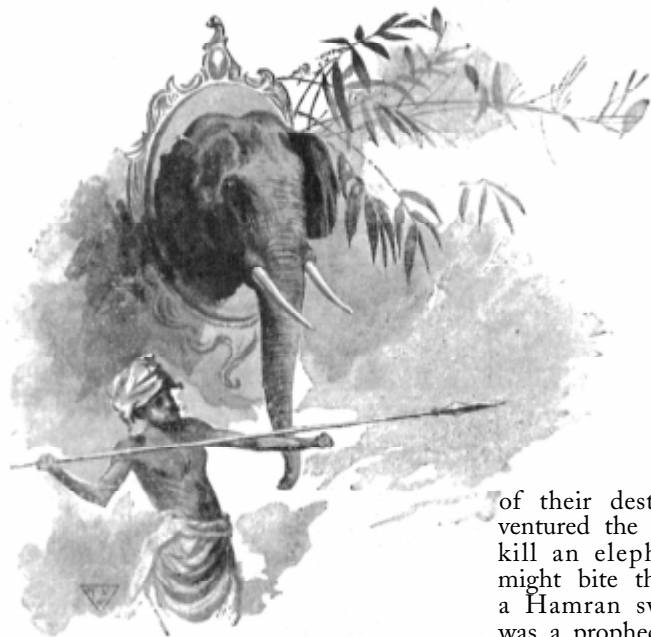
THE HERO OF THE DAY. (p. 6.)

OUTING.

VOL. XXVI.

APRIL, 1895.

No. I.



A TIGER HUNT.

BY

DR. J. H. PORTER.

“YOU saw him yourself?”
“*Ul-hund-ul-illa*, praise be to God, your servant saw. I beg to represent that Chunder Dé and I both saw him. Monkeys began to swear as we rested by the Fakir’s tomb, and a peacock flew screaming across the nala. Then we ascended trees with haste, and he came, *Mashalla!* this was a great and terrible beast, the grandfather of all tigers.” Thus spoke Ali, the village shikari, as he salaamed before the Major.

Our camp lay by the Narbada, and we were a party of three fully equipped for tiger hunting. We had seven elephants—shikar tuskers and pad animals. All our providings and personnel were such as in India nobody supposes he can do without. That evening our talk was naturally of tigers, and apropos

of their destructive powers, the Major ventured the opinion that “A tiger *could* kill an elephant. For instance, he might bite through those vessels which a Hamran sword-hunter cuts.” There was a prophecy in his words that passed unheeded then.

The season for tiger hunting begins in April and lasts until the monsoon. During this time it is intensely hot. Water-courses fail, springs go dry, pools evaporate. Then wild beasts of all kinds leave those remoter tracts to which they retire at other seasons, and gather about drinking places in foothills and jungly lowlands.

In beating for a tiger the start is never made early in the day. This creature, whose structure forms an unequalled mechanism for offence, possesses little endurance in the heat of the sun, supports thirst very badly, and soon breaks down from scorched feet if harried by day. Therefore, when its lair is found, sportsmen wait until the sun rises high before going out. Their hunt is almost certain to be among those ravines where the tiger always lies up,

and not usually until the last extremity will he break out into the burning plains.

Still tigers are not organic machines made to act by instinct in an invariable manner. Some will assault at sight, others skulk and dodge through *nalas* for a long period before the beaters and will not attack until wounded. No human being who has not seen a tiger fight can conceive what their charge is like.

Our beaters were sent off betimes to look for tracks, and, of course, ordered to keep within certain definite limits. Equally of course the injunctions were thrown away. For genuine, inborn, spontaneous contrariness, there is no variety of *genus homo* that can match a Hindu.

By ten o'clock the country around our shady mango *tope* looked through the quivering air as if it were on fire. Then the elephants were brought up and we inspected them carefully. This was always done, lest before the day was over we should find on some of them sore backs, and an end put to their use for a time. A wild elephant gets over the worst injuries, but with domesticated animals a chafe from its girth is a serious matter if not attended to at once.

With pith helmets twined by folds of muslin and jackets padded down the back to intercept the sunbeams, we secured our rifles in their howdah racks and rolled out toward the distant hills across a sea of scorched *jowaree* grass. When we reached the jungle there was not a sign of life about; there never is in daylight and during hot weather. At this time every living thing there has to be forced to show itself. Imagine a high alp breaking down through a forest belt fringed with scrub; its front scarred by a great ravine swept by a torrent during the "rains." Half way down, where more friable soil had been washed away, lay an island, and beyond it the main gulch broke up into many *nalas* that ran out and lost themselves upon the plain. Such was the scene of our exploits.

We occupied those dry water-courses most likely to be traversed, blocked others with pad elephants, and closed the rest by natives placed in trees. The tiger we knew lay upon the *chur*

itself, and we perched our scouts around to signal his movements. When our beaters began their work, signs ominous to the initiated were displayed by my tusker, Chakravati Raja. He stamped and trumpeted as soon as the howling din of the beaters commenced. His Highness had a little attack of the nerves that morning. Briefly, an elephant is never to be trusted; least of all, where his own safety is concerned. "Dere was too much ego in his cosmos," as Hans Breitmann says—not he of the ballads, however. There is a *probability* that some elephants may be relied upon, nothing more. The great beast is as nervous as a hysterical girl. He may stand a tiger's charge, or he may dash you to death getting out of its way. As for those traits set forth and printed in books, talk to the keepers of Teperah and Keddah-men of Mysore about his virtues or intelligence, and they will laugh in your face.

Pea-fowl and florican whirled past as the line approached, an axis stag glanced across the *nala*, entellus monkeys scuttled through the boughs, and a sounder of hog broke away to our left, but the game we sought was not to be seen. "Stripes," the tiger, that is to say, carries in his head a complete topographical chart of any locality he infests, and you may safely swear that all the covered ways leading from that place are well known to him.

Presently one of our lookouts made signs that a tiger was afoot, but if so he turned aside. Most probably the man in his excitement broke a small twig or detached some fragments of bark. While stealing away the tiger's ear possesses the discriminating power of a lying up moose, who hears a stick break under your foot even while an autumnal gale crashes the branches of a pine forest in the northern wilds. There is no surer way, after rifles, of stopping outlets than by placing trackers out of reach who occasionally snap a withered branch or softly strike pieces of wood together. A tiger will notice this in the midst of any turmoil that can be made, and if not ready to fight he knows that the path is occupied and turns off, if skillfully managed, in the direction you wish him to go.

Our Stripes' disinclination to show

himself did not last long. A shot from the Major's heavy ordnance was answered by his savage voice, and almost immediately shrieks of terror and pain arose, mingled with the tiger's well known short, hoarse roar. What had happened was only too plain. The wounded beast had charged our line of beaters.

"Push on," I shouted. The mahout drove his ankoos into the elephant's head, and we burst through the underbrush bearing down everything before us. The Major was up first. A man lay against the trunk of a tree, apparently dead, but fortunately he was only stunned.

As I approached a tracker staggered out of some karinda bushes and fell down in a faint. Another near by was bitten through the lung and his body twitched in death spasms. These men were not taken by surprise. They all knew what to expect at any moment. But their Hindu heedlessness had been intensified by fatalism into infatuation. "If it is to be to-day, it cannot be hereafter; if hereafter it cannot be to-day." That is the principle they act upon.

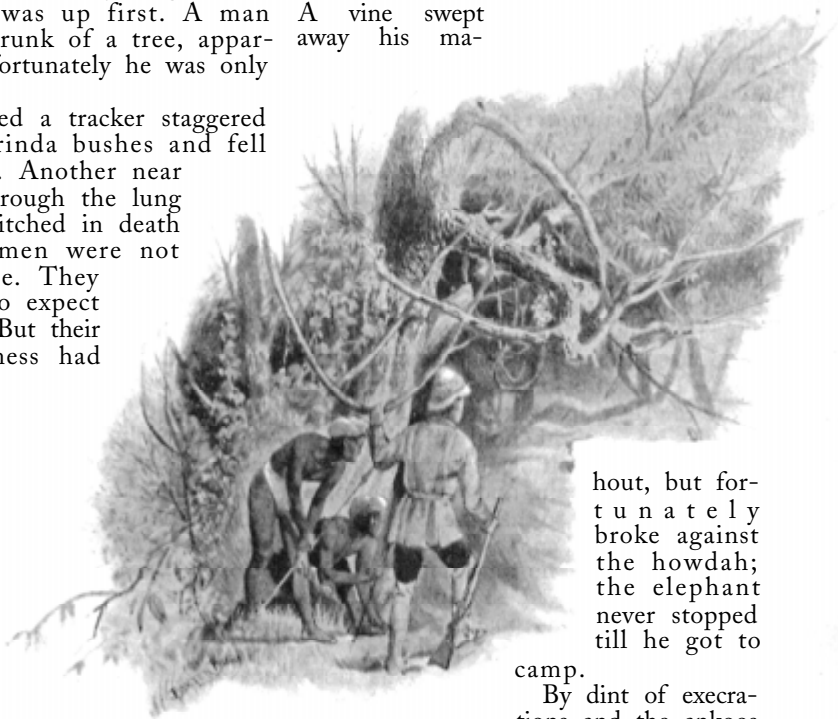
When the wounded and scared natives had been cared for we moved on; but there was no need for any more beating. We could trace him by the blood track. The tiger's prudence came to an end with his injury. It was only necessary now to follow him. Few persons, seeing the elephants' stately pace and majestic appearance as they advanced in line up the valley, would have supposed that, so far as two of them were concerned, it was nearly as dangerous to be in their howdahs as it would have been to have gone on foot. We had not got half a mile before my elephant stopped and stretched out his trunk toward a clump of jungle oppo-

site us, while another of the animals wheeled and, but for his driver's exertions, would have fled.

"Neither of your elephants will stand, gentlemen," said the Major. "And—look out! Here he comes!"

He was coming, indeed; coming as only an infuriated tiger can come, with tail on end, dilated form and blazing eyes. Chakravati Raja bolted, but Gordon's brute got off first. The panic-stricken elephant fled screaming down the ravine.

A vine swept away his ma-



"THE TIGER RETREATED." (p. 6.)

hout, but fortunately broke against the howdah; the elephant never stopped till he got to

camp.

By dint of execrations and the ankoos my tusker was brought up after a time and turned back; but I had enough of the "Raja" during that skurry. He nearly finished me more than once against the trees. The tiger, hard hit by the Major on this attack, retreated into a hollow overgrown with grass and bushes. It was evident that most of the sport would fall to the Major's share, and all I could do was to climb into a small tree growing out of an isolated rock near by—a bad position, and one not to be occupied except in case of necessity. Bisgaum, ridden by the Major, behaved beautifully. His mahout heaped encomiums upon him. "*Touba, touba!*"

Shame! shame! upon those unsainted ones! You, Bisgaum, are my father and my mother and all the rest of my relations. Shall it be said that you, oh valiant in heart, fled from this son of the devil? *Astagh-fur-ulla!* God forbid!"

At the word of command Bisgaum moved forward, but the ground was very unfavorable, and I called to the Major that it would be better to fire the grass beyond, and that if he advanced farther it might easily be impossible for me to aid him by a shot. He did proceed a short distance, however. Then a man slipped down from his perch and the cover was soon ablaze. The light of battle shone in the Major's eyes as he halted poising his double rifle. But he had got too close, and the crackling of flames scarcely commenced before the tiger burst out and in an instant was on his elephant's head. Bisgaum tossed like a ship at sea in the effort to throw the desperate beast off, and the Major, holding on with one hand, used the rifle pistol-wise and over-shot. The explosion and flash, however, made the tiger lose his hold. Ramping round, he caught hold of the elephant's hind leg, biting deeply. Bisgaum screamed with pain, and his huge form sank backwards, so that the tiger had to let go or be crushed.

Leaping aside he again flew at the elephant's head, and so rapid were his movements and his position such, that the Major could not shoot, while I was, of course, unable to do so. This time his fangs were fixed in the trunk, and he literally pulled the elephant down.

Now was the time to see the necessity for that careful inspection of one's gear, already mentioned. Suppose the girths had burst with the convulsive movements of the wounded animal, nothing

could have saved his rider's life; he would have been torn to pieces without any possibility of succor. Everything held firm, however, though the strain must have been great, and as Bisgaum pitched forward, the Major, with admirable coolness, braced his knee against the howdah's cross-bar, and firing downward shot the tiger—dead.

"Stripes" was a magnificent creature and had made a grand fight. Nevertheless, the natives gathered around to revile him and cut off his whiskers. They always do this, and if a sportsman wants to have a perfect head he must watch his attendants closely.

A pad elephant was called up to carry the game to camp, and then another, for the first had a fit of hysterics as soon as it was brought alongside. This often happens. A jungle crow or monkey knows when a tiger is dead, and is satisfied that it cannot do any further harm; but an elephant frequently does not know a dead tiger; he is too bewildered with constitutional nervousness to know.

We were soon ready to start, though the hero of the day, Bisgaum, had to be left behind. Everything possible was done for him. He limped into the camp, his wounds were dressed and a guard was set. Teeth and talons had torn his head and shoulders very badly, but that was not the worst. Bright arterial blood spurted from his leg at every pulse, and although this hemorrhage grew less under pressure and wetted bandages, it did not entirely cease. He was suffering severely, too, from shock; his eyes were dim, and he shook in every limb. Before noon the next day the mahout came, casting dust upon his head, to tell us that Bisgaum had died. This was one of those rare instances in which an elephant was actually killed by a tiger.

