

OUTING.

VOL. XXXII.

APRIL, 1898.

No. 1.



A TIGER-SHOOT IN INDIA.

BY A CAVALRY OFFICER.



THE exact position of the country which was the scene of our "shoot" is of no importance. Suffice it to say that it is somewhere about the middle of the Indian Peninsula, and that my companion, who

was fortunate enough to obtain more leave than myself, got there some days before me. When I found him, he was comfortably encamped under the shade of mango trees, with two tigerskins pegged out to dry, and according to his own account live tigers tumbling over one another all around him.

Before going any further, it might be as well to describe the means by which tigers are shot in the particular part of India to which I allude, at any rate by persons of limited means like myself.

The time-honored method of shooting "stripes" from the backs of elephants is, of course, well known by everybody, for most of the sporting literature on the subject deals with this somewhat

expensive way of killing him. Some people prefer to walk up their tigers on foot, a method which is not only dangerous to the sportsman, but to his "shikaris" (native trackers, etc.), on whom it is hardly fair. There is, however, a third way, perhaps more complicated, but certainly safer than the second and less expensive than the first.

The jungle where a tiger is said to be is first searched for tracks, which are usually to be found in the sandy beds of "nullahs" (dried watercourses) near such pools as the hot weather may have left. It follows then that the hotter the season, the fewer pools of water there are, and the easier it is to locate one's tiger.

The first step is to "tie up." A buffalo calf, or "hela," as the inhabitants call it, is fastened by the leg in the usual path of the tiger, so that the next time he passes that way he may find a meal ready to his mouth.

Early next morning the place is visited and, if "stripes" has risen to the occasion, it sometimes happens that he is found finishing his breakfast, when matters are greatly simplified by potting



Painted for Orosco by Jas. L. Wooten.

"SUDDENLY THE TIGRESS BROKE." (P. 1)

him. Usually, however, he is found to have eaten what he wanted, washed it down with a long drink from some neighboring pool, and gone to sleep off the effects of his heavy meal in some cool and shady spot.

Next, the exact whereabouts of this spot is "ringed," that is to say, his "pugs" or footprints are followed, frequent casts being made round what appear to be likely places.

In this way, given a reasonable amount of luck, and fairly impressionable ground, the tiger can be located to within a small area; for if pugs are seen to enter any particular piece of jungle, and no tracks can be found leaving it, it follows that "stripes" is probably inside.

A number of men, varying in accordance to the size of the jungle to be beaten, are next collected from the various villages in the neighborhood, and arranged round what is considered a triangle, the sides of which are represented by lines of men in trees, to act as "stops," and the base, by the beaters proper, armed with axes, sticks, tom-toms (native drums), or anything else they can get hold of calculated to make a noise.

Through the apex of the triangle the path passes, which, it is considered, the tiger will probably take on being disturbed, and it is here that the gun, or guns, station themselves. Should the tiger take a path different from the one he is expected by, it is so arranged that he must come in contact with the stops, whose duty it is, by breaking a twig, gently clapping the hands, or coughing, to prevent the tiger from breaking out of the sides of the triangle.

The beaters proper simply walk through the jungle, either shouting and making a noise, or merely tapping sticks together, according to the tiger one has to deal with.

A savage old tiger, one which has been already beaten over, will, on hearing a great noise, almost invariably break back and charge through the line, whereas, if the disturbance appears to be caused merely by people cutting wood, or gathering sticks, he will in all probability move on very quietly.

When the tiger has been brought up to the guns, the man whose luck it is to be nearest him fires, and, by means of a whistle, informs the beaters, by pre-conceived signal, whether the beast is dead or wounded; and in the latter case, in

which direction he has gone. If the signal for a wounded tiger is heard, the beaters climb trees and otherwise make themselves as scarce as possible, while the sportsman proceeds, if he is wise, with the utmost caution to make the best of a bad job.

On commencing the last stage of my journey I had got a letter from B—— in which he told me of one tiger in the neighborhood of his camp which had, up to the time of writing, never failed to make the most of any meal provided for him. B—— had beaten for him several times, but without success, not having been able to cover a sufficient space by himself to make sure of getting a shot on the tiger's breaking. The letter implored me to make what haste I could.

On arrival, therefore, I was disappointed to learn that "stripes" had not kept up his reputation in the killing line, and was still more disappointed when two more days of my leave went without a kill of any kind.

The weather, too, which always does the wrong thing at the wrong time, became distinctly unfavorable, the sky clouding over, and the temperature dropping to not more than one hundred degrees at the hottest part of the day. Now, when it is really hot, a tiger sticks to the nullahs, where he can get shade and water, and one knows where to find him; but when it is cool, he wanders about, and as he is a great traveler there is no certainty of finding him.

The country round our camp was full of game, but when there is a tiger about it is inadvisable to shoot anything else for fear of disturbing him. It is in this that to my mind the chief disadvantage of tiger-shooting lies, as not only is it annoying from a sporting point of view to sit still doing nothing when there is sport in plenty to be had for the taking, but one has to subsist entirely on tough village fowls, a form of diet which soon becomes distinctly monotonous.

On the morning of the eighth day after my arrival, however, luck turned, and the prospect of a hotter day was rendered pleasant by the discovery of a kill in a nullah about half a mile from camp. We ringed the place carefully, took all the usual precautions, beat and drew a blank.

The tigress (we knew she was a tigress from the pugs, which are longer and narrower in the case of a female)

was not at home, and we were completely sold. Very disgustedly we went over the ground where "stripes" had been, but search as we would, we could find no tracks leaving the jungle, until one particularly sharp-eyed shikari discovered what he took to be faint pugs leading through some dead leaves in the direction of a "cora," or gully, in some high hills in the neighborhood.

This cora was full of rocks, and had no water within a mile of it, making it most improbable that any tiger, after a heavy breakfast, would find his way there; it looked, however, an excellent place for bears, and we settled to try a beat, having first agreed to shoot any game which might happen to break.

The beat came on, and on, and up to our posts, without our seeing so much as a peafowl. B—— had put his rifle at half-cock, preparatory to unloading, when suddenly the tigress broke and made straight across. Taken completely by surprise, he missed her altogether with his right barrel, but managed to get her in the forearm with his left as she passed.

The wound, though a fairly severe one, did not stop her, but seemed rather to accelerate her movements, and as the country round was seamed with gullies like the one we had just beaten, I anticipated some trouble in bringing her to bay. More by good luck than good guidance, however, as she passed an opening in the jungle about one hundred and fifty yards from my tree, making the best possible use of her three sound legs, I succeeded in knocking her over with my left barrel.

From where I was I could just see her yellow and black body as she lay half hidden in the long grass, and wishing to make assurance doubly sure before we walked up to her, I fired again. That the precaution was a wise one the sequel proved, as, rousing herself at the shot, she charged down on my post, getting the contents of my left barrel in her neck at about fifty yards. Even after this shot she lived for close upon an hour, and was the best example I have ever seen of the wonderful vitality of her species.

The tigress proved to be an old lady, measuring only eight feet one inch, but her cunning seems to have been in inverse ratio to her size, for the local

shikaris assured us that her habit of taking a long walk after breakfast over the most unimpressible ground she could find had often previously saved her skin.

For the next few days our enemy the weather was again a nuisance, there being many clouds, cool temperature, and even some rain. We were tempted into trying to get something for the pot, but though we saw numbers of nylghai, sambur, and chital, they generally managed to avoid the ground we had already disturbed, and to keep as close to the jungles where we knew tigers were, as they possibly could.

One night I sat up for a panther which had taken one of our kills, and which I thought might fancy some supper and return; but the jungle around me caught fire, and the night, although a most interesting one, was no use for panthers.

This jungle fire not being conducive to further sport in this particular neighborhood, we determined to move our camp, and accordingly packed up our traps next day and moved about fourteen miles further south.

By great good luck, on the road to our next camping-ground, we came upon the pugs of two tigers, and following them up found that they led to a "tanda," or cattle encampment, the owner of which, a Brinjara, was reduced to despair, having lost two cows on two successive nights.

Brinjaras, for the benefit of the uninitiated, are a tribe of gypsy extraction; they own large herds of cattle, and have no fixed place of residence, but wander about from place to place, acting as carriers for the surrounding country. Every animal in the herd, even including the larger calves, carries a pack of some kind, and the transport, as it is quite independent of roads, is about as well suited to the jungle as anything could be. The Duke of Wellington is said to have made use of Brinjara transport almost exclusively in his campaigns against the Mahrattas, and attributed his success in no small measure to the assistance it rendered him.

The men and children dress much the same as the other inhabitants of the jungle, that is to say the men wear next to nothing, and the children absolutely nothing; the women, however, have a distinct dress of their own, which is much embroidered and covered with

further indication of the presence of a tiger, we packed up our heavy baggage, tents, etc., one evening and sent them on to a village about sixteen miles distant, intending, if there were no kills, to follow ourselves at daybreak. As a natural consequence of this arrange-

A few days after the beat I have just described, B——'s condition became so bad that it was necessary to send him back to civilization, and finding that with one gun I could not cover enough jungle to do much, I shortly followed him, having had very little further sport.

NATURE'S EASTERTIDE.



THE Easter sun, with each recurring year,
Dispels the shades of death, the chill of fear,
Gilds with its rays the budding Christian hope,
And breaks the gates which bound his earthly scope.

• • • • •
So Nature, too, cries, "Glory be to God"
As thrills of Spring re-animate the sod;
"Glory to God" is Nature's Easter cry,
"Thanks be to God" is Nature's Easter sigh,
For once again the glow of life is given,
Once more the fiat has gone forth from Heaven,
"Let there be light," and light and warmth appear,
At His command who wields the cycling year;
Once more, in order, come from out their tomb
The lowly violet and the apple bloom;
With genial rays now breaks the wintry clod,
And, decked in greens, earth glorifies her God.

CHARLES TURNER.



fragments of looking-glass. Report says that they first put this dress on as brides, and do not remove it for any purpose whatever until it drops off from natural causes. I am bound to say that the appearance of the dress of an elderly woman testifies to the truth of this statement.

We left two men with our friend, the Brinjara, bribed him to give the tiger a further chance by delaying his movements another day, and moved on to our camp, which was some little way off.

Going round the kills the following morning, we witnessed such a strange occurrence that I cannot pass it by without mention. A peacock rose in front of us, and started flying in our direction, pursued by two hawks. Alarmed by our unexpected appearance it seemed entirely to lose its head, and dashed itself with such violence against an overhanging bamboo that it broke its wing, and was picked up by one of the men, who promptly converted it into food.

On our return to camp we found that our Brinjara tiger had come well up to our expectations, and again visited the tando, reducing the Brinjara's worldly possessions by yet another cow; the man whom we had left behind had a busy night, so they said, in preventing the entire herd from stampeding, and gave us every hope of a successful beat.

I had the choice of places, the last tiger having fallen to B—, and posted myself accordingly. As usual, the tigress, a very large one, came where least expected and went straight to B—, who fired two shots at her without any visible result.

Fortunately, however, we had posted lookout men in our rear, and one of them informed us, much to our relief, that the tigress had stopped about a hundred yards further on, and was lying under a tree near him.

A somewhat noisy consultation, carried on between B— and myself at a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards, was interrupted by the appearance of another tigress, which quietly walked up to me to investigate matters.

However eager "stripes" was to join in the discussion, being shot was evidently not to her taste, for, turning round, she did such good time back to the jungle that I had barely time to be surprised at her appearance. Once under cover, however, her curiosity got the better of

her, and, like Lot's wife, she stopped to look behind, just showing her head and neck between two bushes.

My shot was followed by a roar, which generally means that the bullet has taken effect, but the beast galloped off, apparently none the worse, and disappeared into the jungle.

Between the devil and the deep sea is proverbially a bad place, but I doubt if the place between two wounded tigers is much better. We looked as brave as we could, however, and first turned our attention to our friend under the bushes, which we bagged with very little trouble, and the expenditure of a good deal of ammunition. She measured eight feet seven inches, was very heavy and in excellent condition.

My tigress was still to be accounted for, and the lookout men having told us of roars which they had heard coming from the direction in which she had gone, we followed cautiously and saw a tiger lying on the side of a nullah, in what we considered to be a dying condition. We decided, however, that another bullet was necessary.

I believe that it is a rule that a wounded tiger should be shot, if possible, in the head, but knowing from experience that this is apt to spoil the skin, and thinking that our friend was too sick to move, I aimed at the shoulder, about four inches of which I could see between the trunks of two trees.

When the smoke cleared away there was no tiger to be seen, nor could we find any trace of one until we unexpectedly tumbled over a striped corpse lying on the bed of the nullah. She was a small tigress, measuring only eight feet two inches, and evidently a cub of the first we had shot. We were, however, astonished to find only one bullet-hole, through the base of the neck; and moreover that the beast was quite stiff, and had been dead for some considerable time.

Here was a mystery out of which there was only one way, namely, that there had been three tigers, and not two, in the beat; that the one whose skin I had tried to save was evidently a second and quite unwounded cub of the large tigress we had first shot, and that I was more kinds of a fool than it was safe to have about. This last fact B— took special care to impress on me, when an inspection of the trees, through