



TWO JUNGLE ROGUES

By GORDON H. NICHOLSON



SOON after the close of the third Burmese war, while the country was still in a very unsettled state, I was out for several days with a small force of police, trying to capture a gang of dacoits (robbers) that was ranging my district, robbing and murdering the unprotected villagers and hiding their booty in the jungle fastnesses.

We had camped near a small Burmese village, and, wakeful and anxious on account of my failure to track the dacoits, I decided to watch alone the first part of the night. The moon was shining brightly as I walked out toward the river, and the trees on the edge of the jungle cast long shadows across the open fields. The air was cool and refreshing after the fierce heat of the day. While trying to form some plan of pursuit, I heard a shrill screaming which increased to a tumult. At once I thought the dacoits had attacked the village and ran to awaken my men, when a Burman came running and shouting: "Elephant Devil! Elephant Devil!"

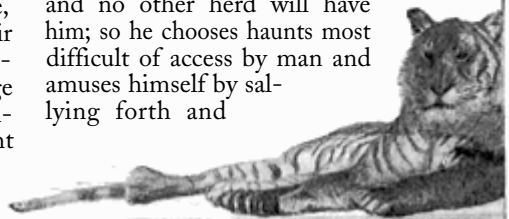
On reaching the village, we found that an old "rogue" elephant, which the villagers said had ranged the jungle for a hundred years or more, according to the traditions of their fathers, and had killed many people, had marched into the village and pushed in one side of a bamboo house. A woman was caught under the mass of falling poles

and bamboo matting; but she had scrambled out and rescued her baby, which had been sleeping in its box-like cradle swung from a pole in the roof.

The wrecked house was at the end of the village farthest from the *zayat* (rest house) where we had camped, and when we reached it the "rogue" had crossed the rice field and was skirting along the edge of the jungle, trumpeting his defiance and evidently trying to induce some one to pursue him.

The villagers were greatly excited and told innumerable tales of his cunning and ferocity; but I finally quieted them by promising to find and kill the elephant if they would help to track him. They eagerly agreed, and I assured them that I would return as soon as possible with my heavy elephant rifle and shoot the old tusker.

From their tales I judged he was one of the most sagacious and ferocious of his kind. A "rogue," as an ostracized elephant which has been driven out from the herd while fighting for the females or for viciousness is called, leads a solitary, wandering life, and often becomes very sullen and mischievous. He seems to be in a bad humor with the world in general, and goes out of his way to fight it whenever a chance occurs. If he is once driven out, he never rejoins his own herd, and no other herd will have him; so he chooses haunts most difficult of access by man and amuses himself by sal-
lying forth and



playing practical jokes on the unwary inhabitants. He chases anybody that comes his way, tramples down the rice fields, and, if chased, entices the pursuer into the thick underbrush, where the advantages are all on his side. The hunter who is tracking him creeps on nearer and nearer, peering through the bushes to get a glimpse of his foe; but the "rogue" stands as motionless as a rock till the man is just before him. Then, with a shrill scream, he charges on his victim. If the hunter's aim fail or his rifle miss fire, in a breath he is crushed to a jelly. It is much more dangerous to encounter a single "rogue" that has the propensity to turn hunter than to attack a herd of elephants.

It was nearly two months before I could fulfill my promise to the people of Minzan village. When I arrived, the villagers reported that the "rogue" had been prowling about their neighborhood, but had not again visited the village. They had followed him far into the jungle and discovered his favorite haunts. I had with me two rifles, especially designed for shooting elephants, with bullets much harder than ordinary, and I was accompanied by three sturdy young Karens armed with good rifles.

We slept at Minzan village and were ready to start early in the morning. The headman of the village acted as guide, and several other Burmans selected by him made up the party with my Karens. The headman carried an antediluvian gun and had some shot which he had pounded out of stray scraps of lead. He begged powder from me, which he at once proceeded to adulterate with charcoal. A Burman always acts as if it were the gun and not the gunner who is responsible for its going off at the proper time and killing something; so the powder and shot are altogether unimportant details with him. The main object is to make them last as long as possible. The other Burmans were armed with *dahs* (sword-knives).

It was nearly noon before we came upon my traces of the "Half-Ear Demon," as the Burman called the "rogue." He had, sometime in his fighting days, lost half of one of his ears—hence the name. We rested for an hour, ate, and then took up the trail again through the hot, moist jungle. The tracks were now fresher and easier to follow, and we moved forward cautiously. The undergrowth was so thick that we could hardly push through, and there was much

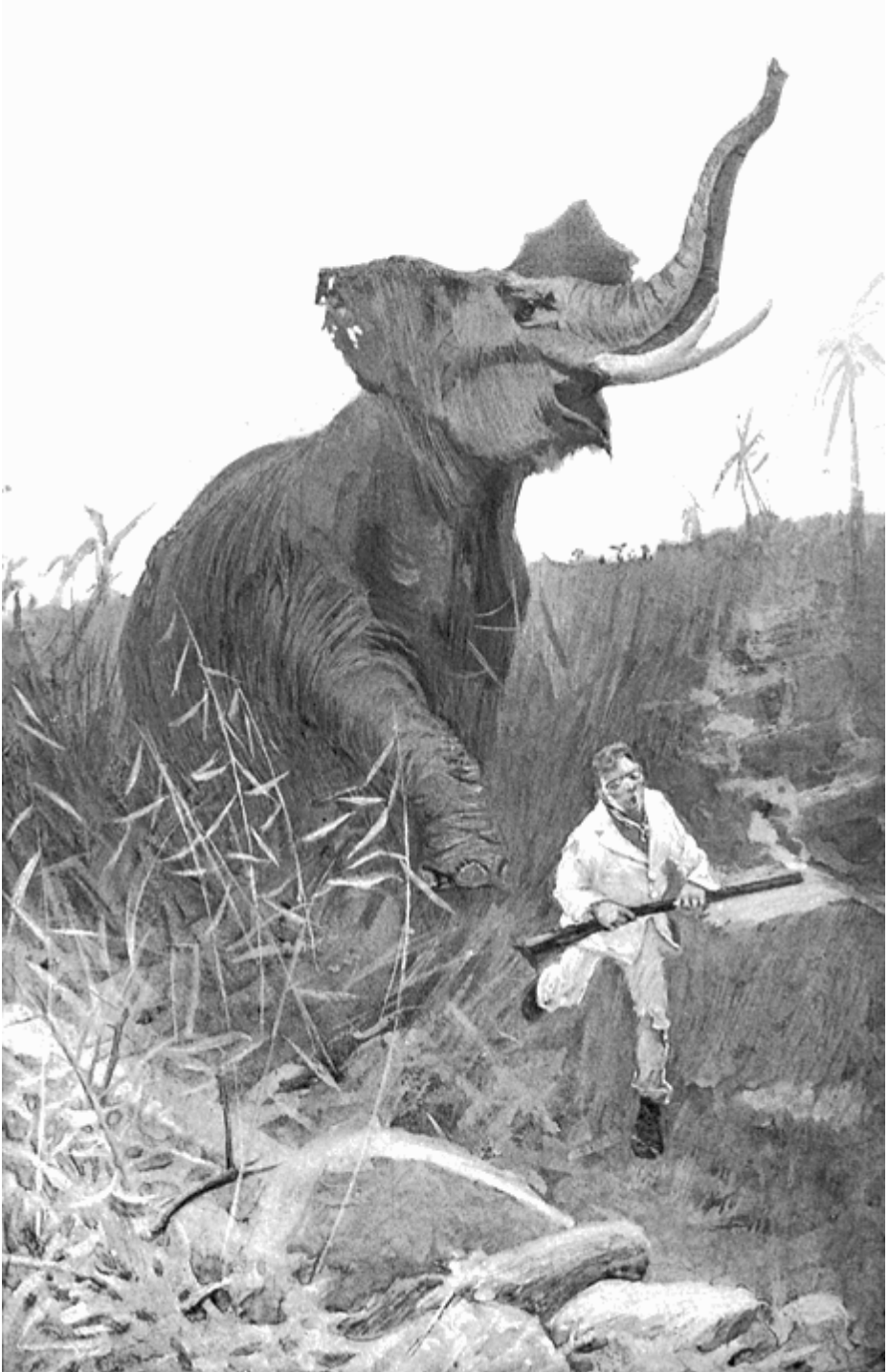
danger. We soon came to a more open place, and Po Saw, my most trustworthy Karen, stole cautiously forward, while we halted on one side of a little glade where the bushes had been burned away, probably by dacoits. He motioned with his gun, and we crept forward. I looked where he pointed and caught sight of an elephant some distance away, behind the bushes. He was lying down and waving a huge, green branch over his head with his trunk, no doubt to keep off the mosquitoes, the chief pest of elephants. The headman called my attention to his abbreviated ear, so I had no doubt about his being the special "rogue" we had planned to outwit.

I motioned for all the others but Po Saw, who was carrying my second gun, to stay back, I reloaded the guns with great care and crept up on my hands and knees to the edge of the bushes; but the elephant kept his head, trunk, and the green branch all moving so continuously that I could not get a sure shot.

Suddenly—he must have smelled us; elephants have a keen sense of smell—he gave a loud snort of rage, and was on his feet before I could regain mine. With trunk erect before the vulnerable spot in his forehead, and tail straight up like a poker, he charged down on me, right over the bushes. I fired and hit him in the trunk. It confused him for a moment, and I ran back toward the trees. He gave another scream of rage and again came straight at me. I jumped behind the nearest tree, where Po Saw had already taken refuge, and snatched the other gun. For some time I played a dodging game with old Half-Ear. He was as determined to have me as I was to have him. At last I decided to wait till he was close to me before I fired. He came at a headlong pace, and, when only a few feet intervened, down slashed his trunk; then with a shrill trumpet of fury he was upon me. Instantly I fired both barrels into his forehead. He staggered forward and fell dead at my feet.

The Burmans and Karens swarmed down from the trees, where they had been watching the exciting battle, wild with joy. I told them I would take the tusks, and that they might have the remainder of their old enemy.

He was the largest elephant I shot in India, each tusk measuring six feet nine inches in length.



"With trunk erect before the vulnerable spot in his forehead * * * he charged down on me."

About a year after I shot old Half-Ear, I was in the Tenasserim Province, Lower Burma, on a tour of police inspection, and again Po Saw was my guide and interpreter. We carried several guns in our carts, but, so far, had killed an occasional jungle fowl and some small deer only, to vary the monotony of our rice and curry. Stories of tigers met us at every turn; but the tigers had not molested us, and we had been too busy to hunt them.

While we were resting at a Karen village under the wide-spreading *padouk* trees during the heat of the day, Po Saw brought up half a dozen jungle Burmans, who, with many humble *shikobs*, informed me that they had come over the mountain to ask me to bring my "magic gun" and kill an old elephant

that was terrorizing their villages. Their hunters had many times tried to kill him; but their efforts had often resulted in the "rogue" being the executioner. They had decided that he was under the protection of the *nats* (evil spirits), and that a Burmese could not kill him, but an Englishman might. It never occurred to them that

their bullets were too soft and had probably flattened against his skull. If a Burman fails to do anything, he finds it most convenient to attribute his failure to the *nats*. They were the gods of the old Burman mythology before the Burmese became Buddhists, and, to be on the safe side, they

still sacrifice to the *nats* and reckon their influence in all the affairs of life.

One man asked eagerly if I had brought my "elephant-slaying gun"; another said "they had heard of its wonder-working power in their far-away villages, and had hastened over the mountain to hear its voice of thunder"; while a third, with an humble *shikob*, begged to be allowed to see the "rogue-slayer."

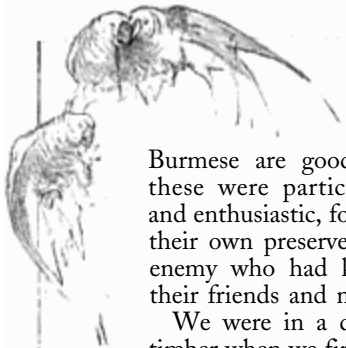
I told Po Saw to bring the rifle.

They squatted in a circle and handled it with the delicate care so characteristic of a Burman when you allow him to touch any of your possessions.

Three days later we were tracking the rogue along the eastern side of the ridge. The excitement had risen with the chase, and I was determined to find this ruler of



"Springing up and catching up my gun, I fired both barrels."



the jungle and do battle with him. The

Burmese are good traders, and these were particularly faithful and enthusiastic, for they were on their own preserves and after an enemy who had killed some of their friends and neighbors.

We were in a dense forest of timber when we first caught sight of him. He was rubbing himself against a tree, and looked every inch the tyrant he had been represented. In a flash, every Burman and Karen was behind a tree. I rushed forward, determined to have a shot before he saw me. With a roar that shook the ground, he charged down on me before I could fire. I jumped behind a tree. He rushed straight past and crashed on through the jungle, now and again trumpeting with a hoarse roar.

We followed cautiously till dark, but did not again catch sight of him, so we camped for the night. The rice was cooked and eaten. Bonfires were made to keep away the tigers and other too inquisitive inhabitants of the jungle. Tired with the long day's tramp, the whole party was soon snoring in chorus.

I must have slept soundly for several hours when I awakened with a start and sat up. The fires had burned to embers, a faint, peculiar odor was in the air, unmistakable to an experienced hunter, and it set my heart thumping against my ribs.

I turned my head slightly and there, not three feet away, were two balls of fire gleaming through the darkness. For a second I was paralyzed with fear. Then, springing up the my feet, catching up the gun by my side, I fired

both barrels at the unmoving green glare. The tiger's head was blown in pieces. He was an enormous specimen with a beautifully marked skin.

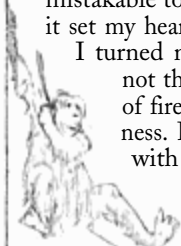
Our fires were replenished, but the excitement was too great to allow any one to sleep again. The Burmans very deftly skinned the tiger for me; food was cooked, and daybreak saw us on the trail again.

The way was rough and the jungle dense as we followed the track down a steep mountain side.

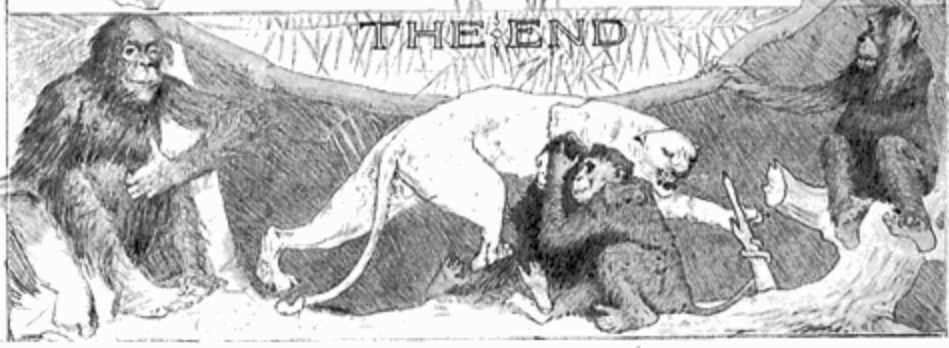
At midday the sun was intensely hot. We heard the sound of running water, leaping down over rocks; and pushing through the bushes found a sparkling mountain stream. Refreshed by the cool water, we lay down to rest under the dense shade of the trees; but a crashing in the jungle below made us at once alert.

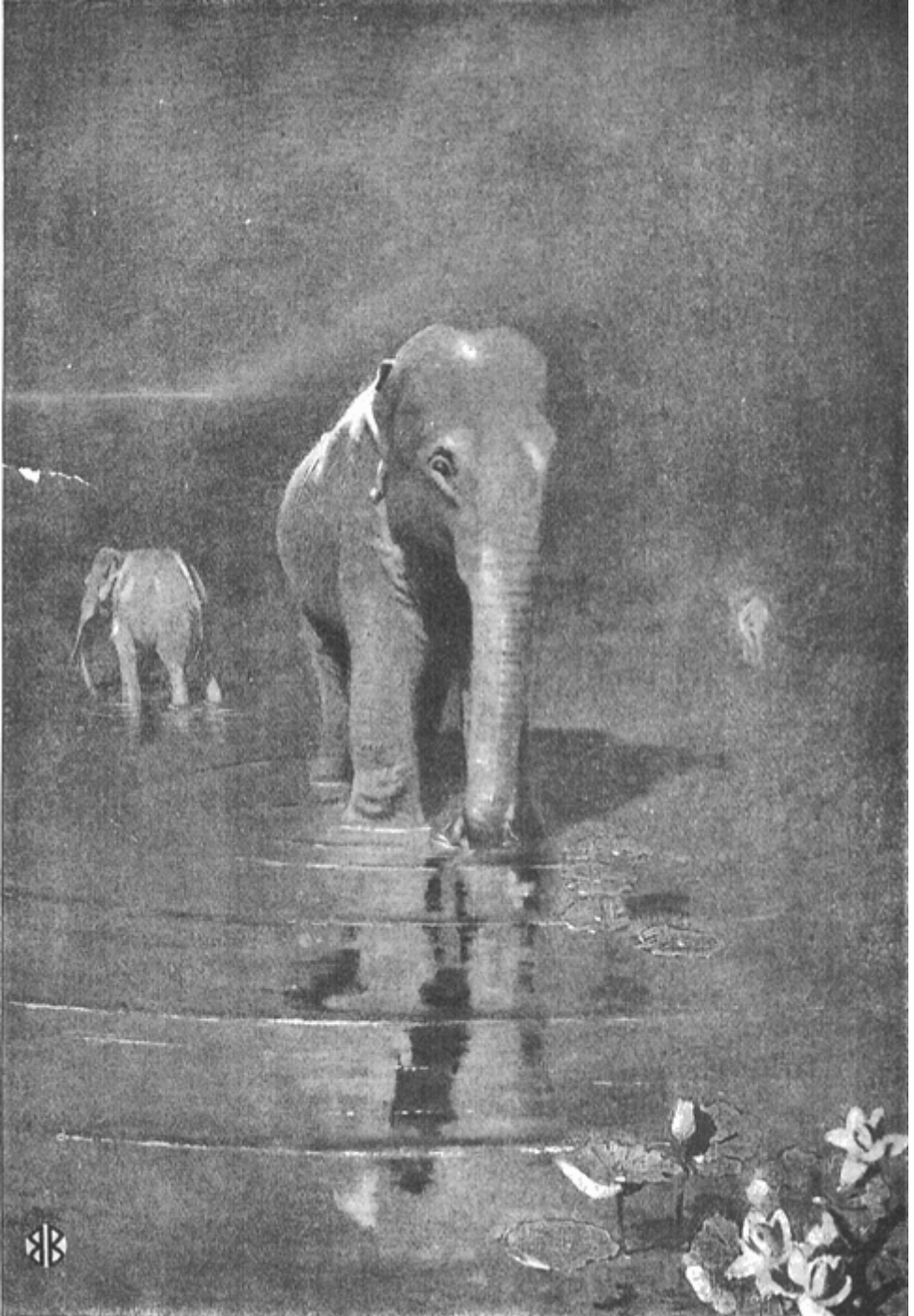
Majestically the old tusker stalked down to the stream to drink. I snatched my gun and crept from rock to rock until I was near enough to touch him, but for the rock between. Still he splashed in the water and made a shower bath of it with his trunk. As he turned to go, I sprang to my feet and fired. He fell and rolled down against a great tree without a sound. His death must have been instantaneous.

The gratitude of the Burmans was expressed in the most, jubilant measures, and as long as I lived in Moulmein, whenever any of them came to town, they showed their appreciation by bringing me gifts such as cocoanuts, plantains, oranges, custard-apples, chickens, eggs, and once a young deer which had been killed with a *dab*, the universal Burmese weapon.



THE END





The Lotus Eaters.

Drawing by A. Z. Baker.