

NARRATIVE

XIX. 33. 16

OF A

FIVE YEARS' RESIDENCE

AT

NEPAUL.

BY CAPTAIN THOMAS SMITH,

ASSISTANT POLITICAL-RESIDENT AT NEPAUL.

FROM 1841 to 1845.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,

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CHAPTER IV.

THE ANIMALS OF NEPAUL; WITH SOME NARRATIVES OF SPORT IN THE FOREST.

THE animal kingdom of Nepaul seems to comprehend all the classes, quadrupedal and bipedal, to be found in the plains and mountains of Hindostan, only qualified by climate and situation. The low and level lands abound with elephants, tigers, rhinoceroses, &c.; the hilly portions, with bears, deer, of every variety, and a great many of the finest members of the feathered creation.

late Earl of Derby, at Knowlsey Park, near Liverpool; and, as his lordship's splendid collection there was open to the public, any one wishing to satisfy himself of the battering required by an Indian elephant before he bites the dust could inspect the specimen to which I refer. I can well remember that he fought me for two hours before I killed him, and I had not made his acquaintance (on foot) ten minutes, before I repented my past folly in confronting him, and would, if he had allowed me, have readily beaten a most ignominious retreat, gladly leaving him even my favourite guns wherewith to amuse himself. During my stay at Nepaul, I had upon various occasions been so fortunate as to kill sundry rhinoceroses, tigers, and bears, with some ease, and during a visit of ceremony to the Durbar (court), when Mr. Brian Hodgson to whose persevering researches in zoology and ornithology reference has already been made, was resident at Nepaul, the Rajah asked me, at an audience, if I thought I should be able to kill a wild elephant. I answered in the

affirmative, when he added: "But I wish you to understand, that the one I allude to is a fearful shitan (devil): he has been musth for many years!" I must here observe, that an elephant when musth is mad, and while in that state is always avoided, and not driven away (as is generally but erroneously supposed) by the rest of the herd. He is thus compelled to become a solitary, but very dangerous hermit. His Highness added, that his elephant-catching had been entirely put a stop to by the animal in question, and that no one dared to go into that part of the forest in which he took up his quarters. I replied, that in elephant shooting I had acquired but little practical experience, having at that time killed but one, an unfortunate wretch, about fifteen years old, who, either from stupidity or fright, would not get out of my way, and that I had brought him down with the third shot. The Rajah then said, that as he had given me permission (which was the first that had been granted to an English officer) to sport in his forests, I ought

to endeavour to render an important service to Nepaul, and that I certainly should do so if I succeeded in destroying this elephant.

I immediately undertook the trial, and promised to do my best; but, upon taking leave, the Rajah said: "I am not quite in earnest about that elephant, and would rather you should not go near him; for two years ago, I sent down a couple of guns, six-pounders, to destroy him, but the party, after firing two shots at, and missing, him, had to run for their lives, leaving the two six-pounders which the elephant amused himself by upsetting." I told his Highness that, as the elephant had already destroyed so many human beings (native reports had stated upwards of one hundred, though I considered the number to have been greatly over-rated), I had made up my mind to encounter this animal. The Rajah hereupon appointed two native chiefs, named Sirdar Bowanee Sing, and Sirdar Delhi Sing, the reputed Nimrods of Nepaul, to accompany me. These two chiefs assured the Rajah on taking leave, that if I should not be

able to destroy the famous "Shikar Bassa Hattee," they would do so: and we shall presently see to what extent these two valiant Sirdars fulfilled their promises. We took our departure the following day, the Sirdars taking with them at least twenty guns each, English and Hindostanee. I had my own usual battery of two double-barrelled rifles, one single rifle, carrying a three ounce ball, and three first-rate double guns. We opened our sporting campaign at Hitounda, the half-way house from Nepaul to the British territory. Many deer, eleven tigers, and seven rhinoceroses, fell to my battery, the two Nepaul chiefs having shown a most religious horror of coming in contact with the last-named formidable animals. The Indian rhinoceros is certainly an ugly customer, evincing a great dislike to being disturbed in his muddy bath. Upon being compelled to move, he at once makes off to another swamp, and; if interfered with on his way, he invariably shows fight, and is not then to be despised; for when he once takes up a position, he will dispute it to

the last with the most determined ferocity, neither giving nor receiving quarter. I was much amused, after killing my fifth rhinoceros by being waited upon by the two chiefs in the afternoon, and after the usual compliments, informed by them that they had received an intimation from the Durbar, that the Court was surprised from their own sporting qualifications, they should allow an Englishman to kill so many rhinoceroses in the Terai, without their having destroyed one; and, that if they were either unwilling to attempt, or incapable of achieving such an enterprise, they were immediately to return, to be replaced by other chiefs, who would be more careful not to disgrace themselves as they had done. My chiefs were evidently in a great state of alarm, so I told them, if they felt inclined to distinguish themselves, I would soon procure them a favourable opportunity. They frankly confessed their incapability of profiting by my offers, but earnestly implored me to save their *hoormut* (honour). To this I acceded, and the next day intelligence

was brought that there were four rhinoceroses within a mile of us. At their own request, I lent each of the chiefs one of my guns, as they had a firm impression that they were endowed with some kind of *jadoo* (witchcraft). We soon arrived at the head-quarters of the *ghindahs*. They were rolling in the mud, in the midst of a heavy swamp; and, finding themselves disturbed in the midst of their luxurious ablutions, they, as usual, got up, and made for another bath. I immediately intercepted them, and provoked two of the party to hostilities, when down they came to the charge. The brute that rushed at me I killed within six yards of the elephant Megreath, on which I was mounted, and which stood to the charge like a rock. I fortunately hit the rhinoceros in the only vital part, just under the foot of the ear, which is not easily accomplished. The other animal selected my friend Sirdar Delhi Sing's elephant, which immediately turned tail and bolted, but the rhinoceros was too quick for him, came up to the elephant in a few strides,

and with his tusks cut the fugitive so severely on the stern—nearly severing his tail—that he attempted to lie down under the pain. But the rhinoceros was again too quick for him, and bringing his horn into play, he introduced it under the elephant's flank; the horn tightened the skin, and then with his two frightful tusks he cut the poor animal so severely, that his entrails came rolling about his legs, as he fell, undergoing the dreadful assaults of his antagonist. The Sirdar now threw himself out of the howdah, and scrambled up a tree (which was close at hand), like a galvanized monkey. The other Sirdar was going across country, at Melton pace, on his elephant. Having disposed of my rhinoceros, I pushed up to the rescue, fearing, indeed, the Sirdar had been killed. On approaching within twenty yards, the rhinoceros relinquished the fallen elephant, and turned to have a charge at me. I brought him on his knees the first shot, but he recovered, and fought me valiantly; and, in consequence of my elephant being a little unsteady, it was not until

the fifth shot that he fell to rise no more. The poor mutilated elephant lived about two hours, and died in endeavouring to rise. I should at once have put it out of its misery, had the mahout not assured me, that if he could be got to the tents he should be able to recover it. From this account, it will be seen that the rhinoceros is armed with much more formidable tusks than the boar. These are the weapons he brings into such deadly operation, and not the horn, as many persons are led to believe.

Upon the day following this last event, whether out of revenge, or from an anxious desire to stand well with their sovereign, the two chiefs courageously proposed that we should go at once to destroy the Shirkar Bassa, or famous wild elephant. They both promised faithfully to support me, vowing to stand by, even to their toe nails (a favourite Indian expression), alledging that their honour was at stake, and without some such finale, they dare not shew their faces at Court again. I much doubted all these protestations, but thinking they might

possibly be seriously anxious to retrieve the disgrace which fell upon them in the rhinoceros affair, I felt disposed to place confidence in them and agreed to their proposal. They then informed me, they had been favoured with a private and confidential communication from their deity, "Goruck," who had signified his gracious intention of supporting us, and would even condescend to protect an unbelieving Feringee upon such an occasion. I thanked them for Goruck's very kind intentions, but inwardly trusted with much greater confidence to a good ounce of lead well planted.

The morning dawned splendidly ; we were all in excellent spirits, and the two chiefs, in appearance at least, were as brave as lions. While we were examining our guns and carefully arranging our ammunition, the savage Shikar Bassa elephant was marked down, having been discovered in his usual retreat. In order if possible to render the deity Goruck more wrathful, he had only the day before destroyed a Brahmin for firing a matchlock ball into his

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ARTICLE VI.

That he will immediately seize and deliver up any dacoits, or notorious offenders, that may take refuge within his territories.

ARTICLE VII.

That he will not afford protection to any defaulters of revenue, or other delinquents, when demanded by the British government through their accredited agents.

ARTICLE VIII.

That he will afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company's provinces; and he engages that no duties shall be levied on the transit of merchandise beyond the established custom at the several golahs and marfs.

ARTICLE IX.

The Honourable East India Company guarantees to the Sikhimputee Rajah and his successors, the full and peaceable possession of the tract of hilly country specified in the first Article of the present agreement.

 D.

NEPAULESE ZOOLOGY.

MAMMALIA.

The Jharal, wild goat. *Capra jharal*, mihi, mature male. Inhabits the Kachar.

Smith. *Hipehaphus* of Du Vaucel. The Bahraiya, *Cervus Bahraiya*. (The Maha of the western portion of these hills). The animals inhabit the saul forest and Bhaver of Nepaul.

The Machabba, or Malva of the Tarai. *Paradoxurus Bondar* ?

Pteropus of central region. *Pt. Leucocephalus*.

The Langoor Monkey. Inhabits the central region.

The Chikara or Chouka. *A. Tetracornis*. Habitat. Tarai.

The Snakes of central region. All of them are innocuous.

Young Porcupine.

Tibetan Mastiff.

Common Hare of central region. Locusts, same region.

Common Otter of Tarai.

Common Toad, common Frog. Central region.

Panther, Leopard, and Bear.

Cabool Greyhound.

Rhinoceros unicornis of the Tarai.

The Khar Laghuna, or brown Porcine Axis.

The Yak of Thibet.

Zibet of central region of Nepaul.

Indian Damba Sheep.

The Barwal or domestic sheep of the Kachar of Nepaul. The Hoaniah or domestic sheep of Thibet and of the Himalaya.