

## *Some Indian Wild Beasts.*

I WILL not try to enumerate all the wild beasts in India. It was my fate or fortune to meet a considerable number of them, under various circumstances and conditions, and though it compels me to be guilty of much disagreeable egotism, perhaps it may be in my power to tell something new about them. Yet it is very possible for an Englishman to spend many years in India without ever seeing a live wild beast. It would be less safe to assert that he will not have heard the voice of one, for even in the most civilised towns, such as Calcutta or Bombay, the jackal makes night hideous in the streets, and many a newly arrived visitor has jumped hastily from his bed, believing that a horrid murder was being committed within a few yards of him. It was only a jackal howling under his window. The prowling beast had either found some prey, or having searched in vain for it, he was challenging his comrades to let him know how they had fared. The cry of the jackal is usually rendered into English in the following words: 'Dead Hindoo, where, where, where, where, where?' The answer being: 'Dead Hindoo, here, here, here, here, here!' the tones rising and falling rhythmically in their dismal strain. Almost anyone who has heard the jackal's cry can passably imitate it, and a wild jackal in India will stop to answer the sound if he cannot make out whence it comes. I was at the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park one day, with an Anglo-Indian friend, who stood near the jackal cage and imitated the familiar cry. The jackal listened attentively, and after awhile began to call in answer to the unsuspected visitor. The prairie wolf in an adjoining cage pricked up its ears, but apparently did not understand what the jackal said in his Indian vernacular.

On the first night of my arrival in Calcutta, I had been told by my kind host that the jackals in his garden would probably serenade me, and, although thus warned, their yelling alarmed

I had something to do with rhinoceros, but never succeeded in shooting one, though I sought for them for three long and hot days under the guidance of the best sportsman in Assam; and I visited their haunts in the Sunderbunds with men of great local experience. But the rhinoceros, like all big animals, has acute senses of smelling and hearing, and makes off at the slightest indication of danger. We had a large one in the Calcutta Zoo which was very tame, and when it got a bad abscess in the head, of which it eventually died, it used to come and lie down to have its ear syringed by the veterinary surgeon, whom it learnt to recognise. There were two fine rhinoceros in the Rajah's menagerie at Burdwan in the inclosure in which the crocodiles were kept, for the pond in which the crocodiles used to swim served also as a bathing-place for the rhinoceros. One day a young pig had been turned into the inclosure to become food for the crocodiles, and as these animals don't travel very fast on land, piggy led them a lively chase, and at last, perhaps by chance, it took refuge under the legs of one of the rhinoceros, which was looking on solemnly, but when the crocodiles approached the rhinoceros, the latter presented his horn and warned the crocodiles to be off. And so the pig survived and grew up and lived for some months under the protection of the rhinoceros. I saw it there, and sent an account of it to my cousin Frank Buckland. But in the course of time piggy became over-confident, and one day, as he was walking through some high grass near the pond, one of the crocodiles that was lying there in the sun swept him into the water with his powerful tail and plunged in after him, and no more was seen of poor piggy save that the waters were stained with his blood. When our large rhinoceros in the Calcutta Zoo died, I wrote to every native prince and potentate of my acquaintance to beg for a new specimen, but they had none to spare. At last I wrote to an old friend, a native magistrate, named Tyjumul. Ali, as follows: 'My dear Sir,—When I was a magistrate and you were a policeman, if I ordered you to catch a thief, you caught him. Now you are a magistrate in the Sunderbunds I want you to catch a rhinoceros for the Zoo, and am sure you will not fail.' My friend replied, urging the difficulties of the case, but promising to do his best. Several months passed, when one day a man appeared with a letter to me. 'Honoured Sir,—Herewith I send you a rhinoceros, which my shikaris have caught after much labour. They shot the mother and then secured the young one. Please forgive me for sending

such a small one, but it will soon get bigger.—I am your obedient servant, Tyjmal Ali.' It was a dear little beast, and quite gentle, so that a man could ride on it. It grew very fast, but it got fever when its large teeth began to come, and so it died. We lost several young elephants in the same way from fever when teething.

Crocodiles, or, as they are more commonly called, alligators, were very common in Eastern Bengal. I could not venture to guess how many hundreds I must have seen in many voyages through the Sunderbunds, and in navigating the large rivers and backwaters of the Dacca division. In Calcutta children sometimes keep little crocodiles as pets, but they seldom live long. I have fired many shots at them, but I cannot pretend to have killed many—at least, outright. The crocodile is very tenacious of life. Once when staying at an indigo factory on the Ganges, we were greeted on our return from a long morning's shooting by the news that some fishermen had caught a live crocodile in their nets, and had brought it upon a bullock-cart to the factory. A strong rope was tied round its loins, and it was put into the factory tank or reservoir while we dressed and breakfasted. After about an hour we had the creature pulled out of the tank and tried to kill it. A few bullets seemed to make little impression; a spear thrust down its throat was of no avail. At last its head was chopped off with a Sontal axe, and the body was cut open and the vital organs taken out. The muscular action still continued to move the tail when the beast was headless and its heart was lying on the ground by its side. This crocodile was about six feet long, and a large fish was found in its stomach. In the Rajah's menagerie at Burdwan there were several very large crocodiles, as has been already mentioned. They were kept in a reservoir full of dirty water covered with green scum. It was the Rajah's custom to give these creatures a live duck occasionally. When a poor duck was thrown into the pond, the head and eyes of a large crocodile might be visible just above the water. When the duck had recovered from the fall, and had settled and plumed its feathers, it would usually paddle away a few feet from the spot where it had alighted. Meanwhile the crocodile's head and eyes had disappeared from their original position, but only to reappear suddenly on the exact spot where the duck had first alighted. It was marvellous with what exactness the crocodile had marked and measured the distance that it had to dive through the thick, muddy water. Of course, as soon as the duck saw its enemy it