

The Prince of Wales' Eastern Book

A PICTORIAL RECORD OF THE
VOYAGES OF H.M.S. "RENOWN"
1921—1922

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THE PRINCE OF WALES' EASTERN BOOK

The week in Nepal was devoted to big game, chiefly tiger and rhinoceros. Very elaborate preparations had been made by the Maharaja Prime Minister and Marshal, to ensure good sport. He came down from Khatmandhu, the secluded capital beyond the passes, with various nobles and high officials of state, and superintended the erection of the Royal camp at the edge of the jungle, about a mile from the frontier of British India, and adjoining the railway terminus at Bikna Thori. Nepalese were drafted from all parts of the kingdom to clear this site, and to rebuild a road that would give access to some thirty miles of jungle. They came from the wilds with their kukris and cooking pots, and for weeks were busy making everything ready for the Prince. The game, in which Nepal abounds, was shepherded adroitly towards the selected preserve. Gurkha signallers loaned by the military authorities at Rawalpindi laid down telephone wires and signal posts along the new highway. H.H. Sir Shum Shere Jung's magic caused four perfectly equipped camps to appear in a dense forest, where, until a few weeks previously, wild elephant and tiger roamed at will. Only two days before the Royal party arrived, a herd of elephants came to the edge of the clearing, attracted by the lights, and seemed inclined to rush the stockade.

The Prince's camp was pitched in a patch of woodland on a bluff above a rocky river bed. The streets of tents were grouped around a central drawing-room and dining-room. They included offices for the secretaries and clerks who were always at work, whether travelling or in camp ; a post office with a special telegraph wire to the outside world ; and every comfort which the Nepalese could procure. There was even a tower of refuge against wild elephants : a platform level with the upper branches of the surrounding trees, supported on ponderous baulks

NEPAL

of timber with a light stairway leading to the top. The Nepalese court had its own camp a quarter of a mile away ; while somewhat nearer was an auxiliary camp for a portion of the Royal party, and one for the British Envoy to Nepal.

The Prince lost no time in exploring the jungle. His train arrived at Bikna Thori at 10 a.m. on December 14, and he motored across a rock-strewn valley into Nepal, a journey of less than fifteen minutes by motor car. An arch of green boughs spanned the roadway just within the frontier, where a guard of honour of Gurkhas awaited him, and priests from Khatmandhu performed a brief religious rite. An hour later the Prince was on his way to his first tiger hunt. A 9½ feet specimen had been "ringed" early that morning and the elephant cordon was waiting in the jungle. The Prince hit the tiger first and it was despatched by a member of his staff.

The procedure for each day's shoot was very simple. Buffaloes were tethered to stakes at nightfall, at likely places in the jungle, and early next morning the little Gurkha scouts made the rounds to see what had happened. If they found a stake and only part of a buffalo or no buffalo where there had been both a stake and a complete buffalo the night before, it was safe to assume that a gorged tiger was sleeping heavily in the tall grass several hundred yards away. The spot was immediately "picketed" by a few elephants, and the "kill" reported from the nearest telephone post to the Nepalese camp. By 10 a.m. "headquarters" had received reports from all parts of the jungle area marked out for the week's operations. The Royal party started in motor cars and went as near as possible along the road—the only road, by the way—to the "kill." As it was usually still some miles distant, the Prince and his companions mounted pad elephants—sitting on a pile of roped blankets—and when within a mile or two

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of the quarry, changed to howdahs. By this time a circle of perhaps one hundred elephants standing closely together had been formed around the sleeping tiger. The howdahs were assigned various positions as part of the circle, and then beaters went on foot into the jungle with trumpets and shrill cries. The din was terrific. The tiger, suddenly awakened from his lethargy, usually showed an intense desire to remain under cover. The greater the noise, the greater his determination to avoid publicity. Sometimes he would dart into the open in an angry bewildered fashion, only to bolt back again into the grass at the first glimpse of the cordon. Sooner or later however, he would be extracted. Perhaps a chance shot would sting him into fury, or sheer terror cause him to dash blindly forward. The nearest elephants would squeal nervously, fearing a charge. Sometimes the prisoner did leap on a howdah elephant before the inevitable last shot laid him out. An eight-foot tigress which was ringed near Dhoba on the first day charged two elephants after being wounded and was shot in the nick of time by Lieut.-Col. Harvey of the Prince's staff. Usually, however, the tiger was killed immediately he showed himself.

Rhinoceroses were much more difficult to track down. They could not be "ringed" like tiger, and when trailed through the jungle they moved with amazing swiftness. The Prince went out four days after big game, and two days to shoot jungle fowl. The only day in which the party remained in camp was Sunday, December 18, when the Prime Minister brought a very fine collection of wild animals, trapped in various parts of Nepal, as presents for the Prince. They were conveyed in rough cages, borne by stout little Nepalese, or led by ropes, and when the procession halted in front of the Prince's tent it resembled a circus on the march. A baby elephant headed

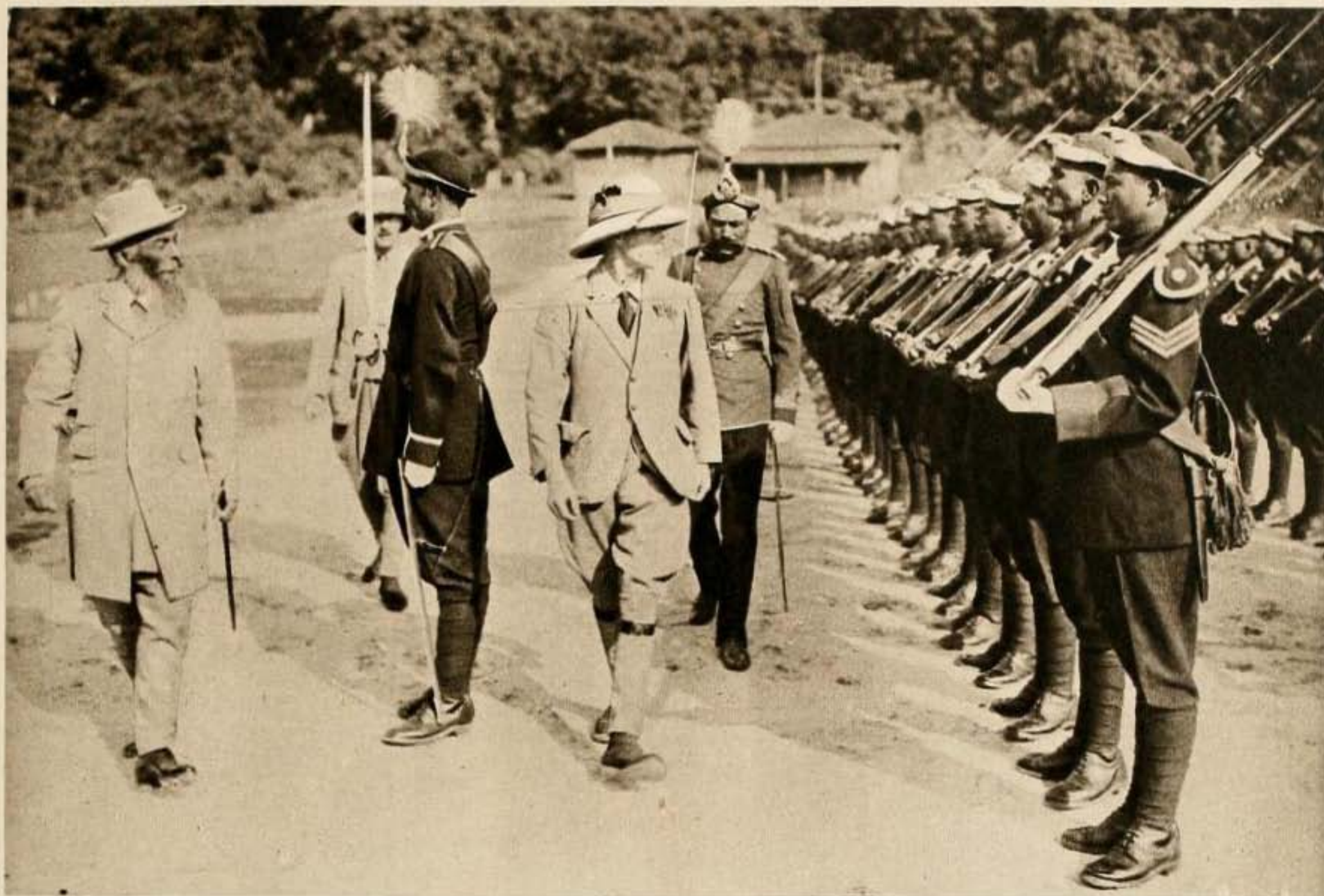
PATNA : CALCUTTA

the column. Then came a diminutive, very perplexed rhinoceros in a tight-fitting wooden prison. Followed two sambhars, goats, two bears, a leopard, a beautiful black panther baring its teeth viciously to all comers, musk deer, falcons, an iguana, a python behind heavy bars, partridges, jungle fowl, and two savage Thibetan mastiffs. The total bag for the week's shoot in Nepal was fourteen tigers, seven rhinoceroses, two leopards and two bears.

While in camp the Prince was entertained by a Gurkha brass band which played the latest popular airs, and by Nepalese dances given under the trees by the light of oil lamps. He received many curious and valuable gifts from the Maharaja including ivory and gold-mounted "kukris," embroidery and jade ornaments. The visit to Nepal ended on Wednesday evening, December 21, when his Royal Highness returned to Bikna Thori, *en route* to Patna and Calcutta.

The Royal train arrived at Paleza ghat on the Ganges at 9 o'clock next morning, and his Royal Highness proceeded down the river in the railway steamer *Benares* to Commissioner's Ghat, Patna. He drove in semi-state to the reception pavilion on the Maidan, escorted by Behar Light Horse, and received an address enclosed in a gold casket which was a model of a famous temple. Next day he met the feudatory chiefs of Orissa province at Government House; inspected the police and boy scouts, and walked through the lines of the 5th Northumberland Fusiliers and the Indian troops

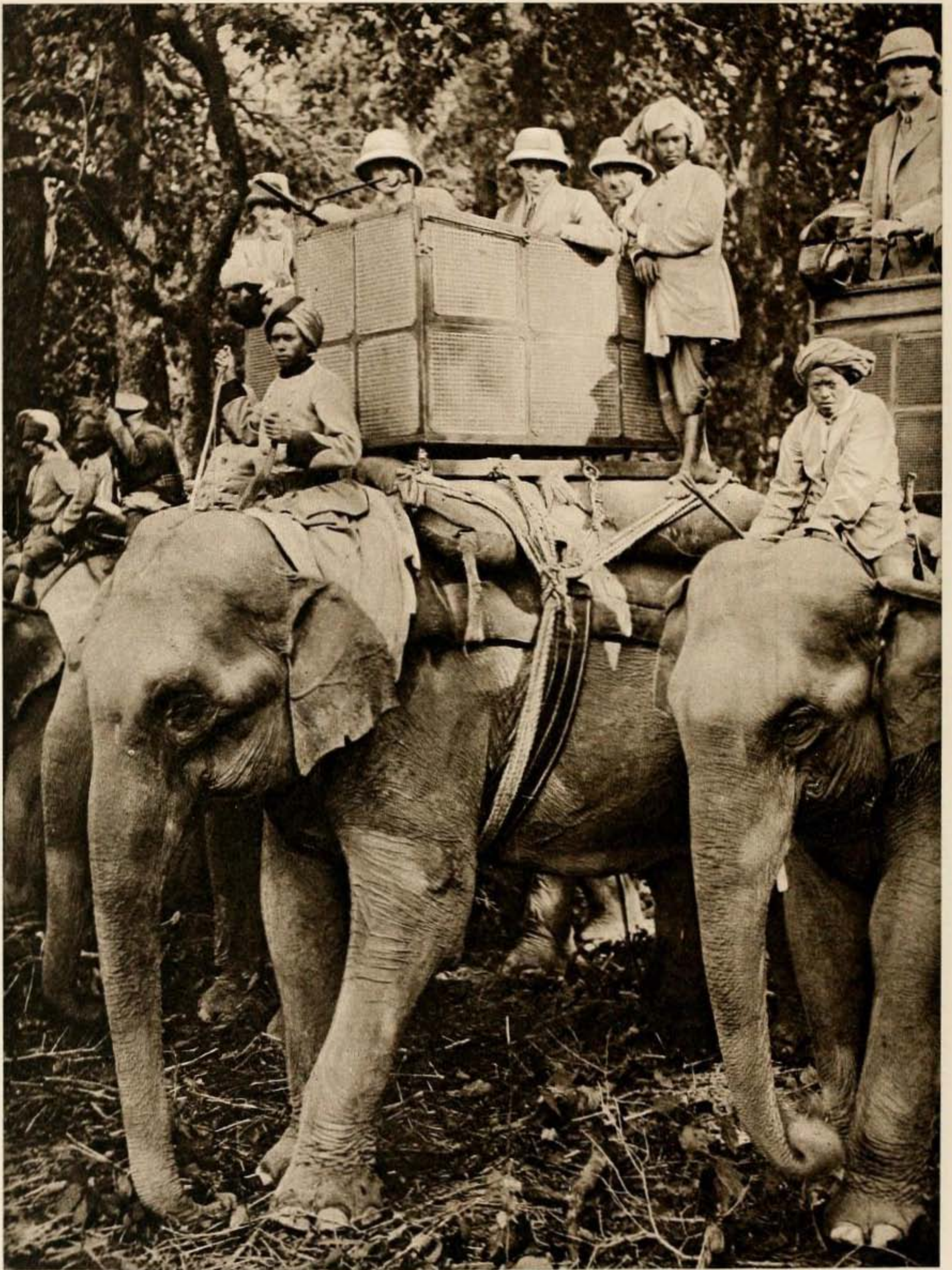
Christmas week was spent in Calcutta. After a night's journey from Patna, the Prince was welcomed at Howrah station by the Governor of Bengal and high officials of the Presidency. His state barouche was escorted by the Viceroy's Bodyguard and an imposing array of infantry



INSPECTING NEPALESE GUARD OF HONOUR WITH THE MAHARAJA OF NEPAL.



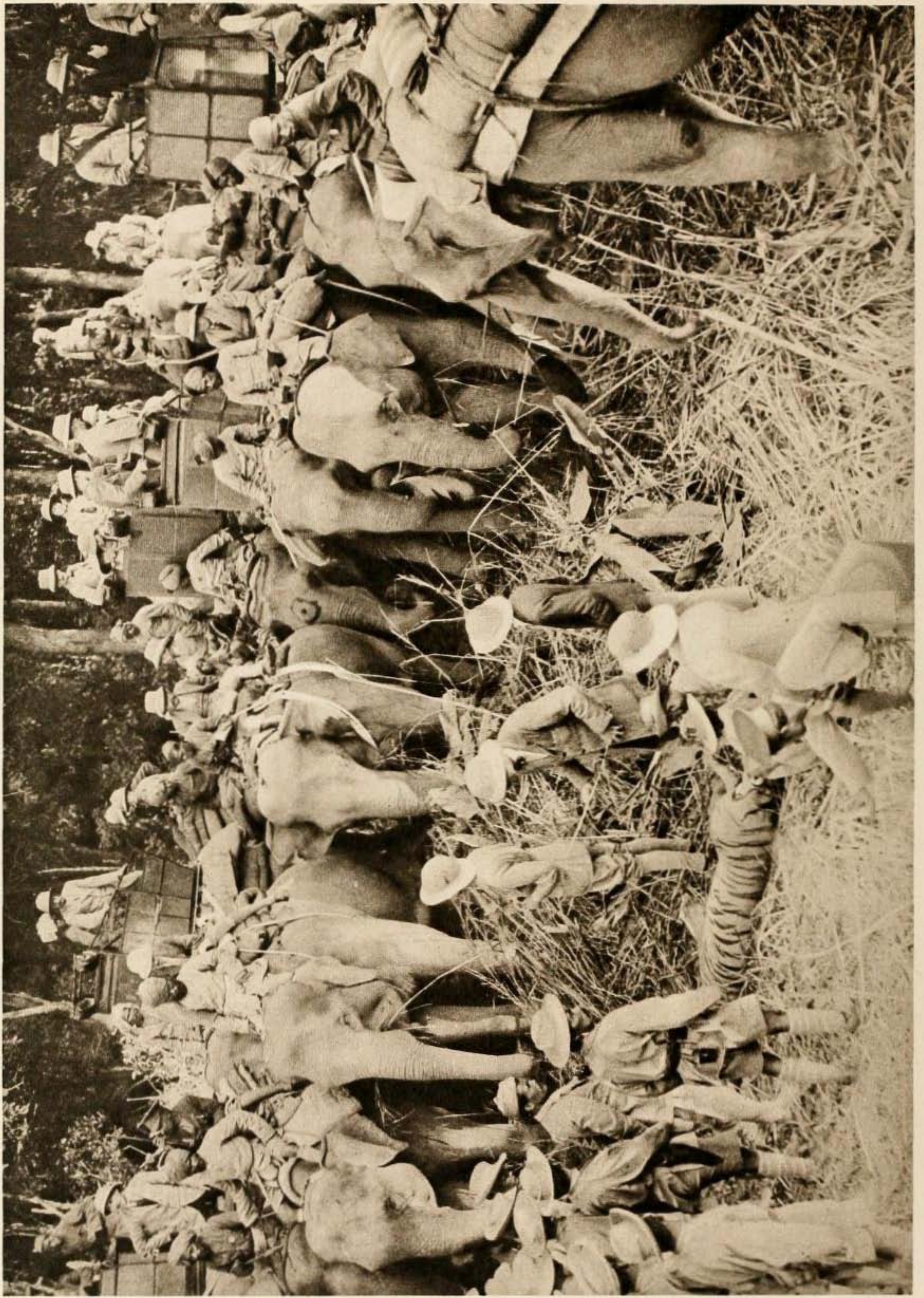
THE PRINCE'S FIRST TIGER, NEPAL.



IN THE JUNGLE, NEPAL.



WAITING FOR THE TIGER TO BREAK COVER, NEPAL.



THE PRINCE ON A 'PAD' ELEPHANT, NEPAL.



ON THE WAY TO A TIGER SHOOT, NEPAL.



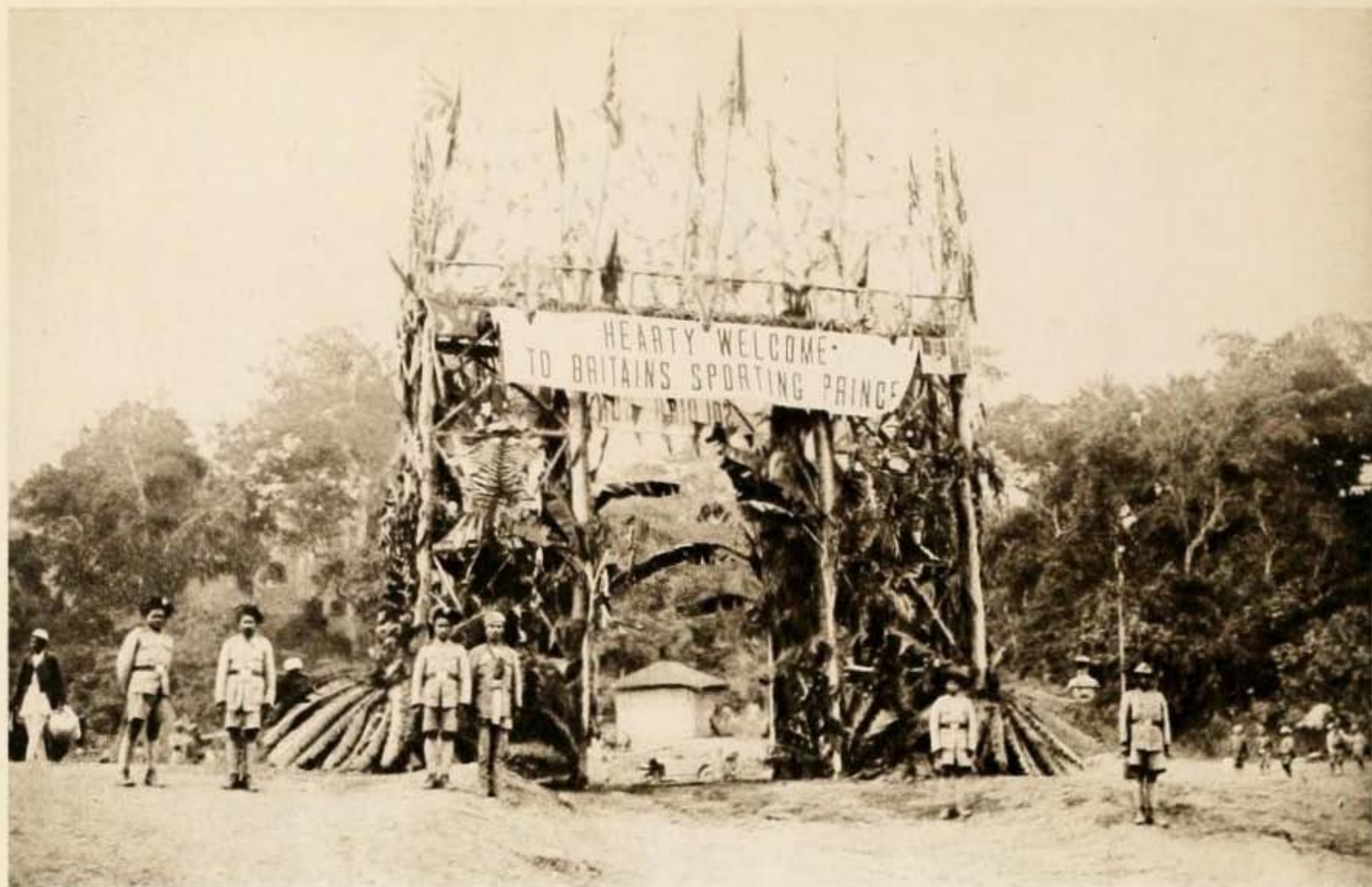
A MID-DAY HALT, NEPAL.



THE PRINCE WITH HIS HOST, THE MAHARAJA OF NEPAL.



THE MAHARAJA OF NEPAL PRESENTING AN OIL PAINTING OF HIMSELF TO THE PRINCE.



THE FRONTIER OF NEPAL.



THE PRINCE KICKS OFF, NEPAL.