

# ON THE FRONTIER AND BEYOND

A RECORD OF THIRTY YEARS' SERVICE

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL SIR FREDERICK O'CONNOR  
C.S.I., C.I.E., C.V.O.

LONDON  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W

## CHAPTER XVI

### SPORT

SPORT of all kinds—but especially big and small game shooting—has meant so much to me all my life, and has rendered endurable existence in such utterly god-forsaken places as, for instance, Seistan, that I should feel ungrateful if I did not devote to it a separate chapter.

It is not so much the mere killing of wild beasts and birds (although there is no use in being hypocritical and trying to blink the fact that when one goes out to shoot one wants to and means to kill something!) that gives charm and interest to sport, but the fact that shooting, especially, takes one out of the routine of everyday life and into the secret fastnesses of nature and the most wonderful scenery, whether mountain or forest, and lends a gilding of romance and excitement sometimes to the most prosaic, ugly, or even sordid surroundings. What sane man, for instance, would willingly tramp perseveringly backwards and forwards through endless muddy fields of turnips or wurzels in a biting east wind; or wade all day up to his knees almost in sticky mud, perspiring in every pore, through the hideously monotonous “paddy” fields of lower Bengal; or crouch for hours, half frozen, in the early hours of the morning on some bare Himalayan slope at an elevation of some 12,000 ft. or so; were it not for the strange fascination and glamour of shooting at some living bird or beast with gun or rifle?

Hunting is, I suppose, one of the most deeply rooted of our ancestral instincts, and the difference between a

Selous with his record of big game, ranging from elephants and rhinos downwards, and the small boy after tiddlers in the Serpentine lies in degree rather than in kind.

But whatever the reason for, or philosophy of sport may be, the fact remains that it has a fascination all its own, and that, especially for dwellers abroad, it makes life tolerable and even enjoyable in what might otherwise be almost intolerable conditions. For one thing, it is an outlet for a man's physical activity, and is the means of keeping him fit when organised games of any kind are unobtainable, and it saves him from boredom and stagnation in lonely stations where the amenities of life generally are few or non-existent. At any rate, I know that in my own case I owe a great deal of health and happiness to sport, and it has besides brought me into many queer, out-of-the-way corners of the world, where, but for this incentive, I should certainly never have penetrated.

One of my very first experiences was in the north of Sikkim where, after my little dash into Tibet, as described in Chapter I, I spent a week or two stalking burhel—a species of mountain sheep. There were, naturally, no professional shikaris in Sikkim, such as one finds in Kashmir to take the onus of first finding the game and then conducting the stalk, so I had to fend for myself, and I acquired in consequence no end of valuable experience of what to do and what not to do, and ten times more enjoyment and triumph when I made a successful stalk than if I had been bear-led all the time by a professional. My only companion was an old Bhutia poacher who lived in the village, and who knew the best places to find the burhel; and although I made a good many mistakes at first, and found it difficult to judge the size of a head, I certainly learnt the elements of the art of stalking, and bagged three or four quite good heads.

I used to sleep in a tiny *tente d'abri* near the shooting

ground, and sunrise would find me on some lofty ridge—perhaps 14,000 or 15,000 ft. high—to which I had climbed in the dark in order to be above some herd of burhel which we had spotted overnight, and whence the most glorious panorama opened out of the great snowy peaks and expanses by which we were surrounded. And I returned to my battery at Darjeeling in a condition of really perfect physical fitness.

My next trip took me into Kashmir, where I spent a week or two after ibex in a side nullah on the right bank of the Indus in Baltistan. On this occasion I was accompanied by the orthodox outfit of a Kashmiri professional shikari and his assistant, and I soon found that I was regarded by them much in the same way that a passenger is regarded by the officers of a liner—just so much human dunnage to be treated quite nicely but firmly, and taken from place to place without any say whatever in the navigation—and was neither expected nor allowed to have anything to do with the actual stalking. I was rather inclined, after my independent efforts in Sikkim, to resent this at first, but I soon found that my shikaris were past-masters of their art, and that it was best to follow the line of least resistance, learn all I could from them, and at any rate do my share by shooting straight when the decisive moment arrived and the rifle was put into my hands at the conclusion of the stalk. On these lines, as so many other young sportsmen have found in Kashmir, our partnership worked very well, and we had some good sport, but I cannot honestly say that I got the same amount of enjoyment and satisfaction out of it as I had had from my own unaided amateur efforts.

Later on, in the Gilgit District and on the Pamirs, I found what were, I think, the ideal conditions: namely, a first-class native hill-man, as keen-sighted as the Kashmiri and if anything a better man on the hill-side, with

whom one could co-operate in a friendly spirit—discussing with him every move in the game, and sharing with him the credit and satisfaction of a successful stalk.

Apropos of the sahibs' attitude towards their shikaris the natives, who have a keen sense of humour, used to produce a little dumb-show for our entertainment round the camp-fire at the yearly gathering of the clans at Gilgit. First a huge "ibex," decorated with a pair of real ibex horns, would make his appearance, and would proceed to graze unconcernedly within a few yards of the bonfire. Then the typical sahib, complete with topi, rifle, etc., and his shikari would be seen approaching from the opposite side of the arena. After a prolonged and painstaking search through a telescope the ibex would be espied, and gestures indicating surprise and delight at his great size would be exchanged. Then the pair would carefully stalk the ibex until within shooting distance (three yards!), and the sahib would take a careful aim and fire—bang! A miss! The ibex, startled by this untoward noise, would raise his head, gaze fearfully around, and canter off unwounded.

The sahib in his rage and disappointment administers a severe beating to the shikari!

End of Tableau I.

The second scene is similar, except that it ends in the death of the ibex, who falls upon his back, kicking wildly, whilst the gratified sahib transfers handfuls of coin to the beaming shikari.

This good-humoured little skit on the habits and manners of the sporting Englishman was always a star-turn, and was received with uproarious merriment by the onlookers.

So with such pleasant companions I spent many days and nights on the hill-sides after ibex, markhor, and red bear. Gilgit was then (and, for all I know, may be still) a wonderful shooting district—preserved by the Kashmir

Game Laws from exploitation, and forming practically a private reserve, during the winter months at any rate, for the handful of Britishers stationed there. Markhor provide an especially attractive form of hill-shooting. Unlike the ibex, who is always found on open ground above the forest line, the markhor frequents the pine-clad slopes at lower elevations up to 10,000 ft. or so. He generally lies up in cover during the daytime, and emerges towards sunset to graze on the open grassy slopes. I once spent a whole month after a fine beast in the famous Damot nullah on the right bank of the Indus, just opposite my little house at Bunji. He was a very cunning old fellow, and used to change his feeding-ground every few days, never emerging from his seclusion until half an hour or so before sunset, so it was almost impossible to stalk him. However, patience and perseverance earned their reward, and we got him at last. He was the last markhor I ever shot, as I left the district shortly afterwards, and became entangled in Tibetan affairs, and never returned there.

Markhor shooting, too, takes one into very difficult and even dangerous ground—the hill-sides of many of these nullahs in the Gilgit district being very steep and some of them almost precipitous—and one has to move carefully, especially in winter after a fresh fall of snow. Indeed, my friend and companion at Bunji, Captain Johnson of the Indian Army, was killed during my first winter in the district in a nullah in Chilas. He slipped and fell over a small precipice, fracturing his skull, and he died within a few hours.

I have already in Chapter I mentioned my little excursion after *ovis poli* on the Pamirs. Apart from the incentive of the sport the trip was a most interesting one. There is a special fascination about these great empty valleys on the "roof of the world," with their silence and remoteness and sense of space. It was drawing to-

wards winter on my last excursion across the passes of the Mustagh range and getting very cold at night. On this occasion we camped with some friendly Kirghiz, whom we encountered, sleeping in their "yurt"—the great dome-shaped, felt-covered tent, warm and comfortable as a house—and riding on their yaks in the early morning before sunrise to the foot of the hills where the poli were to be found.

I remember one morning, after fording a shallow stream on the yaks, the water on the long hair on their bellies froze into icicles and clattered as we moved along. Later, when we had left our yaks below and had climbed some hundreds of feet up the hill-side, the sun rose in the almost unearthly purity and clarity of that heavenly air, and we sat for a few minutes spying for poli and drinking in the incredible beauty of it all. There had been a slight sprinkling of snow during the night, and down below in the valleys we could see a good many wolves prowling about, singly and in small packs, trying to stalk the wily little marmots which were dotted about everywhere at the edges of their burrows, whistling shrill warnings to one another when any danger approached. There must have been hundreds in sight that morning. The very next day, as if by a concerted signal, or an agreed date, not one remained—they had all disappeared, to indulge in their comfortable winter sleep in their snug nests underground, not to emerge again till the following spring. What an enviable habit! Why should it be confined to marmots, dormice, and other hibernating mammals?

While writing this paragraph, I have been reminded of a favourite old book, a companion on many journeys, Andrew Wilson's "Abode of Snow," long-forgotten now, but a classic of its kind. He quotes some verses modelled from Mignon's song in "Wilhelm Meister," which have always stuck in my memory:

*Know'st thou the tent, its cone of snowy drill  
Pitched on the greensward by the snow-fed rill;  
Where whiter peaks than marble rise around,  
And icy ploughshares pierce the flower-clad ground?  
Know'st thou it well?*

*Oh there! Oh there!*

*Where pipes the marmot—fiercely growls the bear!*

*Know'st thou the land where man scarce knows decay,  
So nigh the realms of everlasting day;  
Where gleam the splendours of unsullied truth;  
Where Durga smiles, and blooms eternal youth?  
Know'st thou it now?*

*Oh there! Oh there!*

*To breathe the sweetness of that heavenly air!*

After leaving the Gilgit district I never did much big game shooting again (except for the trip in Northern Persia described in Chapter X) until I found myself in Nepal, during the latter years of my Indian career, but I indulged in plenty of small game in Persia and elsewhere. There was not much shooting of any kind in the part of Tibet where I was stationed (although some fine ovis ammon have been shot in the hills round Kamba Jong), but there was some excellent wild goose shooting to be had near Gyantse. We used to see the geese winging their way to the north in the spring and southwards in the autumn, flying in great wedge-shaped formations, high above us, even at that great elevation, and one of their halting-places in the autumn was at a small lake near our house. There we would wait, hidden by brushwood, and for half an hour or so just after sunset they would come in thick and fast, and we often bagged twenty or so of an evening. It is not often that one gets such a chance at wild geese, and it was great fun while it lasted.



But Seistan was the real paradise for wild fowl and black partridges. The former—ducks and geese of all kinds and descriptions—swarmed by thousands—I might almost say by millions—on the Hamun, but it was not very easy to get at them. There were two methods of procedure.

One was by means of an expedition on the reed rafts of the local watermen, the "Sayads" as they are termed. This is a strange aboriginal tribe found only in Seistan, who live in primitive huts on or near the shores of this inland sea, and who have made their livelihood for generations from its waters by fishing and snaring wild fowl, etc. Their means of locomotion consists of boat-shaped rafts made up of bundles of reeds which they punt about by long poles (see illustration facing p. 154), and which can carry three or four persons at a time. On these primitive but most efficient vessels we used to have ourselves propelled into the heart of the great expanse of reeds which exists in certain parts of the Hamun, and there in some patch of open water await the wild fowl which were kept moving by the beaters, and we would get fine shooting for an hour or two until the birds got scared and departed for quieter haunts elsewhere on the Hamun.

The other, and generally speaking the more productive, method of shooting wild fowl was originated, I believe, by my predecessor, Colonel R. L. Kennion, a great shikari who has written two fascinating books on eastern sport. The locale for these proceedings lay, not in the reedy portions of the Hamun, but on the great, bare, shallow expanses round about the edges which were covered by water to a depth of only a few inches. Here in a good season the wild fowl would assemble in incredible numbers and feed on the grasses, etc., which they could just reach with their bills below the surface. A row of two or three (depending on the number of guns) shallow pits

about the size of a barrel would be dug the day before the shoot some distance out—the water being kept out by a low rampart of mud round the edge of the pit.

On the appointed morning we would ride out to our shooting ground, and I shall never forget the thrill with which we used to hear the clamour of this great multitude of birds as they quacked and splashed and flew around in their thousands, half seen through the morning haze over the surface of the vast lake. About ten to eleven o'clock, when the sun was well up and the birds had more or less settled down for the day, we would wade out to the pits, an empty box would be put in for a seat, and a couple of tent-pegs driven into the side for our cartridge bags, and we would take our seats with our heads just below the level of the water. After the disturbance caused by our movements had subsided, our beaters (generally mounted on small local ponies) would make a line and start to drive from a distance of perhaps two or three miles, and in a few minutes the air would be thick with wild fowl. First would come the faster-flying duck—pintail, mallard, etc.—followed shortly by the slower geese, and finally by the teal, which, in contrast with the straight-flying duck and geese, would twist and twirl and swoop all around us.

On a still fine day the duck and geese, once alarmed by the first shot, would rise high into the air, and we would only get an occasional bird within range; but we always tried to select wild windy weather for our shoots, and then the birds would fly low within easy shot—the geese especially passing sometimes only a few feet above our heads—and we would keep loading and firing as fast as we could for perhaps half an hour or more continuously until our guns were almost too hot to hold.

Presently the beaters would come up and proceed to gather in the spoils, and we would wade ashore and have lunch; and in the afternoon the performance would be repeated, the beaters working from the opposite direction.

And besides these organised beats we would get flighting birds almost every evening on some spit of land or behind some hillock where we knew that the duck and teal passed on their way to their night feeding-grounds.

Then there were the black partridges—jolly little birds, not quite so fast as an English partridge perhaps, but affording very good sport and eating. We used to get them either in the so-called "gardens" in the cultivated areas of Seistan or amongst the tamarisk bushes in the wilder uncultivated parts. The best cover was in the vineyards—small enclosures of a quarter of an acre or so, ridged and furrowed, the leafless vines and the briars forming excellent cover. Here we would walk them up, and a small enclosure like this would sometimes produce ten or fifteen brace. Or if there was an encircling wall we would have the birds driven over whilst we stood outside.

In the tamarisk we always had them driven, and Colonel Hunter and I have more than once bagged over fifty brace in a day—really nice shooting.

During the winter which I spent at Meshad, in Khorasan, I made a little expedition into the hilly forest country beyond Bujnurd, as described in Chapter VIII, where my chief objective was the "maral" stag. I went in the autumn when the stags were calling, as at any other time it would be practically impossible to find them in these dense forests; and I did very well, securing three or four fine heads. Colonel Kennion had shot a good specimen of the local tiger the year before; but although I saw their tracks everywhere, and my orderly surprised a fine tigress sitting on a rock near the camp one morning, I was not lucky enough to shoot one. But the forest and adjoining hill-sides were full of other smaller game, and I had plenty of mixed shooting, and altogether enjoyed a delightful fortnight in this little-known country.

And there was plenty of small game shooting round

about Meshad itself—duck, snipe, sand-grouse, and the lesser bustard. These latter were plentiful, and could be seen moving about on the ground in large packs of twenty or more, but they were exceedingly difficult, almost impossible, to stalk. The only way we could get them was by concealing ourselves in a ditch or behind some brush-wood and having them driven towards us. Nine times out of ten they went wide, but every now and then we were rewarded by their flying over us, and we bagged a good few in the course of the season. They were fine big birds, about the size of a turkey and excellent eating, and made a satisfactory right and left when we could bring it off. And the days spent riding and walking about on these great open uplands at this season of the year were most enjoyable, and made up for the rather enervating heat and dullness of the summer months.

The next scene lies at or near Shiraz, in the province of Fars. Here we had duck, snipe, and my old friends the chikor (hill partridges), which I had not seen since the Gilgit days. One might occasionally make big bags of duck if one struck the right place on the right day, and I once shot over a hundred head, standing almost up to my waist in water amongst reeds in a lake on the Dasht Arjin plain. But the best sport was the chikor shooting on the hills, where we walked hard after these active and wary birds, climbing up and down steep hill-sides all day long and seldom getting a really easy shot. Splendid exercise and fine shooting. I have already described how I sometimes shot with my nomad friends on horse-back.

Then followed the five years interlude of the war, during which I scarcely fired a shot, and the next opportunity for sport occurred during my term of office in Nepal. Here, of course, tiger-shooting was the main attraction. Most people who visit India would like to have the chance of shooting a tiger, and in the fulfilment

of this laudable ambition I endeavoured to gratify as many of my friends as possible. It will be understood that we owed these wonderful pageants to the kindness and hospitality of the Prime Minister of Nepal, who placed the State elephants and all necessary staff at our disposal, granted us the necessary facilities for the provision of supplies for men and beasts in the heart of the jungle, and gave us the free run of his best preserves. In such circumstances, as will have been gathered from the brief description in the two preceding chapters, our shoots were conducted on a scale of real Oriental magnificence—scores of elephants and hundreds of camp followers and assistants being provided, the *mise en scène* consisting of practically limitless forests swarming with wild beasts.

A more detailed account of the *modus operandi* may be of interest. Some weeks before the date fixed for the shoot, experienced trackers and shikaris would visit the district proposed for the camp, and would locate the area or areas where tiger tracks most abounded, or where the inhabitants of the scattered villages reported heavy losses amongst their cattle; and on this information a suitable site would be selected for the camp, and by the appointed date the camp would be pitched, and the elephants, supplies, etc., assembled ready for the arrival of the guests. Meanwhile, several small parties, consisting each of a couple of shikaris with an elephant, would take up their stations in the forest within a radius of four or five miles of the central camp, and a day or two before the guests were due to arrive they would tie up a number of young water-buffaloes in spots known to be most frequented by tigers. Buffaloes were selected for this purpose as being numerous and cheap, and also because Nepal, being a Hindu country, religious sentiment forbade the use of cattle for such a purpose. The selected spots were generally open spaces near the bank of a stream or sandy river-bed, with water on one side and thick jungle on

the other; and the buffaloes were secured to stout stakes by a rope strong enough to hold them, but not too strong to be broken by the tiger. Every morning soon after daybreak the outlying scouts would go the round of the victims, and immediately on discovering a kill would ride into camp with the "khabbar."

The tiger's share in the proceedings followed an almost invariable code. After killing, he would snap the rope and carry or drag the carcass into the nearest thicket—generally within a few hundred yards of the stake—would eat his fill, then stroll down to the water for a drink, and return to the carcass, close to which he would lie and sleep all day until ready for a second meal in the evening. It was easy to see where he had taken his kill by the broad trail left through the brushwood, and sometimes his exact whereabouts would be intimated by a few crows or vultures perched on tree tops round about, awaiting their opportunity for a share in the feast.

The great moment of the day was the arrival of the news in camp. It usually came about eight to nine o'clock, depending on the number and location of the kills of the particular scout, and on his distance from the main camp, which might sometimes be as much as ten miles or so. We would have finished breakfast and be strolling idly about the camp, wondering what the news would be, and whether we should be destined to a blank day or not. Presently, in the distance, two familiar figures would be seen approaching our mess tent—the Subadar and the Jemadar—the Native Officers of the Envoy's escort, keen sportsmen both, who would await the arrival of the messengers from each of the outposts, and would hear and collate their reports.

The approach of these two Officers would be watched with anxious eyes: what message were they bringing us—good or bad? Sometimes (but very rarely) their countenances would be overcast, and their mien depressed,



AUTHOR AND KINNO'S HEAD



ROSAMUND JADY RIDLEY WITH SKIN OF BEAR HIGER  
(10 11 5 IN)





and we would augur the worst. But more frequently—say nine times out of ten—we would discern a jaunty bearing and a beaming look; and indeed, we used to say that we could divine the number of the “kills” by the breadth of their smiles as they came along. Anyone who has seen Commander Dyott’s fine film “Tiger Hunting in India,” the latter part of which was filmed at a shoot in Nepal in 1922, will recollect the appearance of these two fine fellows and their animated description to me (in dumb show of course—we have not yet had a “talkie” of a tiger shoot) of the size and whereabouts of the tiger.

Putting aside those rare blank days when there was nothing to report, we would generally have news of at least one kill and sometimes two or even more; and there was one wonderful morning when news came in from our various outlying posts of no less than eleven kills, in which eighteen tigers (including some cubs) were involved

Arrangements are then made for the day. First the main body of the elephants, including the howdahs, would move ponderously off in single file towards the nearest kill, led by the scout who had brought the news. After an interval of half an hour or so the guests would mount on to their pad elephants (a pad is a huge mattress thrown across the elephant’s back, and fastened on by a stout rope, upon which one can ride either side-saddle or astride), selected for their fleetness of foot, and the main body would be caught up in about half a mile or so from where the tiger was supposed to be lying.

The guns now transfer themselves from their pads to their howdahs, where each man’s orderly is ready awaiting him with his fire-arms and ammunition. All being ready, the serious business of the day—the ringing of the tiger—begins. The elephants again move off in single file, the howdahs dotted at intervals here and there, and from this moment until the ring is complete strict silence

is preserved and everything is done as quietly as possible. When within a few hundred yards of the tiger's lair, the senior Native Officer, the Subadar, takes his stand on one side, and silently signals to each mahout as he passes to turn alternately right or left, and thus the long column is broken into two sections proceeding in opposite directions. The leading mahout of each section guides his elephant in a long semi-circle, one curving to the right, the other to the left, until after perhaps half an hour to an hour's slow progress through the jungle, the two meet.

The elephants are now ranged in a complete circle with the patch of jungle supposed to contain the tiger and his kill in the centre. The ring at this stage is still a very large and loose one with the elephants separated from one another by intervals of 50 to 100 yards or so. Silence is still preserved, but one shrill whistle announces the completion of the ring, and on this signal all the elephants turn inwards and move towards the centre, gradually contracting the size of the ring and approaching closer and closer to one another. As the distance diminishes, and the ring becomes more compact, the precautions hitherto observed are relaxed—shouts and orders are heard, and the crashing of undergrowth and small trees as the great beasts force their way through the forest, whilst the guns on their howdahs keep on the alert in case the tiger should make a premature attempt to break the ring before it is properly formed.

This, however, rarely occurs. As a general rule the tiger, gorged, lazy, and sleepy after a full meal, does not bother his head over a few shouts, and the, to him, well-known sound of elephants moving through the jungle. It is only when it is too late that he realises that it is a concerted business and that he is in a trap. He may then slink about a little to and fro, trying to find a loop-hole for escape, but seeing that he is entirely surrounded he will finally crouch in the thickest patch of jungle he

can find in the ring, and lie sulkily there awaiting the dénouement.

By this time the ring is complete—a compact circle some 80 to 100 yards in diameter, the elephants almost touching one another—everybody on the *qui vive*—the shooters with their rifles ready, the headmen and native officers shouting directions and warnings, and the mahouts and lesser fry jabbering and exchanging facetious remarks.

The order is now given to clear a space round the whole circumference of the ring, whereupon every mahout instructs his elephant to trample and break down the undergrowth and smaller trees in front of him. For perhaps half an hour or more, depending on the nature of the jungle, this process of destruction continues—the elephants trampling, turning, pushing down small trees and breaking branches, and pulling up grass, reeds and saplings by the roots, and the mahouts chopping off the lower branches of the bigger trees with their kukris—until the former impenetrable thicket for a depth of some 10 to 15 yards all round the ring has been replaced by a comparatively open circle, carpeted with a debris of crushed grasses and tangled branches.

The ring is now reformed—all the elephants facing inwards on the outer circumference of the clearing, and the two Native Officers, with the solemn mien and steadfast regard of commanders on the eve of a critical engagement, move gravely hither and thither making their final dispositions—ordering the crushing of some still too prominent briars, or the lopping of some leafy branch, and posting the howdah elephants at the best strategic points.

The decisive moment has now arrived. Up to this point, unless the tiger has actually been seen during the course of the proceedings, it is impossible to say for certain whether or no he is really in the ring. He may

have slipped away unperceived, or he may possibly have cleared off elsewhere after his meal. This is unusual, but it has not infrequently occurred, especially in the case of tigers who have already been ringed and have been lucky enough to make their escape.

However, the test will now be put. A particularly large, stolid, and courageous tusker, with a trustworthy mahout on his neck, and an almost naked assistant perched over his tail and hanging on by a rope, advances majestically into the ring and proceeds to quarter its still unexplored area, up and down, to and fro, round and round. There is dead silence in the surrounding throng. Every eye is fixed on the great beast in his nonchalant progress. Every shooter in his howdah has his rifle firmly grasped at the ready, whilst his orderly behind him holds a second weapon in reserve.

Suddenly the tusker gives vent to a sharp grunt, and backs violently and perhaps turns and runs a few yards. The expectation and excitement quicken—it looks as if the tiger was there, but it may only be the sight of the carcass or the scent of the tiger still lingering which has scared the wily and cautious old elephant who, in spite of his apparently *dégagé* air, knows perfectly well what is up, and who has no intention of being caught napping. So his leisurely march is resumed in another quarter of the ring, and after a few minutes he again approaches the danger zone. This time there can be no mistake—there is a fierce roar, the tusker turns tail and scuttles to the other side of the ring—and a deafening yell of “*bagh! bagh!*” (tiger! tiger!) breaks from the throat of every onlooker.

It is a great moment—well worth living for. We all know that within a few yards of us is a specimen of the most savage of wild animals, cornered and desperate, exasperated by the long waiting and the noise and the knowledge that he is hemmed in by enemies, and deter-

mined to fight for his life to the last gasp. I have been in at the death of some 150 tigers, but that first cry of "bagh!" never failed to give me that genuine thrill down the spine which one experiences now and then during the course of one's life.

Once certain that the tiger is there everyone settles down seriously to the business of the day. The course of the proceedings varies in every case, and cannot be exactly foretold. Sometimes the tiger will break cover immediately on being discovered, will charge or run round the ring, and may be bowled over at the very first shot. More frequently he sulks and remains under cover, snarling and growling, whenever the beating elephant approaches him, and occasionally making a rush at this devoted beast, and pursuing him to the edge of his sanctuary, biting at his heels, and jumping on to his rump and clawing him.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes other big elephants have to be sent to the assistance of the first one, and it may take an hour or two of persistent badgering before the tiger can be forced to show himself in an open space where the guns can get a shot at him.

Sometimes it happens, too, that there is found to be more than one tiger in the ring, and then of course the excitement is intensified. I have often known two, and sometimes three, and twice four tigers to be in the same ring together—generally, but not always, a tigress with cubs, large or small. The end in all these cases is the same. After a longer or shorter period of sulking, the tiger is forced to show himself in the cleared portion of the ring, and is killed or wounded by one or other of the shooters from the howdahs. In the case of several shots being fired the tiger is awarded to the person who gets in the first shot, however trivial the wound may be; and this is not always an easy matter to decide.

It will, of course, sometimes occur that a determined tiger will make a bolt right away, and, undeterred by

clamour, shots, and sticks, etc., thrown at him, will slip between two elephants and make off into the jungle. But even so, he rarely escapes. The Nepalese shikaris from long practice have developed the technique of overhauling a fugitive tiger into a fine art. The moment he is seen to have broken through, the ring automatically divides into two parts, and two long parallel columns of elephants go scurrying away after him; after a headlong rush of a mile or so through the jungle, the heads of the columns converge and meet, a halt is called, and the whole process of ringing is again gone through, with the result that in nine cases out of ten the tiger is found to have been trapped a second time. The fact is, of course, that the tiger is gorged after his heavy meal of the night before, and is too heavy and too lazy to run either far or fast, and can therefore be overtaken and surrounded by the fleeter elephants. But as may be imagined, the manœuvre calls for consummate woodcraft on the part of the shikaris, and the perfect understanding and instant co-operation of every mahout.

Once ringed, in fact, it a very rare event for a tiger to escape altogether.

During the course of a season's shooting every variety of jungle will be encountered. Sometimes the ring will be formed on the banks of a stream—one half of it stationed amongst the "sal" jungle on the bank, the other half on the sandy grass-grown river-bed below. Sometimes the tiger will have taken refuge in a dense thorn thicket—utterly impenetrable to man or to any animal less massive than an elephant. In such cases the task of forming the ring and of breaking down an open space as described above is one of incredible difficulty, and may take almost a whole day of continual labour on the part of the elephants, who naturally dislike having to tackle masses of tangled thorns and briers. And even when all this has been accomplished, the question of driving



*Round the World Travel Pictures*

A GOOD DAY'S WORK

*Left to right* Crouching—Mr and Mrs William J Morden Author Col J B Dalzell-Hunter I M S Standing—Jemadar Capt Harvey Subadar of Envoy's escort



LORD LYTTON, WITH HIS SON JOHN





the tiger out of cover still remains, and the beating elephant, or elephants, find it a herculean task to force their way through the thicket. And in such circumstances, the tiger, knowing well how difficult it is for his pursuers to spot him, will lie "doggo" for hours in some small patch without a movement to betray his presence. I have known cases where the ring has gradually closed into a circle only a few yards in diameter before we could tell for certain whether he was there or not; and it was only at the very last moment, when some elephant was almost stepping on him, that he was at last forced to disclose himself—probably by a furious spring at an elephant's head.

But strangely enough the most difficult terrain to carry out the ringing system successfully is in the treeless grass plains which are often found near the banks of the big rivers soon after they emerge from the hills. Here the grass, though only some 4 to 6 ft. in height, makes excellent cover for a tiger—dense enough to hide him, but not too thick to hamper his freedom of movement; and it is next to impossible to trample it down, as it is tough and wiry, and springs up again after being trodden on. Consequently, the tiger can rush about without being seen, except for occasional glimpses of his back as he bounds along, and it is easy for him to break the ring, and difficult to find him again when once he has done so. I have had some amusing experiences in such country, when there were three or four tigers on foot simultaneously—the ring dissolving itself into separate groups—the shooters pursuing different tigers through the grass, and potting at them as if they were rabbits.

It might be imagined that all this was most dangerous, and that accidents must constantly occur from flying bullets fired off the backs of elephants—often in motion, and at times plunging wildly—from the circumference of a ring less than 100 yards across, and with scores of

men and elephants all around. But, as a matter of fact, it is not so risky as it seems. The shooters, to begin with, are standing on the backs of elephants 10 ft. or so above ground-level, and are of course always shooting downwards; and as their range of vision is limited to a few yards in front and on each side of them, they can only see the tiger when he is right below them, and they have to aim almost vertically downwards—so there are no long shots, and very little chance of a ricochet, except occasionally off the trunk or branch of a tree.

Tigers, too, vary very much. Some are sluggish and cowardly, and succumb without much show of fight. But the majority are ferocious and daring, and will attack the beating elephant again and again before they break cover—leaping on to him, and biting and tearing him with their claws, until he refuses to carry on at all, and has to be reinforced or changed. And such a tiger, when he does break cover, will charge full tilt at the ring, and spring right up on the head of the nearest elephant—large or small—and cling on until shaken off. If it happens to be a howdah elephant it is possible for the sportsman to shoot the tiger by leaning over the front of his howdah, taking good care not to be shaken out by the elephant's jerks and struggles, but otherwise it is too dangerous to try and shoot a tiger in this position.

I remember once a big tiger springing on to the head of a very small elephant which had been brought into the ring for instructional purposes, driven by a young mahout—a boy of thirteen or fourteen. The lad leant over and beat the tiger with his driving stick, cursing him freely all the time in fluent Nepalese. When finally the tiger dropped off and was shot a ring of mahouts surrounded the young hero, praising and chaffing him, and I heard one of them say to him, "Why, Nathu, when I saw you leaning over and looking into the tiger's face I thought you were going to kiss him!"

They certainly are a cheery, jolly crew, these Nepalese mahouts and shikaris—past-masters of their profession, as keen as mustard, and utterly fearless. It is really a sight worth seeing when the big tusker marches into a ring with the deliberate intention of routing out a full-grown tiger from thick jungle. The mahout is fairly safe, seated behind the enormous skull and ears; but the assistant, perched precariously on the elephant's rump, and armed only with a nail-studded club about 18 ins. long (the humane little weapon with which he beats the elephant on the sore place over the root of his tail when he wants him to go faster!) does not occupy a very enviable position, and I think that most insurance companies would require a substantial premium on his life policy. But he does not seem to mind a bit—it is all in the day's work; and if the tiger does happen to jump up at or near him he beats a temporary retreat to another part of the broad back.

I am afraid that I have dilated at rather excessive length on this particular aspect of sport, but the fact is that so many sportsmen have recorded their experiences of hunting markhor, ibex, ovis poli, etc., that there is not much that is new to be said about big or small game shooting. So I have touched only lightly on all the more familiar aspects of the subject. But tiger-shooting, as it is practised in Nepal, is unique, and has never, as far as I know, been attempted on these lines in any other country, nor have many sportsmen had the opportunity of witnessing it; and I have therefore devoted the greater part of this chapter to its description. And, besides, this particular sport possesses a special interest in that it has been shared in by three generations of our Royal Family—King Edward, King George, and the Prince of Wales.

In Appendices C and D will be found a detailed list of the game shot by the Prince of Wales and his staff during their visit to Nepal, and also a résumé of my bags during

my period of service in that country. I, personally, cannot claim to have shot many tigers—I enjoyed the jungle life and the excitement and interest of the sport, and had no desire to amass trophies or to create records; but I did appreciate the opportunity of enabling a good many of my friends (amongst them some ladies and one boy of twelve) to shoot a tiger, and to visit the mysterious Kingdom of Nepal.

And regarding the number of tigers shot, it should be borne in mind that they swarm in these jungles, and that they levy a heavy toll on the peasants' cattle. It is reckoned that a tiger, or tigress, will kill on an average two or three times a week, so, taking an average of one hundred beasts per year per tiger, the 150 tigers shot during my shooting parties meant a saving of some 15,000 cattle (or water buffaloes) per annum! Some jungle beasts—deer, pigs, etc.—would no doubt have figured among this slaughter, but the bulk would consist of domestic animals. And there were besides a few man-killers among these tigers—one in particular was known to have killed eleven men and women out of one village alone. So I experienced no qualms of conscience regarding the number killed.

I have spared my readers as much detail as possible in this chapter on Sport regarding actual stalks, record measurements, etc., etc. If I once embarked on such details, and set out to give a full account of my various travels and sporting adventures, I would require a book rather than a chapter. But all this has already been done in so many excellent works of sport and travel, that it seems superfluous to add to their number, and all I have tried to do is to present a general idea of the sort of sport which is available in these outlying stations for a man who is keen on shooting, and likes camp life, and does not mind roughing it a bit now and then.

## APPENDIX C

### GAME RECORD OF THE ROYAL SHOOT IN NEPAL

14th to 21st December, 1921

#### TIGER

Date	Total Length	Sex	Shot by	Remarks
14th Dec. .	ft. ins.			
	9 3	Male	H.R.H. the Prince of Wales	—
“ “ .	9 8	“	Capt. E. D. Metcalfe	—
“ “ .	7 9	Female	Capt. Poynder	—
“ “ .	8 4	“	Capt. Dudley North	—
15th “ .	7 10	“	Sir Godfrey Thomas	—
16th “ .	9 7	“	Lord Louis Mountbatten	—
“ “ .	8 9	“	Vice-Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey	—
“ “ .	8 2	“	Sir Godfrey Thomas	—
17th “ .	5 4	Male cub	Com. Newport	—
“ “ .	4 11½	Cub	Col. Worgan	—
“ “ .	9 2	Male	Hon. Bruce Ogilvy	—
19th “ .	7 7	Female	Hon. Piers Legh	—
“ “ .	9 10	Male	Earl of Cromer	Largest tiger obtained during the shoots
“ “ .	7 10	Female	Capt. E. Villiers	—
“ “ .	4 3	Cub	Hon. Piers Legh	—
21st “ .	7 4	Female	Sir Godfrey Thomas	—
“ “ .	9 2	Male	H. A. F. Metcalfe, Esq.	—

In addition to the seventeen tigers shot a cub was taken alive and was included in the collection of live animals presented to H.R.H. by the Maharaja of Nepal.

## RHINOCEROS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Shot by</i>	<i>Sex</i>
16th Dec.	Capt. Dudley North . . .	Female
17th „	Capt. Poynder . . .	„
19th „	H.R.H. the Prince of Wales .	Male
„ „	Com. Newport . . .	„
„ „	Perceval Landon, Esq. . .	„
20th „	Lord Louis Mountbatten . .	„
„ „	Hon. Bruce Ogilvy . . .	Female
„ „	Lord Cromer . . .	„

Two rhinos, wounded by H.R.H. and Capt. Dudley North respectively, were subsequently picked up dead by the Nepalese after the shoots were over.

## LEOPARDS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Shot by</i>	<i>Length</i> <i>ft. ins.</i>
19th Dec.	Lord Cromer . . .	6 2
20th „	Sir G. de Montmorency . .	6 7

## BEARS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Shot by</i>	<i>Length</i> <i>ft. ins.</i>
19th Dec.	—	5 0
20th „	Capt. Poynder . . .	4 11½

*Totals*

Tigers . . . . .	17
Rhinos . . . . .	10
Leopards . . . . .	2
Bears . . . . .	2
Hamadryad . . . . .	1—10 ft. 3 ins.

## APPENDIX D

### SUMMARY OF BIG GAME SHOT IN NEPAL IN FOUR SEASONS

	<i>Tigers</i>	<i>Leopards</i>	<i>Rhinos</i>	<i>Bears</i>	<i>Buffaloes</i>	<i>Total</i>
Season 1918-19 .	18	5	1	—	—	24
„ 1921-22 .	46	2	13	3	1	65
„ 1922-23 .	18	3	—	—	—	21
„ 1923-24 .	38	1	5	2	—	46
„ 1924-25 .	38	3	1	4	2	48
Totals	158	14	20	9	3	204

55 measured tigers averaged 9 ft. 8 ins. (excluding any under 9 ft.).

36 measured tigresses averaged 8 ft. 8 ins. (excluding any under 8 ft.).

Biggest tiger: 10 ft 5 ins

(All measurements taken along the curves from tip of nose to end of tail)