

GAME IN PEGU.

BY VAGUS.

DEAR SIR,—I have asked several Indian Sportsmen whom I have met in Pegu, to give me their opinions as to the reason of the peculiar paucity of game (I allude chiefly to the larger varieties) in that province. I have failed in obtaining a satisfactory account of the fact, and therefore trust you will permit me to give to my inquiry the free circulation among sportsmen that your pages will ensure.

I have spent upwards of three years in that country, and have visited many and remote parts of it, always carefully examining the capabilities possessed by each district for affording sport. I have also had the advantage of obtaining what information could be yielded on the subject by gentlemen whose duties led them for months at a time into most remote localities, especially on the frontier. Personally I know nothing of the valley of the Sitang, nor, even by inquiry, of its southern portion near the embouchure of the river. I am principally acquainted with the following parts of the country:—the immediate neighbourhood of Rangoon, the Prome, Eingma, and Pongday districts, and the north of Tharawaddy; the vicinity of the frontier from Tibulla, east of the Irrawaddy, to the valley of the Matoon, and the mountains west of Mendoon: I have also gone by land from Thayat Myo to the Prome and Tonghoop road, and along that mountain road to Arracan. My conclusions as to the abundance or paucity of various kinds of game found in Pegu, are as follows.

—Elephants are abundant over a large extent, both of hilly and plain country: but, as it is prohibited to shoot them in Pegu, they are of little interest to the sportsman.

The rhinoceros is found in the western hills: I have however seen none. It appears the Native shikarrees obtain very large sums for the horns of these animals from the Chinese, who employ them as medicine, and therefore the shikarrees do not readily show the haunts of the animal.

Deer are extremely rare, though all over the country several species are distributed, however sparsely. Barking-deer are the most common (it has always appeared to me, whether on account of the constantly, good grazing, or for some other

reason, that all kinds of venison in Burmah are peculiarly good for the table, better than is usually the case elsewhere.)

The bison (or rather gaur) is found in the north-western hills of Pegu. I have seen their horns brought in: I believe no European has yet shot one in Pegu.

The Natives describe the common wild cattle as being found in the same hills.

The hare is extremely common in the drier jungles of Upper Pegu.

The traces of pigs are found all over the country; but the animals are not often seen.

Black bears frequent the hills, but in remarkably small numbers; the only one I know of having been killed was an unfortunate that was discovered swimming down the Irrawaddy, and that landed in the Meeaday bazar.

The tiger is rare, but his track is occasionally met with in the moist bed of remote streams: and between Kama and Nyongkedouk I have seen several villages strongly fenced round to prevent their incursions; and, attached to each house, a small chamber, raised on four lofty bamboo-poles, as a refuge for the inmates from such a formidable visitor.

The common leopard is frequent in the jungly hills.

The black leopard is rare; I have seen his beautiful skin brought in by the natives from near Mendoon.

In several places in the hills the peacock is not infrequent.

Jungle-fowl are very numerous wherever water is to be found: as also, in upper Pegu, the painted partridge, or fracolin; I doubt, however, whether the Burmah bird is identical with the painted partridge of India. A distinct variety of jungle-fowl, of bantam size, is mentioned as being found near the frontier among the hills to the east of the Irrawaddy.

Imperial, and various kinds of green pigeons, are sufficiently common.

Quail are only occasionally to be met with, and then generally but in small numbers, of the rain, bush, or button varieties.

Snipe, common and painted, in September and October are in many places very numerous; as also are whistling and cotton teal during the whole year in certain localities, as in the lake north-west of Kodouk in Eingma.

The various kinds of deer, especially the larger ones, are I conceive the game most sought after by the general sportsman: he might, however, in northern Pegu, range for a week, rifle in hand, over the most likely-looking ground conceivable, without seeing a single deer. One small spot of elephant-grass, slightly raised above a large plain of the same vegetation, I found well stocked with sambur and other deer at the beginning and end

of the rains, when it afforded the only dry ground in the neighbourhood: this exception but served to prove the rule. I this year accompanied an ardent and withal patient sportsman, (whose contributions, I believe, have often appeared in your pages,) for days over a wilderness that seemed full of promise, but he did not catch a glimpse of a deer: he is now on his way to seek more certain game in the Highland corries: but, before he went, he requested me to seek from some reader of your *Review* a solution of the mystery of the paucity of game in Burmah.

I have heard several reasons advanced to account for this scarcity.

One is the (asserted) want of water. But why are the banks of the Irrawaddy, here cultivated, there covered with jungle, as destitute of large game as the other part of the country? Why also the strath of the lovely Matoon, with the valleys watered by its various mountain-tributaries?

Others assert want of cultivation: but Eingma, Mogouk, Pongday, and Tharawaddy districts, richly cultivated, are equally poor in game.

One account, though vague, is at first hearing somewhat plausible, *viz.*, that vegetable overcomes animal life: this may be true in the sense that the densely-tangled forest in an island of the Delta might afford mechanical impediments to the passage of a large animal; but otherwise is of little force or meaning.

I myself can suggest no reason that I deem at all satisfactory: and therefore solicit an explanation from any of your readers of their views on this subject, which is equally interesting to the sportsman and the naturalist.

I have recently traversed the long mountain road from Prome to Tonghoop in Arracan, along which there seems an almost utter want of game, especially on its Pegu aspect. This I can readily account for by the general want of water along the road, and there being no grass there in the dry weather. I met one officer, who had been engaged for years in making that road, who had seen an elephant, and killed a tiger on it; another had seen a bear; another a boar: and this is well nigh all I could learn of large game in that of the country. On the seaward aspect of the hills, where the trees are always green and in full foliage, those two beautiful species of pheasants, called there the peacock and Moulmein pheasants, are numerous: these, the latter species at least, are also very common in the range of wild hills forming the water-shed between the valley of the Sitang and Irrawaddy.

The Irrawaddy presents a remarkable want of life on its bosom: you may drop down it from the frontier to Rangoon, and see nothing more worthy of being called game than a Brahminee

duck. (The crocodile is fortunately most rare, though it exists along the whole course of the river from Rangoon up to Ava at least: I never saw one in it above the tidal creeks.)

I am incurring the danger of becoming diffuse on the subject of scenes I have been long acquainted with, so I shall cease by assuring your readers that I, and I believe several others, will feel much indebted to whoever will account for the remarkable paucity of game that no doubt characterizes by far the greater part of the Province of Pegu.

THE TURF LOTTERIES AND BETTING.

BY *θεοείδης*

MY DEAR ABEL EAST.—I have now before me the *India Sporting Review* for the month of February 1856, and have been looking over your article on “The Calcutta Races, and our prospects.”

The latter part, regarding racing having been made the handmaid of gambling instead of sport, is but too true. And to that very fact do I ascribe the falling-off of the turf throughout India. A man cannot have a horse running, or almost show himself on a race course, without having “I’ll bet you 100 gold mohurs” shoved down his throat. And at Lotteries, there are generally two or three objectionable persons present, who are sufficient to keep any gentleman out of the place. Should a man be an owner and runner of race-horses, to a certain degree he *must* be thrown in with men of this kind; and though he may keep them at arm’s length, still their very propinquity is unwholesome.

Could nothing be arranged to purify this atmosphere? Could no turf club be got up in which lotteries and bots were —* The evils which, under the present system are rife, would then die a natural death. The class of men who only attend race meetings to prey on their weaker brethren, would, at any rate on the Turf, cease to exist.

* A word that we cannot possibly decipher. If it be banished, or an implying the same, we should say that such an extreme measure is not for.—A. E.