

TRAPPING OF RHINOCEROS IN THE DINDINGS, STRAIT SETTLEMENTS

In the current number of the "Indian Forester," Mr. Granville O'Hara publishes the following interesting account of rhinoceros trapping in the Straits—

One day, early in September 1905, a couple of Malays applied for permission from the District Officer to trap a rhinoceros which they came across while out in the forest in the "Ulu" (Malay name for up-country).

Rhinoceros are fairly rare in the Strait Settlements and it is seldom that they are trapped or shot. So being up in the Ulu, on hearing of the proposed trapping, I started for the scene of operations. The next morning the Malays set to work to lay out the trap, but before the actual operations commenced, a little cooked food was offered as a sacrifice to "Dato Utang" (god of the forest) to insure success in the undertaking.

A rectangular pit measuring 8 feet in length, 4 feet in width and 6 feet in depth was dug, and a good many hardwood saplings of 8 feet in length and 5 to 6 inches in girth were cut for lining the four sides of the pit. These poles were buried 3 feet into the bed of the pit in vertical lines as close together as possible, and were further strengthened and held in position by horizontal poles, the ends of which were inserted into the sides of the pit, the end vertical poles being tied on to these horizontal poles.

The dimensions of the pit or trap are more or less proportionate to those of a full grown rhinoceros. The reason for the lining of the pit with vertical poles is to prevent the rhinoceros from using its horn and feet indigging and so making its escape. After the poles had been fixed in position a space of one foot was left all round the pit from the top of the poles to the surface level. A cover of interlaced leafy branches was then made and placed over the opening of the pit, the ends of which rested on the top of the vertical poles. Over this covering a layer of loose earth was put, and brought to the same level as the ground surface. A part of the excavated earth was used for building two small "bunds" which ran parallel with one another for a distance of a couple of yards from the edge of the pit towards the direction from which the rhinoceros was expected, and the surplus earth was carried away and deposited some distance from the site of operation. After this, all the remaining twigs, cut branches, leaves and earth were taken away, and the disturbed surface round about was brought to its original condition by the spreading of dead leaves evenly all over the surface.

One has no idea how particular Malays are when engaged on this kind of work; although they are, as a rule, heavy smokers, not a "Kobko" (a Malay cigarette) passed their lips throughout the whole day, while engaged in laying the trap, and when I pulled out a cigarette to kill time I was politely asked not to smoke, as rhinoceros—according to the Malay—can scent a human being a mile off.

We left the forest at 6-30 p.m., and camped on the banks of the Sungai Betting Luas, (river) for the night in a roughly made hut, raised about 6 feet from the ground on poles. Early next morning a couple of Malays were told off to inspect the trap from a reasonable distance and to return at once and report; but we had no luck that day.

After inspecting the forest on the opposite bank of Sungai Betting Luas I returned, and spent another night in the hut deciding, however, to shift next morning if nothing turned up; but luck favoured us, for the exciting news was brought in early next morning from one of the watchers; that a "Badah" (rhinoceros) had fallen into the trap! I set off at once with my guards and the remaining Malays armed with a couple of my guns and "parangs" (Malaya knives).

The rhinoceros, on catching sight of us, became furious, and its grunting was sufficient to make brave hearts quail. Anyway with all its grunting, and struggles to escape, it was quite safe in the trap. It was a magnificent specimen of a three quarters grown bull rhinoceros, it had a horn about 2½ to 3 inches long and stood from 4½ to 5 feet in height, its skin was of a dark reddish brown colour.

The Malays, after a great deal of excitement, set to work to build a cage, which is constructed of hard wood saplings and rattan cane and its dimensions those of the trap. After it had been completed it was carried and placed on the edge of the trap, the open end facing the animal's head. Two lines of poles were driven in running from the mouth of the cage to a little beyond half way down the side of the pit, so as to prevent the rhinoceros from escaping when driven out of the trap.

The Malays, after consultation amongst themselves as to the best way of getting the rhinoceros out with as little harm as possible to the animal as well as to themselves, decided to get the animal to run into the cage from the trap of its own accord, and the following method was adopted—

Four men took up their positions, two on either side of the pit, and started to shovel earth into the trap in front of the animal. As the earth was being poured in the rhinoceros shook it off its head and back and trampled it under foot so that within a couple of hours there was sufficient earth in the pit to encourage the rhinoceros to make a desperate attempt to get out, in which, however, it failed. In the meantime a couple more Malays took up their positions, one at the end of the trap facing the animal's back, armed with a sharp pole, while the other placed himself on one side of the open cage ready with a pole to close the mouth of the cage when the rhinoceros ran into it. After another half hour's work the animal, with a desperate effort, managed to struggle out and run headlong into the cage, and before it had time to back out again the mouth of the cage was closed by the Malay thrusting the pole through the vertical bars and thereby holding the animal prisoner. Although there was hardly any room in the cage for the rhinoceros to use its strength, still its struggles to free itself were tremendous, and it would very likely have succeeded had not the men been on the alert and further strengthened the cage by strapping additional horizontal poles on to the sides.

After this the animal was left alone without food for the rest of the day and the best part of the next, in order to reconcile it to its fate and force it to give in through starvation and exhaustion.

A thank offering was then made to "Dato Utang's" consideration in favouring their enterprise, a few prayers were said in token of gratitude and the beatings of tom-toms commenced to celebrate their success. In the meantime a couple of Malays were sent into Lumni—the Government headquarters of the Dindings—to inform the District Officer and make the necessary arrangements for shifting the rhinoceros from the forest.

I left early next day for Betting Luas with the guards and returned four days later along with the Malays who had gone to Lumni. I was rather surprised to observe the marvellous change that had come over the rhinoceros, undoubtedly its spirits were completely subdued, it actually allowed itself to be fondled and dug at without a grunt or any other sign of vexation. On the third morning of its capture it was fed on jack-leaves (*Artocarpus indica*) and herbaceous plants on which it chiefly lives.

A point of interest, that here may be mentioned is the commercial value of rhino urine and dung. These were regularly collected, the rhino stalling about 2 bottles of urine at a time, and I was witness to the sale of one bottle of urine for Rs. 8-12-0. This is used for rheumatism by the Chinese and the urine is powerful enough to raise blisters on human skin.

To come back to my narrative, a good part of the next day was idled away awaiting the return of a Malay, who had been sent to reconnoitre the forest and fix on the easiest route to the bank of the Sungai Betting Luas. On his return, preparations were made for shifting the animal.

While the animal was being fed and his attention drawn away a couple of poles were removed from the bottom of the cage underneath the animal's feet, the rhinoceros was then made to a bit a bit, causing its four feet to slip through the open space at the bottom of the cage left by the removal of the two poles. The cage was then lifted

about a foot from the ground and held in position by six sturdy Malays, while a couple more were busy fixing three horizontal poles that were passed through the cage over the rhinoceros' back, then four more poles were passed through the bottom of the cage and similarly fastened so as only to allow sufficient space between them, for the animal to move its legs at a walking pace. The idea of this was to cause the rhinoceros—although a captive—to carry its own cage and shift itself along, instead of being carried, which would incur a great deal of risk, labour and expense.

Rattan ropes were then fastened on to the four corners of the cage, a fifth being fastened in front, and all were held by Malays. The four men—two on either side—pulled away from one another, whilst the fifth dragged and guided the captive rhinoceros in the right direction.

One more man (the sixth) walked close behind the cage occasionally guiding the rhinoceros to make it move on.

Early next morning we left the forest for the Sungai Betting river, which we reached late in the evening. A couple of days were spent here getting a large size "Sampan" (Malay boat) up the narrow stream. A wooden contrivance, in the meantime, was built for loading the animal into the boat. Early on the third day the cage was loaded into the boat and we started for Lumni, which was reached on the second day.

Altogether 10 days were taken from the time the animal was captured to the time it was brought safely into Lumni.

Luckily there was a steamer leaving for Penang on the afternoon of the day of our arrival at Lumni and the rhinoceros was put on board, one of the trappers accompanying it. On the return of the Malay I learnt that the rhinoceros was sold to a Muhammadan merchant for the paltry sum of 200 dollars. Three weeks afterwards when on a visit to Penang I learnt that this merchant had sold it to another merchant in Singapore for 500 dollars, who bought it for the purpose of selling it to the Madras People's Park.

Being interested in the welfare of this rhinoceros I made further enquiries and found out that it had been exported from Singapore to Madras and sold for Rs. 1,500. I am not in a position to vouch for the above statement, but this is all I could gather as to the disposal of the animal; any way, it was not in Singapore when enquiries were made by me.

THE TOUCHSTONE OF INDIAN POLICY.

DR. RUTHERFORD, M.P., AT GLASGOW.

A large audience was drawn to the Palace Theatre, Glasgow, on the afternoon of Sunday last (September 8) to hear an address from Dr. V. H. Rutherford, M.P., on "The Unrest of India and its Remedy." Councillor William Primrose presided.

Dr. Rutherford, whose remarks were received with close attention and evident approval, said he was glad that they had invited him that afternoon to speak to them on the subject of India. In Parliament Indian questions were only discussed once a year, and it seemed to be the aim of the officials who controlled the Secretary of State for India to see to it that the House of Commons knew as little as possible of what was going on in India; while in the country, at large the general ignorance regarding India could only be described as colossal. And yet what subject of more vital or more pressing importance could be named for the consideration of Englishmen? No one, he imagined, had any longer any doubt as to the existence of a real and growing state of unrest in India, and it was idle to suppose that a policy of suppression could cure that unrest, for it was due to a variety of causes, social, economic, and political, which no wise or conscientious man could afford to ignore. India should be bound to England by love and not by fear, than which no more contemptible means could be sought for the association with a great Imperial race of any set of people in the world. But as a matter of fact they were always being told that the teeming millions of India were held by the sword and not by the heart. Was there not herein a wrong premise at the very start?

Much was made of the racial and religious antipathies which divided India against herself. But he did not think there was really any antagonism between the various peoples who inhabited India. The antagonism lay between rulers and ruled, and it seemed to be part of our policy to imagine that this antagonism could be lessened by pitting class against class and creed against creed in India. This was, he feared the fundamental defect which underlay the schemes of so-called reform to which Mr. Morley had been committed by the Government of India; and it was much to be regretted, in his view, that a Liberal statesman should have sanctioned such proposals. He was sometimes asked, would the English lose India and how? He could only suggest that we should not lose it to Russia. Russia had her own business cut out for her. The answer was that we should lose India to India and the Indians. It was only a question of time, and it was for Englishmen to decide whether the change was to be brought about by the sword or by the magnanimity or intelligence of this country. He hoped it would be the latter and that we would never drive the Indians to this struggle, where the sacrifice of life on both sides would be tremendous. We should make the country a self-governing part of the Empire, and then we should hold it in the best and truest way. Numerous causes were responsible for the unrest. Plague, famine, and poverty were among the chief, and deplorable causes they were, too. In six months the death rate from plague was 632,953, and since the plague broke out over 5,000,000 people had died. Then, as to poverty, it behoved them never to forget that India was the supremely poor country of the world. The poverty was not only grinding but chronic. The annual income of the people in Canada was £48 per head per annum, in the United Kingdom £12, while in India it was £2. The struggle for existence among these uncomplaining millions was beyond their imagination. In the train of poverty naturally came famine. There was no lack of food; as was shown by the amount imported to other countries. The people simply had no money to purchase food. He did not say the people blamed the Government for the famine, but it helped, all the same, to cause unrest. Overtaxation and the land problem added to the unrest, and while large sums of money were spent on the military and railways, sufficient money was not spent on education, and he was informed that some thing like four villages out of five were without the first elements of elementary schools. Then, again, all professions, with the exception of that of the law, were prohibited the Indian, and as a soldier he could not rise beyond the common rank because they were not trusted by those in authority. The enduring foundation of the unrest, however, was the very spirit of nationality which we ourselves believed in, and which our forefathers sacrificed their lives for. We admired and loved patriotism, and we must admire and love it in the Indians, and not seek to crush it and brand it as "sedition." It should never be forgotten that God made the nations and men made the Empires. The permanent root of the unrest was a great patriotic movement. Britain had been the very instrument to put this spirit into them, and we should rejoice in it rather than be afraid of it. The only remedy for India and other countries similarly situated was self-government. As Mr. Gladstone had said and nobly said, "Liberty alone fits for liberty." (Applause.)

The depression in the south of the Bay was on Monday reported to be "somewhat more pronounced." The next 24 hours should indicate whether it is likely to develop into a proper cyclone, giving the much-needed rain in places inland, now suffering from drought.

A Prehistoric Mammoth.—We are getting it by degrees, Professor C. W. Gilmore, of the Geological Department of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, accompanied by some brother scientists, has discovered in Central Alaska, a mammoth which is said to be 75 feet long and between 40 and 50 feet high. A matter of ten feet or so in height makes no very great difference. The creature was found embedded in ice, and was in a perfect state of preservation, and "presented a life-like appearance."

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