

# TENT LIFE IN TIGERLAND.

BEING

SPORTING REMINISCENCES OF A PIONEER PLANTER  
IN AN INDIAN FRONTIER DISTRICT

BY

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## PREFATORY.

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WHEN I wrote "Sport and Work on the Nepaul Frontier," I closed it with these words: "If this volume meets the approbation of the public, I may be tempted to draw further on a well-stocked memory, and gossip afresh on Indian life, Indian experiences, and Indian sport," &c. The book was undoubtedly well received. A cheap edition of many thousand copies was struck off by the "Franklin Square Press" in America, and was widely read in the United States; and in Australia regrets have been frequently expressed that the original edition had been exhausted. I am therefore to some extent justified in believing that my Indian gossip has fairly met with the approbation of a large section of the reading public. Hence in the present work I simply resume the thread of my sporting recollections. I have chosen my own way of telling my story and arranging my incidents, so as to add fresh interest, and enlist the attention and the goodwill of my readers as far as possible, and I hope I may have been fairly successful in doing this.

JAMES INGLIS.

SYDNEY, N.S.W.,  
1888.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## A JUNGLE TRAGEDY.

Varieties of winged game—News of a “big beat”—Get to camp—The marshes country—“Hunter’s pot”—Charge of a wounded bull buffalo—A terrible impalement—On the track—Difficult country—Slow and dangerous tracking—Indications of our quarry—An unsuccessful day—A bad night—News with the dawn—Resume our quest—Horrible signs—Sickening gusts—A ghastly sight—Close of the tragedy—The funeral pyre.

IN the middle of December, 1874, I was down at Burgammah superintending the packing of my indigo cakes, having already finished my own packing at the head factory; and as, unfortunately, the season had not been a very profitable one, and my assistant, Tom Hill, was on the spot, although suffering from fever and ague, poor fellow, my work was certainly not very onerous. I had, as may easily be imagined, plenty of spare time on my hands. There was splendid shooting in the neighbourhood, and I was not slow to take advantage of it. Some mornings I would go for a spin with my bobbery pack over the hard turfy uplands to the south of the factory, and kill a jackal or two, or possibly have a good course after a hare; and as my *syce* or other attendants would generally be waiting at some predetermined spot with my gun, I would there dismount and shoot back to Burgammah, calling at various little *jheels*, *i.e.* small lagoons, on my way; or beating up sundry patches of thatching grass intervening; and could always be certain of making a heavy, though certainly a motley, bag.



Hares were numerous, quail were abundant, wild duck, mallard, widgeon, teal, red-heads, blue fowl, painted snipe, jack snipe, and ordinary snipe, to say nothing of wading birds of various kinds, and other varieties such as the golden plover, the tiny ortolan, ground pigeon—green pigeon occasionally—and the beautiful florican, with its graceful plumes, might any day be met with in a single beat.

And down by the river the varieties of small game were equally abundant.

I especially remember one day, having made some good shooting, coming into the factory with some half-dozen coolies laden with game of all kinds.

It happened to be one of Hill's good days, and he had met me in high spirits near the cake house, waving what seemed to be a letter excitedly over his head.

I found it to be a summons from my friend Joe to come down at once, as he was getting up a big *hank*—*i.e.* a drive—after big game, and stating that tiger and buffalo were both plentiful, and asking me to get as many elephants as I could, and to send down one of my tents and some stores. As our packing was just finished, we determined to enjoy a week's outing; and accordingly the next day, having in the meantime made every arrangement to carry out Joe's wishes, we dropped down the river in one of the factory boats, and arrived at night-fall in the vicinity of the camp.

We slept on board that night, to give time for our elephants and camp equipage to get down and to be in readiness, and next day rode for some three or four miles to where Joe had pitched his camp, south of Dumdaha village, and in the vicinity of a long chain of lagoons and marshes, which had been in former years a famous hunting-ground, and had been notable as a favourite haunt for the now very rare rhinoceros.

Between the marshes were high ridges of dense jungle grass and matted bamboo thickets. Wild boar and hog-deer



## CHAPTER XVII.

## "A DAY AT THE DUCKS."

Fresh sensations at every footstep—The endless procession to the water—Daybreak—The annual exodus begins—The Kutmullea *Pokra*—The first shot—What a commotion!—Tank shooting—A good bag for the pot—The river banks—River scenery—What variety of life!—Shoot an alligator—A miss—Entangled in a *Rahur Khet*—Hornets—A sudden and unwelcome *rencontre*—A lucky escape—In the Oude jungles—Abundance of big game—A quiet saunter through the forest—The coolies give news of *nil ghai*—Muster the coolies for a beat—Take up a good position—Jungle sights and sounds—Sound of the distant beaters—My first *nil ghai*—Sudden appearance of a bull rhino—A glorious prize indeed!—Measurement.

DUCKS like water!

I suppose no one will deny that self-evident proposition, and if you desire ducks, you will naturally look for water.

Now duck shooting, although not so exciting a sport as the pursuit of big game, is, for an off day's pastime, one of the most delightful exercises in which Indian sportsmen can indulge; and then the plenitude of the air and water is such, and the potentialities of a day on the river are such, that at every fresh footstep you may experience a new sensation, and in fact you never know from moment to moment what may happen.

For instance, in taking a short cut through the grass or growing crops, to circumvent a bend in the river, you may haply chance upon a solitary stag, a morose bachelor boar, or possibly a wary leopard, lying up during the heat of the day, and waiting till the "shades of night" enswathe the village



in their garments of mystery, when with stealthy foot and red tongue licking his cruel chops, he will prowl around the precincts of the hamlet, to see if haply he may not pounce upon a belated dog, some luckless calf, or, if the circumstances be favourable, perhaps carry off a “kid of the goats,” sheep of the fold, or possibly some luckless truant boy or girl or helpless babe—for he is not particular, and is quite willing to make a meal off any chance plump morsel that fortune may throw in his way.

Then, of course, there are such small deer as otter, porcupines, jackals, wolves, foxes, tiger-cats, florican, quail, plover, green-pigeon—in fact, a bewildering variety of winged creatures and four-footed beasts, from the great, heavy, lumbering *nil ghai*, down to the swift flights of tiny ortolans, flashing like diamond dust in the sunlight.

Beautiful as these little creatures certainly are, they are none the less savoury on that account, on toast, when nicely fried.

Possibly you do not know how to “do” ortolans? It would be no use to pluck them, they are too tiny. So you simply put two or three handfuls in a dipper, plunge them in scalding hot water, which brings off all the feathers, and in fact parboils them, and then you fry them in boiling butter or fat, serve on toast with a little red pepper and a dredging of bread-crumbs nicely browned, and you may just believe it, that in these same tiny little ortolans you have one of the most savoury dishes that not even the luxurious fancy of Apicius himself could have improved upon. In the thick jelly of “Hunter’s Pot” they are most toothsome, or in an aspic they are simply delicious. At one time or another during the day or night, almost every kind of indigenous game may be found near the river or tank or lake as the case may be. In the early morning the water is alive with a bobbing mass of duck, mallard, widgeon, teal, and other kinds of web-footed swimming creatures, pruning their feathers, flapping their



wings, scolding, wooing, conversing in their extraordinary quack-lingo, waking the echoes on every side, and making a scene of such unlimited noise and motion as can only be witnessed to perfection in these great haunts of water-fowl life that abound in the *chours* and rivers of India.

Thus all day long the wading birds, numberless in their variety, run up and down the sand banks, parade in lines through the oozy marshes and humid hollows—stirring up with their busy beaks the retiring denizens of the ooze and slime upon which they prey; and 'neath the shade of the high banks, beasts of prey retire for their midday siesta; the stately elephant and truculent rhinoceros come down to slake their thirst when the broad afternoon shades are widening; and when the shadows of night begin to fall, singly and in twos and threes come the fierce beasts of prey; and then in troops the stately deer and graceful antelope advance, and the long lines of thirsty kine and ponderous buffalo deploy; while during all the livelong night the melancholy cry of the curlew or the monotonous dialogue of the Brahminee duck, give endless evidence that the teeming life of the Indian water-side is still awake and ever represented.

Let me try to give the reader an idea of a day amongst the ducks and water-fowl.

It is still grey dawn.

The long, slender, whip-like shafts of the swaying bamboos gently rustle 'neath the first faint breath of awakening morn, or, shivering through the dank mists that are now rallying their reserves of grey battalions, as if to present a last front of desperate but hopeless battle to the onslaught of yonder quivering shafts of light, that begin to shoot forth tremulously yet strong from the "chambers of the East," where the mighty sun is shaking his tawny locks and rousing himself "like a strong man to run his race." You have long been up, for in India we retire early, and are up before the dawn.



old sow in a thick, matted tangle of *rahur* stalks. It might very easily be a matter of life and death.

Fortunately I was able to bring my carbine to shoulder, and before the brute could charge us, I planted a bullet fair in her chest and toppled her over.

But I can honestly say that in all my after experience with wild boar, leopard, tiger, buffalo, rhinoceros, and other big game, I never was in such a mortal funk as for the first two or three eventful seconds after hearing that ominous and startling *hoo hoo* in the *rahur* field. This settled our duck shooting for the day, and we were right glad to get back scatheless to the factory.

I remember another day of quite as varied incident on the *Kutna Nuddee*, when I had gone up many years after to *Oude* to take over charge of the forest grants, which I shall refer to presently at greater length.

On the *Kutna* one could encounter quite as great a variety of water-fowl as on either the *Baugmuttee* or the *Gunduck*.

But with this added excellence, that the primeval jungles stretched all around for leagues, and big game might be come upon at any moment.

For example, in one day, while out after pea-fowl ostensibly, I have come across half-a-dozen different kinds of deer, leopards, wild pig, wolves, wild buffaloes, and even a lordly tiger himself.

On the particular occasion to which I allude, I was sauntering slowly along the river bank, trying to shoot a *muggur*, which haunted a sluggish pool near where the coolies were clearing the jungle. This particular brute was reputed to be a man-eater, and while gingerly treading the narrow forest track, two or three of my men came up in a state of great excitement, to tell me that three *nil ghai* had gone into the forest a little distance ahead, and they earnestly entreated me to allow them to have a *hank*, as they were very desirous of having roast venison for their Sunday dinner.



This was on a Saturday afternoon.

Nothing loth, I sent them back to call all the coolies off their work, and making them take a wide *détour* so as to drive the game towards me, I posted myself on a small eminence jutting out into the stream, having a piece of boggy ground between me and the jungle in front, and of course being surrounded by the sinuosity of the water-course on all the other sides.

It was a capital position to take up, for it gave me command of all the slope trending towards the river, while at the same time any game being driven in my direction must of necessity pass across the marshy piece of ground to get to the river, and while floundering about in the bog, I could not fail to have ample opportunity of making a good shot.

I had not long to wait.

But in these sylvan haunts, one need never feel a trace of *ennui*, as there is little monotony in an Indian jungle.

In the river, sluggish and muddy as was its current, various kinds of water-fowl steal silently in and out among the sedges, while a lazy *raho* would ever and anon poke his ugly blunt snout above the surface and lazily absorb an unconscious fly.

Small turtle here and there might be seen basking on a half-submerged and rotting log.

A dainty little squirrel, with tail elevated over his prettily barred back, would run up and down frisking and playing with his mate; and darting through among the trees might be seen whole troops of gleaming noisy parrots and other gay plumaged birds, while if you could not see, you could still hear the muffled drum of some strutting pea-fowl as he swelled himself in all the pride of his glorious plumage, and made himself an object of wonder and admiration to his timorous harem of pea-hens in the leafy covert beyond the river.

There is never much sound in these jungles during the day.



But to the keen observer, who has been trained to scan the jungle with an eye that lets nothing escape it, every little knot of bushes, nay, every clump of grass, gives evidence of life.

The deep, monotonous boom of the great croaking swamp frogs breaks in ever and anon upon the current of your reflections; the arrowy flight of the iridescent kingfisher, as she shoots from aloft and cleaves the water with her wedgy beak, and then emerges triumphant with a wriggling tiny fish in her bill, sometimes startles you.

A snake or two may stealthily slide across the half-worn track made by the deer through the grass as they come to the salt-lick near the margin of the water night after night.

A lizard or a great wriggling iguana, shooting out his quivering fork-like tongue, may catch your eye for a minute, as he warily puts a tree-bole between him and yourself, and peers around at you as if wondering what in the world has brought this curious-looking two-legged thing within the circuit of his vision.

High overhead, in the still tremulous atmosphere, you see the great silent sweep of the ever-watchful vultures, circling round and round in never ceasing flight.

A tiny *chikara*, or four-horned antelope, the most delicate looking of the deer tribe, peeps out gingerly for a moment from behind that *Jhamun* bush, and then catching sight of your glinting gun-barrel, he is off with a bound, like a grasshopper.

The ugly grey muzzle of a plethoric jackal is protruded for a moment behind yonder log, and then again withdrawn, and you feel conscious that all around, numerous eyes of bird and beast and reptile are peering at you through the leafy screen, and you know not but that some hungry beast is gloating greedily with looks of fear yet hate upon his natural enemy—man.



Now you hear the distant sound of the shouting beaters, and see! on the slope beyond, a hurrying, agitated, wavy motion in the dense undergrowth, the sharp crack of dry sticks being snapt by a heavy tread, and above the leafy bushes just for a moment you see the antlered outline of a noble stag as he plunges through the jungle.

He seeks the ford below, and after him in swift and stately procession troop the graceful hinds that constitute his following.

After a pause, you hear above the distant shouting another lumbering onward rush, and right through the bosky dell, scorning concealment, blundering blindly on to his fate, a heavy, awkward *nil ghai* comes floundering on, ploughing right through the marshy, treacherous ground in front, and as he tops the bank within twenty feet of you, he receives your bullet full in the chest; the warm gouts of spouting blood quickly follow the wound, and he topples over with a last desperate quivering kick.

And so falls your first *nil ghai*.

It was rather sorry work.

The poor brute, although belonging to the antelope family, has little of the elegance or grace of that *genera*.

The flesh is coarse and rank, and as the poor beast shows little fight and is not easily missed, there is very little excitement in the sport.

I was just about to saunter leisurely from my concealment to have a good look at the animal, for this was the first *nil ghai* I had ever shot, when a roar of augmented intensity from the beaters, with shrieks and hoarse cries of “Ghenra! Ghenra!” were heard, and the heavy crashing, as if of a ponderous body in front, apprised me that nobler and more dangerous game was afoot.

Well was it for me that I had chosen the position I had.

I had risen from my seat and was standing full in view,



having, of course, re-loaded, when right in front of me—not thirty yards away, but on the other side of the boggy ground I have referred to—forth from the jungle, in headlong, desperate flight, came a magnificent full-grown bull rhinoceros.

“Ugh! what an ugly exterior,” I mentally exclaimed. “Here’s a pickle if I happen to miss.” My heart, I must confess, gave a desperate beat.

There was little time for reflection. It was evident the angry brute had seen me, and with a hoarse, choking grunt of wrath and defiance he came plunging straight for me, rushing right into the morass.

He plunged in up to the shoulders, and luckily for me there he floundered.

Now was my opportunity!

Hastily running down towards him, taking half-a-dozen paces to the right, to get him more broadside on, I let him have a bullet right behind the thick fold of his meshy skin that hung over his ponderous shoulders, and the deep sob, or grunt rather, of pain, found a triumphant echo in mine heart as it told me that the bullet had gone home.

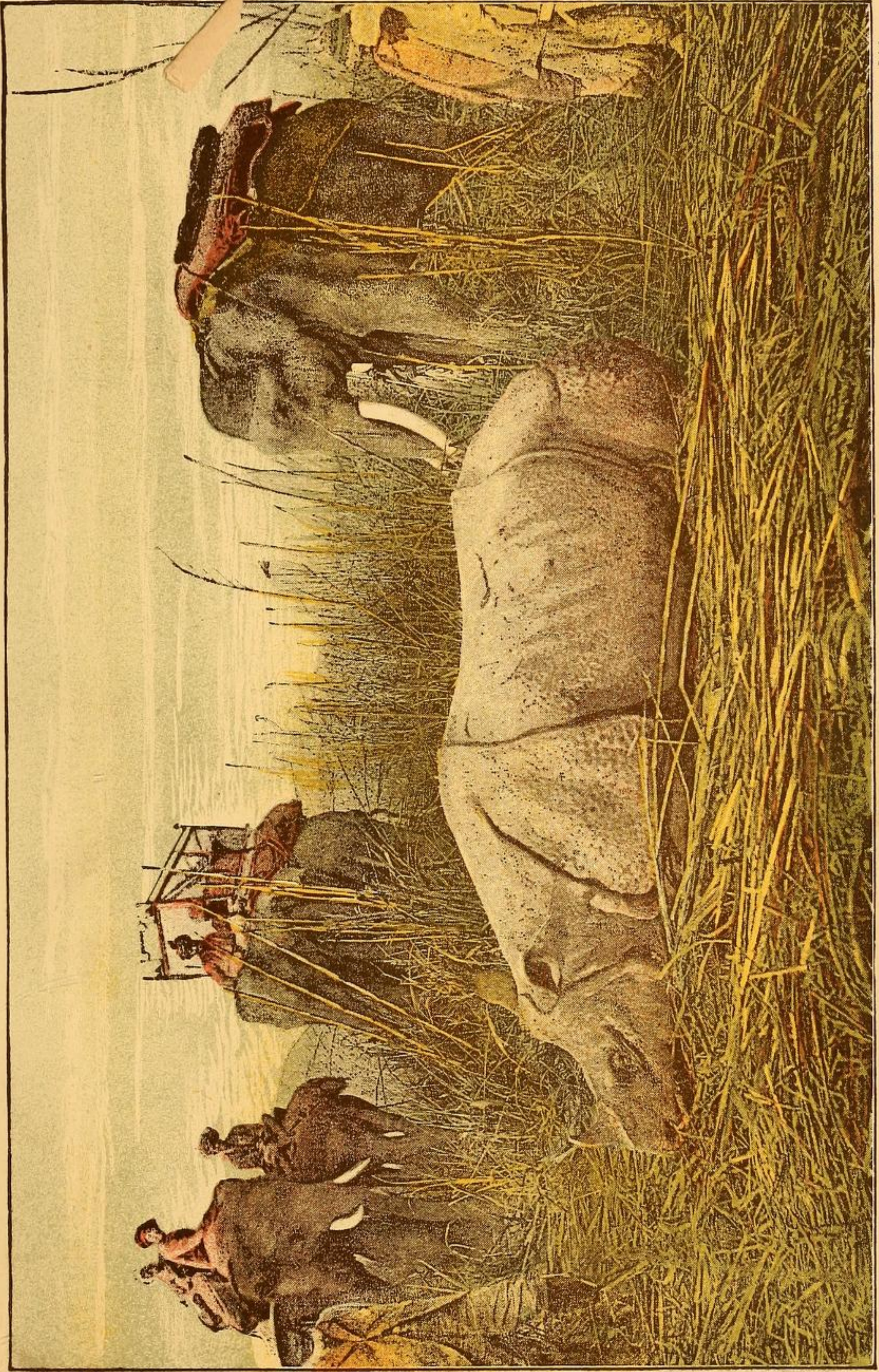
I let drive again with the second barrel, taking him right behind the ear, and with a yell of triumph which I could not repress, I saw the mighty brute sway to and fro, heaving his ponderous body as one may see a giant of the forest swayed by a rushing wind, and then with a hoarse groan he lurched forward, struggled again through the tenacious clinging mud, and then crashed heavily over almost at my feet. What a glorious prize!

This was indeed a piece of luck.

Presently up came the eager, panting beaters, and you may imagine the scene that followed.

The horn was a very fine one, being nine and a half inches from the apex to the base in front.





Vincent Brooks, Day & Son. Lith.

Bull rhinoceros. A glorious prize.



The length of the body from snout to end of tail was eleven feet one inch.

The girth, eleven feet, five and one-half inches.

Girth of fore-arm, three feet one-half inch; and from toe to shoulder, the height was five feet nine and one-half inches.



savage aggression and brute force with the superior cunning which is the heritage of reason. Among all savage tribes, therefore, we find the most ingenious stratagems are resorted to and the most clever contrivances brought into play to secure the spoils of the chase, judging, of course, from the native standpoint.

In the Doddpore jungles, I met with numerous illustrations of this. One of the most common and not the least dangerous of these was the one I am about to describe.

To trap deer, wild hog, or even more dangerous game, the rude forest dwellers adopted the following plan:—

They would usually select a forest path near the edge of the jungle—one of those leading to the cultivated lands in the vicinity, and one most likely from evidences which they are keen to detect, to be most frequented by the animals they wish to kill. In this path, then, they, with much care and skilful contrivance, dig a deep, narrow, well-like pit. These pits are commonly made rather broader at the bottom than at the top; and so far as form is concerned, they present somewhat the appearance of a great sunken lamp chimney. To make the trap more deadly, a single stake, or even a couple of hardwood stakes, with the protruding points hardened by fire, are planted upright in the bottom of the pit.

Over the opening, slight branches or twigs are then cunningly woven, to give an admirable simulation of the natural appearance of an ordinary jungle path; and the whole surrounding area is strewn with a loose layer of leaves, withered grass, and other rubbish natural to the environment.

If the pitfall is meant for tiger or leopard, a decoy goat or calf may be tethered in the vicinity, in such a way as to tempt the unwary depredator along the path and over the dangerous spot. In Assam and some other districts, even elephants and rhinoceros are not unfrequently entrapped and destroyed in such pits.