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**A LUCKY SHOT AT RHINOCEROS  
IN THE SOONDERBUNDS.**

BY W.

DEAR SIR,—I bagged my first Rhino the other day. I was going along in a big boat, down one of the Soonderbund rivers, when my shikari, who had gone on ahead to look out for game, sent back the dinghy with khubber that a Rhinoceros was feeding on the bank, and to come sharp. The news caused the usual "golmal" that does occur under such circumstances; all my people seemed off their heads; the cartridges specially loaded for Rhino were not forthcoming, and were at last found mixed up with cartridges for small game, and so on. With some trouble I managed to get together a dozen cartridges of the right sort, and had them handed into the boat with the guns, and down I stepped; but, as ill luck would have it, the platform in the boat was only made of loose bamboos, and gave way as I stepped: and the whole of my precious cartridges, except four, fell into the water at the bottom of the boat. With many a curse I pushed off for the shore. Then began a tremendous chattering amongst the men on the boat: this had to be suppressed by language rather stronger than is in ordinary use, and the row was stopped before I reached the place where I was to land. As the boat touched the bank, and just as I was going to get out, a youngster, whom my shikari is teaching wood craft, called out "oi jee gandal" (there is the Rhinoceros). I looked in the direction he pointed, and about twenty yards off made out part of a huge body in the thick jungle,

and immediately after the head of a Rhinoceros appeared over some bushes. I had been told by M., a well known Soonderbund sportsman, never to fire at a Rhino's head, as it was waste of time, and native shikaries have frequently told me the same thing, but in this instance I could not get a shot behind the shoulder or ear, the only two places on a Rhinoceros that shikaries consider fatal. I saw that if I did not run the risk of a shot at the side of the head I should probably get no shot at all, as the Rhino would certainly wind us and bolt. I aimed below the ear, between the root of the ear and the eye, and fired, and was not a little pleased to see the Rhino drop. A second shot went through the front part of the skull low down and smashed the jaw. I then let two natives in the bank blaze away with their guns, but their lead bullets made no impression whatever, and I finished the Rhino with another hardened bullet. My shikari, who had during this time been inside the jungle, watching a male Rhinoceros, came out in a devil of a rage to know what all this firing was about, and was a good deal astonished to find a Rhino dead; he had only seen one, the male, and did not know that there was a female too. I had shot the female thinking it was the one he had sent me khubber of. He told me that when the first shot was fired the male, which had only a small horn, had not moved; the second shot had made him go off about twenty yards, and the third and other shots had driven him away. As the male went off, the shikari saw a three parts grown butcha go away in another direction. We had to go back to the big boat for more ammunition, and much time was lost. We came back and followed up the tracks of the male for a mile, through thick Soonderi jungle, but did not come on him; the shots had probably driven him off a long way. It was getting late, and as wandering about in the evening in the Soonderbund jungles, which here swarm with man-eating tigers, is extremely risky, we returned to the boat. The next morning all hands were set to work to skin the Rhino, which was full grown, and a much larger beast than I had expected to find in the Soonderbunds. The skinning took the men the greater part of the day, till the afternoon ebb tide, when I had to go on. The shikari thought it would be no use to try and track the male, as the shots had probably driven him away to a long distance. Whilst the men were skinning the Rhino, a tiger roared for some time on the other bank of the river. I crossed over in the dinghy to try and get a shot, but he would not show himself, though he stopped roaring. The jungle was very thick, and going in after him on foot was not to be thought of; certainly not for an indifferent shot like

myself. I was glad to find my heavy rifle such a hard hitter, and also that a Rhino's head was not impenetrable to a hardened bullet driven by six drams of good powder. The bullets had gone into the skull as if it had been made of brown paper.

A few days after killing this Rhino my shikari took me to another place in the Soonderbunds, where he had khubber of two others, a male and a female. On arrival at the place we were dreadfully disappointed to hear from some wood cutters that two parties of native shikaries had come and killed both. One of these parties had bagged the male, and had cut him up and carried his flesh home in their boats. The other party had laid up for the female in the night, and had wounded her and been afraid to follow her into the jungle next day, and had gone away empty handed ; the Rhino's body had afterwards floated down the river in a putrid state. Natives are very fond of Rhino's flesh, and both Hindoos of good caste and Mahomedans may eat it. I had the tongue of the one I shot salted, and found it very good.

You would be startled to see the charges natives put in their rusty old guns when they go out Rhinoceros shooting. One man, who had shot several, told me that he did not consider his gun properly loaded till the top of the ram rod stood up eight fingers above the muzzle of the gun. Their guns, of course, frequently burst.

I was out after Rhinoceros last year and a shikari laughed when he saw me only load with 6 drams of powder. He said a Rhino would not feel that. Natives have a notion that when a gun is properly loaded for Rhinoceros it should kick well, so as I had an old muzzle loading rifle, a fearful kicker, I put six drams of powder into each barrel and gave it to the man to try. The fool pulled both barrels at once, and nearly got his teeth shaken out with the twelve drams; as he was partially recovering his breath I asked him if he thought that would about do, and he gasped out that no Rhino could stand that. The loading of my guns now is never interfered with.

The shikari I had out this time is a very fine fellow : he has shot a good many Rhinos, Buffaloes, and Tigers, and always goes on foot. He is insulted if you say that you suppose he shoots the Tigers from a machan. It is well known that he never gets into a tree, and kills all his Tigers by following them on foot into the jungle. When I was out last year I sent him one morning to look for the tracks of Rhino and I was

sitting in my budgerow at about twelve o'clock, when I heard a shot close to the boat. I was very much annoyed, as I thought the shikari had fired at Rhinoceros, a thing I had particularly told him not to do, and I was still more enraged to hear two other shots. After a time the shikari came out of the jungle, and I asked what he had fired at. He told me, in the most unconcerned manner, as if he had shot a deer, that he had killed a tigress. I then noticed something wrong with his arm, and asked what had happened, and he told me that on his way back to the boat he had seen a tigress going away from him: he fired and broke her hind leg and she bolted. He and his companions ran after her and lost sight of her, when she suddenly charged out of a bush at him. He fired, and checked her sufficiently to take my heavy rifle from one of his companions, and as she sprang on him he fired into her neck, without having time to put the rifle to his shoulder, and she fell dead on him and sprained his wrist. His companion, who had bolted to a distance after handing him the rifle, confirmed his story, and the bullet marks on the body of the tigress showed that she must have been shot in the way described by him. I had to send him back to Hospital, as his arm swelled fearfully, and I was afraid he had seriously damaged it. My expedition that year was spoilt for want of a good man after he left: he was anxious to go on, but I would not let him. I have never seen his equal as a shikari. He is a first rate tracker, a good shot at short distances, and very plucky. He is a common Bengali Mussulman. His father was a shikari, and also killed a number of tigers on foot, but, dangerous sport as tiger shooting on foot is, he managed to live to a good old age, and died in his bed.

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