



ELEPHANTS EATING THEIR DESSERT OF SUGAR-CANE.  
From a photograph by Motaker & Co., Secunderabad.

## THE INTELLIGENCE OF ELEPHANTS.

WITH STORIES ILLUSTRATING THEIR UTILITY TO MAN.

BY COLONEL F. T. POLLAK.

OF all wild animals subjugated by man probably the most useful is the elephant. He learns marvelously, never forgets what he has learned, has great strength, and is wonderfully acute in his senses. When in good health, his whole skin is sensitive to the slightest touch, and the top of the proboscis has, probably, as keen a sensibility as the points of the human fingers. His eye, also, is keen, though the range of his vision is probably not very extensive. Indeed, sight is not the most useful sense in such places as those which elephants inhabit; and the senses of animals are, in general, adapted to the nature of their haunts. The sense of hearing is a much more serviceable one among tall vegetation than that of sight, and from the size of the elephant's ears and the freedom with which he can move them backwards and forwards, there is reason to conclude that in him this sense is very acute. His sense of smell, however, is the leading one, as it enables him to find what he seeks, and to avoid that which it is his instinct to shun. The trunk of the elephant is preëminently adapted for this purpose, as it is continuously supplied with nerves, and there is ample evidence that it is under the gui-

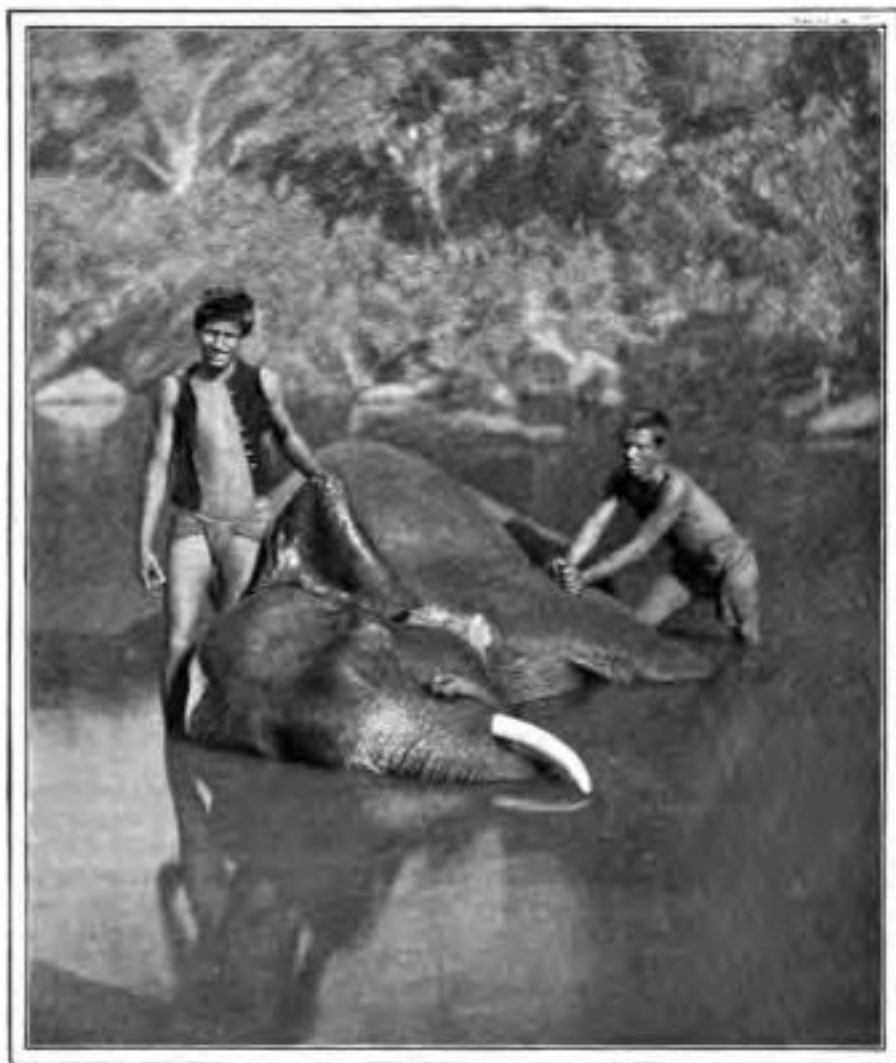
dance of his proboscis that he chooses or rejects those articles which are offered to him. It is impossible to approach a wild herd from the windward, as long before a hunter can get within shot from that quarter, they will either flee or charge. And not only the elephant's sensibility, but also his instinct, is remarkable, and he is capable of being taught almost anything.

The peculiar sagacity of elephants is especially exemplified in the use that is made of them in running down and ensnaring their kind. Many of the females are let loose in the forests, and decoy the males into stockades erected for that purpose. When the nights are dark and the places where the elephants feed are known to the hunters, they advance towards them with four trained female elephants; and when they have determined upon the particular elephant they mean to secure, three of the trained elephants are conducted silently and slowly by their drivers, at a moderate distance from each other, near the place where the male is feeding. Thence, unattended, they advance cautiously, feeding as they go, and are mistaken for wild ones. When the male perceives them, he takes a good scent

all round, and then approaches them. A female goes on each side of him, gradually closes up, and commences to caress him, and while he is occupied with these the third places herself crosswise close up behind him. Then, behind the third, a fourth is quietly brought up, laden with ropes and attendants,

class of trappers. Two or three club together, and if they catch three or four elephants in a season they think themselves lucky.

Running down and noosing elephants, of which I shall give some description further on, is very destructive to life. So many



THE DAILY BATH.

From a photograph by Spooner & Co., London.

who immediately get under the belly of the third and quickly tether the legs of the wild one, which is thus secured beyond the hope of escape. Now when we consider that the three first elephants act without any guide, it says a great deal for their sagacity and training that they are as unflinching in the business as they are. This mode of capturing elephants is adopted only by the poorer

captives die from the rope cutting deep into their necks that the Government has forbidden it; but it is carried on all the same extensively in the remoter forests. It also uses up many tame elephants before their time, from the exertions they undergo. I have my doubts, however, about elephants living up to 150 years and more, as is asserted by some writers. Yet it is well



FILING TEAK TIMBER, RANGOON.

known that elephants have been worked up to eighty years of age. When very old, it is said, elephants do not lie down often for the purpose of sleeping, and it has been also asserted that instances have been known of an elephant not having lain down for a whole year, merely sleeping a little off and on whilst standing. Wild ones sleep occasionally leaning up against the hole of a tree; but they far more frequently lie down, and an old friend of mine who had been searching for an old tusker at last came upon him from hearing him snore, and slew him as he lay. In camp I have seen elephants lying down asleep, using a foot as a sort of pillow.

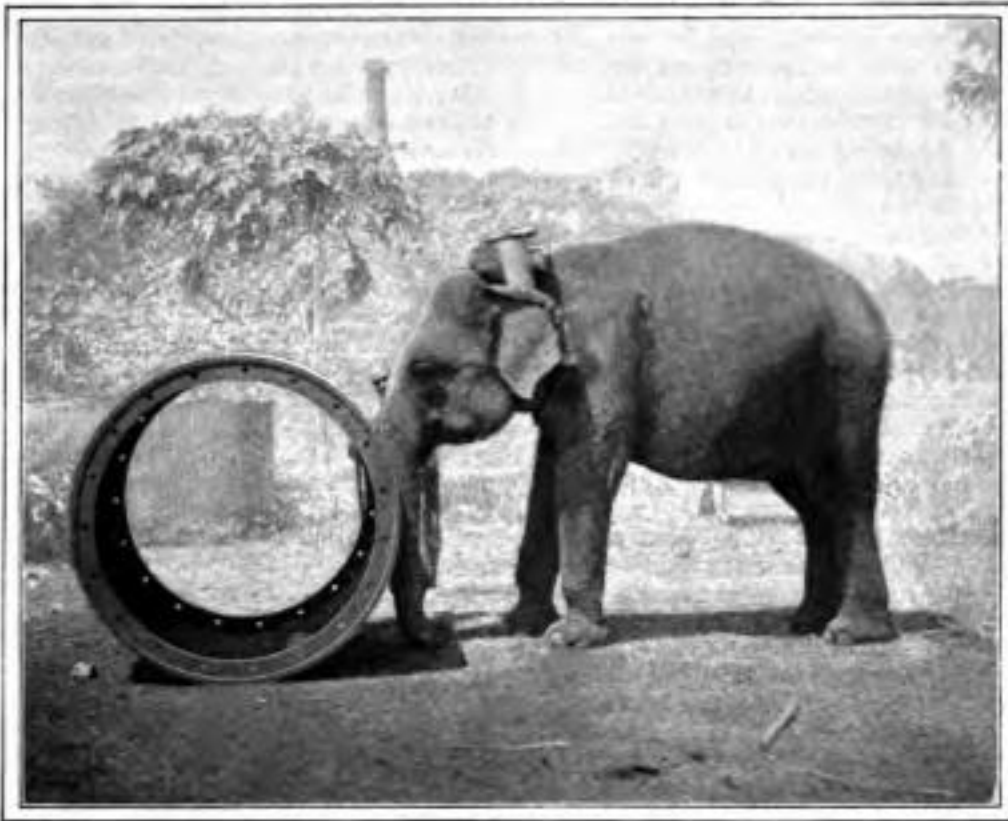
Elephants are indispensable for moving heavy batteries of artillery in India. Their tractable nature renders them invaluable animals for such purposes. But when the guns are brought into action, the elephants are replaced by bullocks, as the latter are not subject to panic like the former. In the plains of India two elephants will drag a heavy gun along at the rate of about three and a half miles an hour. Each battery consists of six guns—four forty pounders and two 6.3-inch howitzers. There are twelve

elephants to each battery, two to each gun or howitzer. There is a jemadar, twelve mahouts, and twelve grass-cutters to look after the elephants.

We are accustomed from time immemorial to associate the horse with the pomp and circumstance of war; but the elephant—though a non-combatant is not a whit behind the horse in intelligence, and there appears to be very little for which he is not adapted. For the transport of siege trains one cannot imagine a more valuable animal. The gentle ox is also of great value, especially under fire, but it takes a great many of him to equal one elephant.

The following is a description by the late Colonel Walter Campbell of the use an elephant is put to on a march. He is not alluding to those employed in dragging siege guns, but to those told off to assist gunners in moving their guns through a country rendered heavy by its boggy nature or owing to recent rains:

"It is interesting on the line of march to mark the extraordinary sagacity displayed by elephants attached to each battery in helping them out of the numerous difficulties



ROLLING AN IRON CYLINDER.

they encounter. The elephants employed for this purpose have their foreheads covered by a strong leathern shield to protect them from injury when pushing against the guns. Whenever a gun comes to grief by sticking in a quagmire, one of these sagacious brutes is brought up to assist it out of the difficulty. With the important air of an experienced engineer he marches up and deliberately examines the state of affairs. Twisting his trunk round the spoke of one wheel, he gives it a lift, as if to ascertain the depth and tenacity of the mud, and then quietly walks round and does the same by the other wheel, dropping it again with a knowing twinkle of the eye, as if he said to himself, 'All right, I can start her, I think.' Then he deliberates for some minutes, giving a slight push here and a slight pull there, when, having at last made up his mind as to the best mode of proceeding, he probably applies his forehead to the muzzle of the gun, and uttering a shrill trumpet-like sound, as a signal for the gun bullocks to pull together, pushes against it with his massive weight, which, if the bullocks obey the signal, is generally sufficient to start the gun.

But sometimes when bullocks are over-driven or sulky, they refuse to obey the signal. It is then amusing to witness the indignation of the elephant. I have seen him spring up with a scream of rage, and brandishing his trunk, rush at the team of bullocks as if to take summary vengeance on them or their driver; and this threat generally produces the desired effect."

The forests whence timber is procured are often at considerable distances from water carriage, and but for these useful slaves the logs could not be dragged to the water's edge. Thus many elephants are employed during the cold weather in transporting teak timber, which had been felled the year previous and cut up into suitable lengths, to where it can be formed into rafts. Not only do they drag the pieces, but help in arranging them alongside one another in the water, and so to form them into rafts. I do not know what the huge timber yards in Rangoon and Moulmein would do without these trained animals. I spent some years in Rangoon as a sapper and engineer officer, and really the human way in which an elephant will test the weight and balance of a log before lifting it

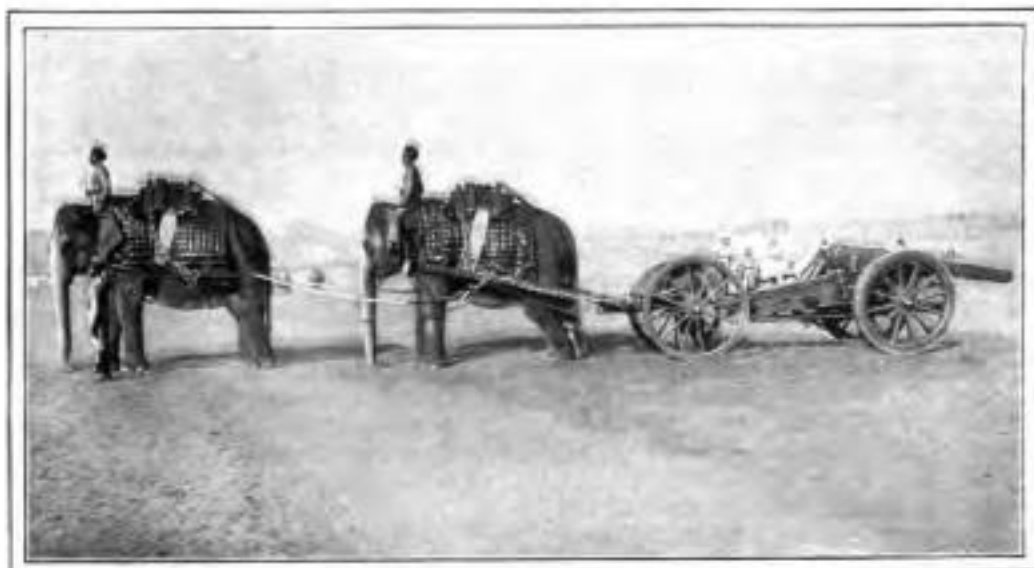
possible, with one leg advanced and her whole weight thrown to the side opposite to the captive. But even then we were dragged some distance, until, finding himself choking, the youngster had to halt. The second noose was then thrown, and the captive made sure. Now came the dangerous task of loosening the slip-knot by means of a rope attached to the knot for that purpose, and replacing it with stout ropes round the throat of the victim. But these men are so expert from constant practice that an accident very seldom occurs. Two or three tame elephants now close up and lavish attentions on the half-strangled stranger; the assistants slip off, and tether the hind and front legs in a moment. Often it is a very difficult task to loosen the slip-knot, as it frequently cuts deep into the flesh, and many elephants die after capture of mortification of their wounds.

Directly an elephant finds himself caught he resigns himself to his fate, and goes quietly to the place fixed for a temporary or permanent camp, and is there broken in and made fit for work in six months. Mr. Nuttall, who for thirty years was superintendent of government *keddaks*, said he had used an elephant for tiger hunting two months after its capture, and was chasing wild ones off the back of another three months after; but such instances are very unusual, of course.

When a wild elephant is very obstreperous and unusually strong, the noose-rope is cut, and the elephant allowed to go free. Now and then, but very seldom, where a foolish attempt is made to capture an unusually large tusker, the *koonkie* is overthrown and the hunters killed. But the rich bankers who manage or finance these hunts, give strict orders that the hunters are not to capture large males, as so many die and it is money thrown away, and they heavily fine the catchers if they disobey these orders.

Wild elephants during the heat of the day retire to forests or to dense thickets, and show great ingenuity in choosing their place of siesta.

There are, in various parts of India, medium-sized ponds that in the middle of the hot weather contract. They are full of coarse fish. By stirring up the mud, the fish, to breathe, are forced to come to the surface, and this can best be done by sending in a lot of elephants and making them go up and down until the water is like pea soup. The greater part of the fish come gasping to the surface, and are caught in hand-nets, knocked on the head, or grasped by the hands of the men. It is not bad fun while it lasts. Some of the fish burrow their way into the muddy bottom, and there hibernate, as it were, until the rains recommence and the ponds are filled again.



HEAVY ELEPHANT BATTERY.

From a photograph by Mettaker & Co., Secunderabad.

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