THINGS MORTAL

by

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PRINCE OF WALES' VISIT TO NEPAL

Chapter XII

PLEASANT AS LIFE was in the peaceful valley of Katmandu, I personally was always pleased when the time came to descend to the plains again for our camps and shooting excursions during the Indian cold weather. Nepal borders on the south with the Indian provinces of the United Provinces and Behar, and here I made a number of friends among the planting community, and others, and used to travel about and shoot and play polo, pig-stick, etc. Behar was formerly the centre of the indigo industry, and before the invention of synthetic indigo this was a most flourishing business, and large fortunes were made from it. It was exploited in the first instance almost entirely by various English firms and individuals. Large tracts of land were leased, and the tenants subsidised to grow indigo which was manufactured on the spot. Some of these estates extended to 100,000 acres or over, and the planters lived in lordly style in fine bungalows, and hunted and shot over their properties like country landlords in England. But at the time when I first came to this part of the world, the prosperity of the old days had greatly declined, and although there was still good profit to be made from the ordinary agricultural produce of the land, it was nothing like what it had been in the palmy days of indigo.

Still, conditions of life were exceedingly pleasant, and the small scattered European community was regal in their hospitality. One of my friends had an empty bungalow on his estate, a few miles from the Nepal border, and this he kindly placed at my disposal, and I used it as my headquarters in the winter for several years. It was a charming little house, and the country all around provided excellent shooting, chiefly partridges, quail and so on, and there were

three or four small lakes where one was always sure of some wild fowl and snipe.

My closest friend was Mr. W. H. Irwin, who managed a very large estate close by. He had come out to India as a youth, and had spent his whole life in this district. The property belonged to the Miller brothers, the well-known polo-playing family, and in the prosperous days they and their friends used to come out to India for the cold weather, bringing with them a pack of hounds, and used to hunt, shoot and play polo, and entertain in great style. It was Colonel Charles Miller who about forty years ago started the Roehampton Club, which he still manages with the help of his charming and capable wife. Irwin and I had many jolly days together after partridge and snipe, and he in turn used to join my camps in Nepal, and bagged several good tigers.

The great feature of my winter tour, however, was the shooting camps in Nepal itself. The first tiger shoot I ever had there was as a guest of the Prime Minister, shortly after my first arrival, and the whole thing was arranged with real Oriental magnificence. There were about 130 elephants, and the process of "ringing" and shooting the tigers was carried out with extraordinary skill and care.

Sir Chandra was a perfect host, gracious and considerate always for the safety, comfort, and good sport of his guests. With him on this occasion were several of his sons (of whom he had eight), whom I met for the first time, and all of whom have remained my friends ever since. I need scarcely say we enjoyed very good sport.

In fact these jungle camps and the shooting were one of the great features of my life in Nepal during the years I spent there. Game of all kinds was plentiful, and I felt no remorse in shooting the tigers which preyed on the villager's herds, and sometimes on the villagers themselves. But apart from that, the mere fact of being out in these great forests was an unfailing source of delight. The Prime Minister was kind enough to allow me two shooting camps every year, one about Christmas time, and the other later on towards the end of March, when it was beginning to warm up a bit. We generally had forty or fifty elephants assigned to us, enough to make a good "ring" round a tiger in these dense jungles.

Our tents would be sent on ahead, and we might have to drive twenty or thirty miles along a rough cart track through the forest to arrive at our camp, and there we would settle in comfortably in our big Indian tents. Such things as tinned stores, tea, sugar, etc., we would bring with us, but our daily supplies came from the forest or the nearest village—eggs, milk, and game in plenty. The weather was perfect at this time of year, bright sunny days and cool (at Christmas time often actually cold) nights. A big camp fire of whole trees and heavy logs would be lighted in the centre of the camp, heaped up and blazing brightly in the evening, and left to smoulder during the day-time.

Each day brought its fresh interests and fresh excitement. Tigers were, of course, always the main attraction, and were the most coveted bag. In Nepal, owing to the extent and density of the forests, the only way to get at them is on elephant back. In places the grasses and reeds grow to sixteen to eighteen feet in height, and are over one's head, even when standing up in a howdah on an elephant. And there are thorny thickets which even an elephant or a rhino find it hard to penetrate. A man on foot is helpless.

The native hunters have brought their particular technique to a high state of perfection. At night young buffaloes are tied up round about the camp at likely spots as bait, and in the morning the hunters go round to see if any have been taken. The tiger when he kills drags the carcass into a thicket nearby, eats his fill, and sleeps close by till it is time for his evening meal. So the hunters can tell by the tracks approximately where he is. The elephants then make a big circle round this place, and approach gradually till they are in a close ring, perhaps 100 yards across, only a few feet apart. Then one or two big tuskers are sent into the ring to stir up the tiger. Nine times out of ten one will be found there, and sometimes two, or three, or more (I have known five), and as the tiger roars and charges at the ring the guns in their howdahs get their chance of shooting him—not so easy as it sounds on a restless elephant and in this thick jungle.

Then on the way home there are deer to be shot, and partridges and pea-fowl, and other small game for the pot.

And throughout, whether there is good sport or not, there is always the fact that one is wandering at large through the most exquisitely beautiful scenery, sometimes in open forest of tall "sal" trees, sometimes through tangled thickets, sometimes in open grassland by a river's bank. And at intervals in a clearing there comes a glimpse of the snows dim and ghostlike in the far distance to the north.

It was a great privilege to be allowed to have these camps, and the use of the State elephants and the chances of such wonderful shooting. Once I had shot a tiger or two myself I did not want any more, but I had the opportunity of inviting my friends, and naturally everyone likes to say that they have bagged a tiger while in India, and no one was ever disappointed. So I was able to return the hospitality of my planter friends, and of my hosts in Calcutta, and elsewhere.

Royal shoots are quite a tradition in Nepal. The first of these was the great shoot arranged by the famous Jung Bahadur for the late King Edward VII, when he was in India as Prince of Wales in 1876. This was held in the western part of Nepal, where an immense camp was prepared with no less than 400 elephants. Besides the usual tiger shooting the party indulged in the rather unusual sport of chasing a wild tusker elephant on horseback, and apparently had a thrilling time. And on one occasion they were attacked by a swarm of wild bees (one of the most dreaded dangers of the jungle), and in the book written by the famous *Times* Correspondent, W. H. Russell, about the tour, there is a sketch of the Prince wrapped up in rugs to ward off the bees, with the Duke of Sutherland's Piper, MacAllister, perched behind him in his howdah, while the elephant scuttles off as fast as he can across country.

Then in 1911, King George V, when he came to India as King Emperor, was also the guest of the Nepal State, during the premiership of Jung Bahadur's nephew, Sir Chandra. The camp was in the heart of the finest shooting preserve in central Nepal, and a very big bag was made, the King, who was a wonderful shot, both with gun and rifle, shooting no less than twenty-one tigers, besides rhinos, deer, and small game.

And in 1921 it was the turn of a Prince of the third

instantly sent in when a tiger had killed or a rhino had been marked down.

I had heard a good deal about the Prince before his arrival, and knowing his love for riding, and his rather restless disposition, I realised that he would not much care for sitting about on the back of an elephant all day, a form of amusement which certainly becomes tedious after a few hours, so I arranged beforehand that he would be able to get active exercise both before and after the regular jungle shooting—polo in the morning, and walking up small game in the evening. Just across the border, on the British side, there is an open piece of land near the railway station large enough for a polo ground, and with the help of the local Police Officer, Mr. McNamara, I arranged for a number of coolies, and had it cleaned up and goal-posts erected ; and at the same time McNamara looked into the possibilities for small game shooting in the neighbourhood.

Immediately after the Prince's arrival in camp he asked me to come into his tent to tell him what the programme was and how the shoots were conducted. As I expected, he did not at all like the idea of wandering about in the forest all day on an elephant, and he said that he particularly wanted to keep fit, as he was to play in some polo-matches at Calcutta and elsewhere as soon as the Nepal visit was over. When I told him that if he liked we could have a few " chukkas " of rather primitive polo in the morning before breakfast, he was delighted, and said that this would be just the very thing to keep him in training.

He then said that he must insist that in the tiger and other big game shooting everyone should be given an equal chance, and no favouritism shown to himself by always putting him in the best place, and so on. I replied that of course this would be done if he wished it, but that, as a gesture of courtesy to his hosts, who had taken so much trouble in preparing the camp, I thought he ought to be prepared to let us arrange for him to shoot at any rate the first tiger, after which he could do as he chose.

He agreed to this after a little demur, and as soon as the party had breakfasted we went out to where there was a kill, and the Prince duly got his tiger. After that all his staff and

the other guests were treated on equal terms with himself, and as a result everyone, without exception I think, got a good bag and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

From this on our day was a pretty strenuous one. The Prince, with Captain "Fruity" Metcalfe, and perhaps one or two others, would drive over to the polo-ground early in the morning before breakfast. There we would find McNamara and two or three of our planter friends with ponies, etc., all ready, and we would spend an hour or two in rough-and-ready polo, or just knocking a ball about for practice. It was extraordinary to see how keen the Prince was about any kind of horsemanship. Several of the ponies were only half-trained, but he often made a point of mounting some awkward country-bred, and handling it gently and carefully till he got it quieted down and used to stick and ball.

Then back to breakfast, and out into the forest after tiger or rhino or general shooting. I generally drove him on these trips out to our objective, ten or twenty or as much as thirty miles along the rough forest tracks, winding in and out between the trees and over the flimsy bridges across streams. I had an old American car which was better for this sort of thing than his English cars.

By lunch-time the main business of the day was generally over, and after a hasty meal of sandwiches or hard-boiled eggs (his lunch generally consisted of a couple of these latter) we would drive, or sometimes ride on horses provided by our hosts, back to camp, and again cross the border to the more open country, and spend an hour or two till sunset walking up partridges, snipe, quail, etc. And so back to camp in time for dinner.

It was on one of these little tramps that he was attacked by a venomous snake, a king-cobra (hamadryad), the only Indian snake which ever wantonly attacks human beings. He saw it rustling along through the brushwood just in front of him, and fired one barrel of his shotgun at it, whereupon it turned and charged at him, and he killed it with his second barrel a few yards from his feet. It was a big snake, ten feet five inches in length, and deadly poisonous. He was delighted with this adventure, and I may say that all of us were delighted, and thankful too, that his second shot had stopped the brute.

The poor coolies who were beating for us had not at first realised who he was, but when they were told that he was the Heir to the Throne, they were astounded. One evening after our shoot, just as we were leaving, they asked if they might say something to him. They came along in a group, these simple people, and their head-man said that as long as they lived they would never forget that they had had the honour of seeing the Heir to the Throne and working for him; and they added some remarks of a political nature which perhaps I had better not put on record. When all this was translated to him the Prince laughed, and said it was the nicest and most sincere thing he had had said to him since he had landed in India.

One morning as I was driving him along the forest-road to some rendezvous or other in the heart of the forest, he caught sight of a British soldier in uniform standing by the side of the track—a very unexpected sight in Nepal. "Hallo," he said, "There's a British soldier. What on earth is he doing here? Stop, and let me talk to him." So I pulled up the car, and the Prince called to the man to come up, and asked him who he was, and what he was doing in Nepal. The man explained that he was one of a company of Sappers and Miners who had been lent to the Nepalese Government to supervise the erection of the telegraph line through the jungle. The Prince chatted with him for a few minutes, asked him where he had served during the war, and so on, and we were just about to move on when the man saluted and said: "Would you mind shaking hands with me, Sir? I have a particular reason for asking it."

"Certainly," said the Prince, "of course I will shake hands with you with the greatest pleasure." And did so. "But," he added, "what's your particular reason?"

"Do you remember, Sir," said the Sapper, "when you were up in Hull some years ago, and shook hands with a lot of factory girls?"

"Yes, I remember it very well," said the Prince, "what about it?"

"Well," replied the man, "one of those girls was my sister, and ever since then she's been bragging about it, and telling me that she has shaken hands with the Prince of

Wales, and I haven't. So now, I am going to write to her and tell her I've done it too!"

Well, it is a simple little human story, and I have no doubt that there are thousands of such to be told of the encounters of the Duke of Windsor when he was Prince of Wales with men and women all over the Empire. He laughed as we drove along, and then his mood changed.

"You know, O'Connor," he said, "that I suppose that no Heir to the Throne had ever had the same chances as I have had of seeing men in the raw as I saw them in the trenches during the war. Sometimes," he added, "when I was in England, I used to go down to Victoria to see them going back to France after a few days at home. They knew very well what they were going back to, and that they were leaving the comforts and decencies of life behind them, and their families, and their sweethearts. I realised it too, for I had seen it, and knew what it meant, and I have often gone home," he said, "and cried like a child."

If ever there was an unaffected, natural human being, it was, and is he. He detested pomp and show, and especially ostentation of any kind. It was the "Things Mortal," and the tears in them, that touched his heart.

He was of extreme moderation both in eating and drinking. His obsession to keep himself fit made his diet almost Spartan. At dinner, after our strenuous days, he would relax like anyone else and drink a peg or two. After dinner in the big tent, carpeted with leopard-skins, the Nepalese (always the most thoughtful and considerate of hosts) had arranged that a couple of their own pipers, with the authentic Scotch bagpipes (the Ghurkas and the Scottish regiments have always been on particularly good terms, and the Nepalese pipers were regularly trained in Scottish regiments) should march in and parade round the table in the orthodox style. The Prince loved this, and followed them with his eyes as they strutted round. After dinner a big massed military band of Nepalese used to play in the centre of the camp under an arc light. This, too, intrigued him, and once or twice he edged his way into the circle, quietly removed the baton from the hand of the band-master, and conducted the music for a few minutes—to the

mingled scandal and amusement of his Nepalese hosts.

I soon found that he resented any attempt to dictate to him what should or should not be done in particular circumstances; but once or twice when I thought that a word of warning or advice (about local customs for instance) was indicated, he was immediately receptive and amenable.

The Prime Minister, with his family and staff, lived in a camp of their own a few hundred yards away, and did all that was possible for any hosts to do to make the Prince's visit a success. The Prime Minister was not in very good health at the time, and could not himself accompany the Prince on his shooting excursions, but every morning he would come into the camp to discuss the programme of the day, and again in the evening to hear the news of the day's sport. Other members of his family, especially his four eldest sons, Generals Mohun, Barber, Kaisar and Singha, and his brother the present Prime Minister, Sir Joodha, were in constant attendance on the Prince and his staff wherever they went. All the intricate arrangements worked without a hitch, and everyone had plenty of good shooting.

It was all, of course, only a brief interlude in the Prince's long tour, but I am sure it was an enjoyable one for him, and he carried away a very pleasant impression of the Nepalese and of their courtesy and hospitality.

Generally speaking, life for the British Envoy in Nepal is tranquil enough, and is occupied with matters of routine and occasional formal ceremonies. This visit was one of the outstanding events during my term of office there. Another was the negotiation and signature of a new treaty between my country and Nepal. As mentioned above, the old treaty of 1816 had regulated the relations between the two countries for over a century quite satisfactorily, but with the progress of time certain fresh aspects had arisen and required discussion and adjustment, and the Government of India instructed me to suggest to the Prime Minister the framing of a new treaty to meet modern conditions. His Highness agreed to this, and a draft was prepared for discussion. Certain technical details concerning customs duties, and so on, required expert handling, and it was the best part of two years before all the clauses were settled to the satisfaction of

both parties. But by December 1923, the draft had been approved by both Governments, and the signature of the new treaty took place with due ceremony in a large, pillared marble hall at Katmandu—the Prime Minister signing on behalf of Nepal, and myself on behalf of Great Britain. It was an interesting occasion, and set the seal on the friendly relations between the two countries.

It was termed in the preamble a "Treaty of Friendship," and began by making quite clear the independent position of Nepal, both in her external and internal affairs, which we undertook to acknowledge and respect. Another important clause was the one under which it is laid down that the two High Contracting Parties agree to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with other neighbouring States, and each to "exert its good offices as far as may be possible to remove such friction and misunderstanding"; the object of this clause being to facilitate efforts made by either party to avert hostilities in the event of any such danger arising with neighbouring States. As a matter of fact both countries had already in the past exercised influence of that kind. Sir Chandra had done his best to effect a friendly settlement between ourselves and the Tibetans in 1903; and the Indian Government had similarly intervened as a mutual friend when friction arose between Nepal and Tibet later. So the treaty merely placed formally on paper a principle which was already accepted by both parties.

The treaty was duly ratified by the Sovereigns of both countries, and an exchange of the ratified copies was made at a formal Durbar at Katmandu in April 1925, between the Prime Minister and myself—my last official duty before retirement on reaching the age limit a few months later.

As will be seen from this account of my thirty years service under the Indian Government, the whole of my time was spent either on or beyond the Indian frontiers, most of it in the independent countries beyond the frontier, Tibet, Persia, and Nepal. In this, I always think, I was very fortunate. Frontiers are always interesting, and it was quite a different matter serving in a diplomatic capacity (and as Consul in Persia my work was certainly more diplomatic than commercial) in foreign countries from the work of a Resident

in an Indian State. These States are, of course, part of the British Empire and feudatory to the British Crown. In the latter capacity a British representative acts as a friendly adviser to the Ruler of the State where he is accredited, but as a last resort there is always the possibility of pressure, and even compulsion, being applied, as has been necessary on various occasions when misgovernment has compelled the intervention of the Indian Government, and possibly a change of Ruler.

In an independent country the position is entirely different. One tries, naturally, to keep on good terms with the Government of the country and its local representatives, but there can be no question of dictation, and the only compulsion that can be applied is the threat or the actuality of war—just as in Tibet we were obliged to support our Mission with an armed force and eventually to fight with the Tibetans. But these are extreme measures which are not usually contemplated, and are not applied except as a last resort. The duty of a British Representative abroad, whether he is a Consul, or an Agent, or a Minister, or Ambassador, is to support the interests of his own country and of its subjects as best he can, and generally speaking the best way to do so is to cultivate friendly relations with the authorities and the people of the country concerned. In this I was fortunate, for once our treaty had been signed at Lhasa no difficulty or friction arose with the Tibetan authorities themselves, and it was a very real pleasure to live among them and to get to know them better, and to try to overcome any mutual prejudices. In Persia the people were always quite friendly as a whole. It was only the advent of the war and foreign intrigues which led to the unpleasant experience we had in Fars. And even then the Government of the country remained nominally neutral, and it was the undisciplined, petty chieftains in the south who were actively hostile and allowed themselves to be made catspaws by the German agents. Whilst in Nepal, as I hope I have made plain, the relations between our two countries were of the most friendly nature possible, and the British Representative was made to feel that he was an honoured guest.

Then the moment one crosses a frontier the whole horizon

widens, and one begins to take a share, however small, in international affairs. In Tibet we were constantly concerned with Chinese and Russian reactions to our policy and proceedings. In Persia, with Russia again, and also, before and during the war, with German and Turkish intrigues, and with Afghanistan on the eastern frontier. In Nepal other foreign countries and their policies were not so prominent, but even there questions sometimes arose regarding China and Tibet.

And one meets, too, the representatives of other foreign countries as well, of course, as the British diplomatists.

In fact one gets a much wider outlook than one does by serving only in India, and a more realistic view of world affairs—or at any rate, as in my case, of Asiatic affairs—which stands one in good stead for the rest of one's life.

I bade farewell to Nepal with real regret, but, as will appear in a later chapter, I have been fortunate enough to revisit the country several times since retirement, and to keep in touch with many of my old friends there.

TRAVELS

Chapter XIII

THE YEARS AFTER retirement from service abroad are often tedious and difficult to fill in. A man who has spent thirty odd years or so in work which is often exacting, and which has occupied his time and thoughts, finds himself suddenly thrown entirely on his own resources; and after so large a slice of his life spent out of England, it is all the more difficult to settle down in some quiet back-water in a country where most of the associations and friendships of his youth have long since been interrupted, and at a time of life when new roots are not so easily thrown out.

A married man with a family carries his own interests and associations with him, but a bachelor is deprived of this consolation. It is a common experience for many retired officials, civil or military.

Luckily for myself I have always had a good many hobbies—writing, reading, languages and music among them —and I have also been fortunate enough to be able to do quite a lot of travelling and to visit a number of new countries and places all over the world. In fact, I have done a great deal of globe-trotting since my retirement. I have been round the world twice, thrice to India, once to Australia and New Zealand, and twice to Hollywood. Not that there is any merit or distinction in making comfortable journeys in comfortable ships and trains, but it is always amusing and instructive to see new countries and to make new friends.

My three journeys to India were all made on invitations from my old friends in Nepal. To the deep regret of all who knew him, Sir Chandra, the Prime Minister who was in office during all my time there, and with whom I signed the new treaty as described in the last chapter, died in December 1929, and was succeeded in accordance with the family custom by his next brother, Sir Bhim Shumshere Jung. Sir Bhim

kindly invited me out on a visit, and provided me with a camp, elephants, etc. It was a real joy, after several years of the rather humdrum life in England, to find oneself in the jungle once again, with the lordly accompaniment of elephants and in the home of tigers and rhinos. Our camp was situated some thirty miles from the nearest railway station, right in the very heart of the best preserves and on the site occupied by King George's Camp, when he was there in 1911. It was a lovely setting on a knoll, overlooking a wide river, dense forest all round, and a great expanse of reeds and high grass on the opposite bank, where rhinos were actually wandering about within a few hundred yards of our camp. We had the usual excellent sport, paid a flying visit to Katmandu, and I returned home *via* the Far East, spending a week or two at Hawaii *en route*.

Following the advice of a friend I had met in India, I stayed at the Halekulani Hotel at Honolulu. It is situated right on the famous Waikiki beach, and the breakers wash its garden wall. The central block of the hotel is just a big wooden chalet, with wide verandahs and cool spacious rooms. In its grounds are a number of smaller chalets, each including three or four sets of apartments, and it was in one of these that I took up my abode in a grove of coco-nut trees. The whole place has a definitely Hawaian atmosphere, and seemed to me preferable to any modern monstrosity. Here I spent a fortnight, until the next Empress boat called, in great comfort and extreme languor. For this was the effect the place had on me. Never have I struck such a relaxing climate. Lotus-eating is nothing to it, and for the first ten days or so I was utterly unable to make the smallest effort either mental or physical. I am told that this is a common experience with newcomers, and passes off to a certain extent as one becomes acclimatised, and I certainly did feel a little less lethargic the last few days of my stay. But I cannot honestly believe that the people who live in Hawaii can ever suffer from an excess of energy—except, perhaps, when they dance the Hula in the moonlight!

This, however, did not prevent me from having a very pleasant time. I had a few introductions, and was taken to see all the regulation sights—drives across the island, and to