

MILESTONES OF MEMORY

A Plain Tale of Service, Sport and Travel
in the East and West

by

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ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

"HAEC MEMINISSE JUVABIT"

was going to retire. At last transfer orders came and I left Mymensing without a single regret, as may be imagined. When I took over from the old man I was received rather coldly, but was delighted with Tezpur. Our bungalow was situated on a hill above the Brahmaputra river and in the mornings we had a glorious view of the Bhotan snow ranges. The country all round, too, was very pretty. There was also a nice garden, but the bungalow was in a fearful state of dirt, so much so that two or three months were taken in getting the whole place overhauled. But after that we got out all our nice things and made ourselves comfortable.

I found that, in addition to the jail, I had charge of the largest lunatic asylum in Assam, the allowance for which added considerably to my salary. I found also that the tea planters were good sorts and lavish with their hospitality and help, so we soon made many friends. But I found the hospitals in a terrible state and had to work very hard to get them in order.

Tezpur is the headquarters of the Durrang district. The district itself is bounded by the Bhotan Hills, North Lakhimpur and the Gauhati district. Its southern boundary is the Brahmaputra, which, in the monsoon, may have a breadth of five miles. The river is constantly changing its course, and the old beds form swamps of reed which only the rhino and buffalo can traverse. There are other rivers, the Borelli, Gabru and Sonarupa. The Black river in the north flows in an open channel from the Bhotan Hills, but after a while it disappears to become an underground river for three miles or so. There are dense forests and thickets on the banks of these rivers packed with all kinds of game, and they also afford excellent mahseer fishing. There were also a number of tea gardens, but not so many as in Sylhet.

My work here, I found, was not so heavy as in Sylhet, so I laid myself out for big game shooting, and most of it that fell to my rifle was obtained in this district; I was fortunate in bagging the record tiger and the record bison for the district, also some very fine buffalo. It

was my luck, too, in accounting for the largest elephant that had, up to that date, been shot in Assam. My attempts at getting rhinoceros on foot were unsuccessful. I had several narrow escapes, and at my last attempt my hunter was killed and I narrowly escaped with my life. I also used to go after all rogue elephants that had been so proclaimed, one, the Bindikuri rogue, nearly killing me, and another nearly killing either myself or my wife, for he charged right up to our elephant and receiving two bullets, but, as he raised his trunk to catch one of us, he was dropped with a third bullet. That same day we were charged by a bison which gave the hind quarters of our panic-stricken elephant, who nearly tore us to pieces as he rushed through the jungle. Tigers and panthers were numerous; I shot several of the former not five miles from the station, the climate coming when I accounted for one on the drive and barely thirty yards from the gate. Six panthers were shot just below our house, but not till after they had taken every cat, dog and goat from the village below.

When my wife and I went after some small game I always took a rifle for safety's sake. Black partridge, floriken and duck also abounded, giving us grand sport. I took a great interest in the asylum as it was an entirely new job, but fortunately, whilst on leave in England, I had taken a three-months course at Foulds Lunatic Asylum near Bristol, so that this particular branch of medicine was not new to me. There were some amusing inmates. One old man, who though he was the boss of the place, abused me one day and became very violent, so he was given a cold shower which cooled him down. Another lunatic would come out and pick up insects in the asylum and

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