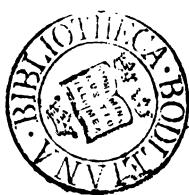


THE
PRIVATE LIFE
OF
AN EASTERN KING.

BY
A MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD
OF HIS LATE MAJESTY, NUSSIR-U-DEEN, KING OF OUDE.



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CHAPTER XI.

DUELLO—THE RHINOCEROS AND ELEPHANT.

Fighting camels—The rhinoceros—His peaceful nature—His manner of fighting—The rhinoceros and the elephant—The rhinoceros and the tiger—The fighting elephants—*Maldeer*—The struggle—Fall of the mahout—His death—The elephant's remorse—Another fight—Danger and escape.

I HAVE already described the ordinary fights of birds, antelopes, and tigers. I now turn to the larger animals. Nothing more brutal than the contests of camels can well be conceived. They are trained to fighting with each other in Lucknow; but nature intended them to be useful, peaceful animals, not warlike; and when man, endeavouring to change their nature, insists upon their being warlike for his gratification, the sight is odious. It is well known that, like the lama of Peru, the camel discharges a fluid from its throat at its adver-

sary. I have seen those trained to fight bring up one of their stomachs in the energy of their spitting! A horrible sight! Nor was it more pleasant to see one grasp the long lip of the other between his teeth, and drag it off in a brutal way. Such fights end only in lacerating the head and injuring the eyes, the huge bodies remaining untouched.

Naturally, the rhinoceros is also a peaceful animal. Bishop Heber says, that in Ghazi-udeen's reign the rhinoceros was used in a carriage, and to carry a howdah. I have never seen him so employed. Although peaceful, however, he is better fitted by nature for warfare than the poor camel. His knife-like horn, his skin more impenetrable than a coat of mail, his compact body and huge muscular limbs, all render him a fearful antagonist to the largest animals. When roused, he will soon make away, I doubt not, with a hippopotamus, and is a match for an elephant.

The extent to which these various animals were kept at Lucknow for purposes of "sport" may be conceived, from the fact of the royal menagerie having contained, when I served the King of Oude, from fifteen to twenty rhinoceroses. They were kept in the open

park around *Chaun-gunge*, and were allowed to roam about, at large, within certain limits.

It was usually at this palace, *Chaun-gunge*, and sometimes at another called *Mobarrack Munzul*, that the fights of the larger animals took place, generally in an enclosure made for the purpose, over one side of which a balcony had been built for the king and his attendants, not unlike a portico in front of a house to receive carriages — structures far more common in Calcutta than in London. Sometimes, however, the fights took place in the open park, where galleries had been erected on substantial pillars. The two rhinoceroses, males,—always more ready to engage in combat at particular seasons than at other times, just as the elephants are,—were duly prepared by stimulating drugs, and let into the enclosure from opposite sides, or were driven in the park towards each other by active fellows on horseback with long spears. The first sight of the antagonist was generally enough to cause each to be ready to attack ; for they know at once, by their keen sense of smell, whether a male or female is in their vicinity. Rushing against each other, with heads somewhat lowered, they met angrily in the midst,

thrusting forward their armed snouts in a hog-like way.

So thick are their hides on the back and legs, that even the short knife-like horn of the snout can make no impression upon it. In the more tender skin of the belly alone, or between the legs, can injury be done. The object of each, then, in closing is to introduce his snout between the fore-legs of his antagonist, and so rip him up; a process which the slight curve of the horn backwards renders comparatively an easy one, if the required position be attained.

But as both equally seek the same advantage, their heads and snouts in the first instance meet in the midst. They strike each other, they push, they lower their heads, they grunt valorously, displaying an amount of activity and energy that one would conceive it almost impossible for them to exercise with their unwieldy forms. The snouts rattle against each other as they mutually strike; the horns may come into contact too, and the sound which is produced plainly tells that it is with no child's play that they are thus crossed. At length, in some way or other, they appear to be locked together, horn to horn, snout to

snout, head to head—the heads always down defending the chest and the entrance between the fore-legs. Then commences a hard struggle,—a firm continuous pushing with all their might. Each throws the whole weight of his huge form into the scale, and with that the enormous strength with which nature has endowed him. They push, and push, and push again with obstinate perseverance. The weaker must ultimately lose ground. He is driven back, at first slowly, step by step, then more rapidly, in a sort of backward trot ; the stronger and sturdier pursuing his advantage with implacable ferocity. At length the weaker, finding that he can no longer make head, makes a desperate plunge backwards to release his snout and horns. It is the decisive moment of the combat. I have seen it end very variously. If in an enclosure, and the weaker has no room to withdraw himself, he is almost sure to be ripped up by the impetuous assailant, and to fall very severely wounded or dead ; his adversary being driven off by hot irons thrust under him, and spears. In the open park, however, the weaker, if active, sometimes succeeded in detaching himself, and scampering off as fast as possible with-

out receiving any severe hurt. The stronger pursued with hearty good will, and they were soon out of sight. In such cases, all would depend upon the nature of the ground, and the relative activity of the two. If the flying combatant was overtaken by his pursuer, nothing could save his life, for a gaping wound, a foot deep, would soon be made in his chest. On one occasion, however, and on only one, I saw a very different termination of the contest to that which was expected.

The weaker had been gradually retreating, at first slowly, afterwards more rapidly. It was in the open park. At length he made a plunge backwards to release himself, and succeeded. The stronger brute, evidently somewhat pig-headed, surprised at the action, thrust his snout upwards in an astonished way; his more active enemy saw the movement at once, and, though evidently preparing to fly, checked himself, lowered his head, and had his snout introduced between his enemy's fore-legs in an instant. The stream of blood which flowed from the wounded combatant, and his quick snort of pain, proclaimed the victory of him who, up to this moment, had been losing

ground, and hope perhaps. The wounded rhinoceros now turned to fly, losing blood rapidly, and his intestines partially protruding from the wound. His adversary allowed him to turn and run a few paces; and then burying his snout again between his hind legs, gored him severely. He fell in a frightfully mangled way, and the active horsemen with their long spears drove off the assailant—no easy matter. Whether the wounded rhinoceros died or not, I do not know. I probably heard at the time and have forgotten. So skilful are the native leeches, however, in attending these monsters, that I should not at all wonder if he recovered.

The contest between a rhinoceros and an elephant is not nearly so interesting as that between the rhinoceros and the tiger. In the former case it is not easy, in the first place, to make the two animals attack each other, even though the elephant be *must*, and the rhinoceros in a similar condition. Should they take a fancy, however, to try each other's mettle, the elephant approaches as usual, with his trunk thrown up into the air and head protruded; the rhinoceros either standing upon

his guard, or also advancing with lowered snout. The tusks of the elephant sometimes pass on each side of the rhinoceros harmlessly, whilst the huge head shoves the lighter animal backwards. If the elephant's tusks trip up the rhinoceros, as is sometimes the case, they are then plunged into him without mercy; but more frequently the contest ends to the disadvantage of the elephant, by the rhinoceros inserting his snout between his antagonist's fore-legs and partially ripping him up; the elephant belabouring all the time with his trunk, to a certain extent uselessly, however. Prevented by his tusks, the rhinoceros cannot get his snout far under the elephant's body, so that the wound he inflicts is not generally a very severe one.

Between the rhinoceros and the tiger, however, the contest is one of infinitely more animation and excitement. The steady guard of the larger animal, and the stealthy, cat-like attack of the smaller—the lowered snout of the one and the gleaming teeth of the other—the cocked horn, kept valorously in an attitude of defiant guard, and the bullet head, with its gleaming eyes, together with the brawny claws—were all things to be watched

and to interest. The rhinoceros, however, is secure from attack on his back, and when the tiger springs, his claws get no hold in the plate-like covering of his antagonist. Should the rhinoceros be overthrown by the tiger's weight, then the fate of the former is sealed ; he is ripped and torn up and gnawed from beneath, as a tiger only can rip, and tear up, and gnaw ; I have heard of such results following the tiger's assault, but have never witnessed such.

In nine cases out of ten the rhinoceros gains the advantage ; the tiger springs, and springs, and springs again, still baffled by the voluminous armour-like skin of his antagonist, until, at some moment or other, the rhinoceros seizes his opportunity, and succeeds in inflicting a severe wound with his formidable horn. The tiger then declines the combat, and easily escapes its unwieldy enemy, should the rhinoceros take it into his head to attack.

There is no other animal, perhaps, so utterly impervious to attack as the rhinoceros ; there is certainly none other that takes all attacks with such perfect coolness and self-possession. Shut up in a comparatively small enclosure with a ferocious tiger, he seems to

be not in the least disconcerted—not even to find his situation uncomfortable—but, with wonderful phlegmatic ease, stands prepared for all contingencies. His coat of armour is, of course, his chief defence; but the shape of his head contributes much to his safety. It curves inwards from the snout to the forehead; so that the eyes are deeply sunk and securely wedged into a concave bone where they cannot be easily assailed—the short pointed horn forming an additional defence to them, and one of the most formidable weapons of offence too, possessed by any animal, when the strength of the rhinoceros is considered. There is something surprising, notwithstanding all this, in seeing this pig-like animal withstanding or conquering the largest tigers and elephants. I have never seen the rhinoceros pitted against the lion. The king of Oude had but three or four lions, and he reserved them for very special occasions—but a contest between the two would but be similar, I doubt not, to that between the rhinoceros and the tiger. Indeed the lion fights so exactly like the tiger, that a contest between two lions is precisely similar to that between two tigers. There was no lion in Lucknow a

match for the largest tigers there : doubtless the few found at the foot of the Himalayas, and in Asia generally, are not equal to those of Africa ; but I very much doubt whether the Bengal tiger is not the more formidable animal of the two. I have never seen any lions in London or Paris equal in size to the largest tigers.

Of the hundred and fifty elephants possessed by the King of Oude, there was one with one broken tusk, that had been victor in a hundred fights. His name was *Malleer*; and he was a great favourite with the king. His tusk had been broken off bit by bit in several encounters ; the elephants rushing against each other with such force as sometimes to snap off a portion, or the whole of a tusk. *Malleer* had lost his, as I have said, gradually. He was a formidable black fellow, very terrible when in that excited state called *must*. During the visit of the commander-in-chief it was determined that a fitting antagonist should be found for *Malleer*, and that he should once more make his appearance on the stage as a gladiator. It was fortunately the proper season. *Malleer* was *must* ; and another gigantic elephant, also