



CHAPTER XIV.

Rhinoceros and Rhinoceros-shooting—Three Distinct Varieties in Bengal—Their Disappearance from certain Localities in which they were formerly plentiful—Tracking Rhinoceros on the Back of an Elephant—Rhinoceros-shooting with a Line of Elephants—Good Sport—Numerous about the Sources of the Monass—Shooting Rhinoceros in the “Soonderbuns”—A Surprise on the March—Birds Attendant on Rhinoceros.

THERE are three distinct varieties of rhinoceros to be found within the limits of the Lower Provinces; viz., the great Indian (*R. Indicus*), the Soonderbun (*R. Sondaicus*), and the two-horned or Malayan. Of these, the first is the largest and best known, the second is almost as large, and the third is the smallest and most rare, being found only in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. I have heard of the *R. Indicus* as having been seen in the valley of the Langai River, in Sylhet, by elephant catchers, and it is probable that it was common in that district, as well as in Cachar, in which latter the jungles and swamps were particularly suited to its habits and tastes. There is a place called “Gaindamara” (rhinoceros-killed) in Cachar, which as late as ten or a dozen years ago was in every way adapted to this animal; but I never saw even the spoor of one there or at any other place in Cachar, and conclude that it disappeared from it altogether at least fifty years ago, and migrated northwards long before the axe and the hoe of the tea-planter converted its vast forests and morasses into gardens. It is probable also that both the Indian and the two-horned types formerly met in those wildernesses prior to the English occupation. We know that in old times Sylhet was a market for rhinoceros hides, from which were

made shields to cover the warriors who fought in the plains of Hindostan, Western and Central India; and thus many a hide which grew and toughened upon the bodies of these monsters in Sylhet, Cachar, and Lower Assam, were afterwards slashed and dented in the hand-to-hand encounters of Rajpoots, Puthans, Moghuls, and Mahrathas, and may have turned aside the arrows of Tartars and Bashkirs, and in days of yore have been crushed beneath the sledge-hammer blows of Cœur-de-Lion and his Paladins in Syria. The hides are still valuable, and the horns are more so, fetching from twenty to thirty rupees the pound in the bazaars, being used by Hindoos in some ceremonies connected with the worship of idols, and by Chinese for far more useful purposes. There are many superstitions attached to the horn of the rhinoceros, and one is the virtue it possesses, when formed into drinking vessels, of discovering poison in the contents.

A story is told of a gentleman in Assam, having ascertained the value put upon horns in this country, commissioning a brother at the Cape to send him a large consignment for sale. In due course of time a quantity of the horns of the black and white species was received, but, to the consignee's surprise, could not be disposed of, although in every way superior to the Indian article. It then transpired that, being far finer and larger than any previously seen by them, the intelligent Marwaree and Hindoo traders pronounced these horns spurious and "Brummagem," and not at all the genuine manufacture of nature! Here is a hint for the enterprising merchants of my native land, for which I hope they will duly thank me in suitable form when the proper time arrives.

The flesh also of this animal is highly esteemed by many tribes, such as the "Mech," the "Koch," the "Rhubbah," and others, who will follow the camp of the sportsman for days together, and will even assist to transport his baggage without hire if liberally provided with its flesh for food. Some Hindoos, too, have a high opinion of its manifold virtues, but, having tasted the meat, I have failed to discover a single one, even a savouriness within reason.

A discussion often arises whether the horn of the rhinoceros is its weapon of offence, one party maintaining that it is never, and the other that it is always so used. My own observations on this point lead me to the conclusion that both are right and wrong at the same time; that on most occasions the powerful incisor teeth are the offensive weapons employed, but that the horn is also sometimes so used, although the ordinary purpose it fulfils is to grub up roots and strip off the bark of trees; its ordinary worn appearance fully proves that it is extensively used. With its formidable incisors this creature will rip open the side of an elephant, using them precisely as the boar does his tusks; and both in attack and in flight it can display an astonishing degree of speed and activity, in spite of its ugly and clumsy form.

Inhabiting as these great beasts do only the densest and remotest jungles of grass, reeds, and wild cardamoms, they inflict little injury on man, and are almost harmless; but if they wander away into cultivation and are worried and disturbed, they become vicious and mischievous, but such instances are extremely rare. Some forty or fifty years ago they were to be found on the "churs" of the Koasee in Purneah, and at the base of the Rajmehal hills, especially near Sikrigully, but they have deserted those places altogether at the present time.

Its vast bulk and power apart, the rhinoceros is not an animal to be attractive as game; nevertheless it is so to some, who prefer its pursuit to that of the tiger. Followed soon after dawn with two or three elephants, and patiently tracked up into its fastnesses till found and slain, it no doubt affords sport; but if put up surrounded by a great line of elephants, and ultimately riddled with bullets and mobbed to death, it does not and cannot show much sport.

The following may be taken as an exceptionally good example of a day's rhinoceros shooting from the backs of elephants, when the season (end of March), the state of the coverts, and the number put up, were all favourable to sport.

We were a party of four "howdahs" with eighteen elephants in all, shooting along the southern bank of the Brahmapootra, in the district of Goalpara in Lower Assam, and had arrived near Luckipoor enjoying splendid sport, and making daily miscellaneous bags of buffalo, marsh-deer, hog-deer, pea-fowl, floriken, hares, and partridges, with a tiger or two occasionally; marching and shooting ten or twelve miles every other day along the left bank of the great river, our tents and baggage were conveyed in boats, close to which we always encamped. On reaching camp near Luckipoor we were greeted with good news of rhinoceros being near at hand, and accordingly the following day was devoted to their especial pursuit.

Leaving our tents soon after daybreak, the word was passed for no firing on any other thing than the object of that day's pursuit—tigers only excepted; and in half an hour we were beating with a broad and rather open line, through immense fields of lovely green young grass four or five feet high, in which many marsh and hog-deer were put up and permitted to escape unfired at. Presently we approached the opposite side of the grass, where a bare plain of a mile or two stretched away to the south towards the Garo hills, when three rhinoceros were seen making off ahead of the line, which was then pushed on rapidly. Although their heads and backs showed above the grass, the animals were too distant to be fired at with good effect, and one separating from its companions and breaking out on the right made off into the open, while the other two turning to the left skirted the jungle, seemingly loth to leave its shelter. My post was on the left of the line, with three or four pad elephants beyond me on that flank, and these being signalled to advance at a run, headed the two remaining animals, so that on my gaining the end of the extensive grass covert, I saw one of the two galloping away over the plain at a great pace; but the third, a huge male, stood on the outside, undecided in his mind what to do, and half inclined to fight it out. As my elephant stepped out of the higher into some shorter grass, I caught

sight of him standing eighty paces to my left; but on turning towards him he wheeled round and made off also, presenting his broad stern only. Ordinarily the distance was too great for an effective shot, but there being no chance of a better, I let drive a two-and-a-half ounce steel-tipped conical at him in the hope of breaking a leg bone; the shot told unmistakably. On being struck the beast ran along the covert side for a hundred yards, and then pulling up began swaying about from side to side, and before I got up to him rolled over on his left side stone dead. This, as a great piece of luck, delighted us all, as an auspicious commencement of the day's sport. As the huge animal lay on its side, his upper fore-leg standing out horizontally was as high as my face, and he proved to be a particularly fine bull of the largest size in the prime of life. Being opened the bullet was found embedded in his lungs, after having entered in a soft place near the root of the tail, traversed the body, and inflicted frightful internal injuries. Blood had spouted from his mouth in jets, and his lungs were found to be completely smashed.

After this we continued our course southwards for two or three miles, working through a splendid savannah of high grass, with here and there a marsh with clear water in the middle, on which reposed flocks of ducks and teal, while marsh-deer and buffalo, springing up out of the grass, made off unmolested. Towards noon, as we were beating carefully line in line, two more rhinos were roused, and one, a large cow, was struck several times, but got away. I was still in my appointed position, well on the left flank with two or three beating elephants beyond me, and in the chase of the wounded animal, when, within fifty paces in a mud-hole, I came upon a very tall emaciated-looking old bull, at which I obtained two good shots as he sprang up to bolt, which so severely damaged him, that after a run of a few hundred yards he pulled up into a walk, and allowing me to gain upon him, was slain without trouble with one more ball in the neck. This was an aged beast, as high as the first, but a mere bag of bones and hide, with a short stump of a horn worn down to four or five

inches in length, unlike the other's, which was a very good one, weighing two and a quarter pounds. After this we halted to rest and refresh for a couple of hours beside a wide "jheel," in which our elephants thoroughly cooled and enjoyed themselves in the succulent green young grasses and rushes.

At two in the afternoon the "howdahs" were re-mounted and line formed facing the north-west, with the intention of sweeping round through some heavy covert not yet explored, in the midst of which a narrow but deep "nullah" ran in a tortuous course, with many rhinoceros trails passing down and along its banks. From the great height and thickness of this jungle of reeds, seemingly never burnt, the beat proved most arduous, the "nullah" or its many branches turning up before us on all sides, rendering our task most tedious. However, we were kept on the alert by putting up a rhino, or stumbling upon a buffalo every now and again, and we could hear them plainly enough without seeing them at all, no matter how close they might be, if not under the muzzles of our rifles. At last, after an hour's hard work, one of the party viewed a rhinoceros going down the bank of the main "nullah," with the apparent intention of throwing us off by crossing it, but on receiving a bullet in its back it turned up again and made a blind sort of a charge, in the course of which two or three more balls told without dropping it. We now lost it for a minute or two, but recovering its broad track we followed at best pace, and overhauled it in company with two others making play ahead. The two unwounded animals got away round our right flank, probably back to the spot from which they had been roused, but the wounded one, now bleeding profusely, passed obliquely to the left of the line with great snortings, and making a terrific noise as it crushed the stout reeds, which grew there higher than our heads as we stood in our "howdahs," in its savage rushes to get at its unseen enemies. Passing before me at a distance of only a few yards, but quite invisible, Rhino received from my rifle two shots, the first causing it to turn fiercely upon my elephant, when the second struck it in the shoulder,

bringing it down upon its knees, but only for a second or two. Before I could exchange the discharged muzzle-loader rifle for a loaded one, Rhino was off again, making for the deep "nullah" on the left, towards which we all turned, and being on that flank, it was my luck to view it as it showed on the bank before plunging down with another ball in the neck, which laid it dead in the water below. The sides of the stream being almost perpendicular, we had no little trouble in getting down to cut off the head and shields. This proved to be a young but full-grown cow, with a slender horn of moderate length.

We had killed three and wounded at least as many more that day, and might altogether have roused from first to last ten or a dozen small and great, though some were never once sighted in that dense covert. Turning homewards we gained the tents about sunset, picking up on our way half-a-dozen marsh and hog-deer for our hungry camp followers.

Having seen so many rhinoceri that day, we devoted the next to the same pursuit, but killed only one, although at one time we had seemingly half-a-dozen ahead of us. The previous day's firing had driven many of them farther away towards the foot of the Garo hills without having had any effect upon other game, of which we met with great numbers, without finding a single tiger in these, its well-known haunts; nevertheless we enjoyed a good day's sport, and made a large bag both in weight and numbers, viz., a rhinoceros, five buffaloes (unsought), nine marsh and seven hog-deer, two peacocks, a floriken, five brace of "kyah" partridge, and a pink-headed duck. The scenery near the foot of the hills was wild in the extreme, and in the eyes of a sportsman lovely beyond compare; but the jungles were so extensive and dense that our line of eighteen elephants was lost in it, and had we not carried on some of them flags of white cloth on bamboo poles to regulate our movements in wheeling, and to dress the line, we should sometimes have inevitably lost each other, or got astray, particularly in beating round morasses. We saw no elephants on that occasion, but their tracks were numerous,

and a considerable herd had fed recently in one of the marshes, attracted thereto by a kind of weedy grass called "dul" by natives, which grew abundantly in it, and forms a favourite food.

The above is a favourable sample of this sport, and quite as good was to be had then at the sources of the Monass river, on the opposite side of the Brahmapootra, and along the base of the foot-hills of the Himalayas, a magnificent sporting country, and probably the very choicest in India; abounding in elephants, rhinoceros, buffalo, gour, and marsh-deer, with sambur, tigers, and bears in smaller numbers. I have heard from my friend Colonel P., that during a trip of ten days (in 1870 I think) through that part of Assam, he and his party saw at least fifty rhinoceri, but for causes explained by him, their bag was in no degree commensurate with the numbers viewed, the elephants proving unsteady and timid, and the shooting indifferent in consequence. There are not many tigers to be found in that splendid field, those animals preferring the comparatively cultivated tracts, and the vicinity of great herds of cattle.

Balls from modern rifles will penetrate even the shields of the *R. Indicus*, if driven home by six or seven drams of powder at moderate ranges, the best places for them to be placed being the neck, behind the great shield on the shoulder, and downwards at the junction of the head and neck. As before observed, this is not a particularly attractive sport, apart from its comparative rarity, and the wildness of the jungles inhabited by the quarry; but if it could be followed on foot, its pleasures and excitements would be vastly augmented; that however can hardly ever be done, from the nature of the jungles the animal affects, although by its custom of resorting to certain spots to deposit its dung (as do some antelopes and deer too), it offers an opening for attack by the rifleman, who may choose to sit for a shot in a "machan" or pit.

When tea-gardens were first opened out in Assam, these huge creatures were so plentiful and so fearless, that they

were sometimes fired at from the houses of the pioneer planters; and I have been shown a spot on which one of them stood behind a bungalow, preventing the occupants' dinner being served, till driven away by several shots, the kitchen in this country not forming a part of the dwelling-house as in Europe and countries of the temperate zone.

In the "Soonderbuns" it is possible under the most favourable circumstances to seek the rhinoceros on foot; but quite apart from the extreme unhealthiness of those forests, that sport is attended by so many difficulties and discomforts, that it is not much engaged in by other than the most enthusiastic sportsmen. I have had myself very little experience of it, but am not altogether unacquainted with it, having during my early career in this country often visited those wildernesses of evil repute, which swarm with game beyond all doubt in many places, particularly on the sea-face, and marshes within the woods, and lastly, on the skirts of the remotest cultivation.

Along the base of the hills in the "Doars" this animal may occasionally be met with by the "gour" or deer-stalker; for in those regions rarely trod by the foot of man, he roams without fear or dispute as a monarch, to whom even the mighty elephant must give way, and before whose ponderous strength and weight the morose bull-buffalo must bend the knee and kiss the dust.

Mr. Robertson Pughe writes to me:—"I was once marching with a detachment of Frontier Police at the foot of the Bhutan Hills in the middle of May. Nearly all my men being, or having been, down with fever, the march was a melancholy one in the extreme. In course of time we arrived at the margin of a small pond in the midst of a dense forest, and while the men rested, I took a turn round the water in search of tracks. Finding some of rhinoceros, I followed them. The mud left upon the bushes and trees by the sides of the animals was barely dry, but I failed to come up to them, and time at my command not allowing of a prolonged pursuit, I gave a 'coo-ee' to call up my men, bitterly to regret

it the next moment, when I heard a great splashing a few yards ahead, and running forward, found a family of six rhinoceri—male, female, and young—in a state of great commotion. One of them, a large bull, coming out on my side of the water in which they were all standing, compelled me to take shelter behind a tree, from whence I gave him a ball at about fifteen yards' distance, but he went away as if untouched. My second barrel was fired at another mounting the bank on the opposite side, but it, too, got away, leaving lots of blood and froth on the trail, and although I followed, it was to no purpose, and I never saw one of them again. But for that unlucky and ill-timed 'coo-ee,' I might have had the gratification of seeing that family at play, and had I had a heavy instead of a light rifle, I should have bagged one if not more."

According to Mr. Pughe, the "myna" takes the place in India of the rhinoceros-bird in Africa, attaching itself to him for the purpose of picking off the ticks and other parasites which infest his hide, but sometimes becoming unintentionally the messenger of death to its gigantic ally, as its upward soaring and alighting on the same spot will reveal the presence of its friend to the watchful sportsman, who otherwise might not discover him in the midst of a sea of grass.

As the "king-crow" attends the buffalo, sitting upon his neck or back, ever ready to snap up the insects disturbed by the grazing animal, and the graceful white cattle-heron stalks in front of the feeding cow with the same object, I fear a purely selfish one, so the "myna," no doubt, becomes the attendant of the rhinoceros, as much for the sake of the insects roused out of the grass and reeds as for those to be found on his skin.





CHAPTER XV.

Rhinoceros and Rhinoceros-shooting, *continued*—A Trip to the Sea-face of the "Soonderbuns"—Boats and Boating—Spotted Deer—Wild Hog hunting Crabs on the Beach—Abundance of Game—A ticklish Position—Unexpected Sport with Rhinoceros—A huge Python—Porpoises and Sharks—Intricate Navigation—A Tiger roused—Another Rhinoceros killed—A Tiger shot—Shooting Deer from a Boat—Death of a monster Crocodile—Big Game near Calcutta—A large Rhinoceros found and lost near Baraipoor—Rhinoceros very abundant in the "Soonderbuns"—Epidemics among Wild Beasts—Shooting off Elephants impracticable.

FINDING myself once, in the course of a tour, within reach of an ebb tide of the mouth of one of the many rivers which pour their waters through the Eastern "Soonderbuns" into the Bay of Bengal, I was induced to continue my way downwards; first by a desire to visit a portion of the sea-face with which I had no previous acquaintance, and next to test the glowing reports of the abundance of spotted deer to be there seen.

The time was January, a day or two before the full moon; the weather tolerably cool, and the breeze light and northerly; all favourable for a run down to the sea, not approachable at all seasons in country boats.

For the whole of that day, from early morn, I had sailed swiftly and smoothly down a broad stream, both banks of which were covered with forests of "soonderee" and other trees, much thinned by wood-cutters, till a little before sunset I anchored, and made all snug for the night in a reach, below which the river widened considerably.

Weighing anchor early the following morning, we started under sail for our port of destination, leaving behind the

eight-oared country boat, which served as kitchen and tender to be picked up on our return. My own boat was a particularly fine and comfortable craft. Originally built to navigate the stormy and shallow tideways of the Megna, she pulled twelve oars, carried two masts and lug-sails, and was fast whether rowed or sailed. She was sixty feet in length by twelve beam; bows and stern alike, except that the former stood a little higher out of water. Her cabin accommodation consisted of a pantry, three feet by twelve, a saloon twelve by twelve, a bedroom eight by nine or ten, and a bathroom three and a-half by seven or eight. Aft the cabins, which were over six feet in height within, was a deck of six feet, on which the food of the Mahomedan crew was cooked in a caboose. Before the cabins the deck was all clear for the rowers, with a low hatch leading below deck, where sails, chains, ropes, and the crew's kits were stowed away, together with my own stores. The boat having a keel of only three inches on her round bottom, lay over very little on taking ground, and ran no danger of being upset in a strong tide-way, as a sharp built one would be. With such a craft, drawing two and a-half feet, and with a crew of thirteen sturdy Noakholly boatmen, the mouths of any rivers might be navigated in safety during the cold season, or indeed at any other time. Being built with great care of well-seasoned timber, and copper-bottomed, she was capable of making fair weather in a considerable swell.

About four in the afternoon, the north breeze having died away, and a southerly air blowing from the sea, we anchored a couple of miles from the mouth of the river in a little bay of the left or eastern bank, where the swell which set in with the spring tide shortly after was little felt, and the heaving of the water, usually perceptible so near the sea, even in a perfect calm, only caused the boat to rise and fall with a gentle motion. A glorious moon rose soon after sunset, and lit up the deep woods and the rushing river with a soft shimmering light, very pleasant to look upon; while shoals of the "bummelow" and other small

fish floated past on the strong flood tide. Having placed ready at hand a heavy rifle, and set an anchor-watch, to guard against boarding by some enterprising tiger, I turned in early after dinner, and soon fell asleep, lulled by the lapping of the rushing tide.

The night passed in perfect quiet, broken only by the dull sound of the breakers upon the sands, the cries of curlews, the clang of wild geese changing their feeding grounds, and the wheezy breathing of porpoises which rolled along with the tide in pursuit of small fish. Day broke chill and misty, with a light air from the sea, so that, although I was up and had taken my early breakfast before sunrise, it was six bells (let us be nautical now) before we stepped into the jolly-boat to row down to some place below, where it might be desirable to land, to pursue on foot the sport fortune had in store for us that day.

Not knowing exactly what animals might be met with in such a wilderness, rarely visited by human beings, I took the field with a 10-bore rifle, another 12-bore, and a 12-bore gun (all by Westley-Richards), seven stout fellows, and an ample supply of ammunition and refreshments. After coasting along for half a mile, and passing the mouth of a creek up which the tide was swiftly flowing, I landed upon a sandy spit, and leaving two men in the jolly-boat to await our return, I walked slowly and noiselessly on the soft sand, till turning a point of the forest which came down close to the water's brink, I sighted a herd of about a dozen spotted deer a couple of hundred yards ahead, which dashed into the woods before I could bring a barrel to bear upon a stag. The distance being too great for accurate shooting, I refrained from firing, and moved on till the sea-shore was reached, and followed it then eastwards.

The beach consisted first of a line of hard fine sand, and above it of a belt of mixed mud and sand, some thirty or forty yards in breadth; then a streak of mud overgrown with rushes, low bushes, and sharp stumps and roots of trees, and above that again the dark and silent woods.

For some moments after turning eastward along the sand, I confess my mind was more occupied by the scenery, then new to me, than aught else, but the round stern of a boar trotting on in front recalled me to the business of the day. The pig sauntered on leisurely, stopping here and there, snout to the sand, as if bent upon some interesting investigation; anon turning up the sand and munching something apparently very toothsome and dainty. Curious to learn what he was at, I followed silently, and discovered that he was diligently engaged in hunting and eating crabs, which ran about in hundreds above the wash of the waves, and on being disturbed made each for his own particular hole in the sand, or if cut off therefrom ran into the water. They were the kind common on this coast, bright red in colour, and about the size of a shilling to a half-crown piece. The boar sniffing at a hole, and finding its occupant at home, turned up the sand with his snout, and if successful in catching the householder, the latter was at once snapped up and eaten. Having no quarrel with him, I gave the boar a loud good morning, which startled him very considerably, and caused him to make off in a great hurry into the forest, with loud grunts expressive of the utmost alarm and surprise at an object probably quite new to him.

As I walked along the beach I noticed that it was covered with the footprints of deer and wild hog, which had passed over it since midnight, when the tide was at the full, and made it their playground in the bright moonlight, having in some places run round and round, in the enjoyment of the balmy sea-air, in complete safety, since there they could not be surprised by their fell tyrant the tiger, or the still more horrible python.

When I had covered a mile of beach I came upon an opening in the woods on my left, looking as if the trees there had been laid low by some terrific tornado, and had given place to a growth of bushes and dwarf palm over some forty or fifty acres. Entering the glade cautiously, I put up in it a large herd of spotted deer, which, scattering right and left,

made off at speed with flashing skuts, but a stag, moved by curiosity, lingered behind to stare at me, nose in air and antlers laid over his back. Being suitably dressed and the wind blowing across us the handsome beast could make nothing of me, as I stood stock still, and partially concealed by the brushwood, and thus he gave me a fair shot at eighty paces at his white thick throat which showed above the covert. The report of the 12-bore rifle—perhaps the first ever echoed by those woods—was succeeded by a slight rustle of leaves, and then all was still. My gun-bearer, who had crawled up behind, whispered his opinion that I had missed and the stag was off, but the dull thud of the bullet had caught my ear, so that on walking up to where he had stood, a noble stag was found stone dead, shot through the throat and the vertebræ of the neck. Leaving him where he fell, well covered with branches of trees, we walked round the opening putting up many deer, seeing one now and then for an instant, and wounding, without bagging, a second stag; and thus we once more returned to the open beach, having observed the foot-prints of tigers thickly dented in the muddy paths which intersected the thickets in all directions, but without remarks thereon we pursued our silent way with increased caution.

On regaining the sands we turned again to the left and walked along them, now nearly covered by the rising tide, for a full mile without meeting with anything worthy of note, except the dried and blackened skin and bones of a hammer-headed shark, eleven feet in length by my measuring tape—a strange and uncouth monster, which must have been cast up by the sea some days before, after having been wounded unto death by some other mightier than he.

Another mile got over we came upon a second opening in the woods similar to the last, but far larger, and extending to nearly a mile inland. On entering the scrub a sounder of hog rose suddenly almost at our feet, and scuttled off before us in terrible alarm; and following upon their tracks we presently came out of the low jungle and found ourselves on the margin of a park-like expanse, surrounded by deep woods—

dark, and frowning, as if in envy, upon the bright savannah lit up by the warm sun, and rejoicing in the brisk cool breeze. This open space was dotted over by a few trees and bushes, and was somewhat higher than the surrounding forest, slightly undulating, and its sandy soil clothed with a short crisp grass. The general appearance was such as to induce the surmise that during some great cyclone the sea had risen and encroached into the forest, and after destroying it, had retreated again, leaving the surface of the clearance formed into hummocks and dips, resembling, in miniature, hills and valleys.

Cautiously mounting a sandy ridge I took a glance round without at first detecting any game, but presently made out a herd of several scores of deer under a clump of trees a quarter of a mile off to my left, a head or a pair of antlers now and then showing above the soft grass, in which the animals nestled to enjoy their noonday siesta. Followed by a single gun-carrier I commenced a stalk under cover of the ridge, the sea breeze blowing across my line of advance; and I had approached the herd within two hundred yards, when a stag and two hinds, rising up suddenly out of some bushes close to me, startled the others, and sent them flying into the jungle on the skirts of which they had been reposing. Not to be balked altogether, I took the stag in the stern with the smaller rifle and knocked him over, head over heels, but rising up he limped away after his companions with another bullet in his ribs to join the herd to which he no doubt belonged.

The blood-spattered trail led us into a covert of a kind of dwarf palm, called by the natives "hurtal," which grows ordinarily to the height of five or six feet on the banks of tidal creeks, and on lands saturated with brackish water; but where we entered, it rose three or four above our heads, so that we walked in the shade of the thick and drooping fronds without difficulty, till having penetrated some way, we got entangled in a net of small muddy "nullahs," up which the flood-tide was gently flowing. After a manful struggle

to stick to the trail we were fain to relinquish further pursuit, and return to the clearance by a sweep made round to our right, and this we did for fully a mile, when we were startled by shouts from behind.

In taking up the last trail, I was closely attended by two men carrying the gun and the second rifle, the other three following some distance in the rear and out of sight, but guided by our footprints upon the yielding soil. Halting on hearing the cries, the second party was allowed to rejoin us, and then it appeared that one of them was missing, a long-bearded up-country tent-pitcher, much addicted to chattering, and somewhat to boasting to boot. Our progress in the "hurtal" jungle had been crossed and re-crossed by numerous tracks of tigers, which appeared to have made it a favourite promenade. At first then our fear was that the man lagging behind had been "set" by a tiger and seized, but repetitions of his outcries raised hopes of his safety as we hastened back to his relief, and shortly our fears were removed on finding him unhurt and shouting lustily for help. It now transpired that the man's nerves had received a shock in the jungle we had attempted to penetrate in the early part of the morning when the stag was shot, and afterwards, on observing tigers' tracks even more abundant in this than in the last covert, his fears had so completely mastered his reason, that hanging back for some purpose he had lost sight of his two companions, and instead of hastening to overtake them, he had sat down in utter terror and despair, and by his shouts had invited the tigers to come and eat him. This man's fears acting upon the nerves of the others, who up to this time had manfully followed me without a word, it became advisable to get out of a situation in which I felt I should not be on fair terms with a tiger bent on a sudden attack, nor even with a comrade on whose nerve and rifle full reliance could be placed would I care to invite such an encounter in so ticklish a place, where one could not see five paces ahead or sides. We were not sorry then to see sunshine again, on stepping out into the open ground at its

northern or farthest end, where we rested awhile and reconnoitred.

Our movements having been extremely noiseless (through a polite desire not to disturb the siesta of any tigers which might be reposing in that neighbourhood), we had gained unseen and unheard a spot which commanded a view across the open, but the day being far advanced, all animals had taken to the shelter of the woods, and not one showed itself; nevertheless we silently skirted the bushes and "hurtal" on the northern side of the clearance, intending to return to the beach by the eastern. I now remarked, for the first time, certain tracks which I recognised as those of rhinoceros, and not a few either, and some quite fresh, as of that morning. Quickly and silently exchanging the 12 for the 10-bore rifle loaded with steel-tipped conicals, I moved cautiously ahead attended by one man only, carrying the other rifle and the gun, one on each shoulder, the rest of the party following some distance behind, and in this manner the north-east angle of the clearance was nearly reached, when a sight which caught my eyes, caused me to drop down on my hands and knees behind a bush, my gun-carrier at the same time flat on his face, whispering softly "elephants!" He had never before seen a rhinoceros or the picture of one.

On the margin of a mud-hole twenty or thirty feet in diameter stood a huge rhinoceros in deep contemplation of two shapeless slate-coloured lumps just showing above the muddy water; in other words, two companions enjoying a mud-bath, while he, having had his, as his well-plastered hide testified, was basking in the sun half asleep, working his ears and stamping with a foot now and then as flies pestered him. The mud-hole was near the jungle on the north, and fully two hundred yards from our ambuscade; too far for a shot at so tough a customer, and there was no cover between us beyond a few rushes and a little scrub, too thin and low to afford concealment. Backing out, therefore, a little distance, I entered the bushes, which formed a fringe of the forest all round, and charily making a little sweep, not alto-

gether unmindful of the possibility of a tiger being an interested spectator of my evolutions, I wriggled my way to a position within sixty paces of the pool, the wind favourable and the enemy's broadside bearing almost directly on me. Looking about me while recovering my breath after the stalk, I observed that the water in the hollow was rising by the influx of the tide along a rill issuing from the woods, so that the patriarch's fore-feet were now immersed, but the sedges and rushes in which he stood barely reaching his belly, his whole right side was fully exposed to view. As soon as my breathing had settled down to its normal state, the big rifle was directed to the neck, but on drawing a sight, it was somewhat covered by the huge bulging shoulder, the head being turned a little away from me, making the shot an uncertain one at the angle presented; the aim, therefore, was rapidly changed to a point a trifle behind the shoulder, and the heavy bullet told truly with a loud smack. On feeling the wound the great creature threw up his head with a grunt, and glared round for the enemy who had struck him, and before his position was changed a second bullet hit him on the same spot, but a little more forward, and brought him on his knees with a wheezy sort of a groan. He was up again immediately, and dashed into the woods with blood spurting from his mouth. At the report of the first barrel the other two rose from the mire in a mighty hurry, but paused on failing to discover aught on which to vent their wrath, and then seeing or scenting the smoke, galloped off after their leader, the larger of the two receiving from the second rifle one ball in the fore-ribs, and a second in the head, fired at short range, and driven home with four and a-half drams of powder. Without changing the smaller rifle in hand, I reloaded it with cartridges in my pocket, and followed as fast as I could on the broad trail left by the flying monsters, and before I had gone fifty yards, a loud crash and a long-drawn groan announced the fall of one at least, and soon after I almost stumbled over its huge carcase lying in the death-agony. Dashing on upon the bloody trail for

another hundred yards, I came upon the bank of a narrow creek, just as one of the animals was disappearing in the overhanging wood on the opposite bank, and the other was rising out of the water, exposing its broad back as it struggled with mighty efforts to extricate itself out of the sticky mud. A shot, planted in the middle of the back over the loins, followed by another just behind the head, caused the stricken beast to plunge forward stone dead; its fore-parts on land, and the hind-quarters and legs in the tide now near the full.

There being no means at hand to get at the fallen beast, I retraced my steps, to find my followers gathered round the carcase of the first, which proved to be a male of the largest size, carrying a well-worn horn of moderate size. The natives with me, who had never before seen a rhinoceros, gazed at it with silent awe as they walked round, examining its strange form and monstrous bulk, and when they heard that another had fallen they ran off in a body in the utmost excitement to view it and compare notes as to age, sex, and size.

Well pleased with my unexpected success, I had to consider how to secure the trophies, but soon gave up all idea of so doing that day in the absence of axes or bill-hooks, or the means of carriage. We then tied a white cloth on the branches of a tall tree growing on the spot to direct our search next day, and fastened a similar signal on the bank of the creek where the second beast lay, and after a short halt, we proceeded on our way along the eastern side of the clearing, and had nearly regained the beach without further adventure, when I noticed what at first sight looked like a fallen branch lying upon the ground. Something peculiar about the object induced me to approach it cautiously within half-a-dozen paces, and then I made it out to be, as I supposed, a dead python of extraordinary size. As we stood regarding it, it lay motionless, two-thirds of its length glistening in the bright sunshine, and the rest hidden in grass and scrub. To make sure I fired both barrels of the gun, loaded with No. 2 shot, into the head and neck, shattering them completely, and

yet no movement followed, but streams of clear red blood flowing abundantly proved it had been alive. Further examination showed that the reptile having swallowed some prey, which distended its body to a great size about the middle, we cut it open with our hunting-knives and "daos," and disinterred a wild sow, which it had seized and swallowed probably about sunrise, and was digesting, in a torpid condition, when we stumbled upon it basking in the sun. The python measured twenty-two and a half feet — a great length, but exceeded by many to be found in that wilderness.

After regaining the beach and looking along it eastward, we espied a dark object lying at high-water mark a quarter of a mile from us, which, on inspection, turned out to be the stern and a portion of the upper deck of a vessel of about eight hundred tons burden, which might have been lying there several years, for the timbers were decaying, and all colour and gilding had long been washed out by the salt air and water combined from the stern and upper cabins, which had been once highly decorated. What that hapless ship was, where wrecked, and when cast away upon that wild shore, there was nothing left to tell. After searching about and discovering in the jungle above high water mark, hurled up by some giant roller, a lower mast, and the ribs and bottom of a boat which may have belonged to the wrecked ship, we sat down, sheltered from the warm noonday sun, in the shadow of the poor castaway's side, and ate our tiffin, pondering on its unhappy fate. Thus an hour passed before we retraced our steps upon the sands left wet and soft by the retiring tide, till reaching the spot where the stag had been left concealed, we broke it up and carried away the meat to gladden the hearts of the crew.

Regaining the jolly-boat about four in the afternoon, the two men left in charge of her informed us that soon after our departure a large herd of deer had come out upon the sloping bank of the river, and after feeding and playing for some time, had retired when the sun became warm. Also that an

immense crocodile had basked for several hours on a sandy spit at the mouth of the creek.

In passing the opening of the creek, now quite shallow, we saw a number of porpoises rolling in the tide in the apparent enjoyment of a hearty meal upon shoals of small fish brought down by the ebb; and among them, too, appeared the sharp wicked-looking back fins of some sharks cutting through the water here and there, close-hauled and with tacks on board, engaged in a similar diversion. Had we been provided with a couple of light harpoons, with lines attached, we might have enjoyed a sport both novel and exciting, since some of the porpoises were huge, and the sharks from four to seven feet in length.

A little islet lay at the mouth of the river, about a mile from us, and half that distance from the opposite bank. Well wooded down to the water's edge, and its southern extremity stretching out wedge-like towards the sea in a narrow spit, the total length may have been three miles, and the greatest breadth less than one mile. On stepping on board the boat, the "Serang" (native boatswain) reported that great numbers of deer had shown themselves upon its shores where they were comparatively clear of forest till ten o'clock, and that some crocodiles of extraordinary size had basked in the sun till high-water on little sandy points; but no other creatures had been seen from the boat.

The boatmen having in our absence taken some good fish in nets, including a basketful of "bummelow," we all fared well that evening, and the night again passing in perfect quiet, we rose at dawn ready for a heavy day's work.

As the jolly-boat, which pulled four oars, could not accommodate all the men needed to cut up the rhinoceri shot the day before, it was my intention to leave the "Serang" in charge of the boat with four of her crew, besides the cook, "Khidmutgar," and bearer, while my gun-carrier, who could shoot a little, took command of a party composed of the tent-pitcher and four boatmen, and armed

with my double gun, and supplied with a sufficiency of ball-cartridges, should proceed along the seashore to the spot where lay the first rhinoceros; meanwhile, I and four other men should work the jolly-boat up the creek to the same place, or rather to that where we left the second beast, partly on land and partly in water. I further desired that whichever party first reached its destination should fire two shots as a signal to the other; adding, that as tigers might be attracted by the carcase, caution should be used in approaching it. On this the tent-pitcher, recalling recent experiences, moved an amendment to the effect that the land party should, on reaching the second clearance, await the signal from us before venturing into it; and this being warmly seconded, and appearing reasonable under all the circumstances of the case, was finally adopted.

We started about seven o'clock just as the flood set in, well provided for the work to be done in the cutting up and hacking way, even down to the cook's kitchen chopper, besides poles and ropes in abundance; and first putting on shore the land party at the mouth of the creek, we in the jolly-boat moved silently up it with the tide, in the expectation of obtaining a shot at deer, if no nobler game presented itself. My double smooth-bore being lent to the other party, I took instead a double .500 Express by Henry, which I kept in hand, the heavier rifles lying beside me ready for use. Since the rowlocks in rowing made much noise, the boat was poled up by two men, going fast on the strong flood, and I sat well forward, rifle across my knees. After we had gone half-a-mile, on turning an elbow of the creek, a stag and four hinds came in view within easy range, standing in the midst of bushes, which hid them up to the middle of their bodies, and staring at the strange sight which roused their curiosity more than alarm. The first barrel of the "Express" sent a bullet with a soft thud into the shoulder of the stag, and brought him down at once, and the second sent another rattling into the woods after the hinds, which disappeared like phantoms in their gloomy depths. Landing at once, we

broke up the deer, and hung it up on the fork of a tree close to the water's brink, with a wisp of cotton cloth as a mark.

After this no more shots were obtained till we had proceeded so far, that it became desirable to abstain from firing at deer, with the chance before us of a shot at larger game. Gliding on noiselessly, we had proceeded altogether four or five miles, when the creek narrowing considerably, and throwing off many branches, it became a matter of difficulty to select the right one. The distance along the seashore to the second clearance, where the rhinoceri were found, may have been three miles, almost due east; allowing, therefore, for the turnings, and consulting my pocket-compass, it seemed that the time had come for hitting off a branch to the right; accordingly, sweeping out of the main stream, we went up a branch heading southward, soon to discover our mistake, for it narrowed rapidly, and led us into a wilderness of gigantic "hurtal," and a labyrinth of small and shallow rivulets, very clearly out of our course. Our situation then became dangerous, as the jungle almost met over our heads, and a hungry tiger could have whipped off one of us out of the boat before a shot could have been fired; but worse still, we were on the wrong track.

We now returned to the main stream, and going up it till we came to another fork, one branch turning sharply to the north, we followed the other in a south-easterly direction, and in a quarter of an hour came upon the carcase of the rhino last killed, and then perceived that the other branch we had ascended, had led us to the "hurtal" covert, out of which we had turned away towards the open the previous day.

The hind quarters of the dead beast had been much torn by crocodiles, but the forepart, fixed in the deep mud, had resisted their efforts to drag it into deep water. Leaving the carcase, we landed on the opposite bank, and took up the track leading to the other, advancing cautiously, and a surly growl proved that caution was not uncalled for on that

occasion. Standing stock still for some moments, my finger on the trigger of my rifle, and every sense stretched to its utmost, I awaited some further demonstration, but a repetition of the same ominous sound at a greater distance, proclaimed the retreat of the enemy, a couple of bullets sent rattling after it, hastening the movements of the tiger, which could be heard bounding through the undergrowth, and at the same time giving the signal as concerted, answered at once by the seashore party, which joined us in half an hour, and commenced upon the labours of amputation.

My gun-carrier and I standing as sentries on the watch, the rest fell to work, and by dint of hard blows, and unremitting labours, removed in the space of a couple of hours the head and a portion of the hide, which were conveyed to the jolly-boat, together with certain parts of the body, carefully reserved by my followers, as sovereign remedies for divers human ailments, and restoratives of decayed vigour in the Asiatic constitution.

The ground round this carcase was thickly marked with the footprints of tigers, several having visited it since noon of the day before; but beyond attacking the softer parts they had not yet made much impression.

Next, we examined the sides of the pool in which the three rhinos had been found, and it appeared then to have been much resorted to, the tracks round it being numerous, both the old and the fresh, as well as the cones of dung, two and three feet high, left all round it.

Not sorry to get out of such a tigerish situation, and returning to the river-side, we crossed over and resumed the work of hacking and hewing upon the other, which proved to be a full-grown cow, whose head only was removed into the jolly-boat, other parts being hard to get at by reason of the mud and the rising tide.

After a hearty lunch, I on ham and biscuits, washed down with whisky and water, and my followers on cold venison and water undiluted, of which last each man carried a bottle (both this and the previous day), we separated again, the land

party to return by the seashore, and the rest in the jolly-boat, now heavily laden.

I am informed that drinkable water may be obtained by digging two or three feet into the sand of the seashore, just above high-water mark, but I cannot make that statement from experience, having always taken care to be well provided in that respect.

The tide being at its full our progress downwards became slow, two men poling at the stern, while I resumed my seat at the bows. When we had dropped down about a mile and a-half in perfect silence, the peculiar sounds made by a heavy animal in drawing up its feet from soft mud caused us to prick our ears, and a moment or two afterwards, on turning an elbow of the creek, a rhinoceros was viewed, slowly walking along the miry left bank, and showing above the low growth of jungle on it a couple of long ears and an immensely broad back.

The beast, unconscious of our vicinity, moved leisurely along, feeding at its ease, not thirty yards from us, when I opened fire with the heavy rifle and sent a conical raking forward towards the heart and lungs, following up with a second in the thigh, which broke its right hind leg as it darted forward to escape, but fell in the effort. Before the wounded animal could recover itself, the boat being propelled briskly up, I was able to strike it again twice with the 12-bore rifle at ten yards, bringing it down on its head as it rose, and I finished it with a fifth ball from the "Express." We dashed ashore with a hearty cheer, such as those wild woods had never echoed before, and casting ourselves in the mud knee-deep were soon standing beside the prostrate monster, a large male, with a better horn than the other two had. On examination we found that the first bullet alone would have killed in a few minutes, since it had penetrated the lungs; the third and fourth also inflicted mortal wounds near the heart, and the fifth had struck the middle of the neck; it was not surprising, therefore, that so great a beast should have succumbed so quickly.

With fewer hands for the work, we were a long time engaged in separating the head from the trunk and stowing it away in the boat, now deeper in the water than ever, and our progress would have been slow had not the set of the ebb helped us materially. Our only thought now was to get back to the big boat before sunset, and after so much firing there appeared no likelihood of further sport that day; but subsequent events proved that our good luck was not yet exhausted.

Within a mile of its mouth the creek widened considerably, and the falling tide left on each bank some feet of sloping mud-bank, on which a few rushes grew thinly. I was on the look-out for a shot at a deer, as my men were asking me to shoot them more venison, since they rarely tasted such good meat, and to meet their wishes the "Express" was in my hands ready for instant use. At this juncture a tiger was seen leisurely rising out of the water a hundred yards on the right, and after shaking off the wet from its coat like a monstrous Newfoundland dog, it stood for a few moments among the sedges before it caught sight of the boat, and glared angrily at the strange apparition. The range had become short—about sixty or seventy yards—and the target was large and stationary, so that the first bullet sped true to the mark, and as the report of the rifle thundered through the woods the tiger, rearing up on its hind legs, fell over on its back, beating the air with its fore-paws, gnashing its gruesome teeth, and emitting deep gurgling growls in the agony of death. A second and a third bullet fired in rapid succession made an end of the jungle king, a rather poor specimen of royalty as to robes and portliness, for, though of a fair length—nine feet nine inches—he was in low condition, and had a pale yellow skin, on which the stripes, as well as the ground-colour, were of dull tints, as if his Majesty had not enjoyed the best of health for some time, and required a change of air and a beef diet. Having swam over the creek, and being intent upon his toilet, this tiger had allowed us to steal up to him within easy range, when some

slight sound had attracted his attention to the boat, and moving his curiosity had sealed his fate. The first "Express" bullet had pierced and completely shattered his heart, the second had smashed his lungs, and the third had passed through his ribs.

Taking out the entrails, and casting them into the creek, as an offering to the crocodiles, sharks, and turtle, a rope fastened round his body, behind the arms, was thrown over the branch of the nearest tree, and the fore-part was hoisted by our united efforts two or three feet above the ground; next, with the other end of the rope tied round the loins and far lighter half of the body, the hind parts were lifted above the fore, and all made fast and left suspended, as the boat would hold no more; nor could we pick up the stag shot in the early morning, which remained safe and untouched as we had left it, vultures and carrion-crows being rare in the distant "Soonderbuns."

Landing the shore party on the north bank of the creek at its mouth, I was soon on board my boat, glad to get a bath and a change of clothing, for the day had been sultry, our work hard in a close atmosphere, and my shooting suit was saturated with blood and perspiration. During the night the wind changed to the north-west, a short, chopping sea got up with the flood, and made the boat pitch and roll till high-water about midnight, after which there followed a perfect calm, and all hands enjoyed the peaceful rest our labours had well earned.

The next morning there was much to be done, as the tiger and deer had to be brought in, and I was desirous of visiting the islet and to explore its shores. To do both, I took five men in the jolly-boat, and hoisting its split-lug, we crossed over, close-hauled with a smart north-westerly breeze, ordering the big boat to go up the creek when the flood made to bring the game, and to await my return to its former anchorage.

The strong ebb carried us down to a point of the island where the forest ended, and the long spit of sand pushed out

seawards, but the flood setting in about eight bells (nautical again), we slowly coasted along shore with oars, keeping a look-out for deer.

The forest consisted chiefly of "Soonderee" trees, from which these wild seaboard regions take their name, but a species of trees growing near the water's edge to the height of twenty or thirty feet, with small bright green leaves, covered certain points and miniature capes, which I have observed to be a favourite with spotted deer here and elsewhere. Among groves of these trees a good many deer were nibbling the delicate green leaves, and in the course of the morning gave me several shots, but I succeeded in securing only one stag, the finest yet shot, the others including one or two wounded ones, getting away where they could not be followed.

As a rule, I do not think the thick woods are much resorted to by aught besides monkeys and jungle-fowl, for they grow so thickly and form such a tangled and impenetrable covert, that even wild beasts find some difficulty in traversing them, except by paths opened in their passage from side to side. The sportsman who attempts pursuit in such coverts, unavoidably makes so much noise through the rustling of leaves and branches, that his approach is announced, and the animal he is after makes off, going ten yards to his one, and that one gained in a stooping posture, hampered by trees above and sharp stumps below; and lastly, he may come upon a crouching tiger, when his head is jammed between branches and his arms almost pinioned by the undergrowth. On the whole, it is a most unsatisfactory kind of sport at all times, and except for three months in the year a very unhealthy one to boot.

As we were about to re-cross to the eastern bank of the river, an immense crocodile came in view lying open-mouthed upon a tiny sandy spit, up which the tide was slowly creeping. The reptile lay fast asleep, head towards the water, and its curved tail on the gently sloping shore. It seemed to be airing its hideous mouth and throat in the genial sunshine and the crisp cool breeze; to make the picture complete, there ought

to have been the attendance of those little birds, which are said to have in their care the tongue and teeth of the crocodile, but they were absent on this and every other similar occasion of which I have had experience. Preserving the utmost silence, the tide gently swept us up to within fifty yards of the sleeping beauty, whose slumbers were disturbed by a ball behind the fore-paw, and for a moment I thought he was killed outright as he rolled over on his side, but after a struggle he came upon an even keel (nautical term), and waddled into the water with a second ball in his head close to the right eye, the mark showing bright red at once before he dived into the stream with a furious sweep of his tail; but rising again in the shoal water to breathe as they often do after receiving a severe wound, or doing so unconsciously as frequently happens, it was struck again by a third ball in the back just behind the neck. After this it sank and I feared I had lost it. In ten minutes however, it rose again and made for the shore, which I allowed it to ascend, where its death throes were terrific, as with distended jaws it rolled over and over several times, snapping its teeth and striking with its monstrous tail, exhibiting the most awful rage and agony. For a few instants I neglected to fire on witnessing struggles such as I had never before seen, ended at length by one more bullet between the eyes at short range, and I took possession of one of the very largest crocodiles I had ever seen. He was twenty-two feet in length and was of astonishing bulk of body. The head was short compared with his length, and of immense breadth between the eyes and back of the skull.

This monster could have carried off a tiger as easily as a cat does a rat, and could have bitten in two the body of a man as easily as a boy does an apple. I should have liked much to have secured his bones for the Calcutta Museum, but was unable to do so, and had to be satisfied with the head only, with which and the stag I rejoined the boat, and at once taking advantage of the remaining quarter of the flood, made as much way as was possible before evening set in.

The time at my disposal did not admit of a longer stay, or I am sure more good sport might have been enjoyed, especially further up the creek than I had penetrated, for it appeared that we had hit off by mere accident a favourite haunt of the *R. Sondaicus* and of the tiger. Deer are plentiful in many parts of the "Soonderbuns," probably nowhere more so than in places in Sagor island, where I have seen them as thick as rabbits on a warren; but on the other hand, the ground to be got over is so unpleasant that a tithe of the numbers in a good stalking country would afford infinitely better sport, since sport does not consist in the mere killing of game, but in the enjoyment of open air and wild scenery, joined to the exercise of skill and endurance of toil followed by merited success in moderation.

When some estimable lady or gentleman dies full of years, we are told, as if it were something to make our eyes start out of our heads with amazement, that she or he (I think it is generally the former), remembered hearing of tigers having been killed within a few miles (distance rarely exactly defined) of Government House. No doubt they have been so shot, but without pretence to being estimable or venerable, or desirous of alarming the distinguished company which takes the air daily on the Strand, or in the Eden Gardens, I can say that I have not only heard of, but have seen a tiger—a wild one—not many miles from Belvedere; and furthermore, have put up and wounded a rhinoceros no further off, and that I believe will surprise some people even more.

The latter encounter came about in this way. In the course of a hunting-meet with the old Tent Club, it transpired in conversation with some villagers that some of them had heard of, while others had seen, a huge beast like an elephant without tusks or a trunk, and which they were told was a rhinoceros (a creature with which they were unacquainted except by report), as being in a jungle not far off our hunting-ground. Accordingly, on the close of the day's hunting, the members of the Club returning to Calcutta, one of us remained behind to verify the report,

and was conducted the following morning to a patch of jungle on the banks of the Pealee river, a mile or two from camp, and there shown fresh footprints which were, beyond all doubt, those of a large rhinoceros.

Ordering some elephants and a portion of the camp to remain at a village close by, our friend hastened to Calcutta with the information of what he had seen with his own eyes, and to form a small party to beat up the quarters of the distinguished stranger, which being promptly done, the next evening five of us were on our way to the appointed place of meeting.

Driving in our dog-carts to within a few miles of Barra-poor, we mounted our horses, and leaving the road, we went on five or six miles to the banks of the Pealee, overtaking our servants, who had been despatched early in the day with guns, rifles, and other requisites.

Arriving at the river side, where two boats had been hired for our use, we found a strong flood tide flowing in, and were thus detained till past midnight. Under the beams of a brilliant moon near its full, and of a clear sky, sparkling with myriads of stars, an *al fresco* supper was prepared on the river bank, to which full justice was done; but neither it, nor draughts of iced claret-cup could outweigh the discomforts arising from the sultry air and the stings of swarms of rapacious and venomous mosquitoes, till we stepped into the canoes on the ebb setting in, and gliding down stream we met the southerly air blowing up the river, which drove away the pestilent little tormentors and lulled us to sleep. Landing again an hour before daybreak, our early breakfast was got ready while the elephants were sent for to camp, from a village distant a mile or two, where they had been ordered to remain till our arrival, so that the jungle near the camp might not be disturbed by their movements and foraging.

The information which awaited us on coming ashore was that the fresh spoor round the covert showed that up to the previous evening Rhino had not deserted it or crossed

the river, but he had not been actually seen. This was, on the whole, most encouraging; our apprehension being that, rendered suspicious by the attentions he was receiving, our visitor might have considered it advisable to change his quarters.

Having with us four elephants but no "howdahs," it was resolved to beat him out, and shoot him from positions taken up outside, when he should break cover. The patch of jungle to be explored was not more than eight or ten acres in extent, lying on the river bank, and nowhere dense, consisting, as it did, of dwarf palm intermingled with tamarisk bushes and high grasses; in short, as it appeared afterwards, we might have walked through it on foot. Fifty yards on its north, a water-course running down to the river had been dammed up near its mouth, on which the spoor was thick, proving that it had been much used by Rhino in his nocturnal promenades, although abundant proofs of his presence were not wanting elsewhere about the jungle side.

Our preparations being completed soon after sunrise, active operations commenced by the advance of the elephants, under the command of G. G. M., assisted by a gentleman, introduced to us who had not the privilege of his acquaintance as the "Bloody Captain," whom we found awaiting us in camp. The breeze blowing from the south, the beaters formed line on that side of the covert, while we took post on the opposite, along the water-course, which afforded some sort of cover, and in which direction, but at some little distance, there still stood a remnant of the "Soonderbun" forest. C. B. S. and I stood one on each side of the dam, in full expectation of that becoming presently the line of retreat when the enemy took flight. D. R. S. stood fifty paces west of us, partially concealed behind a bush; and lastly, D., from opposite its north-west angle, watched the jungle on our right.

Barely ten minutes after the beat commenced the shrill cries of the elephants, the shouts of their drivers, and a shot

or two fired by M. announced that the rhinoceros had been found, and warned us to be prepared. Ten minutes more passed in silence, during which the elephants, frightened out of the jungle at the first sight of their much dreaded enemy, had been brought again into line under proper control, and we, who were waiting outside with fingers on the triggers of our rifles, and eyes searching the openings in the covert, were becoming impatient, when D., who was on the extreme right up the water-course, was seen to dart out from his ambuscade, and, running some distance westward, to fire two shots in rapid succession at a huge bull rhinoceros, which was making off at full speed in the open fields beyond D. Dashing to my right, I obtained a couple of shots with a heavy rifle at a long range, but my hand being unsteady from running, one ball missed altogether, dropping beneath him, and the other told loudly on some spot forward, but not fatally. D. R. S. also fired without effect, and although we followed the cowardly brute on a bloody trail for two or three miles up to the bit of forest above mentioned, and afterwards some way into it, we saw no more of him.

Our disappointment at such a termination of an adventure commencing so auspiciously was extreme. M. had come upon the rhinoceros fast asleep in the covert, and was about to fire, when the elephants were put to flight on its rising up suddenly in front of them, not one of them being a trained "howdah" carrier, and its snorts proving too much for their nerves. However, he fired a random shot or two over the stern of his elephant as it bolted with the rest, and thought that one ball took effect somewhere or other, he could not tell where, probably in the back. The wind blowing in our faces the beast certainly could not have scented us, and we lay very still too, but he may, on reaching the skirts of the covert, have caught a glimpse of something to cause him to turn away westward, and so have escaped us. D. got two barrels at him from a hundred yards, and being a steady marksman could hardly have missed him altogether; however, he got away without leaving much blood on his tracks, and the pace

at which he scuttled along proved his wounds to have been slight.

On returning to it, the covert from which we had started the rhinoceros was thoroughly examined, and found to exhibit marks of a pretty long residence, completely verifying the villagers' story. It was a strange lair for an animal so shy and suspicious, being small in extent, open on three sides, and bounded by the river on the fourth. Directly opposite and across the water was a hamlet which we visited that afternoon to institute further inquiries regarding these animals, and were told that they were occasionally to be seen on that bank of the river a little further south, and that our friend of the morning was the first and only one known to have crossed it to the west bank, in which direction the country was open and cultivated; but he had done so some time ago, and had shown himself often below the bank when he bathed and disported himself in the river.

This beast looked a particularly fine specimen of his species, and his spoor proved that also; the horn, however, did not strike us as large. His speed across the fields caused as much surprise as his timidity. No doubt the sudden appearance of the elephants, creatures altogether new to him, had proved a shock to his nerves, and made him the poltroon he proved to be, for the rhinoceros of the Soonderbuns knows nothing of any animal larger than himself, being in this respect unlike those of Assam and the Terai, which are in the habit of meeting with wild elephants very frequently. Had a lucky shot broken a leg bone he might have been overtaken and slain, but failing that, or a bullet striking some soft place, his escape was inevitable.

Seeing how little they are disturbed, and how rarely killed by "Shikarees" and others, these great beasts must be multiplying fast in the wilderness of the Soonderbuns, for they have no foe to dread but man, and must be so acclimatised to the unwholesome climate as never to have had the attention of the Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal directed to their unhappy surroundings. Probably tigers and crocodiles

may carry off a calf now and then, and the young may be destroyed when severe cyclones sweep over their resorts; but, after all, such casualties are few and far between, while at other times their lives must be as smooth and easy as those of Archdeacons and members of Boards of Revenue. There must therefore be many places in those woods in which they are plentiful, even allowing for epidemics, which are well known to occur among wild animals, such as that in Upper Assam in 1869-70, which carried off great numbers of deer and wild buffalo, and that of about the same time which destroyed many bears in Birbhoom and the Santhal Pergunnahs. Allowing for all causes affecting their increase, it still seems certain that rhinoceri must be now more numerous in some portions of the "Soonderbuns" than they ever were before, more so perhaps than anywhere in Assam and the Terai at the present day. It is unfortunate therefore for the sportsman that their haunts are so unsuited for stalking that none but the most enthusiastic care to seek them. A few native gunners make their pursuit a profitable one, and by crawling noiselessly up to them when feeding or wallowing, till within fifteen or twenty yards, despatch them with heavy charges, or, severely wounding them, follow their tracks a day or two after and secure the spoils. It may be added, for the information of those unacquainted with the "Soonderbuns," that elephants cannot be made use of in them, in consequence of the thick growth of trees and the infinity of small and great muddy creeks which intersect them in all directions, and which cannot be crossed by elephants on account of the deep mud of their sides and beds.

