

SPORTS AT BARODA.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

BARODA, JUNE 10.

I HAVE now to describe the sports that came off last evening; they consisted of wrestling matches, **rhinoceros** fight, ram fights, and buffalo fights.

Amongst the people present in the balcony, I noticed the new Gaekwar seated to the left of Sir Richard Meade, who was rendered conspicuous by his black silk hat. On his right were the late claimants, Gunputrao and Khunderao, who were courted as much as was proper by the gentleman between them and the Gaekwar. The principal officers of the Residency and Brigade were also present. Sir T. Madava Row stood behind the Governor-General's Agent all through the performances. Anna Sahib Maney, an uncle of H. H. Jumna Bai, with little Tarabai, sat next to the youthful Gaekwar. Her Highness herself with the ladies of her court were ensconced above, and Mrs. Coles, the wife of the newly-appointed Police Superintendent, kept them company.

The wrestling matches opened the sports, which were commenced soon after the principal spectators had taken their seats. Before describing these, I must briefly sketch the surroundings, which, I trust, will give your readers an idea of the position of the scene in which they occurred.

The drive into the place set apart for these demonstrations was the same as has already been described, but from the Clock Tower gates you proceeded two hundred yards further, where you turned to the left through a dirty looking lane as ever one could see, and here stopping out of the carriage we entered a dismal looking gate. After this we passed through a court filled with earthen pots, dirty metal utensils, and other rubbish which lead to a short flight of steps, ending in a dark and dirty passage, that at half-past four in the evening had to be illuminated by the flame of a cotton wick floating in a small mud saucer. Passing this we reached the refreshment room, and then the balcony where seats were provided for invited visitors. On arriving here, the sight which presented itself was really picturesque. Immediately in front was the arena, enclosed by strong lofty walls, with loop holes let in every twenty-five paces, except at the east and west of it, where they were divided sufficiently wide to admit of the entrance of two elephants abreast. Further on were erected rough stands, which, together with the splendid trees in the neighbourhood, and the entire length of the arena walls filled with men, gaily attired in all colours was a very fine sight. I omitted to mention that within the arena itself, and immediately fronting the balcony containing the Gaekwar and his staff, was a railed enclosure within which all the matches of the evening took place. This was surrounded four deep with living beings. A couple of dome shaped mausoleums, one to the right and the other to the front of the balcony, as well as all the houses and the ruins from which the sports could be visible, were thronged with men.

The wrestling opened with a couple of herculean Mahrattas. The muscles of these men were developed to an enormous extent; they were certainly massive men, but not in the light in which your special termed the policeman Gujanund Vittul. Each arm was a weight that no ordinary mortal could bear for ten minutes, but still those two wrestled and closed with each other, one on the ground now and a moment after the other; they continued thus till one of them was floored on his back, which was the sign of his defeat. A number of other competitors at this time also joined, and in the enclosure were no less than six pairs, all as earnest as it is possible for any man to be. It would be impossible to describe the feats of each single couple. I therefore picked upon a Hindoo and a Mussulman, who appeared to me to be the best matched pair in the whole ground; and I was not wrong. The usual flourishes to find out each other's strength were gone through and then followed the "tug of war." The excitement between them soon passed to the balcony, and all in it watched them eagerly. Now one succeeded in gripping the waistband of the other and lost it, and was almost floored, but a cross movement of the leg saved him; the other was soon in a similar position to that in which his opponent was, and met with a like fate, till after repeated ups and downs, whilst the umpire and lookers-on were siding now with one and now with another, both fell to the ground simultaneously. The victory appeared to be the Hindoo's, but in another moment an equality was gained. Excitement was thus maintained at its highest pitch, till the umpire observing the action of the chests and stomachs of the gladiators deemed it time to separate them, and the match was declared a drawn affair.

The **rhinoceros** fight followed the wrestlers. The two monsters entered through opposite doors, and were goaded on by their keepers to face each other. This they did, and both cautiously advanced, but when within a couple of inches, their behaviour must have astonished their respective backers, for instead of any hostile action, the huge brutes appeared to kiss each other and their mute glances seemed to enquire the cause of their being disturbed from their comfortable stables. The opportunity, however, was not to be lost, and while in such friendly intercourse, their cruel tormentors spear-ed both the beasts simultaneously, and each one, I suppose, imagining the other to be the cause of the pain suffered, the two animals tested their horns. They rubbed these together and then tried their strength. With their mouths sunk into the earth they pressed against each other with their powerful necks, for several minutes with indifferent results, till at last the horns slipped, and one of the animals fell on his knees with the tusk of the other stuck under his large jaw. With shrieks and groans he tried his best to extricate himself, but for every movement of his the other was prepared. All this time it must not be forgotten that the brutes were being goaded to fury to annihilate the friendly feeling which at their first meeting they appeared to manifest, and the keepers succeeded in infuriating the monsters to such a state as alarmed even themselves. They then had recourse to cold water to cool the ardour of the animals. They were separated at last, but not before blood was drawn, so it can well be understood how cruel the trial must have been, as the rhinoceros is covered with a skin like iron, and to pierce through it, strength of the mightiest description is necessary. One of the brutes fairly turned tail and ran. Their legs were then chained and they were taken out through opposite gates.

Rams were then brought in to add to the pleasure of the evening. Five pairs appeared simultaneously and ten heads were butted together. These were succeeded by five others, and so on, the owners of the animals with frantic gesticulations and cheering sounds urging them on to do their best, till matters were becoming rather serious, as a fight between the men was imminent, when the rams were removed to give place to the most harrowing sport of the evening, the buffalo fight.

A pair of well-fed, rounded animals were brought in, the horns of both of them curled. At first, unlike others of their training, they displayed a reluctance to engage with each other, and one of them was decidedly showing the white feather. This uncertainty however was not allowed to last, as their keepers with great perseverance cheered, abused and goaded them to action. The fight at last commenced with great zeal on both sides, and a number of butts were exchanged. The rapidity with which the brutes moved their heads in their efforts to entangle their horns was astonishing, and the rattling noise made by their exchange of butts was loud and rapid. The pluckier of the two, in his frantic efforts to overthrow his antagonist, got his foreleg across his horn, and was immediately thrown on his side, the other meanwhile fixing his horn into the side of the fallen brute, ripped the skin of his stomach, and

gored him over and over again. The sight was positively repulsive and all the efforts of the keepers to separate the pair were futile. Had it not been for the pluck and presence of mind of one of the men present, who tying a strong cord to the hind leg of the conqueror dragged him off, the other might have been goaded to death.

The presents followed this last contest, and it was a good stroke of policy to distribute them both to the conquered and the conquerors. Turbans and gold edged cloths with gold bangles were given to the wrestlers, and other gifts of less value shared out to the others who contributed towards the amusement of the evening.

At best the sports are inhuman, and it was a matter of observation (especially by the ladies) how such things could be not only patronized but actually concocted by Sir T. Madava Row and Sir R. Meade. There is certainly a political motive for it, and that is to show the young Gaekwar to the populace, and to let them see that everything will remain as it was in the time of Khunderao and Mulharao.