

Lives of the Lindsay

Oriental Miscellanies;

COMPRISING

ANECDOTES OF AN INDIAN LIFE,

BY THE [HON. ROBERT LINDSAY,]

A.W.C.L. CRAWFORD

NARRATIVES OF

THE BATTLE OF CONJEVERAM, &c.,

BY THE HON. JAMES AND JOHN LINDSAY;

JOURNAL OF

AN IMPRISONMENT IN SERINGAPATAM,

BY THE HON. JOHN LINDSAY;

AND

AN ADVENTURE IN CHINA,

BY THE HON. HUGH LINDSAY.

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ANECDOTES OF AN INDIAN LIFE,

BY

THE HON. ROBERT LINDSAY.

rates ; and we should eventually lose our character for activity and intrepidity, which alone supports our name in India.

In the cold season, we had shooting in perfection—peacocks, partridges, wild cocks and hens, and waterfowl in abundance ; but it was dangerous to shoot on foot, from the multiplicity of tigers and leopards that infested the woods. One day, while shooting with my Highland servant, John MacKay, he suddenly exclaimed, in his own broad accent, “Gude G—, Sir ! what ca’ ye that ? ” pointing at the same time to a huge animal in the path before him.—“That, John, is a royal tiger !”—“Shall I tak a whack at him, sir ?”—“No, John ; ‘let be for let be’ is the surest plan.”

Another day, having marked a peacock into a large tamarind tree, I took aim and was about to draw the trigger, when I observed a leopard rapidly descending from one of the branches, on which he had been basking. I of course made a speedy retreat. There is seldom any danger to be apprehended when you can fix the eye of these cowardly animals ; they leap upon you when off your guard, not when discovered, and their blow is generally fatal.

In this country tigers of all kinds were extremely numerous, and there was a liberal reward from government for catching them. We caught from fifty to sixty annually, which afforded us much amusement. When a bullock is carried off by a tiger, the farmer gives information to the office ; the *panjalla*, or tracksman, traces him

by his footsteps to his den ; the drums are beat, the nets are collected, and the haunt is surrounded with the net to prevent his escape. A temporary stage is erected for the chief and his attendants. Elephants are ordered out to beat down the brushwood ; they soon succeed in rousing the tiger, and the gentlemen have an opportunity of shooting the animal in perfect safety. Upon one of these occasions we successively shot four tigers ; the crowd, supposing them all killed, jumped into the enclosure, when a fifth tiger sprung out from under a bush, and killed a man. This mode of catching is seldom practised, as it is oppressive to the inhabitants, occupying their time for several days. Another method, more simple and equally effectual, is resorted to.

Large traps, constructed of wood and turf, of an enormous size, not less than thirty-six feet long, with four doors successively opening from each other, are built in such places as the tigers frequent. The bait is a living bullock in the centre. The tiger may enter on either side ; on treading on a spring, the two counter doors drop, and he is secured, while the bullock remains in perfect safety.

A tube or cylinder, of about twelve feet long and eighteen inches' calibre—(made of mats and fortified with rope or ground rattans, and secured at the further end by two sticks run across it)—is now introduced ; and the tiger, being previously teased in the trap and abundantly anxious to escape, seeing this ray of daylight conveyed into his prison through the tube, gathers him-

self together, and darts into it, in hopes of finding a passage at the opposite extremity, but is stopped by the cross-bars. A man stands by to drive in two other bars across the end by which he entered.

No mouse was ever more inoffensive than this powerful animal now finds himself; the whole space he has to move in is only eighteen inches' calibre, which barely allows him to move, and I have repeatedly taken him by the whiskers with impunity.

But his troubles are not at an end. He is now lifted upon a cart and conveyed to the town. The place chosen for his public *début* was generally an old mosque surrounded by a high wall, enclosing full half an acre of ground. In this enclosure a buffalo awaited his arrival, and stages were erected for spectators to see the sport. It signifies but little whether the buffalo is in his wild or domestic state; they have in either case the same antipathy to the tiger, and attack him wherever they meet. In the present instance the buffalo was in his tame state, brought from his daily occupation in the field, and submissive to his driver.

But the moment the tiger entered, his character changed; he foamed at the mouth with rage, and with fury attacked his opponent. The tiger put himself on the defensive, threw himself on his back, biting and tearing the limbs of his antagonist, but the buffalo soon overpowered him and threw him in the air, tossing him from horn to horn with wonderful dexterity, until he was dead.

The leopard shows much more play, when thrown into the enclosure with the buffalo; in an instant, he is on the top of his back, and makes him completely furious; he then jumps from limb to limb, wounding him in every direction—but whenever the buffalo can hit him a fair blow, he is done for.

We sometimes, though not often, fell in with a rhinoceros. He is of a morose, sulky disposition, and shuns the other beasts of the forest. During the rains, one of a very large size lost his way and took refuge in a thicket within a few miles of the town. The drums, as usual, beat to arms, and the whole population turned out. The situation was favourable,—three small hillocks close to each other, covered with brushwood, and surrounded with water.

But to rouse him from his den was a business of no small difficulty. Finding himself surrounded, he lay close. We fired into the thicket and threw fireworks, without effect. At last we got a very long rope, and tied a log of wood to the middle of it; we then passed the ends to the two opposite hillocks, holding the weight suspended over the place where the rhinoceros lay, and at a signal given, we dropped it directly upon the animal's back. On this, he made a furious charge on our centre, but we received him with a shower of iron balls, which compelled him to retrograde. We continued to fire at him, with no effect whatever, owing to the toughness of his coat of mail. I ordered one of my servants to aim at him between the folds under the neck, in a

horizontal direction from the lower ground ; upon which he at last fell. I had then an opportunity of examining his body, and found that, (except the last,) he had not sustained any injury from the many balls fired at him. And I was not a little pleased to extricate myself from the crowd ; for the inhabitants from the adjoining villages, with a savage enthusiasm, had besmeared themselves with his blood, and were dancing around him with frantic wildness. Every part of the carcase possessed, in their opinion, charms for one disease or another, and was carried off piece-meal. It was with much difficulty that I secured the head and horn, which I brought home with me, and have now in my possession. I had also the curiosity to secure a collop, with which I made a very tolerable steak. Upon the first view we had of him, when charging us on the hill, he had all the appearance of a hog of enormous size. I never knew an instance of his coming in contact with the elephant or buffalo, but, from the powerful weapon on his nose, I think he would prove a formidable antagonist.

I must mention another animal, a native of these hills, the Gayaul, nowhere described in Buffon's natural history. He is about the size of a large English ox, but stouter in the body, and well made. He partakes of the cow and buffalo, but is evidently of a separate class. Attempts were frequently made to send them to Calcutta, but they always died when brought to the low country. Their milk was yellow as saffron, and in

considerable quantity. They are domesticated in the Chittagong and Tipperah hills, where I have seen them in considerable numbers.*

On visiting the country where the greater part of my elephants were caught, I fell in with a small tribe of hill-people, living more in the style of the brute creation than any I had ever met with. They are well known by the name of Cookies, and have their habitations on spreading trees, to defend them from beasts of prey. They live on wild honey and the fruits of the forest, and have but little connection with the people of the low country. I procured one of their children, whom I endeavoured to educate, but found his capacity very inferior; he was fonder of the society of a tame monkey than any other companion, nor did he, during the course of one year, acquire a single word of the language of the country. At last, he made his escape into the woods, and I never saw him again.†

* * * * *

The year 1787 had now commenced, and I began to

* See, for a full description of this animal—(the *Bos Gavæus*)—communicated by Mr. Colebrooke, Vol. viii., pp. 511 sqq., of the Asiatic Researches.

† An interesting account of “the Kookies or Lunctas,” by John MacRae, Esq., will be found in the Asiatic Researches, Vol. vii., pp. 183 sqq.—Their living habitually in trees has been ascertained to be a mistake, occasioned by their practice, on expeditions of war, of march-

feel the effects of the laborious and active life I had led during eighteen years' residence in India. Upon balancing my accounts for the two preceding years, I found that my affairs had been more prosperous than I imagined. I therefore prepared, with a glad heart, to return home. . . . I embarked for England in January, 1789, on board the *Britannia*, Captain Cumming, and arrived there after a tedious voyage of six months. I found many of my friends in London in as good health as when I left them, particularly my excellent brother and best friend, Colin, then General Lindsay, who accompanied me to Scotland, having travelled the same road with me twenty years before, on my way to Spain. . . . The subsequent years of my life have been devoted to the education of my children and improvement of my estate, in both of which I have been most ably assisted by my best and faithful friend, my wife. It is now near thirty-five years since we were happily united, and during this long period, I have enjoyed in her society, and that of our numerous family, as much comfort and happiness as this world can afford. To her, with perfect gratitude and affection, I consign the care of the foregoing pages for the perusal of my family—thus fulfilling my father's advice in transmitting to my children this trifling memorial of myself.

ing by night only, and lying concealed during the day in their hammocks, "which they fasten among the branches of the loftiest trees, so that they cannot be perceived by any person passing underneath."

In consequence of my sight being much impaired by a cataract in my eyes, I write with difficulty ; I have therefore dictated this sketch to my three daughters, Anne, Elizabeth, and Cecilia.

ROBERT LINDSAY.

Balcarres, February 26, 1821.