EXTRACTS.

A LADY'S REMINISCENCES OF TIGER-HUNTING.

ONCE upon a time, and more years ago than I care to count or choose to chronicle, the regiment of Irregular Cavalry to which my husband belonged was stationed at Shahjehanpore, in Rohilcund. This fertile province, stretching between the Ganges and the Himalayas to the west of Oude, includes a tract of country (lying immediately at the foot of those mountains) known as the "Terai," or, as the term might be translated, the "Moist Country," an appropriate name for a district which receives the water drainage from a thousand hills, arresting on its flat expanse the haste of countless rivers, and changing myriads of torrents and brooks into lakes and swamps. This tract, though varying greatly in width, extends along the whole range from Bhotan to the Punjab, and throughout maintains the same general characteristics. Forests, marshes, and plains, covered with gigantic flowering grasses, alternate to form a land where Nature, in all the luxuriance of tropical life, reigns almost undisturbed by man and his labors. During many months the breath of the wilderness, overcharged with the humidity and exhalation from the teeming ground, is fatal to human life. Vegetation riots supreme in rank vitality and countless forms of beauty; deep woods shade the retreat of vast herds of deer; channels of water-courses, covered with almost inpenetrable thickets of the smaller plants and bushes, hide the tiger in his darkened lair; the python lies coiled in the swamp; alligators congregate in swarms, sprawling on the surface of the sun-warmed mud, their rough and scaly bodies looking like masses of decaying timber. In the deepest and most secluded recesses of the jungle, the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the buffalo make their home, rarely disturbed, save by some adventurous hunter, whose indomitable love of sport forces him into these wild fastnesses, reckless of fever, risk of starvation and peril of life and limb. Our little cantonment of Shahjehanpore is situated about sixty miles from the southern edge of this belt of the Terai and in the midst of a highly-cultivated and populous country. Removed thus from the malarious influences of the forest, it is still within easy travelling distance of a region where, as described, large game of every kind abounds. In the winter months the Terai is not unhealthy—at least not in that portion of its length near us. Towards the south-east, in Assam and below the Darjeeling hills, where it spreads over lowlands seventy miles in breadth, fever lurks always; but here, from December to June, the traveller may pitch his tent under the magnificent timber trees, in the very haunts of the wild creatures I have named, and take no harm. It was at the close of the first year of my married life that I first visited the Terai. I had suffered much during the preceding summer, my first hot weather in India, chiefly from what appeared to me the extreme aridity of the climate: I felt parched and withered by it. I used to awake at night and fairly gasp for breath at touching the warm dust which would accumulate on my pillow. Everything that my fingers rested on seemed gritty with the hot sand, and an indescribable longing for coolness and damp, which could not be gratified, was one of my most painful trials. I have

often rushed out in the middle of the night to the well in the garden, to dabble hands and feet on the wet masonry. The impression thus made outlasted its cause; and even when the cold weather came, and with it renewed health and spirits, I still craved for greenwood and running water. Then too for me there was no perfume in this Indian air—none of that indefinable delight of damp herbage and flowers which is never wanting in England. It is true, the babul, *Mimosa*, the citron, the Persian lilac, and a few other flowering shrubs in their season do load the breeze with the heavy fragrance of their blossoms, but they overdo it, and the fresh sparkling vivifying air of home was something never to be even counterfeited here. So one day, on my making a remark to this effect to my husband, A. replied,—"You may get a very good imitation of the air you are so fond of (not the healthiest, however, despite your praises) in almost all the forest districts of this country." Then I said,—"Bring me some forest districts." A. laughed. I continued,—"It's all very well for you brick-dust-colored people, who have been desiccated for years, till you don't remember the scent of the growing grass that rose from the lawn the mowers were working on, when you put your face out of your bedroom window at home, when you saw the rabbits brush the dew of the turf as they scuttled by: very well for you to abuse the dear old English air, and call it unhealthy; but it never hurt me whereas this place suffocates me." A. looked doubtful. "Well," I said, "it quite spoils my complexion"—A. looked unhappy—"and my temper"—A. looked serious. I said,—"I assure you the sand-storms scratch lines upon my face, and they'll all turn to wrinkles in no time—witness Mrs. D." "Mrs. D. is a grandmother," said A., "and you are not." I allowed this, but asked if in the meantime I might live a little while in the forests. A. hummed and hawed, and finally said he would ask Mr. C. to dinner. Mr. C. was a brother officer of ours, and though quite a young man had already established a wide reputation as a sportsman; so I knew that that apparently inapposite remark of A.'s meant a consultation regarding some sylvan excursion, and was satisfied.

Mr. C. did come to dinner, and after a good deal of talk with A. about *nullahs* and *mahouts* and *howdahs* and *guddees* (this was the only word I understood, it means "donkeys," but I did not see any on our trip), it was settled that on the first of February we were to start for a shooting excursion to the Terai, obtaining a fortnight's leave of absence. Great and manifold were the preparations we made. I was told to remember all sorts of things which we were to take with us, without them we could have no comfort, and I sedulously forgot them all. A. was continually inquiring if the cook had salted humps enough, or tongues enough, or something equally absurd. One day I found a huge iron pan of burning charcoal in my drawing-room, and Mr. C. and A. awfully busy moulding and ranging into lines an immense number of glistening bullets on my hearth-rug (breech-loaders were not in those days). I in the meantime was engaged in preparing my wardrobe for the excursion, and having been warned of the heat of the sun, bought a new sun-shade, white lace over violet silk, and displayed it to A. in triumph, whereupon he, with a compliment to my taste, produced an enormous cotton umbrella with white calico sewn over it, and a thing like a punkah-frill all round, which he assured me was the "lady's new jungle-pattern parasol," and declared that the tigers and creatures wouldn't look at anything else. Then he made me bring an old straw hat with a broad brim I had for gardening in at home, over which he spread a quantity of cotton wool pulled out as loosely as possible, covering the whole with more white calico, making a close imitation of the top of a gigantic mushroom; all this amused him

and did not hurt me, but as to wearing such a thing—No. But it might do to sit upon, so I accepted it with graciousness. Then came the *howdah*, to be inspected, for we were to hunt, riding upon elephants. I knew, *i. e.* I thought I knew from pictures, the sort of thing put on elephants—all gold and silver and crimson velvet and fringe,—and to my astonishment I found in the verandah an immense square box of open cane-work without a lid. This was divided into two unequal divisions by a board running across, in each of which was a narrow-cushioned seat. In the front partition were two roughened iron plates like carriage steps to stand upon, and a narrow tray with partitions for ammunition was fixed across the front just beneath the top rail, which was of iron and intended to receive the barrels of the guns, to be arranged two and two on either side of the occupant of the *howdah*. Two short iron chains depended from the frame work of massive wood on which the *howdah* rested : to these an immense rope, intended to girth the elephant with four folds, was attached. I thought it looked rather snug altogether, the seat in the back part of the *howdah* being intended for me. The *khawas*, as it is called, I was told, was ordinarily meant for a man whose duty it would be to load, I offered to do this, and A. immediately picked out an immensely heavy gun—the lightest he had he said,—"a poly-grooved rifle" he called it—for me to experiment upon. The stupid thing was such a weight that I could hardly lift it. However I put in the gunpowder all right, and then a bullet sewn up in leather, which I patted in with a little polished mallet as far as its own depth in the barrel. Beyond this, however, the obstinate bullet refused to go, and A. was obliged to do it himself, which he did with a remark that I "wasn't quite strong enough for the place." He said, however, he would hand me over his cigar-case (a thing more like a dressing case) and a (fusee-box and "a flask," which was a quart bottle covered with leather with a silver cup that fitted on, and that I should find plenty of employment with the aid of a few novels and ginger-bread nuts. Well, we had everything ready in time. We sent off horses to ride a week before, with orders to wait for us on the banks of the Sadur. This beautiful stream (also called the Surjoo), and in its lower portion the Gogra river, is famous to sportsmen for the quantity and variety of game to be found along its borders, and for the size and abundance of fish in its waters. A. had been here before, years ago, and used to tell me stories about it before we were married, and I was very curious to see the places I had heard of. We travelled about fifty miles to the ferry in the course of one day in palanquins, and reached the bank about sunset. Mr. C. had undertaken to arrange that the elephants, both those we were to ride and those which were to be employed as beaters, some dozen in all, should *rendezvous* at this ferry, after being collected from the different Rajahs and native gentlemen of the province, who were good enough to lend them to us; but when we arrived we found only two waiting for us. Inquiry elicited no satisfactory answers, no one had seen or heard any thing of the others, and Mr. C., highly indignant and disturbed at the *contre-temps*, immediately mounted his horse to ride to the residences of the different owners to collect the elephants. This horse, a beautiful grey Arab, carried his rider, a very tall, powerful man, over ninety miles that night ; and Mr. C.'s voice hailing us in the morning awoke us with the tidings that the elephants were *en route* to join us. Of late years it has become the fashion to run down and depreciate the qualities of these superb horses, and indeed I think the Arabs I see in these days are not so handsome or so good as they used to be: but I used to love ours, and believed in them to any extent ; and I think the feat I have just recorded would not be easily repeated by Walers or

Stud-bred or English horses that seem to have replaced my pets in publi estimation.

I should mention that I made my trial trip on the back of an elephant on the evening we reached the Sadur, and crossed the river sitting on th pad. This is a huge cushion about three feet by five, and nearly a foo thick, having a hollow in the centre for the elephant's spine: on this th *howdah* or any other load is secured. The proper way to ride is to sit or the edge of the pad immediately behind the *mahout*, who bestrides the neck of the elephant having a foot on each side of him. The top of the *mahout's* head is then about level with the rider's knees, who can shoot over the *mahout*, or on the right or left, with equal ease. I sat sideways, with A. behind me holding me on. The stream was barely fordable we found, and once when the elephant sank down behind, suddenly A., to whom I had entrusted a glass shade of a lamp to carry, very nearly slid off into the stream, and grumbled because the water got into his boots. It was very nearly dark when we succeeded in crossing. Our tent, a small one for sleeping in, was pitched but a little way from the bank, and near it we found our horses (which had crossed in the ferry-boat) picketted. The remainder of our camp equipage had been sent on to a spot in the forest a few miles distant. The elephants were about half-way to this place. When Mr. C. joined us in the morning we rode by a capital bridle-path to meet them. We found nine of them altogether, a number less than we hoped for, but sufficient to form a line extended enough for our small party. A. and I had the *howdah*, Mr. C. preferring to shoot from the pad. Our elephant was made to kneel down, and a little ladder placed against his huge side, there being a door in the *howdah* to admit us. A. got up first, and then, he holding my hands, I climbed into my *khawas* without much trouble. When the animal rose, however, I had to clutch at the rail to prevent myself falling out backwards. This was at 11 A. M., and A. insisted on my putting on the mushroom hat, and really I found the broad verandah of it rather grateful to my eyes, and it was not heavy for its size. I had plenty of cushions besides. Then we formed our line, Mr. C.'s elephant about 120 yards to our left, with one beater beyond him, then five beaters between us, and one on our right. We were as yet but at the outskirts of the jungle, and the grass was not above three or four feet high. Here and there some small woods of Sissoo trees occurred and patches of thorny brushwood. For some time we saw only a few partridges, a quail or two, and a hare, but neither A. nor Mr. C. would look at them. A. stood with one foot on each iron step striding across the *howdah*, and swaying slightly with the motion held his rifle ready in both hands. I was just beginning to think that the amusement was becoming monotonous and of getting a book, for the hot sun and the slight rolling motion made me half sleepy, when two or three quick grunts, a slight trumpet from our elephant, and a rush of something at his feet, made me jump up. We had nearly walked over a whole colony of wild pigs, who scattered themselves in an instant, running at a tremendous pace, disappearing for a moment in a patch of grass, then re-appearing for another second to again vanish. A., who never seemed to notice them at first, presently fired, and I saw one of the biggest to our right check in his pace and stagger, but he was out of sight the next instant in the grass. Our line went steadily on, and as we reached the place our right hand beater stopped, lifted up his trunk, trumpeting. Then we went up and saw a big boar lying on his side with his flank crimson with blood, quite dead, the bullet having gone through his shoulder and heart. Poor beast, I was half sorry for him, and A. did not seem much pleased. He

muttered something about "couldn't ride them here, you know, else it would be bad form shooting pigs." I said the idea of riding him was absurd; his back was so much arched, and he had great tusks projecting from his lips, all covered with blood too. A. laughed and said, "ride after them, I meant." Then we had him lifted on to the pad and went on. Presently I saw a little animal about the same size, and nearly the same color as the pig, jump up and run even faster than that. A. put up his rifle, but lowered it immediately, and said "his horns are in velvet." This is what is called a "hog-deer," a very pretty little creature. We got plenty of them afterwards; they have little antlers with three points, each horn only about six inches long. At this season they had just commenced getting new ones, and little knobs on the head, covered with soft velvety down, were all that were to be seen in several instances. In others again, they were perfect. At 2 P. M., we halted under some shady trees and descended to lunch. The grass had gradually increased in height as we advanced, and when I got off the elephant I was quite surprised and a little dismayed to feel so utterly insignificant as I did. There was a little open space where our servants and their luncheon apparatus had established themselves, and a place for us to sit in, but it was all hemmed in by the long herbage, which was over the heads of A. and Mr. C., both taller than six feet, and therefore it was like being surrounded by a wall, we could see nothing beyond but the tops of the nearest trees, and I realized at once how utterly helpless one would be shooting on foot in such a place. Both the gentlemen pulled rather a long face about this grass; they said there was a great deal too much of it for tiger-shooting; that it had not been burned away half enough to give us much chance of real sport; that it would be easier to see a rabbit in thick gorse than a tiger in this sort of ground, and so went on growling till lunch was ready.

After the first surprise I rather liked it; it was quite cool and fresh and damp, and I made a little nest for myself and spread a thick shawl down in it, and enjoyed myself thoroughly, while Mr. C. told me some of his adventures with tigers and things in Central India, and A. lay full length on his back with a big cigar, and I thought went to sleep, till I saw him pull out an eternal note-book he always carried, and scribble away. Mr. C. jumped up and called the *mahouts*, got the *howdah* set straight, for it nearly always became crooked, slewed round, as A. said, on one side or another after a few hours, and urged us to get on. So we started again. In about half-an-hour one of the beaters trumpeted, and then another, one or two more hung back, and Mr. C., urging his elephant on, waved his arm to A., pointing to his front. Then said A.,—"Now look out, there is probably a tiger on foot; C. would not draw my attention to anything else." Before the words were out of his mouth, I, who was leaning forward to see if I could discover what A. was seemingly intent upon, saw just for one instant a flash of what looked like a long narrow piece of orange silk, with broad black bands across it, drawn through the grass just in front of us. My heart bounded to my lips, I could not help snatching at A.'s arm involuntarily, for that was my first tiger. I knew it in a moment, and I whispered, "Look there." My excitement, however, lost A. the shot. He was very good about it, and only said "his eyes might not be so bright as mine, but he rather thought he could see with them." And then I resolved that I would neither speak nor move again, not if all the tigers in the Terai should jump up before me. As ill luck would have it, we did not see the beast again, but he made a rush and broke through our line going back. Mr. C. fired at the place marked by the waving of the grass, but the chance had been thrown away, and I was utterly vexed at our loss. After this neither of the gentlemen would fire at deer or anything

else, hoping to put up another tiger. At length Mr. C., who had widened his distance from us, fired, first one shot, and then two more in rapid succession, and we immediately turned to join him. On our arrival we found that he had dismounted and was hard at work securing two immense snakes. The men we had with us thrashed them with big sticks to finish them. But they did not quite cease writhing, even when tied up in blankets and put on the elephants. One was close on twenty feet long, the other sixteen. The largest was about nine inches in diameter. The skin is very elastic, and the pattern on it reminds me of what is called oil-cloth (such as is used at home in dressing-rooms, passages, &c.,) in which the markings are made in little squares. I was told the big one could probably kill and swallow a hog-deer, and I can easily believe it. These were pythons, the Asiatic representative of the boa. It was just sunset when we reached our camp, a very pretty place. A level piece of sward, turfed almost like an English lawn, with some young trees grouped to give plenty of shade, extended along the bank of a river flowing from the mountains to a lake about four miles distant from us. This bank was elevated above the water-course about twenty feet, and a road ran parallel with the bank. Between the road and the stream our three large tents were pitched in a line as close to one another as the ropes and tent-pegs would admit. In front of the centre tent, a *shamiana*, a sort of canvas portico, was raised, and carpets spread beneath it. This is in camp the lounge, where ladies and gentlemen resort to chat. We made little use of it, being out all the day, but in the evening we would sit here and burn a big fire in the open air beyond. The interior of the centre tent was our dining-room, and very comfortable it looked. We brought with us all the usual peraphernalia ; and it was difficult to believe, when sitting at the table bright with lamps and glass and flowers and all the rest of it, that we were nearly a hundred miles from any other civilized beings. A. was in command of the wing of his regiment then, and we had a regular daily supply of bread, vegetables, &c., brought out from Shahjehanpore on camels. Our letters and newspapers reached us as usual. In fact, we did not "rough i" in the very least. I was delighted with the whole arrangement, but in the night I dreamt of tigers and nothing but tigers, at least half-a-dozen times. I awoke once hearing a long melancholy cry, and my mind still full of tigers, I awoke A. and asked if that tiger was not very close. A. pooh-poohed the idea, and said it was a wolf, and added that if I lay awake all night, I very probably should hear a tiger, but that he didn't see being disturbed if I did, and added "you've got the tiger fever," but refused to explain what he meant, and went to sleep again.

The next morning we all got up very early and explored the neighbourhood of our camp while breakfast was being prepared. We went down to the river, and presently A. called my attention to a mark in the damp sand, something like a dog's foot-print, but as big as a man's stretched out hand, and nearly circular. This was repeated again and again, for it was the track of a large tiger which had passed here within two hundred yards of our tents last night. Following this up we came to a multitude of such marks, and we found that a regular pathway had been marked across the sand to the water by tigers only. At breakfast, I asked A. what he meant by "tiger fever," and was told that excitable people, such as I, had always their minds so full of ideas connected with this animal, that they almost excluded, after the first day's pursuit, all other thoughts by day and dreams by night, and this was tiger fever, but that it would not last a week. Good gracious ! I thought, am I to dream of tigers for a whole week ? I might as well be eaten up at once, but I did not quite

believe it. The day was so bright and cool (and there was really that soft dewy kind of scent in the air, not quite like home, but very nice) that my night's disquiet passed away, and it was in the highest spirits that I entered my *howdah*. We were to beat to-day towards a famous lake or rather swamp—for the clear water was in small proportion to the morass that surrounded it—called Arjunea Tal, noted for being the resort of all the wild animals. If I thought the grass long before, I was now more than ever astonished at its extraordinary growth. We came on a belt of open prairie-like country between two forests, which was covered with grass in flower. The tops of this grass were a foot higher than A.'s head as he stood on the elephant, therefore they must have attained a height of sixteen or seventeen feet. Pushing through this we often heard a rustle of some animal as it got up and rushed away, but we could see simply nothing. A. said in another fortnight all or the greater part of this would be burnt, and only patches in damp corners would remain, and then would be the time for tiger-shooting, only it would be so much hotter that it would hardly do for ladies to be out. I asked why I should not be able to bear heat as well as a man, but A. would not discuss the question, and said we should see. It did get very hot, and the glare made one wrinkle one's eyelids and forehead. A. wanted me to wear a veil, but I hate veils: women only wear veils when their complexions won't stand scrutiny. Shortly after passing through the grass we came upon another stream, or rather bed of a water-course, and pulled up to consult Mr. C. about our line of direction. Mr. C. had given A. a beautiful double-barrelled rifle, by Purdy, to try, offering to lend it him for the excursion. A. had accepted it with thanks, and when we had decided about our line, an opportunity occurred for proving both the weapon and his own skill. About ninety yards to our front a jungle-cock, a bird exactly resembling our domestic game-cock, only smaller, showed himself for an instant and then ran into a little patch of green weeds, out of which its head was visible as a bright red spot. A. checked his elephant, and after a second, fired. I saw a slight rustle, and on reaching the place found the bird dead, the neck being cut through close up to the head. "That is good business for the right barrel," A. said; "we will try the left presently." It was agreed to-day that the grass being so thick and high, it would be no use looking exclusively for tigers, and firing at any kind of game might be allowed. Advancing through a rather thinly-planted wood, I saw for the first time the beautiful spotted deer, "the axis," a stag and two does, the prettiest and most graceful creatures imaginable; the antlers of the stag were only half grown. Under the trees the grass was of course very different to that I have described, and the shade was very pleasant. We could see before us for fully a hundred yards; beyond that distance the branches well-nigh covered from sight any animal there might be. After we had gone some distance through this wood, it grew denser, and presently I fancied I could see some large dark-looking animals in the shade ahead of us. A. stood up and fired, and immediately they all disappeared. A. hurried on the elephant, saying that he knew he had wounded a stag which he believed to be the *bara-sing* "twelve-horn," and in a short time we came upon the poor beast walking very slowly and looking back over his shoulder at us. A. immediately fired again, and the deer fell with a bullet through the neck. It was a very large and handsome stag, but had only five points on each horn. It was exciting enough to see the creatures, and to watch the effect of the shot; but I did not like seeing them killed at all, and A. at my instance would scarcely ever fire at deer; "only just often enough to give us venison

to eat," he said. We had arrived at the outskirts of the wood by luncheon time, and "happening on" a small stream, we alighted as usual. Mr. C. had shot another stag *bara-sing*, and a stag *cheetul* (spotted deer) also. After lunch the conversation turned on the eternal subject of tigers, and the difficulty of getting them while the grass was so long. I said I should like to see the burning of such a prairie as we had traversed, and Mr. C. observed that we should be doing a kindness to the nearest cultivators by getting up a little incendiarism on our own account. No sooner said than done. We lighted a fire to leeward of our bivouac, and it spread at once with fearful rapidity, seeming to increase the breeze that fanned it. Not content with advancing to leeward, it extended slowly towards us, creeping round to our right, and A. had to leave his cigar and his note-book to help Mr. C. to beat it out near us. As the line of flame spread, clouds of black smoke arose, and a number of birds came flying about it; I suppose they preyed on the insects driven out. The roar the fire made was very peculiar and not very re-assuring. I should not have liked to be on the wrong side of the line. It was curious to watch the almost instantaneous destruction of the trees that stood in the path. Up to the instant of being reached by the flame they stood green and calm and motionless, but suddenly caught and wrapt by the fierce spirit of destruction, their boughs would writhe and bend as though swayed by a storm, a fierce crackling sound would be heard, and in a minute a blighted blackened trunk could be seen standing where the green tree had been, looking as though years had passed since it had life. The open space thus cleared by the fire looks as though thickly planted with colossal porcupine quills, the thicker stems of the moist grass so far resisting the action of the flame as to remain standing charred as they are, the outer husk of the straw peels off in patches so as to exactly imitate the markings of the quills. The ashes of the burnt plants serve as manure, and the little plots of cultivated ground we came across near the tiny hamlets certainly bore testimony to the fertility of the soil thus prepared. When we had all remounted our elephants after luncheon, our line crossed the stream and wheeled so as to make our advance parallel to its course. We had scarcely commenced beating when one of the elephants near us shied violently at something in the grass. We went up to see what it was, and found the body of a spotted stag, still warm, and the blood flowing, which had evidently been only just relinquished by a tiger. Actually while we had been eating *our* luncheon not a hundred and fifty yards off, this tiger had been busily engaged *on his* all the time. We knew he could not be very far off, and we went on with a stock of confidence which had recently been waning. As we progressed towards the lake I have written of, the stream widened and became swampy, and A. made the *mahout* of our elephant go into the middle of its bed where patches of high reeds gave most excellent cover, but which the beating elephants, it seemed to me, were inclined to shirk. We went on and on with however no luck, the only thing we saw being a woodcock, a very rare bird in the plains, which flew so close over our heads that we could see the narrow stripes on its breast quite plainly. A. said he was sorry he had not fired at it with his rifle, for we did not see any tigers all that day, and a woodcock shot with a bullet would have been a curiosity, and have figured well in A.'s list of game-birds shot with ball at one time or another. This included peafowl, bustard, black and grey partridge, jungle fowl, hares, wild duck, and one snipe! After beating down this *nullah* till we came close to the lake, we tried to get out of the swamp and beat back to our camp, and here an accident befell us which might have been very awkward indeed. When our elephant endeavoured to get up the bank of the *nullah*,

his tremendous weight broke down the earth, and after making one or two efforts of this kind the mud all round became almost fluid. I suppose from continuing too long in one place, the animal had broken up the before firm foundation, and in one of his trials when his knees were on the bank, his hind legs sank so deeply that the mud and water actually flowed into the *khawass* where I was sitting, and the elephant showed unmistakeable symptoms of subsiding on his side in this horrible morass. I did not like it at all, and A. became very angry. He said the *mahout* ought to have known his business better than to persevere in trying an evidently impracticable place. The *mahout* got frightened and beat and stabbed the elephant with the iron hook he carried till the poor beast shrieked in a frantic manner. We had to retrace our steps a long way before we could get out, and did not reach camp till quite dark. A. told me afterwards that these yielding morasses are very dangerous. An elephant under the circumstances described will take everything he can lay hold of with his trunk and put it under his feet, a man's body being very convenient for the purpose. But if it had rolled over we should have stood a fair chance of being smothered outright in the mud, an eventuality I certainly was not prepared for. I asked A. after dinner what he had been scribbling down in his note-book, and he read me the following description of the scenery that had struck his fancy, using the Spenserian stanza :—

I.

The forest shadows sleep beneath the trees,
Whose crests, all lifted sunward, sway on high
Haughtily, vast expanded to the breeze.
Perfumed and warm the soft wind idles by
To woo the youngest of the leaves to sigh,
And when it flutters, as the heart of maid
With first caress, the truant feigns to die,
But steals away and quits the yielding shade,
To seek its loved repose in some forgotten glade.

II.

The passive clouds in languid masses piled
Dwell motionless, blending their ashen hue
With Heaven's tint that pales its visage mild,
And, faint with heat, displays a faded blue.
The birds their failing songs no more renew
But wanton with their mates in thicket near,
Or wing capricious flight across the view,
Like boatmen caught becalmed upon the mere
Who seem with listless oars to heed not where they steer.

III.

The farther landscape of the distant wood
Now veils its outline greyly, like a care,
Which may be cloud, or Fancy in dull mood,
That loves not sunshine and its searching glare,
While glancing through the nebulous thin air,
In space between the shadows, skimmer by
Newly-freed spirits, shaped like insects fair,
Who mock the following gaze that would descry,
Whence have these fairies sprung, and whether may they fly?

"Well," said A., "is that a true description, and have I caught Spenser's manner as well as his rhyme?"

I said Yes, but that it would not matter, for not one man or woman in ten thousand had ever read Spenser; besides the idea of a musquito being an angel was too much for any readers in India who knew better.

A. replied that he "had written spirits, and they might be devils if the Indian people liked to think so."

"Well," I retorted, "they are, especially when they bite. What a host of them that burning grass must have destroyed—and a good thing too," I continued rather viciously. A. laughed and went on with another verse:—

Forgotten hopes! these fairest friends of mine
Have naught of mortal cumbrance to decay
But have such being, as the flames that shine
In evanescent brilliance, when the spray
Of flashing fire flaunts her changeful ray,
Shifting their fleeting shapes for ever. So
Seem hopes of human hearts, that light the way
Vaguely and fitfully as we trembling go
Through wastes we scarce can see, to goal we cannot know.

There was no arguing with A. once in this mood, and as I am writing about tiger-shooting, I shall, as I did then, change the subject. We had spent several days of our brief season of leave pleasantly enough, but still blankly so far as the tigers were concerned, when one eveuing on reaching the tents, a villager came breathless to say that a tiger had just killed one of his bullocks at a place not a mile from our camp. We sympathized with him gravely on his loss, but A. and Mr. C. were evidently in great glee, for they said the brute's penchant for beef would certainly keep him there or thereabouts till the morning, and we arranged to start at the very first peep of dawn to "look him up."

We enjoined the villager on peril of his utter destruction and that of all his flocks and family, by tigers, not to disturb this one; and we told him to get two or three of his brethren and post them in trees in the neighbourhood of the slaughtered ox at once, remaining there all night, so as to be able to tell us which way the forest tyrant took when he had finished his meal, and then we dismissed him with assurances that he should have his revenge on the destroyer of his cattle.

Accordingly we all got up the next morning in the dark, and by the time it was light enough to see, our line was formed, and we were slowly and watchfully approaching the spot where the tiger lay. Signals were made to us by the people in the trees that the animal was "all there," but we were still two hundred yards from the dead ox, when a wave of an arm from the nearest tree showed us that His Majesty was on the move. The next instant we saw him in full view crossing a little open space where the grass had been cleared. A. said:—"If I let him go now it is four to one we shall never see him again with the jungle in its present state. I'll risk it." The tiger was broadside on to us, and even at two hundred yards' distance looked very big and long. To watch A. shooting, one would think he scarcely ever gave himself time to aim; and even now, before I had taken a long breath in keen excitement, he had fired. I saw the bullet strike the ground just under, as it appeared to me, the tiger's hind legs. But the animal gave a sudden start—a short fierce growl—and almost immediately disappeared in a square patch of yellow grass of about four

acres or so, which was isolated, and beyond which *he did not pass.* "Now," said A., "we have him." We hurried on the line until we reached the cover, and then halted it to get it quite straight, and commenced our beat —I in a perfect flutter of excitement, which, however, I would not show by word or gesture. We beat to the end, then wheeled round and returned parallel to our first path, but reached the open, and still no sign of the object of our search. Again we turned, and again a blank beat rewarded our trouble. We knew most positively that here, within a hundred yards of us, the tiger was, and still we could not find him. We halted, and Mr. C. came up to consult A. They both agreed that the brute was lying so close that he had allowed the elephants to pass him without making the smallest movement, and it was then determined to bring the elephants much nearer together, *i. e.*, about five yards apart, and to fairly trample over the whole patch of grass till the tiger should be found. I should add that this grass was nowhere more than two feet high—very thin and dried up—and I could not understand how such a big creature could possibly hide in it. A., however, assured me that a tiger could hide in cover where a hog, deer, or pig would be seen at once, partly owing to his color which bright as it seems, is precisely like ripe grass, and partly to his habits and skill in making the most of any means of concealment. A. added his conviction that the tiger had been wounded by his first shot. We had hardly separated from Mr. C., and the elephants were still standing in a little group before advancing, our centre being somewhat in rear of the extremities of our line. A. was leaning forward, peering into the grass just ahead. A native officer of A.'s regiment, who was on our immediate right, moved his elephant a little closer to speak to us, when before the eye, bent with the keenest scrutiny on the ground, could mark the movement, the tiger, with the hoarsest and fiercest growl, or rather grunt, I ever heard, was on the head of the elephant ridden by the native officer, and within six paces of me. He had got both his enormous paws fixed in the slight protuberance where the trunk leaves the head ; his hind legs just off the ground, and was trying, it seemed to me, to pull himself up, or to pull the elephant down. The latter shook himself violently, screamimg and trumpeting, the *mahout* struck the tiger's head with all his force with the iron hook ; the native officer tried to fire, but was so unsteadied by the skirmish that he could not do so. The struggle lasted perhaps half a minute ; our elephant seemed very uneasy, and A. could not fire for fear of injuring the tiger's antagonist. Eventually this latter succeeded in freeing himself, and the tiger—out of breath, I suppose, or feeling the effects of the hammering on his head—trotted away into the grass ; then A. fired two shots rapidly, which were acknowledged by two short roars, but he did not turn or show himself. The direction we were taking now brought us close past the spot where the slaughtered bullock lay, and in the trees near were numbers of large vultures, who had instantly taken advantage of the tiger's leaving his prey to snatch their share. Our approach had driven them to the branches where they sat, their huge talons and beaks dropping blood. The picture, if repellent, was full of a certain sort of power, and has remained impressed on my mind. The dead and mangled creature at our feet, these ravenous and hideous birds sitting like harpies on the watch for renewing their feast, the ponderous shape of the elephants seeming almost black against the light-green back-ground of the jungle, and the whole effect heightened by the anticipation each instant of the reappearance of the swift and brilliant incarnation of wrath we pursued, made up a "situation" sufficiently exciting—at least to me. A. standing in his

favorite attitude across the *howdah*, imperturbable as ever, probably thinking of his next stanza—Mr. C. a good distance off, re-arranging our line in accordance with certain signals made by our scouts in the trees. I think I can see them all again as plainly as I did that morning. Before very long another of those peculiar growls—which always, I think, startled me: it was so very savage—told us the tiger was on foot again. (This sound is one never to be mistaken; it is something like the word "How" repeated twice, deep-toned, but short, and gutteral with hoarse passion). Then Mr. C. fired twice, and we saw the tiger, evidently badly wounded, seek again the refuge of the grass not very far ahead of us, and nearly in front of our elephant. A. ordered our *mahout* to push ahead, intending to give the final *coup de grace* as soon as might be, when Mr. C. coming down upon us from his flank hailed us, saying he thought the tiger was dead, that his last shot had knocked him over, and that it was no use unnecessarily spoiling the skin. A. then sat down and put his rifle into its socket beside him, turned round to me and began to talk. In the meanwhile Mr. C. hurried on to get the tiger lifted on the pad, the rest of the line with ourselves coming up leisurely. We were, I suppose, fifteen or twenty yards from Mr. C., and I thought I could distinguish the yellow mass he was ranging alongside of, when to my horror I saw "it" spring up, heard the growl more fierce and deep than ever, and then in an instant fasten on Mr. C.'s elephant at the shoulder, tearing and raving like a dog fighting. The unfortunate elephant made a tremendous "shy" as the tiger rose, and to our consternation, Mr. C., who was completely taken by surprise, fell rifle in hand from the pad, and lay stretched on his back on the ground within a yard of our formidable adversary. Fortunately he fell on the other side to that on which the tiger, reared on his hind legs, was intent on the elephant with teeth and claw. A. said—"Now if C. does not pull himself together within the next few seconds I must get down, for I *must shoot straight* this time, and can't risk the shot from this unsteady beast." Our elephant was shifting his feet and swaying his head from side to side, evidently very uneasy. A. spoke curtly to the *mahout*, and taking his rifle in his right hand strode over the side of the *howdah*, and took hold of the lower bar outside with his left hand to drop himself down, when I told him hurriedly that Mr. C. had got up and was making good his retreat, so A. came back into the *howdah* again to my intense relief, and stood watching for a chance of a shot. By the time Mr. C. had put a hundred yards between himself and the tiger, the latter, finding that he could not pull the elephant down, left him, and seeming to have some sort of an idea of the catastrophe which had befallen our companion, galloped a few yards in the direction in which Mr. C. was making his escape. But luckily one of the beating elephants was close to the spot, Mr. C. had reached, and climbing on his back our friend was soon in safety. Not however without another narrow escape, for the elephants were now almost all demoralized by fear, and when Mr. C. clutched the rope which acts as a sort of crupper to the pad, the frightened animal tried to kick him with his hind leg, but missed him as luck would have it. Then we had a meeting to congratulate Mr. C., and I gave him a scarf to make a turban of, his hat being lost in the scuffle, and then we had some sherry, for my throat and tongue were quite dry with excitement. Mr. C. was not a bit put out; he said he had his knife drawn in his hand, and could have made a good fight of it, if the worst had come to the worst. But A. shook his head, and I, seeing now what manner of creature we were contending with, felt awfully glad no such unequal combat had taken place;

and further, notwithstanding my knowledge of A.'s skill with the rifle, was mightily rejoiced that things had turned out so well for us that he had not descended to try conclusions on the ground. Again we advanced our line, and this time the tiger did not wait till we were upon him as before, but boldly came down at a gallop from a hundred yards' distance. The whole line of elephants including our own turned tail. We were singled out this time for attack, and I shall never forget that charge; with every hair on his body standing out, making his size seem enormous, his eyes flashing with rage, and his immense teeth gleaming white, he came down upon us with extraordinary speed, extended like a horse in his gallop. A. turned completely round in the *howdah* facing him, but it seemed an age before he fired. The tiger, from whom I could not remove my eyes, was so close that I felt sure the next stride would bring him right into the *howdah*, when at last A.'s rifle rang out with a report that quite deafened me, for it was fired within a foot of my head, and I saw the tiger rear straight up with his huge fore-feet spread out before him as high as he could reach, and seeming level with my face, and then fall over on his side. How glad I was. It was all very well when we were hunting the tiger, but his hunting us was *toute autre chose*, and I confess I did not like it a bit. Even after this, the indomitable beast showed fight, and got hold of the smallest elephant we had, biting and clawing him till his shrieks resounded through the forest; but at length, weakened by loss of blood from his many wounds, he retired for the last time to a thicket of grass, whence on the line of elephants again approaching him he tried to charge, but fell in doing so, when a bullet from Mr. C.'s rifle pierced his heart, and thus died after a fight of some hours our gallant antagonist, my first tiger. We all got off our elephants to look at him. He was much stouter and thicker in build than the animals I had seen in cages, in managerie, and the zoological gardens, and was an immense weight to lift on to the pad. Examining his wounds A. found a piece of the ball of the hind foot had been cut out by a bullet as clean as if it had been done with a gonge, and this, as A. had thought, was no doubt the effect of that first long shot. The pain this wound must have given him prevented his travelling far at a time, though when excited by rage it did not certainly affect his going much. The skin was a very handsome one, the fur being much longer than that of most tiger-skins I have seen, and the neck was adorned by what might have been almost called a mane. This skin having been presented to me I sent it home, where it was fittingly mounted, with a deep border of black bear skin. Our servants had all the fat melted down and preserved in bottles, natives attributing to it medicinal virtues, and thin strips of the flesh were hung up on strings in the sun to dry. These strings hardened like wood, and could then be packed away without decaying. The skull was much injured, probably when A. fired into the tiger's face, the tushes, on one side, both upper and lower, being cut away, and the jaw-bone broken.

A day or two after this we were beating a tract of forest of young trees which grew so thickly together that the grass could not flourish, when presently some large animal was seen moving in our front, but the leaves and branches were too thick to let us discover what it was, and it quickly disappeared. But we noticed that a party of monkeys made an immense chattering and disturbance, and some jays began to screech as they do when alarmed. This put us on the *qui vive*, for neither monkeys nor jays appeared to take any notice of us. Shortly afterwards we came to a little open glade in the forest with some very high soft grass in it. Suddenly an enormous tiger sprang up before Mr. C.'s elephant, and crossed us quite close. As ill-fortune

determined, we were at that instant in a little plantation of very young trees, the boughs of which swept the *howdah*, and A. could not get his rifle clear to fire. Mr. C. came up, and speaking of this tiger said that when it got up it stood so high that at the first glance he took it for a sambur. We beat for this animal for four or five hours, but never saw him again. A. reminded me of what he had said about the grass being too much for us, but it was being burnt every day, and by the middle of April, the tiger-shooting season might be said to begin—April, and this was February! A pity that it should be so hot then, I thought, for already I used sometimes, in the afternoon to find the sun oppressively warm, notwithstanding A.'s umbrella. The evenings were the best times we had, I used to think, and the scenery in the forest just before sun-down was often wonderfully beautiful. I remember once near the Ajoonea lake about that time in the day we came upon one of the open prairies between the woods which had been cleared by fire, to the right we could see distinctly the varying blue and purple of the ranges of the Nepal Hills, to the left the wide sheet of water as bright as silver, in our front a line of unbroken forest of magnificent trees bounded the plain before us, and over this plain roamed countless deer. I never saw so many at once, either before or afterwards. There must have been hundreds of them, both spotted deer and *bara-sing*. We did not get very near to them, but they were beautiful to see as they slowly moved away at our approach, and neither A. nor Mr. C. would spoil the spectacle by firing. One might have fancied oneself in a park on a truly royal scale. A day or two before we left the neighbourhood of the lake, we came across an official from Nepal, the frontier of which country was close. In fact, I believe, we sometimes crossed it in our expeditions. He was very civil and polite, and gave me a leopard skin and a "kukri," a sort of *conteau-de-chasse* of a very peculiar shape. This is the national knife of the Goorkha; it is always kept very sharp, and in their hands is a most efficient weapon for all purposes, from that of war to cutting firewood. Most English people would, I think, find it awkward to use. Of this fortnight's trip I have but little left to record; our bag altogether amounted to about forty head, chiefly *bara-sing* and cheetul stags, but as I have said we could have got treble the number of these, if we had wanted them. One hog deer we obtained in a most curious way. It jumped up under our elephant's feet, and rushed away in a great fright straight from us, its horns were "in velvet," and but just sprouting from its head. In its blind hurry to escape, it dashed at a fallen tree whose branches and roots lifted the trunk from the ground about a foot; in trying to pass underneath the poor little creature struck its head with such force that the shock killed it out-right, and we picked it up quite dead. Only where the horns were coming, the velvet skin had been knocked off and blood flowed, otherwise it was without a scratch of any kind. The evening before we returned to our station, A. made an extraordinary shot at a vulture. This bird was flying in large circles at a great height, and A. asked me if he should test the left barrel of Mr. C.'s rifle as he had done the right. I said, Yes; but thought to shoot at a bird flying was hardly a fair trial. However, A. fired, and down came the vulture with a bullet through his breast. It was most curious to see an elephant deal with this vulture. His *mahout* drove him up to the bird to pick it up, but the elephant got it between his fore and hind leg, and kicked it backwards and forwards between them; beginning with a blow from the hind foot the unhappy vulture was thrown against the upper and inner side of the elephant's fore-leg, then falling to the ground the stroke of the fore-foot backwards threw it back against the hind leg, and so on, with great force and rapidity. I was told

this was the elephant's way of killing any object of his wrath, and that in this manner the elephants formerly used as executioners by native princes destroyed their human victims. A horrible but, I should think, a speedy death ; one blow from such ponderous weapons would be sufficient to kill most men outright. When our leave came to an end, we made the same arrangements for our return to Shahjehanpore as we had made in coming. I was very loth to leave our sunny camp, and the beautiful green woods and waving plains of grass we had roamed over so persistently. I think Mr. C. and A. were rather tired of it, and disappointed at getting no more tigers, but I was quite satisfied with my one. I am not " keen" enough, I suppose, to like to see animals killed for killing sake only. As Mr. C. said, I might see twenty tigers shot and never another fight so bravely as this one. And so I went back to my routine life satisfied.

— *The Pioneer*, 3*rd*, 5*th*, *&* 10*th June*, 1871.