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SPORTING RAMBLES.

On the 8th of January, I set out with two friends on a rambling excursion in search of sport in the direction of the Nipaul hills; and as the country was new to me, I made a few memoranda which I now offer to the *Review*, though I fear to many of your readers, the earlier part of my narrative will not prove very entertaining, though I can assure them that to me the trip was a very interesting and enjoyable one. We met at Segowlee and having sent off the elephants, we rode about six miles across country, and the first observation I made was that the English dog-rose flourishes most luxuriantly in most of the jheels and swamps in this part of the country, and I have since had my first day's snipe shooting amongst them! The ground we first commenced beating with the elephants was high grass and swamp likely for swine and the edges most promising for black partridge, but we soon discovered that if sport were to be had here, it must be at a later season of the year, the late inundation, which had so completely deluged Tirhoot and Champarun in October and November last, had not yet subsided in the low grounds, and go where we would we had too much of it; places where in former seasons a good bag of black partridge was to a decent shot a matter of certainty, were now actually too wet to hold a snipe, and even with elephants we could only attempt to beat the outsides, and after several hours' tedious work we only bagged a few bittern, some painted snipe and about three brace of black partridge; by-the-by, I should like to know something more about the painted snipe; in Cuvier's Animal Kingdom under the head of the snipes (*Scolopax*, Cuv.) I find the *Rhyncheans* (*Rhynchæa*, Cuv.) "are African and Indian birds, the mandibles of which are nearly equal, a little arched at the end with the nasal grooves extending to the tip of the upper one which has no third furrow. Their toes are not palmated. To the port of the snipes they conjoin more vivid colours, and are particularly remarkable for the ocellated spots which adorn the quill feathers of their wings and tail. They are found of different medleys of colour which Gmelin brought together as so many varieties of one species (*Sc. capensis*) and which Temminck also believes to be the same at different ages." This not being a very long description I have copied it, having a stuffed specimen of the bird now before me, and being satisfied this is the one alluded to. But there are many questions to ask: do they migrate in season with the common snipe? I have seen them in every part of India, but they seem to pack

in very small numbers by themselves and apparently always at the most filthy part of the jheel, *i. e.*, where the mud is thickest and most slimy, and usually where there is more shelter; they are never nearly so wild as the common snipe and fly like owls: an old sportsman seldom will shoot them; I don't think I ever tasted one and really do not know whether they are good to eat; somehow in spite of their gay plumage, they are a dirty looking bird, and I certainly should not fancy their trail. Are they ever found in Europe?

At about 4 P. M. we mounted our nags and got into the road to Betteeah, to which place we had sent the tents: we started at a brisk canter, and I had hardly ridden half a mile when with a fearful yell a voice close behind me said, "look out!" Now when a man's nerves are in a quiescent state, which they usually are when he is seated on a free going nag, with a cigar in his mouth, springing along such turf as we have in this part of the country, a look-out of that description is very alarming, nor was the reality calculated to calm the imagination. I beheld a man with an enormous hat in his hand to all appearance riding at me, and no time to get out of his way; whether my alarm was conveyed to the already startled pony I know not, but he dashed off at a tangent and putting both fore feet into a hole, turned as complete a somerset as man could desire to see, giving the man with the hat in his hand a header calculated to make him wish he had never taken it off. The fact of the matter was that the pony had a particular dislike to fancy hats and always tried to run away from them, and this his rider should have remembered for he had met with a previous fall from the same cause: on this occasion I am sorry to say he badly sprained his wrist, and, in spite of all remedies, was for a long time unable to handle a gun. We dismounted and walked with our crippled friend into Betteeah, at which place we arrived long after dark. On the following morning at an early hour we were visited by the Rajah and his two sons; the father appears an intelligent, gentlemanly old man: it was not easy to make much out of the sons, two young men dressed up for the occasion and evidently afraid or forbidden to open their lips: the visit was a short one and was quickly followed by a dholee of vegetables, in which the most remarkable thing was a fine cauliflower, a production I had never before seen from the garden of a native, so much for the march of intellect. The most singular thing in Betteeah is a colony of Native Roman Catholics; a colony of natives may seem an improper term, but they form a distinct and separate class, and have a regular imported Padre and a very respectable chapel: they support themselves by their own industry, I believe, and are employed as other natives—indeed, one of them came as a cooly to assist in

carrying my bed; they are particularly successful in breeding poultry, and Betteeah has consequently long been famous for its turkeys and capons. We went to call upon the Padré, who appeared a cheerful fat little fellow, bare-headed and bare-footed with the usual dress of his order. I believe he is a Neapolitan, and as we could not speak either Italian or Latin, our conversation was carried on in Hindostanee; I think he told me that his congregation in all amounted to one thousand and fifty; he could give but little account of the original mission which I have been informed was formed in Nipaul in the year 1707. The Padré seemed to think that his flock had originated in Nipaul; I have since been told that it has its origin from the people of the plains, and that a colony at Chooree, about ten miles distant, was the one from Nipaul, and that the Christians with four European Missionaries were expelled from Nipaul on account of their religion at the time that Perthee Narain, the Goorkah Chief, conquered that country somewhere about the year 1769. A history of these people would be most interesting. I tried all I could to obtain sight of any books or records of former days, but the Padré assured me nothing of the kind existed, all having been seized and burnt: the little man seemed proud to show us his chapel and prouder, too, to point out the improvements since his arrival, especially a new steeple which is now building: he expressed himself much indebted to some gentleman in the neighbourhood, but did not by any means seem either to wish or expect that his present visitors would add to his building fund. I am not aware of the resources from whence the expenditure is defrayed, but they must be considerable, and I could not help thinking of the time and trouble required before even a moderate sum can be collected for the erection of any Protestant edifice of the kind in our provinces: it appears to have been a stipulation of the British Government, that these poor Christians should receive the protection of the Rajah of the country and remain unmolested.

In the evening we returned the Rajah's visit, and the old gentleman met us at the gate and conducted us to his hall of audience, an open chamber on one side of a quadrangle and here we sat in state trying to keep up a lively conversation, until the introduction of a very tame and very stupid Rhinoceros which having seen, the Rajah took us to see his other lions in the shape of a tame sambur, a half starved tiger and some very sickly gold and silver fish in a very dirty tank. I must not forget to mention that the Rajah did not appear at all satisfied that the Christians were so very near him, and he seemed to think that the little Padré was a great deal too often on the top of the chapel, and much too busy with the steeple from whence it is said he can see further into the Rajah's Zenanah than is desirable—of

course we said fie ! fie ! Rajah Sahib, no scandal ! and so took our departure. On the following morning after breakfast we mounted our elephants and started for Chooree, taking almost a direct line across country ; we bagged a few brace of black partridges and quail and one hare, arriving at our tents about sunset ; here, as before stated, is another colony of Roman Catholic Christians to the number of about 300 : they have a new Padré, who, strange to say, cannot even speak Hindostanee ; how he gets on with his flock I cannot imagine. He sent us by way of a present some wretched looking sausages and a few sticks of celery, a mark of attention which we returned with a leg of gram-fed mutton and a hare : the chapel here is a puckah substantial building, but we did not go inside it.

From Chooree we marched on to Looreeah Bazar and, as the natives had discovered either from our servants or our sporting equipment that we were on a shooting excursion, a strong party turned out : they proved most excellent beaters and in no part of India have I seen villagers so keenly alive to sport ; they had two or three dogs with them, by no means common looking pariahs, but fine active, powerful dogs which might have been considered handsome had they not been disfigured by cropped ears. Our principal beating this day was in sugar canes into which of course we could not put the elephants ; but however stiff or extensive, our beaters and their dogs worked cheerfully through it, and a very fair bag of black partridges was the result. One of the dogs amused us particularly, for he ran after each bird that was shot, and I was for a long time in doubt what were his intentions in case he got it before the man ; I had however an opportunity of being satisfied upon this point : a bird fell to my gun in the open field and my black and tan friend was instantly after it, he caught it in his mouth and away with it across country affording a pleasant chase to all the men before he would drop it ; a very pleasant sort of retriever ! As the sun was setting we found ourselves some five miles from our ground, so up and away upon our horses, and a nice wild gallop we had of it reaching Looriah about dark, when to our disgust we found no tents up and consequently no dinner prepared. After about an hour's delay some part of the establishment arrived and we sat down to enjoy a large fire and witness the khitmutgar's ingenious operation of making charcoal wherewith to cook the dinner. In all my marchings I have never seen this before, and as no time is lost in the manufacture, and cooking is carried on as fast as the charcoal is made, I consider the plan an admirable one as it gives all the comfort of a fine bonfire on a cold night—dig a deep narrow trench in the ground and pile as much wood as you please over it, keep stirring the fire and with an iron

therefore I may be pardoned for recording our success, perhaps some of your readers will tell us if they are found in the Dhoon in severe seasons.

I will not dwell upon the slaughter of a few deer or an occasional barasingha, we killed some and had sufficient proof that later in the season we should have seen many more.

One day we ascended the bed of a mountain torrent as much for the scenery as any thing else. I have not time, could I hope to make it interesting, to describe this wild excursion up the rude torrent's brawling course—it was not brawling now—though prostrate trees and masses of detached rock gave evidence of the fearful scene in this mountain gorge in the rains. I had taken my fishing rod and the capture of couple of trout, one of which measured eleven inches, has given me hopes of some fishing in this part of the world, and we afterwards visited a lovely spot called Trebene Ghat, where the great Gunduk debouches from the Nipaul hills. I have seldom seen a more beautiful place than this, but I must reserve my account of it for a future occasion, I satisfied myself that mahasur are here in abundance, and hooked one fine fellow, but my tackle was not of the right sort, which it shall be next time.

I had intended to offer somewhat of a statistical account of the resources of this place, the quantity and quality of its timber, the facility of transporting it by water to the Ganges, to have told of the quantity of gold which is washed from the sand of some of these mountain streams and collected by the natives, specimens of which I have seen made into handsome ornaments; also of the suspicion entertained that iron ore exists to a considerable extent, the probability of coal being found, also the certainty of immense quantity of the most beautiful and plastic jet black clay, which, when dry, has the appearance of the best kanel coal, but when wet is as soft and as pliable as the finest putty, but this article is already too long and I only hint at the advantage which Government might derive from the researches of any qualified Geologist.

I have now only one sporting anecdote to add and then I will close this disjointed account of my rambles. We had heard of a brace of Rhinoceros, but in ground quite impracticable at this season of the year, so left them undisturbed. I have since been informed that a party went in the following month from Gorruckpore to attack these beasts and upon arriving at the ground they fell in with a solitary Baboo, with a single elephant, who had just then and there killed a Rhinoceros with a single ball!!

The following is an account of a sporting excursion during a few days in February, which if you please you may attach to the foregoing.

On the 16th February I started to join another merry party, and after a pleasant drive of four and twenty miles arrived at the hospitable home of the good fellow whose invitation I had accepted, and in whose hands was the entire arrangement of the excursion I am about to describe: here I found an old friend, one of the best shots and as distinguished a sportsman as any in India. After a game at billiards and a right good tiffin we started three in a buggy, and laughed and jolted for about ten miles till we arrived at the domicile of another right worthy and liberal member of the same corps—the Royal Blues of Tirhoot. Albeit his name is *not* blue and his intimate friend call him Sandy, and with him we found another rosy, healthy, hearty, merry fellow, who looked as if he had never had a head-ache or a moment's vexation in his life. There must be something charming in this climate for no one ever meets a sickly looking indigo planter—there is a bloom about them, resulting either from their happy contented dispositions or the climate or both, not to be found in any other part of India; they live and understand living better than most men, their hospitality is as notorious as it is unbounded, they seem to have no knowledge of the powers of a tropical sun, they are ready to jump into the saddle or scuttle across country in a buggy, at any hour, any how or any where, nothing stops them, nothing seems to hurt them, every man seems to live as much for his neighbour as himself—his doors are never closed, his cupboard never empty, it matters not whether he himself is at home—walk in, you may make yourself so, if you stand on the least ceremony you are likely to give offence, *i. e.* if it be possible to offend any of them which I much doubt; they appear like one family and seem to agree better than the generality of brothers, altogether they are the most hearty and hospitable fraternity I ever met with, the only puzzle with me is how they would manage to live if separated and sent to other parts of the world, into other society, or into other professions, or if bound by any other regulations than those of good fellowship and good weather for the Indigo: I fear they would like the plant itself pine for a return to the genial climate of Tirhoot: may their shadows never be less (they are all good big ones) may the seasons be propitious and the markets equally so. This is no digression, it is only a slight preamble to the merry night of the 16th of February, when our spirits were as effervescing and our hopes as bright as Sandy's Pale Ale, and whilst we

The present hours in present mirth employ,
And bribe the future with the hopes of joy,

the dâks are being laid, the elephants and guns are on their way to the first fixture where the tents are pitched, and all will be ready for our reception on the morning of the 17th. We partook of an early breakfast, and before I had

offing, and had him broadside on at about 30 yards,—another second, and

“ Struggling in blood the savage lies,”

but as quickly was he up again, and

“ His roar is sunk in hollow groam,”

and down he came at me “like flash of flame,”—the elephant stood splendidly. I had time to take up another gun, it was a glorious sight to see the crouching run, the tail straight out an end, the hissing, grinning, half groan half roar, the ears back, the glaring eye balls, coming straight at you; not a blade of grass to intercept the attack, no bound, but as I have said, a furious crouching run with all the powers reserved for a leap at his enemy; nearer yet, nearer, till within four or five yards, and

“ Pierced through the dauntless heart then tumbles slain,
And from his fatal courage finds his bane.”

Whoo whoop! Whoo whoop! I cried, and in a few seconds the tyrant of the woods was surrounded by all the party, and a noble beast he was. The shades of evening were fast closing o’er us and we had some four miles to go to camp: *en route* I asked C. why he had not fired at the time I heard his tally ho! he said that upon looking to the line of light he saw the tiger in bold relief on the very verge of the wood, but just beyond him with their backs turned, were the elephants of A., and W.—C. had to descend into the nulla to cross and go up the bank to force him out; before he could do this the tiger had turned and disappeared and I have told the result.

So ended this my last day’s sport—on the following morning C. and I left the party, the others remained out a few days longer, and added two tigers and two bears to the list of slain, but I was not there to see, so here I bid good bye to the jungles and to my readers, who are, I dare say, by this time heartily tired of the prosy rambles of

ROHILLA.
