

BIG GAME SHOOTING WITH AN OBJECT

The Vernay-Faunthorpe expedition to India

By Arthur S. Vernay

A SHOOTING trip is always looked forward to with pleasant anticipation, even though one realizes that he may go away to some out of the way place of the world and spend considerable time hunting various animals, and come back with an empty bag—which happened to me on one occasion. However, this does not worry one much; there is always the pleasure of the chase, and the life in the open air. When one starts on an expedition with the object of collecting specimens for a museum, it is quite another story. There is a very definite object to be accomplished. It has been my experience in shooting that one is filled with enthusiasm during the

that the object would be to obtain groups, as far as possible, of each species, including a representative male, adult female and young—with an additional adult male for a skeleton. When the animals required were listed, it was a formidable list; but I am happy to say that although naturally all the desiderata has not been obtained, we were lucky enough to get far more than we ever anticipated. This was to a great extent accomplished by the help that everyone so kindly gave us. In the first place, Faunthorpe, who, apart from being the authority on tiger shooting from elephants, is probably the finest shot in India at a running animal, and a most able organizer; organization in an ex-



SETTING OUT TO RING TIGER IN NEPAL WITH COLONEL W. F. O'CONNOR, BRITISH ENVOY TO THE COURT OF NEPAL

Ring is the most exciting and picturesque method of shooting tiger and exclusively a Nepal custom. The tiger is enclosed in a ring of elephants and made to charge out of the ring, when he either escapes or is shot. In this instance fifty-eight elephants were used

chase until the moment the aim is taken; the trigger is pulled, the quarry is killed, and then there is always a moment of intense regret that one has taken the life of one of these animals. When shooting for a museum that feeling was somewhat relieved by the knowledge that the animal obtained would not only be of scientific interest, but of general interest to the public for many years; I hope generations to come.

When Colonel Faunthorpe and I, two years ago, conceived the idea of forming a collection of animals of the Indian plains to be presented to the American Museum of Natural History, we realized that in order to make a collection that would be of any value at all, very careful organization and study of the geographical conditions of the country would be necessary. At the present time, the collection of Indian animals in the American Museum of Natural History is by no means representative; in fact, in several instances it is entirely lacking. Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn, on being approached about this expedition, was filled with enthusiasm, and we came to the conclusion

pedition of this kind means half the battle, as we had to cover a vast territory and get various permits from heads of forest departments, ruling princes, etc. Again, the period of the year was important, as there are certain times, for instance, in tracking bison, when it is practically an impossibility to come up to your animal.

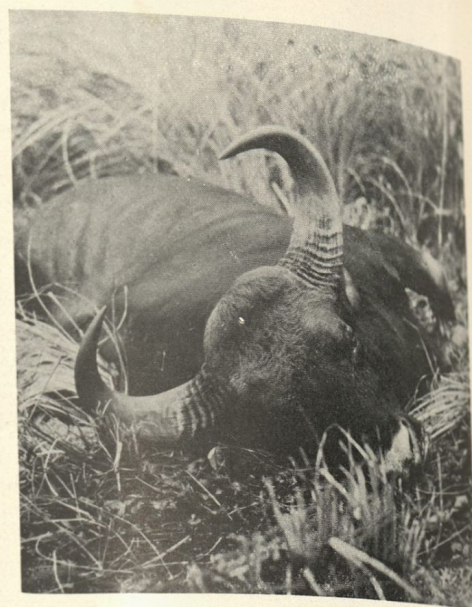
Some of the more important specimens obtained were elephant, rhinoceros, bison, tiger, leopard, thamin, sambur and many others of the deer family. The great Indian one-horned rhinoceros is an extremely interesting animal. It is the largest of the present rhinoceros family as far as actual body is concerned, but only possesses one horn and that somewhat small; a good average size is twelve inches. The difficulty of obtaining rhino is not in the actual shooting but in the first place getting the necessary permission, secondly making *bandobast* or arrangement, and lastly getting to the terrain. This we found required a considerable amount of discomfort and hard going, but it was worth it.



A FINE SPECIMEN OF THE SAMBUR
Shot in Bhopal, Central India, to head the species group in the American Museum of Natural History



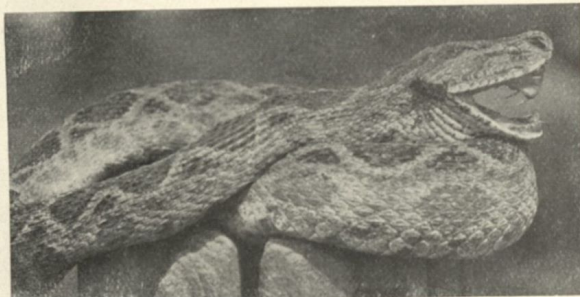
ANTLERS OF THE GOND
Arthur S. Vernay and Lt.-col. J. C. Faunthorpe with swamp deer trophies



THE GAUR, OR INDIAN BISON
This specimen, which will form part of the Museum group, was shot in the Billigirirangan Hills, Mysore

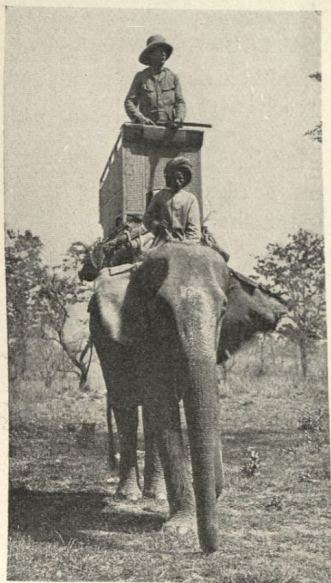
We had made many inquiries from people in India who had shot rhino, principally the Nepalese rajahs and various native princes who had been invited to shoot in Nepal, and the opinion without exception was that the rhino should be driven out to guns on elephants. The first news we had of rhino was of one in a jungle about five miles away from our camp, and it was decided that we would post ourselves in an open space between two jungles and have the rhino driven out to us, Faunthorpe and I being on elephants. In due course, a somewhat small cow and calf came out of the jungle near me, whereupon my elephant immediately turned and bolted, fortunately in an open space. This was somewhat discouraging, showing that the elephants were by no means staunch. In any event, this particular rhino was not large enough for our requirements, and a few days later we found another, and shot him before the elephants had seen or scented him, with the result that he was killed quite easily. An important matter in shooting big game, if one wants to kill one's game neatly and quickly, is to study carefully the anatomy of the animal. This in regard to rhinoceros and elephant is of the utmost importance. We met one man in India who had fired eighteen shots into an elephant before it was killed, which is quite needless suffering for a very noble animal; the reason being that no effort had been made beforehand to find out ex-

actly how the animal should be shot. Consequently, we carefully studied the skeleton of the great one-horned rhinoceros in the Bombay Natural History Society's museum. This, coupled with the information received from men who had already shot them, brought us to the conclusion that there are only two desirable points of aim, the brain and the neck. If the first is decided upon, a solid bullet should be used, and for the second a soft nose bullet. Faunthorpe used a Jeffries .400 and I a Holland .465; both were found to be most effective for rhino and elephant, and in fact any of the big game animals. The neck shot for rhino kills instantly, the point of aim being between the folds of the neck just a little more than halfway up. This drops the animal in his tracks, and there is no suffering whatsoever. Naturally the brain shot is equally effective.



RUSSELL'S VIPER
The second most deadly snake in India, this viper accounts for the death of between four and five thousand persons a year in Burma alone

On thinking the matter over, we decided that it was far better to stalk them on foot, it being more sporting and better than having one's elephant bolt through the thick jungle, with the possibility of the howdah being smashed by the heavy branches and the occupant probably badly hurt. So the remaining three rhinos were stalked on foot and disposed of quite easily. The rhino is a slow moving animal; even when charging, he lumbers along and is not a difficult animal to meet. The natives of this district were somewhat difficult to deal with, as they would not bring in the necessary news until we



LT.-COL. FAUNTHORPE
The recognized authority in India on tiger shooting from elephants



WHERE THE PARTY OF SIX LIVED FOR NEARLY THREE WEEKS
In the elephant country. The huts of lemon grass, built by the aborigines of the hills, are rainproof and comparatively comfortable



ON A TIGER HUNT
Getting up into a machan to await the return of the tiger

informed them that we would immediately send a runner to the Maharajah, Sir Chandra Shumshere Jung, which would bring all sorts of calamities on their heads. They may probably have thought that although the Maharajah himself had arranged this shoot for us, we would get tired out and retire after a short time; but we informed them that we would stay there for weeks if necessary in order to obtain the specimens we required. The rhino in Nepal is royal game, and is only allowed to be killed by special permission of the Maharajah. In the event of a native killing one of these animals,



THE INDIAN GREAT ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

A particularly fine specimen of this rare mammal shot in the Gandak Valley, West Nepal

three weeks at our disposal in which to obtain our elephant and bison groups, also a few local specimens which were necessary to the collection. It meant that no time must be lost, as apart from the actual *shikar*, the difficulties of skinning, especially the pachyderms, and shipping the skins, tusks and bones down to the rail head, entail a considerable amount of work. The country in which the elephant shoot took place is inhabited by a few English coffee planters (six in all), and, so-called, aborigines, the Sholagas, a semi-wild tribe having many curious superstitions, considering them-



THE KING OF THE JUNGLE IN HIS WINTER COAT

This large tiger was shot in February in Kheri, in northern India

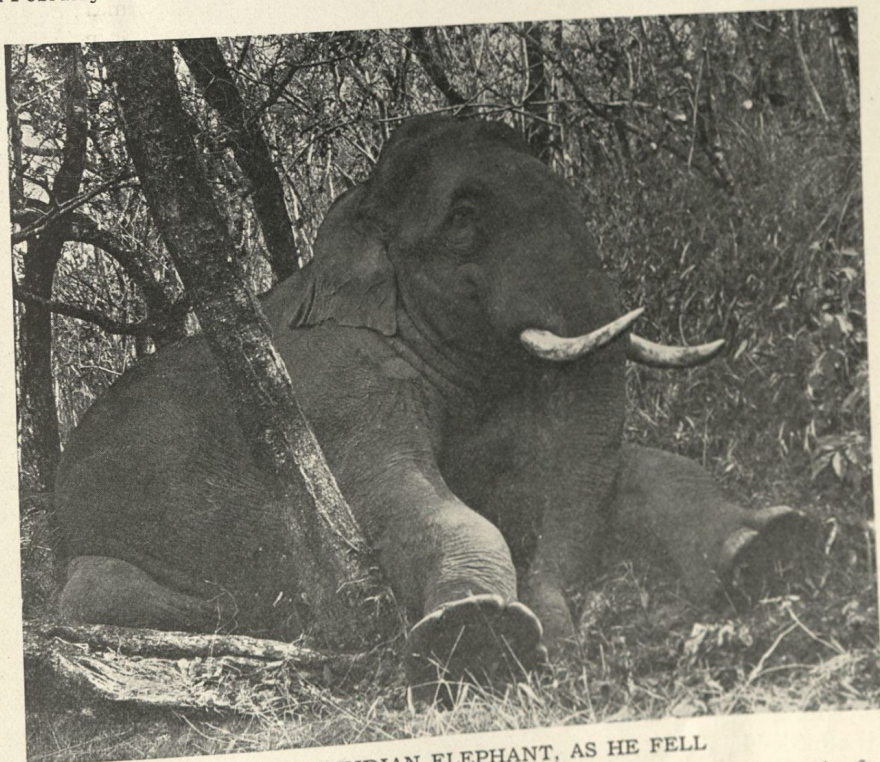


THE TSINE, ONE OF THE FINEST SPORTING ANIMALS

They are found in Burma, Siam, Indu China and the Malay Peninsula

the penalty for the first offense is a fine of one thousand rupees (which a native never possesses), and the penalty for killing a second one is death. The flesh and blood of the rhinoceros are very valuable. The blood is dried and used for medicinal purposes, which I believe is purely a superstition, and the flesh is dried and eaten as a rare delicacy.

On going down into Mysore into the elephant country, we were looking forward to an interesting experience, as the Indian elephant is closely protected and permission is only given to shoot it in extraordinary circumstances. We had but



A NOBLE INDIAN ELEPHANT, AS HE FELL

Shot in the Billigirirangan Hills, Mysore, he is above the average, standing over nine feet

selves of very high caste. One rather amusing superstition is the fact that no one has ever lived in their country before. At the same time there are evidences that there were people there several hundred years ago. There are certain overgrown spaces which were evidently paddy fields, and also an ancient fort.

I asked Morris, my coffee planter friend, how the natives explained that they were the only people who had lived in this country, and he asked them. They said with pride that they were the only real men who had ever lived in the country,

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BIG GAME SHOOTING

(Continued from page 31)

but prior to their being there, "moons and moons ago," there were some very small men who lived there, "but not big men such as we are." In fact, they were so small that when the land was being cultivated, "the ploughs were drawn by hares." They are without doubt the finest trackers of elephant and bison in India or Burma. The majority of them have considerable courage, and can pick up tracks when it seems practically hopeless. Their sight and hearing are developed to an extraordinary degree; they creep through the thickest jungle without a sound, and fortunately they will stand at a critical time, which cannot be said of many natives, as very often at the psychological moment, one's gun bearer will get the wind up to such an extent that he will bolt, carrying the second gun with him—which is liable to leave one in rather an embarrassing situation.

In this shoot Faunthorpe's organization again brought its result. Inquiries had been made before leaving as to the time required for skinning an elephant. The information given to me was that this would take, outside of the drying, approximately one week for each elephant. This length of time we could not spare, therefore we had thirty Madigas (native cattle skinners of lowest caste) in our organization who had only to skin and flesh the animal. Consequently we decided that the first thing to do would be to get our elephant group disposed of. We required one big tusker, one full grown female and a full grown male for a skeleton. Incidentally one of the most disagreeable things about shooting for a museum collection is the fact that one has to kill females. In the case of elephants, they are more difficult to obtain than males, as they are generally in large herds and more wary and bad tempered, owing to their probably having their calves with them.

On arriving in our district, which was the Billigirangan Hills, Mysore, we were met by Captain H. J. L. Fremlin, whom I had shot with two years ago, and news had come in that a big single tusker had been in the neighborhood for some time and had been causing the natives a good deal of discomfort. In fact, he had been heard of in a jungle only a day or two ago. The result was that we decided to set out immediately to try and track him. After a quick lunch we started on our journey. Within two or three hours we heard several elephants in the jungle a mile or so away pulling down branches and making the usual elephant disturbance. The jungle was extremely thick and in places the strobilanthes, which was then in flower, was six feet high, which made going very difficult indeed. Eventually we came up to the elephants and saw about seventy yards away an enormous elephant—which we found to be a *machna*, or tuskless male. He was of perfect shape and immense size; but, unfortunately, we did not require this, although I am now sorry he was not shot for skeleton, in view of what happened afterward. However, we skirted around him to the other elephants and the wind changed slightly, with the result that they scented us and the tusker we were after became a little apprehensive. We followed as quickly as possible, and eventually saw him on the edge of a jungle about one hundred and fifty yards away, moving rather rapidly. We made a large de-

tour, and in due course observed him going over the top of a hill about forty yards away, where he was shot. He proved to be a medium sized elephant with a tusk which was not of much importance, but the jungle was so thick it was hard to get a full view of his size or tusk. Nevertheless, his is a good, representative skeleton. A few days after this we obtained a splendid cow, one of the largest I have ever seen, and two days later a splendid old bull, which fell to the shot as it entered the brain. He subsided into just the position in which he is shown in the photograph. In spite of the pleasure one feels in obtaining such a splendid specimen, there is always the feeling of intense regret that one has killed such a superb and noble beast. Indeed, the modern rifle is an extraordinarily effective weapon. One has not much regret in disposing of a tiger, as he is a relentless enemy to all of the inhabitants of the jungle with the exception of the great pachyderms, and at times is a great menace to the native population themselves. An old tiger has badly worn teeth and a somewhat sour disposition; his bones are stiffening up, his sight gets dim and his sense of smell and hearing are not as acute as they were. Consequently he finds man an easy victim to stalk, and this is how the tiger becomes a man eater.

We obtained in the course of our various shoots fourteen tigers in all, which were shot in various ways, sitting up in a *machan*, ringing and beating with elephants. The most exciting and picturesque method is that of ringing. The tiger is, after some time, enclosed in a ring of elephants and made to charge out of the ring, when he either escapes or is shot. The moment of the charge is a most superb spectacle, and he comes out with one magnificent leap at the nearest elephant, and should the elephant not be staunch, it turns tail and bolts through the jungle, the tiger taking advantage of the opening and, if he is not shot, getting away. We obtained five tigers in one week's shooting by this method; the biggest taped one-half inch over ten feet.

The sitting up in a *machan* has to be resorted to sometimes when it is impossible to obtain the tiger by any other method. The tiger has definite habits, one of which is that of killing his food, gorging on it during the night and then retiring to some thick patch of jungle grass near a pool where he can lie in the shade and sleep off his gorge, returning to his kill in the evening. The result is that one sits up in the afternoon on a platform ten or twelve feet from the ground and waits for the tiger to return. It is necessary in this case to observe at all times the greatest silence, as the slightest move will, if the tiger is in sight, cause him to turn back. The method of driving out with elephants is for a line of from fifteen to twenty elephants to beat through the thick grass which is impenetrable to a human being, the guns being a little ahead of the line on each end, and when the tiger breaks out he is shot.

Of the methods of shooting the various deer, each has its peculiarity—which has to be carefully studied beforehand. At the same time one has to exercise a great deal of patience and put a lot of effort into the work in order to get any result. It was through the help of the Viceroy and the various ruling princes, conserva-

(Continued on page 86)

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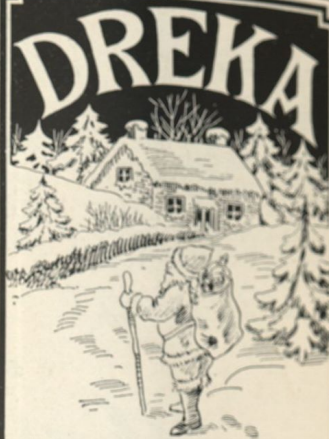
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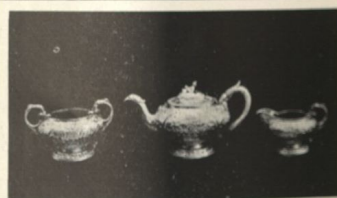
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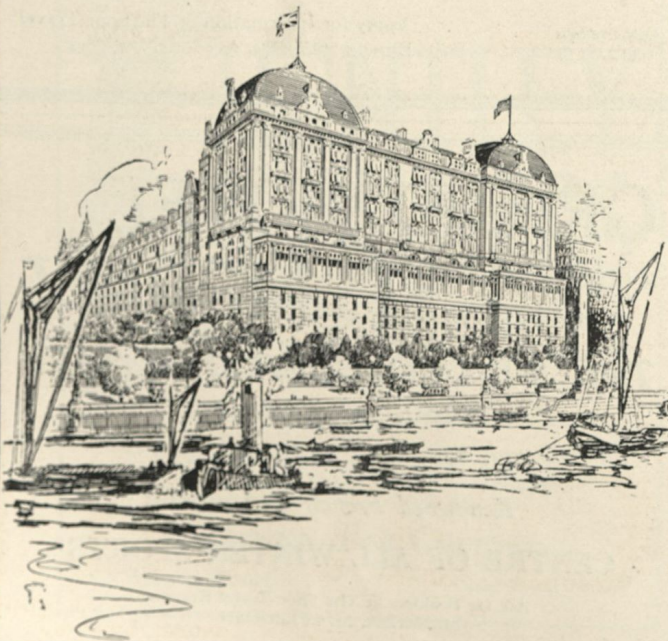


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BIG GAME

(Continued from page 78)

tors of the forests, etc., that we were able to obtain the result we did. Also the shoot in Burma, where we went to obtain the tsine and thamin, or brow-antlered deer, was only made possible through the help of the Governor, Sir Harcourt Butler, himself a keen *shikari* and sportsman who gave every possible assistance—with the result that we had all the success we could hope for under the conditions, which, unfortunately, were not good.

In order to track tsine, which is one of the most sporting animals of the world, one has to have rain really to get up to his animal. The tsine seems to be possessed of a seventh sense. He is always wary, has wonderful scent and hearing and is every ready for a battle. It was amusing on starting out one morning at four o'clock to find shortly after dawn the tracks of an enormous tsine bull. We tracked him for two or three miles and eventually came to a place where there had evidently been a terrific battle between two bulls. Trees were badly scarred and all the bushes broken down. We kept on the tracks of our big bull, following him until five o'clock in the afternoon, when we came back to exactly the same spot, the battleground. He had evidently returned to see if his adversary was on hand for further punishment. Although the tracks were fresh, we returned to camp somewhat weary, but quite realizing that the tsine had "put one over."

The brow-antlered deer, owing to living in fairly open spaces, is a very difficult animal to approach. We found the best method was to ride along quietly, keeping as still as possible and, on seeing a herd of thamin, to make a large circle, gradually getting nearer and nearer. The thamin, seeing the ponies, is not very much disturbed, and with luck one may get within about one hundred and twenty-five yards, when the gun slips off his pony flat onto the ground. In the meantime the ponies are taken on, and then the gun may possibly get a chance shot. This is how one very fine stag was shot. His antlers measure fifty-four inches.

In spite of the various difficulties that one encounters on an expedition of this kind, it is all more than worth while. The native *shikari* is told that he must be ready to start in the early morning "at the time the jungle cock crows," as this is the only hour that he knows for the early morning. Tracks are taken up and followed, sometimes with success and sometimes without; but in either case one sees in that day things that are indelibly impressed on one's memory.

The expedition will carry on next December, starting from Moulmein on to the Ta-ok Plateau across Siam down to Bangkok, in search of the other two species of rhinoceros and the Schomburgk deer. The jungles there are more remote and it is hoped the inhabitants of the jungles, which in this case are only the fauna of that part of the world, will come in reach of the camera, and if necessary for the collection, in range of the rifle.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Gloucester. By Land and Sea. By Charles Boardman Hawes. Little, Brown & Company, Boston.

The Soul of Abe Lincoln. By Bernie Babcock. J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia.

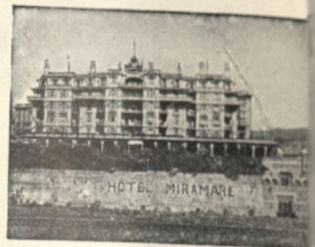
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