

# JOHN CHAMPION FAUNTHORPE

Sportsman, Civil Servant, Soldier, Conservationist, and Friend

By ARTHUR S. VERNAY

AT the opening of the Vernay-Faunthorpe South Asiatic Hall of Mammals, the one man who might be said to be principally responsible for this beautiful addition to the American Museum of Natural History was absent. Lieutenant-Colonel J. C. Faunthorpe, with whom for eight years I was associated in the effort to obtain for the American Museum the world's finest collection of animals from India and Burma, had succumbed to an attack of pneumonia only eleven months prior to the completion and opening of the hall. Perhaps it is harder for me than for almost any of his other friends to write about him, for he and I, during the past eight years, have been together on many big game expeditions that make men either hate one another or draw more closely together than brothers. During this long association I invariably found him an incomparable companion—unruffled, full of resourcefulness and humor and efficiency. I never expect to see a finer type of sportsman, for he was not only a marvelous shot, with a profound knowledge of shikar, but he also had the true sportsmanship of character and outlook.

It was during the Great War that I first met Colonel Faunthorpe, and later, when the war had ended and he was connected with the British Embassy at Washington, I had many conversations with him. It was at this time that I was contemplating a trip around the world and when he was transferred from Washington to the post of Commissioner at Lucknow he urged me, in case I made my contemplated visit to India, to join him there so that we might do some hunting

together. Prior to this time, Faunthorpe had visited the American Museum of Natural History and had written to President Henry Fairfield Osborn, offering to make a collection of Indian animals if the Museum would provide a capable taxidermist and mount them properly. Consequently, when I arrived in India and joined him for our shooting trip, we discussed the matter with the result that on returning to America our scheme was presented to the Museum, and definite plans for the collection were soon under way.

The story of the collection, however, has been ably told by Mr. H. E. Anthony, in a previous number of *NATURAL HISTORY MAGAZINE*, and it is now my purpose merely to attempt to give some account of the charming and capable character with whom I was associated in this task.

Well over six feet tall, of slender frame, with exceptionally broad shoulders, Faunthorpe was cut out from boyhood to excel in any sport he took up. He was a son of the Reverend Pincher Faunthorpe and was born May 30, 1871. As a youth he attended the Rossall School and later went to Balliol College, Oxford. At college he did a little rowing, but his earliest and most lasting love was for shooting. I doubt whether there has been any Englishman of our time more expert in the theory and practice of rifle shooting. It was not until he had graduated from college and entered the Indian Civil Service, however, that any exceptional opportunities offered themselves in the sport that meant so much to him. In his work in India he came in contact with many Englishmen and native gentlemen through whom came many of the



longed-for opportunities to develop his ability along the lines which appealed to him so strongly. Always imperturbable, never talkative, invariably pithy in his statements, never ruffled, he was essentially human; never worried by human weaknesses, his quiet sense of humor, his remarkable balance resulted in an unusual popularity with officers and civilians, as well as with the natives themselves. Faunthorpe never acted hastily, but when occasion demanded he could act strongly. His opinions were never hurriedly formed, and because they were based on sound judgment, he had

reason to stick to them strongly. The Indians learned that he would not only listen to their cases but would hear them through, and they soon learned, furthermore, that his word was invariably good.

In 1921, for instance, when serious agrarian trouble broke out in southern Oudh, both Sir Harcourt Butler who was Governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and Colonel Faunthorpe, who at that time was Commissioner at Lucknow, found themselves faced with a serious and difficult problem. The rising was of Indian tenants and landless people against their Indian landlords. It is true that order was restored in a week, but it was largely due to Colonel Faunthorpe's wise handling of the local situation that no bitterness was left; nor would his success have been so great as it was had it not been for the fact that the Indians had long since learned that he was sympathetic, fearless, and honest; that what he promised them would be carried out. As a result of these difficulties he was especially selected to make an inquiry into certain feudal or manorial dues which the landlords exacted from their tenants. As a result of his investigation corrective legislation was undertaken and his report is an exceedingly valuable document in agrarian relations.

Thus it will be seen that with so able an individual as my associate, and with one who was so favorably known among British and Indian officials and princes, we were enabled to begin a collection with many difficulties removed. Nevertheless, science was interested in certain species that for years have been protected in India, and only because of Colonel Faunthorpe's clear and convincing explanations of our plans were we able to carry through the considerable task we had set ourselves. Having gone out to India as a civil servant in 1892, Faunthorpe had become thoroughly conversant with the Indian character, with language, customs,



ARTHUR S. VERNAY

The author of this article was for eight years associated with Colonel Faunthorpe in the work that was required for the new Vernay-Faunthorpe Hall of South Asiatic Mammals in the American Museum



and hunting technique. The open-air life of the district officer—the backbone of British rule in India—exactly suited him. He seemed to read the minds of natives as surely as he read the life of the jungle, and his good sense, his prowess in sports, and his happy, sympathetic humor made him an administrator of whom nobody could get the better and whom everybody trusted and loved.

There is no great sport in India in which Faunthorpe did not reach the front rank. He was an excellent horseman and a fearless rider. He was equally at home on the polo ground and at pig-sticking. He was keen on racing and his pony "Devon" won the then great pony race of India—the Civil Service Cup at Lucknow. He had many great achievements to his credit in shooting on the range and in sport, but in big-game shooting he quickly made a name as being in a category by himself. He could arrange a tiger beat as well as any native hunter who had spent his entire life in the business, and no mahout in India could give him points on the management of elephants on a big-game expedition. He could organize a shoot in the jungle of the Nepal Terai as well as any of the Indians who had given their lives to the subject. He had always been interested in natural history and because of this interest, coupled with his unusual ability,



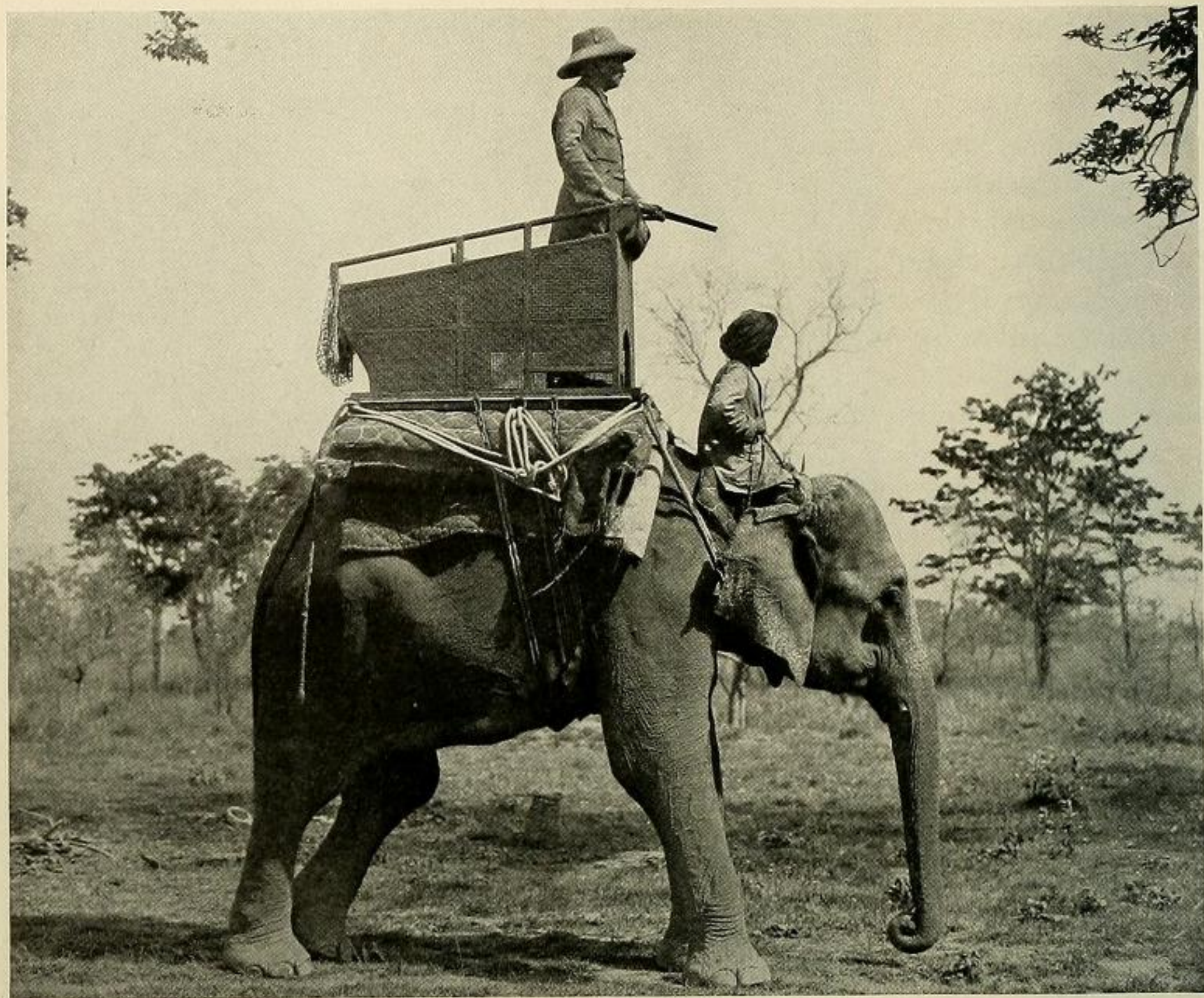
JOHN CHAMPION FAUNTHORPE  
1871-1929

he became as intimately acquainted with jungle life as any native hunter who had been born there.

His interest in riding and in shooting brought with them an interest in military matters, with the result that he was always a keen soldier and ultimately came to be Lieutenant-Colonel of the Light Horse of the United Provinces. He entered into all military work with the keenest enthusiasm and throughout his life remained actively interested. That his military service proved him a man of exceptional ability is demonstrated by the fact that in 1922 this volunteer officer was appointed aide-de-camp to His Majesty, King George V.

Due to his thorough understanding of their characters, as well as to his exceptional success in their pastimes, the native





COLONEL FAUNTHORPE ON A TIGER HUNT

He had the reputation of being able to arrange a tiger beat as well as any native hunter who had spent his entire life in the business

princes became warmly attached to this impressive, efficient, understanding Englishman, and were only too happy to give him facilities for the sport he loved, for it must be remembered that in India such sports as tiger hunting are truly the sports of kings. Only the enormous wealth of the native princes can stand the strain of the lavish and complete hunting paraphernalia, the herds of elephants, the armies of servants, hunters, and mahouts. Thus the friendliness of the man and the impressiveness of his character aided him enormously in earning his reputation as the best big-game shot in India, and but for his amazing knowledge of shikar and for the many doors that he was able to open, the Vernay-Faunthorpe collection could never have become an accomplished fact.

Faunthorpe, though a civilian to begin with, had, as I have explained, all the interest and ability that go to make a first-rate soldier. He did as much as anyone to raise the Light Horse, and he took over the command when it became a recognized unit of the Indian Defense Force. When the Great War came, he was appointed Military Director of the cinemas on the western front and his battle film of the Somme is still regarded by experts as a masterpiece of organization. He served as an intelligence officer as well, and was in France with the British Expeditionary Forces from the end of 1915 to the end of 1917. In January, 1918, he was made a member of the British Mission to America as a representative of the Public Information, and





COLONEL FAUNTHORPE (left) AND MR. VERNAY  
With the one-horned Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) collected for the Vernay-Faunthorpe Hall in the American Museum



COLONEL FAUNTHORPE, MR. VERNAY, AND MR. R. C. MORRISS  
Colonel Faunthorpe (right), Mr. Vernay (center) and Mr. R. C. Morriss, with the bull elephant the expedition collected for the great center group in the Vernay-Faunthorpe Hall. Mr. Morriss, of Honnametti, India, is the outstanding authority on the game of southern India, and was of great service in aiding the Vernay-Faunthorpe Expeditions



later was associated with Sir Geoffroy Butler, a brother of Sir Harcourt Butler, in publicity work for the British Embassy. His work in the British Embassy in Washington was largely connected with the activities of Indian agitators, and during this service at the American capital he grew to have a deep regard for America and Americans. It was as a result of his friendliness for America that he and I decided that as two Englishmen anxious to show our regard for the American people we could not do better than to collect and present to the American Museum of Natural History the finest specimens and groups of Asiatic mammals that it was possible for us to find. It was then that the idea took hold of both of us of using his unrivalled experience to amplify the collection of such mammals in the American Museum.

As I have already said, he entered the Indian Civil Service in 1892 and retired in 1925, but always he remained interested in India. Furthermore, his activities never flagged, whether connected with his official duties or his activities in the field of sport. Only the year before he died, so active was he still in the sport to which he had given so much of his time, that he won the competition at Bisley at the running deer, and the expeditions in which he and I were engaged occupied his attention almost to his last moment. For the last ten years of his full and varied life, I

think I am right in saying that this Museum project was his dominant interest. Through six separate expeditions he was indefatigable in carrying out the work which led us to many different Indian and Asiatic states.

I rarely think of Faunthorpe without recalling how patiently he could listen to the plans of others, and I recall distinctly how, after listening to me until I had explained in detail what it was I had in mind, he would look up quietly, with a friendly twinkle in his eye, with the simple question "Finished?" And if I had interested him—if I had so stated my case as to win his support—the task could always be counted on as being on its way to completion. As an example, the pink-headed duck took nearly three years to secure, and it took three years of careful thought and effort before permission was obtained to collect the lion of India from Junagadh, but in both cases the object was accomplished.

It was a tremendous disappointment to many of Colonel Faunthorpe's friends that he could not be present at the opening of the hall for which he had done so much. However, it is a pleasure for those of us who knew him best to realize that in the hall that bears his name and mine, the fruits of his labors and his experience will be preserved for all time and with them the name of Faunthorpe—an Englishman who was a sincere friend of America.



ONE OF THE CAMPS OF THE VERNAY-FAUNTHORPE EXPEDITION



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