A Shooting Camp in Cooch Behar.

By the kindness of the Maharajah of Cooch Behar, my wife and I were invited to join a shooting camp in Cooch Behar. General's inspection was over on the 15th March—postponed a week owing to the visit of the Duke of Connaught—and we started off that night by the Darjeeling mail. Arrived at Cooch Behar at 9-30 a.m. next morning, the last two hours in the train being on the C.B. State Railway (narrow gauge). Had a large breakfast at the Palace, a magnificent building with every modern appliance, such as electric light and fans, and a covered squash court and swimming bath in the grounds, and then we started off by motor car for the camp, thirty miles off.

We had motored a good deal in England last year, but never had we experienced anything of this sort before. The road was a "kutcha" one—a very "kutcha" one—in parts merely a rough track with deep ruts, and the way that car bounded and bumped over everything, I shall never forget; nor will my "topi," which made close acquaintance with the hood more often than was pleasant.

We crossed, amongst other obstacles, three rivers on a bamboo platform supported by two boats; so, altogether, it was no mean performance to cover the journey in an hour and forty minutes. The camp was prettily situated on the bend of a small river, with bamboo clumps and other typical Indian jungle near at hand.

The Maharani received us, and just as we sat down to an excellent lunch we heard several shots little more than a mile away, and we are wondering whether it's a tiger or what, and longing to be at it. However, we have not long to wait, as we are told that a "pad" elephant has been sent in for us; so we mount, and there, sure enough, as we pass the "mochi khana" (the place where the beasts are skinned, etc.) we see a fine tigress and cub just brought in. What bad luck! And many imprecations are hurled at Generals' Inspections and their postponement, which are increased when we hear that two other tigers have been killed in the last two days.

We soon find the party, and are each hoisted on to a "howdah" elephant, a singularly uncomfortable mode of progression. Beyond getting two pigs, nothing more was done that day, till we went home in a "general line" of about forty elephants, shooting partridges, florican, etc.—capital fun—but I found my marksmanship singularly inferior, and can only compare it to shooting blue rocks out of a boat in a choppy sea. I was told the elephants varied much in steadiness. I am sure they do, for the variation of mine from side to side can have been little short of 45 degrees!

The next day was wet, and we got a rare ducking, but nothing more. A tiger was seen, but he was on the move, and we never

got on terms with him. Great diversion was caused by one of the "pads," which was frightened by a passing motor, and set off as hard as he could across the open country, with his tail pointed skywards, and was only stopped after going about two miles!

I will now try and describe the general plan of shooting. You start in the morning on a "pad" elephant, the pad consisting of a large mattress on the elephant's back. He sits down ("but") for you to get on by a ladder, and unless you are careful to hold on by the ropes which fasten the pad you will probably

make a somewhat ignominious start by slipping over his tail while he gets up! Once he does get up and starts, you are quite comfortable. The way an elephant goes up and down steep places frightens one to death at first, but they never make a mistake. Their hock-joints are different to those of a horse or other animal, and point inwards, under them; hence, when they have to go down an extra steep place, they kneel on their hocks and use the hind legs as a drag. Arrived near the place where the first beat is to be, and where probably "khubber" (information) has been brought in of a "kill" by a tiger or

leopard, your "pad" elephant is drawn up alongside your "howdah" elephant, and you step in.

The "howdah" is a sort of roofless wicker cage with two seats, one in front of the other, each seat opening and forming a box for coats, soda water, etc. The one who is actually to shoot sits on the front seat, and ranged in a rack on either side of him are his rifles and guns, and in a khaki hold-all with six pockets, hanging on the front wall of the howdah and facing him, are the various cartridges. My battery consisted of a 12-bore Paradox, a ·500 cordite rifle, a ·450–·400, and a 12 and 20-bore shot gun.

As soon as the Maharajah gets into his "howdah," he goes forward with his head shikari and the "khubberias" (men who have brought in the "khubber") to reconnoitre the position. A fine sportsman and shot, and with a long experience and a wonderful quickness, he soon decides on the plan of action; and without the slightest noise or confusion the beating elephants (about thirty) are told off what to do, and the howdahs (six or seven) are posted by a wave of the hand.

The "jungle" is not what is generally understood by the word in England, but consists almost invariably—in Cooch Behar at least—of patches of thick high grass, often as much as thirty or thirty-five feet high, and completely hiding the beating elephants.

When there is no natural open ground in which to post the howdahs, the elephants beat down a ride in which to give a clear shot, in an incredibly short time, whole trees being ruthlessly knocked down like nine-pins.

The beat comes slowly on in wonderful line making a kind of crashing, crackling noise like a jungle fire: an elephant suddenly trumpets shrilly, then another. Something is surely there! We see the grass move, but nothing more; then, as the elephants crash into the last thicket, a leopard steals out. Sometimes he is killed by the first shot, but often breaks back, wounded, through the elephants' legs. Another time he bursts through the line of howdahs full split, as was the case with the last leopard we got, which was only stopped by a beautiful long shot by the Maharajah at over 100 yards.

And so the day goes quickly on. Lunch under a large shady tree—a most enjoyable

meal—and then mount the howdah again till shooting is finished, and the "pad" takes you back to camp in time for a quiet rubber of bridge before dinner—and possibly afterwards too—and you go to bed at peace with all the world, to dream of that record tiger which—fond hope—you are to kill the "morrow's morn"!

We had fine sport with bears, leopards, and buffalo, but had been in camp a week before reliable "khubber" was brought in of a tiger "kill." Such was the case one fine morning, and it was easy to see from the unusual stir and bustle in the camp that something unusual was up.

There were three of us in camp who had never killed a tiger, and were naturally

anxious to do so, and our host was as keen as we were to give us the chance.

We had a long ride of five or six miles on the "pads," fording the fine river San Khost, a tributary of the Brahmaputra, en route.

On arriving at the jungle the vultures could be seen collected on a large tree, or hovering around—a sure sign that the "kill" was there, and in all probability the tiger close by.

There is a certain silence and suppressed excitement amongst guns and beaters alike, quite different to the beats when other game is expected.

It is a ticklish patch to beat, and the Maharajah makes a longer reconnaissance than usual, but at last—it seems an age—all is settled, and we are posted on the right of the line of howdahs, on the bank of a likely-looking nullah. Down goes a tree with a stem six inches in diameter, which seemed likely to interfere with the shot, without an effort from "Ram Pershad," our elephant, and then all is still.

It is a long beat, and waiting is nervous work. The grip tightens on the fore-end as the sudden trumpeting of the beating elephants and the shouts of the mahouts proclaim that the "bara bagh" (tiger) is at home. But it is not to be—for us—this time. Just where the jungle narrows, the tigress (as she proved to be) breaks, but on the far side from us. Four shots ring out! We can see nothing. Surely they have got her! But no! there go all the howdahs on the far side as hard as they can, round the edge of the jungle. According to two natives on a tree, she has not crossed the river, only 300 yards off, but has gone back into the same beat.

It is decided at once to take it back the reverse way, and we are signalled to go round our side and join the others at the far end. There is a slight opening, which we line, and which the elephants quickly improve, and this time we are placed second from the left.

The tigress makes one bid to get through on the right. Three shots are fired, and she goes back into the jungle; but the line is only eighty yards off now, and, bar an attempt to break back through that phalanx of elephants, she must know that she has to face the music in

earnest soon. It is an exciting moment! Here she comes with a "whouf, whouf," straight at me. I let her have it thirty yards off, but the grass is somewhat thick, and I knew I had missed! She comes on, almost hidden by the grass, and then suddenly bursts straight forward! Is she going to charge? She thinks better of it, and swerves —full gallop—past our right. Just as she clears the line I give her the second barrel of the Paradox. *Habet!* I feel it—though she at once disappears into a thick jungle, and all is silent and still. Lord! perhaps I've missed her! We surround the high grass and close in, and there she is, all right, lying on her side—stone dead, with a bullet hole showing clearly just behind the shoulder. Out come the cameras—even a tiger's death is not sacred to them—and then she is measured —8 feet 5 inches—a good average tigress.

And so to lunch. Is it fancy alone that makes that drink taste like nectar to-day? I think not.

Another day we killed three buffalo—one, a cow, with a grand head, of 10 feet 10 inches—and fine sport they gave as they charged the line; but the elephants are staunch, and you might as well charge a house as a big elephant, and no harm was done.

The total bag was six tigers, seven leopards, seven black bear, four buffalo, three stags (bara, singh, and sambur), besides pig, partridges, peafowl, florican, &c.—fine sport, the whole rendered doubly enjoyable by the extreme kindness and hospitality of our host and hostess and all their family.

Northern Nigeria, West Africa.

It is almost worth while going to West Africa solely for the pleasure of getting away from it, if you happen to be lucky enough to do so, and escape the various fevers, etc., that most white men have at some time or other. One's first view of West Africa is by no means cheery —merely a yellow, sandy coast line, with a fringe of green above and the white breakers below. It is more or less interesting calling at various ports, such as Sierra Leone, Lagos, etc., where the steamers anchor a mile or two off the coast and small row-boats come out to take passengers and their luggage ashore. It is more interesting if it is a bit rough and you don't happen to be going off yourself, for sometimes they make a bad shot, and the luggage is dropped into the sea instead of into the small boat. Then curious passengers come on board at the coast towns, and the steerage decks are packed with black men, women, and children, to say nothing of goats, sheep, poultry, and sometimes a horse. At last you get to Burutu, a place on one of the mouths of the Niger, consisting of a post office, store, and one or two white men's houses, but chiefly of swamps, and smells, and heat. You get the river steamer there, and start up the Niger for Northern Nigeria. The scenery is more or less the same for a few days—namely, mangrove swamps, thick entangled forest, and palm trees, and here and there a native village, looking picturesque with mud huts, grass roofs, etc. The natives in their dug-out canoes make for the bank as fast as they can paddle when they see the steamer, as they stand a good chance of getting swamped. On nearly every sandbank one sees a crocodile, and now and then the head of a hippo. appears on the oily-looking surface of the river, then slowly sinks again. Eventually one arrives at Barijuko, on the river Kaduna, a tributary of the Niger, which one has to traverse in a canoe, and on which a certain number of duck and geese can be shot, if one is careful. Barijuko is at one end of the 22 miles of railway with which Northern Nigeria is blessed. You get into a first-class carriage resembling a prehistoric tram-car, and with luck you arrive at Zungeru, the capital of Northern Nigeria, about three hours later. Zungeru is more or less civilised, and has a tennis court, post office, store, and a Government House, to say nothing of various white men's bungalows. I arrived there in the afternoon, and the first thing I saw was nearly all the white men going to the funeral

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Editor's Notes.

THE Editor has to acknowledge the receipt of a donation of fifty pounds, which was kindly voted to the funds of the "Chronicle" at the recent Regimental Dinner, held in London, from the Dinner Fund. We are glad to be able to omit the customary Editorial grumblings of shortness of funds this number, and, in acknowledging, with thanks, this welcome assistance to the funds of the paper, have pleasure in announcing that the "Chronicle" is once more clear of debt. We can only hope that the paper will now continue to be self-supporting, and that it will not ever be necessary again in the future to "send round the hat."

Many of our readers, past and present members of the Regiment, must have learned with regret of the death of Charles Kennedy, V.C., who earned distinction for himself and the Regiment in the South African War. An account of the tragic circumstances under which he met his end appears elsewhere in this number. It seems hard that he should have met such an end, after going through what he did in South Africa; but his last act was in keeping with his character. If something was to be done, Kennedy was there, and ready to do it without thought for himself or the cost. Kennedy was widely known in both Battalions, especially during his period of service in India with the 2nd Battalion, where he was a prominent figure for many years as one of the Regimental football team.

Depot Notes.

RECRUITS JOINED SINCE LAST ISSUE.—Privates 10705 T. B. Blackie, 10706 A. Vickers, 10707 F. M'Kinnon, 10708 J. Beattie, 10709 G. Woottan, 10710 J. Mollison, 10711 J. M'Arthur, 10712 E. R. Cammell, 10713 L. M'Kinnon, 10715 D. Esplin, 10716 R. Owens, 10717 P. Argue, 10718 J. Symington, 10719 D. Kay, 10720 W. M'Atear, 10756 R. Sargeant, 10757 A. J. Frost, 10758 A. Lone, 10759 J. Riddell, 10760 R. Wildgoose, 10761 A. Murray, 10762 R. M'Queen, 10763 J. Mitchell, 10764 E. Wiltcher, 10765 J. Moor, 10766 D. Comrie.

DISCHARGES.—9918 Lce.-Sergt. J. Hogg, to pension, 18th March, 1907; 9824 Pte. J. Suttie, to pension, 23d March, 1907; 2760 Sergt. P. Anderson, to pension, 24th April, 1907; 2853 Pte. A Mitchell, to pension, 14th May, 1907; 4823 Colr.-Sergt. J. Michie, to pension, 21st May, 1907; 2677 Sergt. T. Thomson, to pension, 22nd May, 1907; 4898 Sergt.-Bugler J. Blaik, to pension, 6th June, 1907.

AWARDS AND GRANTS.—8449 Bugler H. Brown, P.S. 4th H.L.I., granted 1st Class Service pay at 6d, from 17th March, 1907; 10002 Pte M. M'Lean, granted 1st Class Service pay at 7d, from 1st October, 1906; 7647 Pte. G. Easton, granted 1st Class Service pay at 7d, from 12th July, 1906; 3635 Pte. J. Gagan, granted 2nd Good Conduct badge, from 10th March, 1907; 5976 Pte. W. Beaney, granted 2nd Good Conduct badge, from 10th March, 1907.

No. 735 Sergt.-Bugler G. Waller, P.S. 3rd