

CLEARED FOR STRANGE PORTS

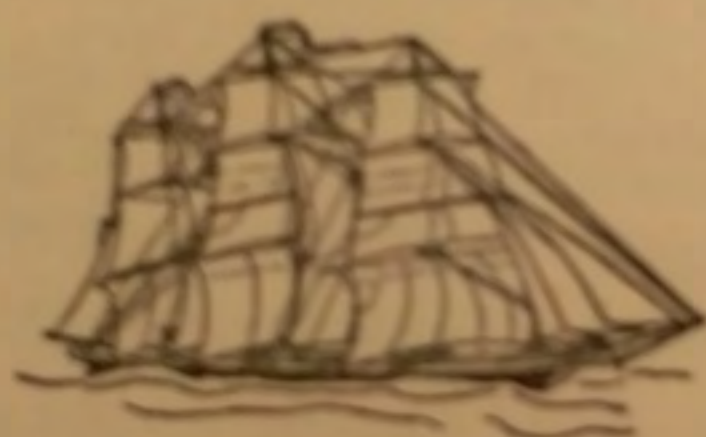
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“FROM THE LAND WHERE THE
ELEPHANTS ARE”

1926

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(MRS. KERMIT ROOSEVELT)

CHAPTER VIII

"FROM THE LAND WHERE THE ELEPHANTS ARE"

In early November of 1925 my sister-in-law and I met our husbands in Kashmir, on their return from a seven months' trip through Turkestan and the Pamirs, where they had successfully collected different specimens of Central Asian game for the Field Museum of Chicago, and secured among other things the coveted group of Marco Polo's famous sheep.

After weeks of delirious rounds of adventures, which embraced not only shooting in many corners of India, but sight-seeing, as well as gay visits to the Viceroy, we found ourselves on January 9th—thanks to the kind interest of many friends, actually arriving in Nepal—that Keblah to which all sportsmen's eyes turn with longing.

Through Sir Frederick O'Connor, the former envoy to Nepal, and Hugh Wilkinson, the present one, we had been invited by His Highness the Maharaja to come to the Terai for a week's tiger-shooting.

Those who have not been to India cannot appreciate the attendant excitement of a visit to Nepal. As we left Lucknow on January 9th, we seemed turned temporarily into puppets moving madly through an interminable nightmare. We had been universally informed that it was an easy trip, but from what mo-

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tive our friends spoke thus we never decided. There were the usual excitements which our departures normally produced—hasty but important messages to be sent to a host of newly made friends—forgotten cables to be dispatched—distraught bearers collecting lost bundles—packages of clothes deposited for laundries, tailors, and cleaners—but as usual we did catch our train. We settled down to the lazy humdrum of Indian travel, reading, bridge, and a little sleep—not much, for all that lay ahead of us stirred our imaginations. I wondered idly how long I'd have to stay in Nepal, remembering my eldest son's casual remark three years ago to his grandmother, to the effect that of course father couldn't come home until he killed a tiger. I had returned home empty-handed once—not even having seen a tiger, but that excuse, however valid, would never pass a second time.

We piled out for lunch and again for dinner at six; we then changed to a narrow-gauge railway. Now, at midnight, we were hustled out of our cramped but warm berths into the dark. E. and I sat on a bench, in the cold, drizzling rain, munching ham and very stale bread, while K. and T. made various and awful discoveries. There was no train—no track—no bridge—to take us across a river and swamp, where our connection was due to leave at three in the morning.

All these were bitter blows, but not insurmountable ones, for with three hours' leeway much could be

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accomplished. Cook's agency, having ignored such material details, not only had failed to inform us of this situation, which had existed for over two years, but had made no arrangements for our transport. K. and T. worked like beavers, recruiting reluctant coolies they found sleeping by the wayside, and carrying big loads, too, themselves. After one tedious journey to the river, through heavy bogs, they returned for us and another last load. E. carried a lantern and I my flash-light; but even so it was slow work, for the mud was deep and slippery. We proceeded with difficulty, and a propensity for falling under all circumstances did not aid my speed. A long line of protesting coolies were being urged on ahead of us. K. and I dropped back to chaperon a few especially lazy ones. One man in particular kept repeating in high falsetto that if he went on he'd surely die—quite oblivious of our remarks to the effect that both the quickest and surest death was to stop for one second!

After plodding what seemed interminable long miles, the faint glimmer of water announced the approach of the river. Our flagging spirits soared—only to drop heavily once more: in spite of telephone calls from the station, no boats had turned up. While we shouted lustily for the boatmen on the other side, we heard our train whistle. The rumble of its start and the receding puffs came faintly to our ears across the water. Eventually a boat arrived—a great flat-bot-

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tomed bark; a solitary man working slowly a thin long pole. Into this we stumbled wearily. Through the dark we glided—the flicker of the one lantern illuminating the strange group; all our odd assortment of luggage was heaped about us, with the coolies huddled too close for comfort. In fact, E. protested she could not and would not suffer such close proximity, but scant heed was paid to her plaint and she was obliged to take refuge in the fumes of tobacco, which offered but a partial protection.

Once across, another exhausting march was necessary. We reached the station at last to find all the officials asleep. The station-master at Chitauni Ghat had promised to have the train held, but he had failed us, and the train which we had heard departing was the only one, until the same hour, three A. M., the next morning. It was an odd schedule that held in these parts. Our anger rose steadily; a whole day's hunting gone, through stupidity and incompetence. Inefficiency and indifference to such an *n*th degree I had never met before. Various telegrams were written and dispatched under coercion, but all was seemingly unfruitful. Sleeping natives were eventually removed, and our bedding-rolls spread out upon the cement floor of the station. E. and I tried to snatch an hour's rest, while K. and T., having discovered that there were various cars owned by sugar-planters in the neighborhood, started forth into the dark unknown to beg, borrow, or steal one.



S. W. S. AND HIS MOUNTAIN ELEPHANTS

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At five o'clock they found themselves entering a colonial dwelling and handing to a bewildered servant their visiting-cards. Only then, too late to retreat, did they realize fully what they were doing, so with the best front they could summon they pleaded our plight to a pajamaed host, Mr. W. T. Gwyther. To his eternal credit, he received them cordially and himself volunteered to take us to Narkatiaganj.

E. and I, routed out, hastily collected a few necessities, and, fortified by a delicious and substantial *chota kauri*, consisting of home-made bread and butter and cold mutton, which the generous planter provided, we started off in two *Fords*.

Even at that hour, in spite of so many tribulations, we were able fully to appreciate that drive in the early dawn—thirty-two miles through the Terai—the country of which "*Mauri*" wrote so pleasantly. There were plantations on all sides—even a few of the fast-vanishing indigo ones. We passed attractive broad-shouldered settlers' houses, sugar-cane and rice fields, short, stubbly jungle where the pig run rifle still—all full of interest for us.

I sat on the front seat by Mr. Gwyther and plied him with questions to which even at that scandalous time of day he responded nobly, giving spirited accounts of hog-hunting, tiger-shooting, and religious uprisings with other less stirring but immensely interesting details from the daily life of a planter.

On our right—after going over a ramshackle bridge

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above a river—rose a slender column, one of Asoka's many landmarks, an earnest of his faith and resolve that the law of humanity should be the highest in his realm. Asoka was the great Chandragupta's grandson and was himself famed as a statesman and a scholar, as well as a religious devotee.

Meditating on the merits of his educational code, which, drawn in the third century before Christ, still withstands revision, and also over the problem of transporting in those days the heavy stone pillar, we suddenly realised our ride was over—Narkatiaganj station was before us—but the train was again gone!

Mr. Inst., the Railway Superintendent, a friend of Mr. Gwyther's, had arranged for a goods train to take us on. After half a morning, spent not unpleasantly jolting in a luggage-car, we finally reached our destination at midday. We were but three hours behind our original time-table—though we all felt considerably battered and certainly more learned and wise than when we so innocently left Lucknow only thirty-six hours before.

At Bhikna Thoree we found mail and a motor and elephants for our luggage, which we prayed would arrive next day with the bearers shed long since en route.

Leaving Bhikna Thoree, which consists merely of a railway-station and several sheds, we passed a few scattered native houses and plunged immediately into jungle. The road was rough and precarious indeed.

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and it was with difficulty that we kept to it. Our car, weighted down to the hubs with guns, ammunition, and bedding-rolls—from these last, in India, one can never afford to be separated—could not negotiate the slightest incline without aid. K. and T. became expert in the art of disentangling themselves from encumbering paraphernalia, and in leaping out to give the necessary push which would just enable us to make the grade. Occasionally natives were pressed into service, much amused and slightly reluctant to touch the throbbing black devil.

The groups of people were gay and responsive, full of quick laughter and friendly nods, remotely, if at all, connected with the gloomy and forbidding or mystic type one meets in India. Romany Gurka nomads these, I judged; almost all Mongolian in cast, small and sturdy of stature, with that tilt to the eye which is so distinguishing and sometimes so attractive.

At one broad stream a whole tribe were encamped. Gaily apparelled women flitted here and there, cooking in shining vessels, washing bright skirts and cloths, or playing with alluring fat and completely naked babies—all smiling—all happy—all really loving life.

We too loved life and this gay welcome to Nepal. Through the dense forest our little road went on. "Butterflies of Sunlight and Moths of Shade" danced in the thicket beside us. Chukors and partridges rose and whirled over the car. Once a whole bevy of spot-

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ted deer frolicked ahead—pretty, graceful creatures disappearing into the jungle with effortless bounds. Later we heard how some rhino had charged the baggage elephants at this same spot earlier in the morning, and had so terrified the elephants that they had bolted, thereby losing Mrs. D.'s best bonnet in the mêlée.

We arrived dusty and travel-stained, having neither eaten nor slept for more hours than we cared to count, just in time for a delicious high tea. The party which welcomed us consisted of our host, the British envoy to Nepal, Mr. Wilkinson, who was not only a good sportsman but a delightful person, always cheerful and always ready with an appropriate story or bon mot; Mr. Norman, a planter who had spent many interesting years on the border-land—and whose descriptions of life on the plantations made us long to accept immediately his most hospitable invitation to visit him; and Major Dalton, an officer from the Gurka regiment, detached for recruiting services; his very nice wife accompanied him, but did not shoot.

The camp, with a half-circle of forest behind it, was pitched on a bluff above the river; beyond, a golden haze of plain; and then the mountains—blue, purer and deeper even than in Kashmir, the snows seemingly more white.

Our quarters were luxurious, a large double tent; two bathrooms for each couple; a dining-tent, and a

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living-tent opening onto the great log fire, around which we sat after dinner under the stars.

The nights were cold, the days very hot; E. and I felt the rays of the sun here more than anywhere in India. We were told that throughout the greater part of the year the countryside was full of malaria, though this was hard to credit. The people in these parts are called Tharus, and are thought to be the aborigines of the Terai. They have poor physique but good stamina, and are apparently immune to the ravages of the fever.

Mr. W. had a fund of information about the different places where he had lived, and gave vivid descriptions of the color and beauty of Khatmandu—the capital of Nepal. I was particularly interested in his tales of a tribe of near-by hill-folk, who unfortunately rarely descended to these plains. They dwell in primeval fashion, wearing no clothes save a bit of tree-bark, and bartering flesh in lieu of money.

Tiger-hunting in Nepal is both an art and a science. Every detail is perfected, every contingency prepared for. In India it is done quite differently, where nullah or thicket is beaten—generally by men, occasionally by elephants—toward the guns, who usually await the tiger in machans, which are a sort of platform slung in trees. Here the jungle was so high and so dense that only elephants could be used. Sixty-odd ties were put out each night throughout the surrounding jungle, and early each morning the

khubber—news—would be brought in. It was a breathless moment when Mr. W. and the Maharaja's two officers attached to the camp, the Subidar Sahib, and the Jemadar Sahib, would sift the news in low, tense voices and decide upon our course. Once the best kills had been selected, we would get off promptly—each on his own pad elephant, with a friendly bearded mahout squatting on its head. I loved these long rides, for though the pad elephant is not, I confess, the most ideal mode of travel, it is far less bad than is usually depicted, and the couple of hours employed in getting to the kill sped by only too rapidly for me.

There was so much to see and to think about—so many impressions to seize and try to hold forever, as the minutes raced by, all crammed with new sights. I prayed that passing years would not blur the brightness of memory, and that this wayside magic would remain with me a treasure-store, vivid and keen, for the years “when we are old and gray and full of sleep.”

The long line of elephants in solemn procession were a source of never-failing joy. There was always their preposterous conformation to ponder over; the enormous flapping ears and the ridiculous minute inquiring eyes; the strange toothless leer of the tuskless ones; the great loose knees which turned outward with a baggy shuffle and the delightful incredible toe-nails. The whole massive gray bulk finished



CROSSING THE RIVER ON WAY TO A TIGER KILL

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off by a spindle-tail with a thorny end gave such an inconsequential air to an otherwise dignified creature. The huge lumbering beasts stepped ever so carefully, a long trunk poked and felt about investigating every propitious spot before each foot was placed gently, softly with exact precision.

It is easy to understand how attached man becomes to this pachyderm. They have, besides their physical allure, such really appealing characteristics: a childish desire for sweets—a sportsman's love of the chase—an unreasoning fear of small live objects—coupled with stanch courageousness in face of actual danger.

We had an assorted assemblage of elephants—all ages—all sizes; from the little ones of twelve years or so, just beginning their apprenticeship, to the giant tuskers, well versed in jungle lore. It is hard to realize that these tuskers, while most formidable-looking, do not compare in size to their African brothers. The skull formation of the African elephant is far more massive than that of the Indian; their ears are almost twice as long and the tusks three to four times as heavy. The most extraordinary pair of tusks I have ever seen are those at Sagamore Hill given to Colonel Roosevelt by King Menelik of Abyssinia. These each measure nearly nine feet ten inches in length and make a pair of average-size tusks standing near by look like miniature ones from a pigmy race of animals.

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Once arrived at the kill we descended from the pads and mounted our howdahs. This was quite a feat from the ground, even with our elephant kneeling. The best method of egress was a flying leap through the air from pad to howdah elephant.

The pads are stuffed and covered with gunnies and are usually laid on a dilapidated scarlet saddle-cloth. They cover most of the elephant and are fastened securely by ropes; one goes over the back and under the middle; another under the tail and around the neck. The mahout sits on the neck astride a numdah of red felt. Special elephants carried the howdahs, which were perched atop of pads. They were fashioned of wicker and iron and had little doors on each side with long iron hooks across to hold them safely; in front there was a higher piece with support for the guns, and a rail running around the top of the front and side boards. There was a comfortable double seat in ours with a rumble behind for the gun-bearer—a charming man who, after my first extraordinarily lucky shot never admitted that I could or had missed anything.

Our howdah elephant was stanch and true, and his mahout, Raencola Chanchal, a fine old fellow with long gray beard, his face inscrutable, the fire in his eyes alone betraying the inward joy of the chase. Nerves are contagious, and a quiet, calm mahout conveys confidence to the elephant. We never once in the whole week moved from the

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ordered position. E.'s elephant was of quite different calibre. I shall never forget my terror on that first afternoon, when a tigress and four cubs were charging indiscriminately on all sides of us, to suddenly behold E. and her elephant vanishing into space. Four elephants were hastily dispatched to head off the frightened beast, but only after the rescue was accomplished did E. realize what had happened. At the actual moment she was busily reloading, and, being a person of great concentration and determination, little details such as runaway steeds were far too trivial to be worthy of notice.

Once in the howdah, the real business of the day began. A hasty survey of the dead bullock, a few moments of deliberate thought and consultation with the local shikarries, and the jemadar would solemnly announce: "The kill was here—water is yonder—the tiger is there in that patch of jungle." We were always incredulous, but the tiger always was there! These people had such a highly developed sense of jungle craft that it appeared pure magic to me.

Silently, alert and rigid, in anticipation we started off in single file, elephant behind elephant, in long line. The giant jungle grasses in many places waved some eight to ten feet above our heads as we stood upright in the howdahs. Below was a dense mass of lianas and thicket through which the elephants mowed their way, uprooting and tearing aside with their trunks any serious obstruction.

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Peering down from our great height we saw, under many layers of intertwining grasses, frequent runways made by the jungle folk; some, narrow little furrows riddled by multitudinous tiny footprints; wide paths others, with giant ploughed-out pug marks; broken reeds and beaten-down grasses denoting the passing of a great body.

There were adventures galore in these dark underworlds—some easy to decipher. Here were the sharply indented tracks of the chital, with a feline spoor—the unmistakable five toes of a tiger, overlaid, showing clearly, and indubitably indicating a swift pursuit and sudden end.

Looking down at these varied paterans, I suddenly appreciated the possible horror of it all. What terrors did not the obscure loneliness down there hold! A nameless dread of the mystery of the jungle enveloped me.

Quickly, at a signal from the subidar, the elephants turned automatically, first right, then left, alternating, thus forming a big circle which in the first stages measured roughly four to five hundred yards across. The elephants closed in, and this radius gradually narrowed down to approximately one hundred and fifty yards. Great excitement prevailed. The Subidar and Jemadar, in their round olive-green hats, could be seen bustling hither and thither, issuing orders, asking questions of the shikarries, looking over the ground.

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A pathway in front of the circle of elephants was cleared; that is, the jungle was demolished utterly. Certain animals stepped forth, moving round and round as on an axis, trampling and beating the grass, and tearing or battering down shrubs and trees. A trunk would encircle a tree-trunk, a great gray knee would press forward, and the big tree would thus simply crash over.

This work continued until a narrow but complete circle in front of the elephants had been levelled. The jungle was usually so dense that but for this clearing it would have been impossible to get a shot. The guns were posted at proper intervals. There were seven: T. and E., K. and myself, as well as Mr. W. and the two other Englishmen. There were forty-five elephants, among which we were posted at equal distances.

The stage was now set. The subidar blew sharply on his whistle. Two big tuskers, Baba Guoge and Jung Bahadur, drew apart and entered the untouched ring in front of us. Every time we quivered under the strain; every time we said to ourselves, there can't be a tiger there—it's not possible; every time, with one exception, the tiger was there.

Baba Guoge, the leading tusker, towered over the others. Whitish gray, exceedingly wrinkled even for his kind, he had enormous tusks, decorated with gold bands, and huge, flapping ears. His was a lurid past. He was known to have killed one mahout, at least,

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and he had had his tail bitten off by a tiger the year before. Just at this time he had four great slashes down his forehead, chastisement for having dared to flee before a charging rhino.

The two elephants moved slowly in, pursuing a zigzag course through the circle. We could only tell by the waving grass where the animals were. Hardly daring to breathe, we waited and watched the quivering line of grass.

The programme varied from day to day; sometimes there would be only a roar, sometimes a streak of yellow, sometimes a direct charge, and out would come the elephants, bucketing and snorting, while the entire ring of natives laughed gleefully, and the mahouts on Baba Guoge and Jung Bahadur seemed equally amused.

The men loved the game. They went in after the tiger day after day with the same eagerness. On the neck of each elephant was squatted its own particular mahout, carrying, of course, the ever-present ankus, or goad. On the extreme back perched a keen-eyed native. These men who sat thus insecurely and casually were called "pechuas."

Baba Guoge's pechua wore a loose black shirt, open at the throat, showing many silver necklaces. His hair was done up in a tuft; big silver rings were in his ears, and in one hand he carried nonchalantly his only weapon—a wooden hammer studded with nails. One of the most vivid pictures of all the mental

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photography of the trip is of Baba Guoge charging after a tiger, with this pechua clinging perilously with one hand to a hidden rope, his head back, his eyes shining, his teeth gleaming.

Jung Bahadur's pechua wore only a dirty loin-cloth, but by way of contrast his mahout was gorgeous in a tight yellow coat, flaring sharply at the waist, and a superbly rolled, if somewhat grimy, gray puggree.

After the preliminary try-out, when the presence of a tiger had been definitely established, there would be a few moments' pause—pregnant with possibility. Then, encouraged by prods from the ankus of the mahout and thwacks from the mallet of the pechua, Baba Guoge would be persuaded to re-enter the circle. Suddenly he would stop, curl up his trunk out of harm's way; a snort and a squeal would prelude a brief but rapid charge. Possibly this advance might be repeated three or four times before the tiger with a roar turned the tables and Baba Guoge whipped around and once more fled outward through the ring of waiting elephants.

The tiger sometimes followed the fleeing tusker out into the trampled ring, but no two tigers ever behaved alike. We never knew what the procedure would be; we never knew how many tigers, or, indeed, what animals the circle might prove to hold. Sometimes it would take hours to coax or drive the tiger out. Sometimes the whole affair, once the ele-

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phants started in, would be over in less than half an hour. Mystery, uncertainty, curiosity, as well as excitement, held us slaves. Quickly your chance might come, to be seized or lost forever—as far as that particular tiger was concerned.

The morning of the first day we had three rings near the river bed, in fairly low grass. We could see the mahouts' heads as the elephants moved hither and yon. The tiger came out almost immediately by N., giving only the most fleeting opportunity for a shot. Quick as a flash, almost without orders, mechanically the elephants moved forward, and a second ring was formed several hundred yards away. It seemed beyond all bounds of probabilities that the animal could have been encircled again, but sure enough, after a few minutes of manœuvring, the two elephants moved into the centre, and this time Baba Guoge plunged and snorted directly in front of us. The tiger, alas! turned tail and ran out through T. and D., who both fired as the grass waved, without actually getting a sight. Another ring was promptly formed, but this time that tiger was gone for good.

Following an excellent lunch of sandwiches and canned peaches, which, next to tinned tomatoes, is to me the most welcome form of food on such occasions, we moved on to some far-distant khubber. Our way led through quite a cultivated bit of country—over a very flat plain, but one rich in produce. We saw castor-trees and plantains, and passed large outlays of



FORMING THE RING



BABA GUOGE READY TO ENTER THE RING

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tobacco, and, of course, countless paddy fields, whose vivid young green sprouts vied with the blue of adjacent flax and the great yellow stretches of mustard in providing brilliant splashes of color.

The villages through which we passed at quite frequent intervals were most attractive. These consisted of open spaces, well swept and garnished, around which the little low-thatched houses were assembled. On the roofs gourds clambered at random, and red peppers. The very walls of the houses, as well as the little fences surrounding the campus, were apparently made only of dried grasses. Near by, the adjoining fields of mustard were enclosed rather like runways. Neatness and order were paramount. Groups of children of all ages watched us with wide eyes. Quite naked they were, save for numberless nose-rings and bracelets and chains, and little tight necklaces of cockleshells and bright beads. Once I threw down an empty cartridge-shell, and the smaller youngsters scampered eagerly after the bit of color.

It was late afternoon by the time we were ready to start the second drive. This was very different country from that of the morning—light tree jungle and higher grass. The ring was formed around a small nullah with marshy land bordering on real bogs near by. It was my first intimate experience with tiger, and the following hours provided a full gamut of excitement. The elephants were restive, our nerves taut. In the circle was a tigress with four cubs; two

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sets of different ages, and they were all gallant fighters, active and very swift. A regular bombardment ensued, for every one seemed to see some animal at the same moment, and all seven guns blazed away, almost if not all the time. T. killed the tigress. Wild excitement—the elephants plunged and snorted. Hard on this a cub appeared, which I dropped temporarily. E.'s elephant bolted. In quick succession two more cubs raced by. Pandemonium and a regular fusillade followed. I felt as if we were playing a game of shoot-me-if-you-can, for to unaccustomed ears, countless bullets seemed to whiz by my head.

Major D., K., and I had each wounded a cub, in spite of which three had escaped. After a moment of quiescence we closed in our circle around the remaining cub. The end seemed inevitable. Forty-five elephants, shoulder to shoulder, hemmed him in. Closer and closer we pressed, but dusk fell, and yet the young unseen creature held us all at bay. Only some ten yards across now, but the high grasses covered him still. A sudden charge at a searching trunk, a whirling, stamping elephant, snorts of rage, a shower of bullets—and the cub was gone.

A faint glimmer in the west, one evening star low to the southward, and night was upon us—black, opaque night.

Cold and hungry, K. and I sat back to back on one pad elephant for warmth and companionship during the long march to camp. I had, fortunately, a pillow

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from the howdah, and this I buttoned into my thin hunting-jacket. Never again was I so foolish as to be caught without my fur coat.

It was a weary four hours before we saw the glimmering camp-fires, for both elephants and mahouts lost the way. Numerous times we were off the track entirely, and always did we have to be on the alert for stray branches, the bugbear of elephant-riders.

Dinner, hot baths, and a long sleep made us fresh and fit next morning for any adventures which the day might offer. After breakfast there were the pleasant few minutes around the fire while the conferences were held. Generally Mir Subah Austaman Singh, C.I.C., came for a little chat. He was a dignified fellow, the Nepalese officer attached to the Legation, and his portly form was tightly encased in a bleu roi jacket with brass buttons. Conversation was limited, but smiles and bows prevailed, and sufficed to establish an entente cordiale.

Bearers scurried around, collecting guns, ammunition, coats, etc.; shortly the elephants appeared and, kneeling, signified the hour of departure. We scrambled up and settled ourselves, sometimes alone, sometimes two for company, but we each had our own same elephant, with its same mahout, and always the same howdah elephant. For some reason the original allocation of pads and howdahs held during the whole visit.

The night before an elephant careering giddily, we

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were told, had stepped down the edge of the river bank some forty feet, but except to the palisade itself, no damage was done. We looked at the mass of sliding earth and rejoiced that our animals appeared in an equable frame of mind this morning.

As we descended to the river, down the pathway broadened and beaten by the daily tramp of great feet, we passed the camp village—huts which had quickened and grown with our coming. Here, on either side of the way, squatting over their shining brass vessels, were little groups of men and women. Their pleasant smiles and courteous gestures of salute seemed to bid us "good hunting all." They were eating what appeared both a substantial and tempting meal. Certainly the curries and gay bits of colored spices, with the heaps of rice in the highly polished brass bowls, and big, round plates, looked pretty and appetizing. One saw quite frequently a member of either sex polishing the dishes energetically. It was evidently a question of family pride.

No real hope for tiger was held out on this morning—the best kill being in too close proximity to a village—and it was said to be unlikely that the tiger would lie up in the neighborhood. This proved true, and, after casting in various directions, we called the morning a blank—our only blank, incidentally—and hastened off toward the next line, which we wished to reach by lunch time.

This particular morning, by the way, contrary to

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all the persistent rumors of such plagues, was the only time I was ever bothered by insects of any kind in Nepal. A pest of very thin, feathery gray things settled upon me and flew in thick clouds around me. They seemed to drop from the trees. They did not sting or bite, but they were annoying, and it was difficult to avoid swallowing them.

At two in the afternoon we started to beat a rather swampy bit of jungle. The tiger-grass in places was about thirty feet high, at least ten feet above us as we stood upright in the howdah. The density of the low underbrush was beyond anything imaginable.

Just after K. had remarked that it was real rhino country, with the necessary slightly damp bottom, we heard a rustling. "Look out, be ready," he whispered; "here comes the tiger"; but the rustling suddenly became a crashing, and I saw distinctly a big black body shining through the grasses. Perfectly still it stood, about fifty yards off, while I was able to sight carefully and fire at my leisure. It dropped. I fired again, but it was still. Suddenly, a little to the right, a commotion ensued. Incredulous, but unable, anyway, to believe that I had actually killed the rhino, I started firing into the moving bushes at what I felt must be the original animal, but what proved to be a young one. On discovering this we desisted, and with difficulty persuaded our elephant to advance. There, before my unbelieving eyes, lay a black mountain of flesh, the big rhino, quite dead.

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My excitement knew no bounds. Even K. was elated. I gazed, fascinated by the sheer ugliness of the monster. Standing beside it we felt dwindled to Lilliputian dimensions. In spite of its hide being obviously "undone and most untidy," I liked it tremendously and regarded it, from its crumbly horn to its preposterous tail, with proprietary eyes. It seemed impossible that I had brought it down with a single shot. In Africa the rhino is so common that he is not considered such a rare trophy; one has no such feeling of elation when one gets him, but in India he is hard to come by, for few and far between are the places where he is still found.

During this episode the other elephants had continued on and formed a ring some little distance beyond us, in which they had cornered a couple more rhino, and where chaos held. The circle had narrowed down to about fifty yards. Protesting elephants were being goaded into making futile charges. Their hearts were not in this particular game. Even the mahouts showed symptoms of uneasiness. There was a nervous stamping and changing of feet.

As we joined them, an immature rhino charged us, dashing first to one side and then to another, scattering the near-by elephants. E.'s elephant whirled as she was trying to get a shot, with such lightning agility that she was very nearly flung to the ground.

Eventually the other rhino was wounded by Wilkinson and finished off by T. The shikarries had pro-

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claimed it a male, but it proved to be a female, too, which was unfortunate, as our museum group still lacked the male, and we only possessed two permits for rhinos. We were making a scientific collection, and the skins of our rhinos were destined to be mounted entire in the Field Museum in Chicago, but these animals having died out in India are quite rightly rigidly protected in Nepal by the Maharajah.

The problem of skinning the rhinos was serious, as it was a lengthy task. At last it was decided that Baptista, our own skinner, and his men should come early in the morning in bullock-carts. In the meantime we covered the dead animals with branches, but first there were certain native rites to be performed: A little sacrifice to the dead one's spirit; mumbled words and a few mystic signs, and then the men hastily gathered blood in improvised bags made from bits of their already scanty wearing apparel. These blood-bags were gruesome-looking objects as they hung over the sides of our elephants, leaving a tiny but gory trail. The rhino blood is famed as medicine for many ills, but especially as a charm for women.

The day was now rapidly waning, but we made time for one more beat, in which a good-sized tiger escaped through the grass with, it was said, his tail between his legs.

The thirteenth, both as a number and date, has always had a deep significance for me, and it was with

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an extra tremor of anticipation that I awoke on Wednesday, January thirteenth. What a never-to-be-forgotten day it proved!—the day of many fords, as most of us will always remember it. Twenty-nine times we crossed the river before we turned homeward. Lovely, laughing water it was sometimes, splashing up joyously against our elephants' dark bodies, with rainbow colors caught in the spray. At other times the deep, placid pools reflected strange pictures, and again there were angry rapids, through which we made headway with effort.

I wish I could describe the beauty of that day: the all-pervading serenity that entered one's soul; the golden sunlight that enveloped us; the blue sky and the dazzling amphitheatre of snow mountains so very close.

The country teemed with bird life. We passed close to any number of Brahmany duck. They are odd-looking birds, not pretty or graceful, but for some reason they always spelled romance to me. The top and bottom of their wings are white, the feathers of their breasts and backs a dullish yellow; they are invariably seen in couples. Even in quite a group, and it was unusual to come across a group, pairs would be distinctly separated from other pairs.

There were quantities of little birds which I, of course, did not recognize. Many wagtails were hopping continuously, persistently, and very daintily. The king-crows I liked tremendously. They were so

“THE LAND WHERE THE ELEPHANTS ARE” decorative perched on tiny twigs, or more often on the tall flowering ends of jungle grasses. Their black bodies, with slender tail-feathers, outlined sharply against the tawny background, seemed to me a suitable new motive for Hunt Dietrick to turn into some fantastic and charming silhouette.

Perhaps the most effective of all the air denizens were the floricans, lovely white and black things, the fame of whose beautiful feathers has spread far afield. Numbers of great white herons flew over us at intervals, alighting now and then in near-by trees, looking for all the world like an unexpected snow-storm. We passed two osirises—tall, stately, red-legged cranes strutting solemnly up and down along a stretch of sandy river bank; and of course occasional peacocks whirled up in front of us.

I shall never forget the first time I saw a peacock in India. It was several years ago, in Mysore, during a tiger drive. I was sitting most insecurely in a banyan-tree, balancing on the top rung of a very high and shaky ladder, when suddenly, with a tremendous rustling, a peacock flew directly over my head, its breast a startling emerald green, its great tail outspread, catching and holding the sunlight in its hundred golden eyes. I, who had never seen peacocks except forlornly trailing in zoos, or with clipped wings in formal gardens, nearly fell out of my tree with astonishment and joy. I had never realized a peacock could fly!

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It was after twelve-thirty before we changed into our howdahs, but this ring, in spite of extreme density of jungle, was a short affair. The tiger came out immediately, directly in front of Mr. W., who wounded it with a very pretty shot. It disappeared back into the grass, only to reappear exactly in the same spot a few seconds later, this time to be killed instantly by Mr. W. It was a good-sized tigress in lovely winter coat.

After a hurried lunch we moved on two miles or so to a thickly wooded district. It proved a tremendous undertaking, involving several hours before the ring could be established. Great trees had to be torn asunder, bushes uprooted, and enormous vines broken down.

Two streaks went past me, flashes of yellow, not brown, so fast that I could not even throw my gun up to my shoulder. My heart sank; my only chance at a tiger gone, I moaned. The shikarry never turned his head, but assured me they were merely cheetul.

This beat was animated from the very beginning. No sooner would Baba Guoge and Jung Bahadur enter the ring than they would dash out, pursued by the tiger each time, causing the usual merriment among the mahouts. After ten minutes or so of this, when the elephants entered all was strangely quiet. While they pursued a zigzag course, K. turned to me, and as calmly as if he were commenting on the weather, said: "There's the tiger. Shoot!" I looked and

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looked, but for the life of me could see nothing. It was heart-breaking. Was I to fail now from sheer inability to see an animal which was yellow and black and perfectly apparent to my husband? Never have I known such agony. Thank heavens it lasted but for a minute, which to me, however, seemed like an eon. The elephants drew nearer. Suddenly the tiger jumped forward into full sight, and turned sharply to my right, exposing its full side length as a beautiful target. I aimed for the shoulder, but hit it in the lower back flank. The bullet, however, ranged forward and it dropped. Picking itself up, and avoiding the next gun, the tiger most considerately appeared in front of us again, to be killed at our very feet.

While these events were occurring, a bombardment went on at our left, where a tiger was first wounded by D. and finished off by E.

Nothing, I think, can surpass the excitement of killing one's first tiger. I jumped to the ground and gazed admiringly at the lovely striped body, examined the magnificent head, touched the soft coat, lifted the big pads, and thanked all the gods of chance for kindly allowing me to secure with a mediocre shot such a gorgeous creature. We took pictures, and I was blooded, a patch on each cheek, according to all orthodox hunting regulations.

After measurements were taken, which were nine feet, eight inches around the curves, we started for home. To me, in my excited state of triumph, the

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hours passed quickly enough; the others played geography game and finished off the remains of our ample lunch.

The days sped by—all full of interest. There was always excitement aplenty. E, in spite of her elephant bolting again, got her tiger next morning in an amazing ring, where three animals charging, attacking, and roaring all at once, surpassed the most thrilling descriptions of big-game hunting. One tiger actually climbed up the nose of an elephant, and was only with considerable difficulty shaken off.

K. already had three tigers to his credit. One big one, killed in Mysore several years ago, he stalked and shot on foot, a perilous method which is rarely indulged in by hunters; but I doubt if anything could have been more satisfactory or glorious than the charge of his Nepalese tiger. He had firmly refused to shoot before I had killed mine, so I was especially delighted when, several mornings later, the ring only just formed, I saw the grasses wave violently in front of us. There could be no mistaking what this meant. The country was less wild than usual in this particular spot, much less jungly, no trees anywhere near and the grass comparatively low. Ripples of movement steadily increased in a direct line toward us, and then we saw a straight yellow tail heralding the approach of Sheer Khan. A magnificent sight he was as he broke into full view. His head up, his tail up, his eyes shining like great, blazing topazes. The sun

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beat down on the lithe, graceful body, emphasizing the vivid orange of his coat and making the clearly defined black stripes in startling contrast look like the softest velour de soie. His mouth was open, and we had a gleam of white teeth and a long red tongue as he charged straight at us. No coward spirit this, but a noble creature relishing danger and facing it with zest. K. fired, dropping him with a single bullet through the heart; and at that moment the elephants raised their trunks and trumpeted in unison, a signal uncannily but invariably indicating the moment of death. The two shikarries rode over and saluted K. solemnly, bowing low in admiring tribute of the pretty performance—and, on getting a good sight of the animal stretched below, exclaimed joyously: "Burra wallah, Burra wallah"—big fellow! Actually he measured ten feet three inches around the curves.

That same afternoon we had a tussle with a fierce but very wary animal. Elephants lined only three sides of a bit of jungle, the river made a natural fourth boundary. For some reason the tiger never or almost never takes to water—even when hardest pressed. I was told Sir Frederick O'Connor once did shoot a tiger in the act of swimming the river. This time, and on one or two other occasions, the bank was left quite unguarded and certainly no attempt was made by the tiger to escape that way, though in direst extremity. It does seem most unaccountable.

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The shikarries had a terrible time with this old tiger. In the beginning he was so very quiet that we all despaired of his presence. There was no sight or sound for the longest time; then the great Baba Guoge gave a snort and came galloping out, while tremendous roar followed upon tremendous roar. A moment after E. got a shot. Then there was another long period of inaction. The tiger now even refused to charge at the attacking elephants. This unnatural calm began to affect their nerves, and neither tusker wished to return to the fray. Still more jungle was annihilated, until the circle was narrowed to a mere spot of grass. The tuskers were supported by fresh elephants. The Subidar and Jemadar, flanking on either side, shouted: "Shabash! Well done!"—in encouraging tones.

Finally the tiger changed his tactics and started making violent rushes, now at the elephants, now at the ring. Every one shot several times, and eventually he was mortally wounded as he charged first at us, then at W. He made a final effort to escape from the circle, and was finished off by a multitude of guns as he slowly returned to the ring. It was necessary even then to give him a coup de grace. He proved the record of that camp, measuring ten feet four inches around curves, and was voted Eleanor's, as she had had the first shot at him, and her excellent marksmanship had been proven many times already during the past months.



ELEPHANT AND TIGER

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At the most crucial moment, when the tiger was charging directly at our elephant, out of the corner of my left eye I noticed a funny little animal run straight up a tree trunk. As the tiger made its final sortie, this thing dropped to the ground, with a resounding thud. Both E. and I thought the other had shot it for the museum, but alas! neither of us had had sufficient presence of mind, and we were never able even to discover what it was. We were d'accordes, however, in indignantly denying that it could have been a monkey.

Alas! In spite of our reluctance to greet it, the last day did arrive. The afternoon turned out to be a suitable finale to our week's sport. The outward route led us through lovely forest lands. Hundreds of straight and slender sal-trees surrounded us. This wood is considered one of Nepal's most valuable products, as it is not only hard and good timber, but curiously enough is always immune from the pest of white ants, which attack indiscriminately all others. In these sal forests the jungle does not grow to extreme heights, so we were better able to see some of the events as they crowded on one another.

It was most interesting to watch the selection of ground, how first we drove straight in this instance, and then gradually formed the circle. This might account for the variety and number of animals in this last ring. There were five cheetah, at least three sambar—and a questionable couple more—some pig, one

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very frightened monkey, one enormous rhino, and five tigers. The cheetah and sambur broke out first, and then way was made for the rhino, the elephants gladly opening up a pathway for him. He sauntered through in leisurely fashion, not deigning to notice us. I caught a glimpse of him then, and later on, outside the ring, eyeing us all incuriously.

Pandemonium soon broke forth in our centre. Tigers charged the tuskers from various directions. A tiger, going like greased lightning, dashed by us. K. fired and turned it. At the same moment Major D. fired at another, which broke through the ranks, causing his elephant to swerve so violently that he was thrown against his wife with such force that he narrowly escaped hurling her out of the howdah and onto the back of a third tiger, which at that moment dashed by on the other side. In point of fact, her topic, I believe, fell squarely on the fleeing beast.

Still another tiger, the fourth, broke by N., while the fifth was killed by T. and E. The first one, though wounded badly, went up and down the ring, avoiding the rain of bullets in amazing fashion. I became quite dizzy in an endeavor to follow them and their sorties, which were the wildest and most dashing exhibitions of speed I ever witnessed. Three out of the five escaped; the two which were secured made our total bag for the week eleven.

To our regret there was no time to go after a leopard, which had killed some eight miles off. We con-

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soled ourselves by beating homeward, once out of
the high jungle.

This was an amusing game. The elephants, some
twenty yards apart, formed a long, straight line and
moved forward together. There was a left flank which
advanced slightly and endeavored to turn any game
toward us. In these drives we shot at anything that
jumped up before us. Besides the birds and an occa-
sional sambur or choetul, there were this afternoon
only little fat pigs and quantities of para or hog-deer.
These provided quite the most difficult shooting I
have ever experienced. They are fleet as the wind,
very small, so that the scantiest tuft of grass pro-
vides a cover, and are as good an example of protec-
tive coloration as I know of. I had numerous op-
portunities of trying for them, but to my intense
exasperation never made the slightest impression on
them either here or in Palia.

Soon it became too dark to shoot. We fell into
single file. The soft glow from the vanishing sun
quickly faded. The lovely last twilight engulfed us.
It was the enchanted hour. The circle of blue moun-
tains in the foreground were of an indescribable pur-
ity. Beyond and above were the white peaks—

"Himalaya heavenward heading, sheer and vast, sheer and vast;
A million summits bedding on the last world's past."

Above us rose a tiny crescent moon, with its com-
panion star. The ineffable evening peace of the jun-

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gle land dropped softly around us—the mahouts silently wrapped voluminous white sheets around themselves and sat hunched on their elephants' heads like ghostly phantoms riding through the air, the soft gray contour of the elephants melting into the swiftly falling night.

What contrasting pictures we carried away with us next morning! What a host of happy memories to guard! We bid an affectionate farewell to our present host, and sent oral and written messages to His Highness, full of deepest gratitude for his kindness and hospitality, and the ardent wish that we might some day thank him in person.

