



AFTER leaving Midnapore in 1860, I was for a time posted to districts where I could not get any big game shooting, though I did enjoy some excellent sport at snipe and duck. In 1867, however, I was, to my great satisfaction, transferred to Maldah, then one of the best districts in Bengal for tiger shooting. The civil station of Maldah is prettily situated on the banks of the Mahananda River, and the place was one of the first possessions of the English in India. In the middle of last century, when the East India Company was endeavouring to open out its trade in Bengal, humbly seeking the favour of the Mahomedan ruler at Mornhidabad, and quite unconscious of the great future before it, Maldah was fixed on as a convenient spot at which to establish a factory and dépôt for goods, and a Residency was built there, surrounded by a wall, with embrasures for cannon at the four corners. In course of time the house was converted into a combined residence and office for the magistrate and collector in charge of the district, the upper story being the dwelling-house and the lower the court-rooms. The old wall,

was a stout-built, intelligent young man, very black from constant exposure to sun and weather, and, as I soon discovered, well up in all matters of shikar. In the course of conversation I told him I hoped we would have some good sport in company, and at the suggestion I saw a look of gratified surprise flit across his face, which augured well for the success of my endeavour to secure his co-operation, and so indeed it turned out. D— sent me all the "khubber" (information) that reached him, and he got much better intelligence than I ever did. His elephants were always at my disposal; sometimes we went out shooting together, if I could not go he often went alone, and *vice versa*. He was an excellent coadjutor in the hunting-field, very keen, and never caring what trouble he took to ensure success, so our compact was entirely in my favour. During the three years I was at Maldah I shot a number of tigers, a success which was due very largely to my having been fortunate enough to enlist D—'s assistance. Among others which D— had, one was apparently a perfect howdah elephant—tall, fast, smooth going, and good-tempered, but she was not steady, so that D— at the time of my arrival at Maldah was trying to dispose of her, though he had just changed her mahout, in the hope that this might do good. I liked the look of the elephant, Biddya by name, and I was greatly taken by the appearance of Junon, the new mahout; so I had my howdah put on the former, and very soon found that Junon had her under perfect command. I therefore adopted her as my howdah elephant, and hardly ever shot off another all the time I was at Maldah. A better mahout than Junon it would be hard to find; keen and plucky, he seemed to imbue the animal in his charge with the same spirit, so that he made Biddya a perfectly steady elephant, and at the end of a year or two D— would not have sold her for any money.

Maldah, at the time of which I write, was very well suited for the preservation of tigers, since a few miles to the south of the civil station lay the

ruins of Gaur, the old capital of Bengal—a mass of decaying buildings, large tanks, and heavy tree jungle covered with creepers, with the interstices filled in with cane brakes, so that it formed a safe habitat for tigers, where they could live and breed, comparatively safe from molestation. To the north again lay the ruins of Parova, another deserted city, where also the jungle was too dense to be beaten, even with elephants, and which constituted another stronghold for tigers. Gaur was full of most interesting ruins, which were rapidly going to decay, the luxuriant vegetation having taken root in the walls of the old buildings, which were thus gradually being disintegrated, even the huge slabs of stone being gradually forced apart. The place was full of tanks, some of them very large, tenanted by a perfect army of alligators, and haunted also by myriads of mosquitoes, of a most malignant type. It was a most unwholesome place, and in my time unfit for human habitation, but I hear that since then cultivation has crept in, and Gaur is now very largely cleared, and in some places inhabited, which may account for the falling off in the tiger



RUINS AT GAUR.

too, still remained, and in my time a few rusty pieces of ordnance yet lay on the grass-grown ramparts, a testimony to the immense change that had been wrought in a hundred years. When I took over charge of the office in April, 1867, I discussed matters with my predecessor, and among other things, questioning him as to the prospects of sport, was told that a native land-holder who lived quite close to the magistrate's house was, from a sporting point of view, an objectionable person. He owned several elephants, but was chary about lending them; he was, moreover, in the habit of slipping out as soon as any news of a kill was brought in, often bagging a tiger or leopard which the magistrate himself might have got. I enquired whether D—, the person in question, had ever been asked out shooting, and when the reply was "certainly not," the reason for D—'s conduct did not seem far to seek; at the same time, the fact of his thus running counter to the wishes of the head of the district argued an independence of character that showed there was something in the man. Soon after this D— came to pay his respects to me; he

shooting. It was then nearly impossible to bag a tiger in Gaur itself, though they were easily enough got when they left their sanctuary, and came in search of cattle into the grass jungles outside the embankment that formed the old city wall.

But though bagging a tiger was extremely difficult in Gaur, owing to the quantity of unbeatable jungle to be found everywhere, there were one or two places within the walls where a hunt might be prosecuted with some hope of success. One such place was a very large tank called the Ságordighi, situated not far from the confines of the old city. Its banks were covered with tree jungle and creepers, quite unbeatable, while at the back lay more heavy covert, in which a tiger would be safe from attack; but in course of time the rains had washed down the soil from the banks, and gradually filled in the edge of the tank, affording a place for grass to take root and grow; so that gradually patches of long grass had come into existence, in which if a tiger could be found it might be bagged. One end of the tank had thus been encroached on to a considerable extent, affording a good-sized covert, in which a tiger might well lie, but from which, if in any way disturbed, it was sure to make for the heavy tree jungle, in which it would be safe. The Ságordighi thus was a place where it was always possible to bag a Gaur tiger; accordingly when we got information one day in October, 1867, that a bullock which had strayed in the direction of the Ságordighi was missing, D— and I, after a council of war, determined that it was worth acting on the news. We could not tell that the bullock had been killed in the grass on the edge of the "dighi," or tank, but even if killed elsewhere it had probably been dragged to the water; anyhow it seemed worth trying, so D— promised to send on his elephants during the latter part of the night, and we were to drive out and meet near the spot early next morning, 7th October. On reaching the rendezvous next morning I found that D— was accompanied by his brother P—; the latter, it appeared, fired by his brother's account of the joys of tiger shooting, had determined to come and see what the sport was like. This was his first venture out tiger shooting, and as it proved, his last; he never tempted Providence again. P— was mounted in a separate howdah on Mohun Peary, a favourite elephant of D—'s, in fact the one he generally rode himself; he had, however, on this occasion given it up to his brother, contenting himself with another one named Kauchau Mala, leaving my pet Biddya for me.

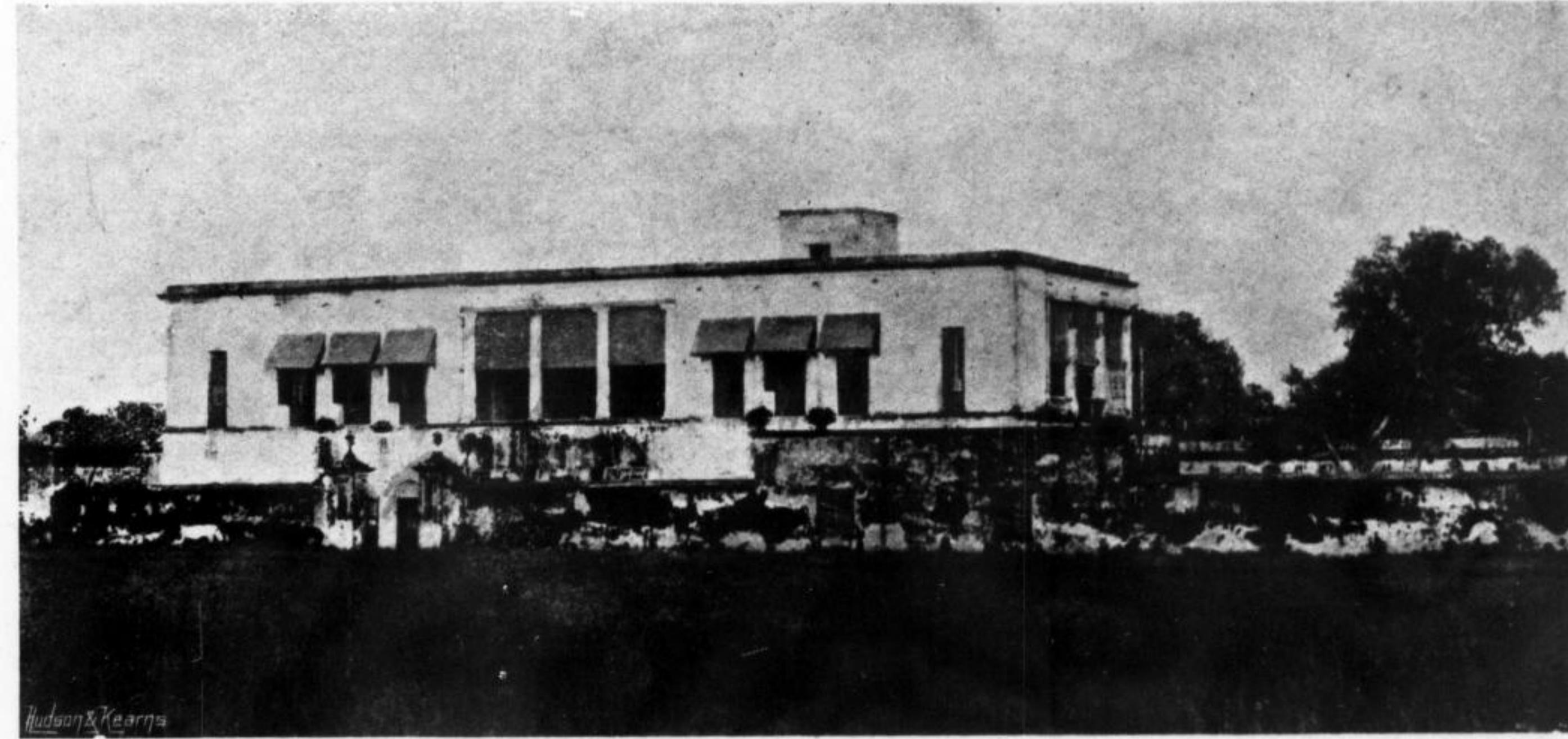
We had no certain knowledge where the bullock had been killed, if indeed it had been killed at all in the vicinity of the tank, so the first thing was to quietly skirt the tank, and see whether there were any marks showing that some heavy body had been dragged into the long grass. This investigation had been held before we arrived, and it was reported that a tiger was probably in the grass at the end of the tank, where it was, as I have said, silted up. Here, then, we formed line, with the pad elephants between the howdahs, and began to beat away from the heavily-timbered bank, intending to keep the tiger in the grass, where we could deal with it, and if it shifted, move it away from its sanctuary amongst the trees. We had beaten through one patch of long grass without disturbing anything, and were on our way through some shorter grass in single file, my elephant leading, when I was startled by hearing a savage snarl behind me, and, looking round, saw a large tiger rising on its hind legs, as if to seize the mahout of the elephant behind me. I fortunately had my rifle in my hand, so swinging round, I fired as the beast got up on its legs and struck it in the ribs. The shock brought the tiger to the ground, and it then dashed back towards the patch we had just left, scattering the elephants in its path, but without being again fired at. As the bank of the tank lay just beyond this patch of jungle into which

the tiger had escaped, I shouted to D—, who was at the tail of the line, to get between the tiger and the bank, and at the same time I urged my mahout to hurry in the same direction. D— and I were just splashing through a low place that lay between the bank and the jungle we wished to cover, when we heard a most tremendous uproar in our rear, the sounds of an angry tiger being mingled with the cries of the mahouts and the shrill trumpeting of an elephant.

From where we were we could see nothing; but it was clear that the tiger was having it all its own way, for we could hear no shots fired. On rejoining the others, we found P— in his howdah, quite speechless with terror, and Mohun Peary with torn head and trunk, and blood running down her hind-quarters from a hole at the roots of her tail. From the mahout we learnt that he had taken the elephant carelessly into the grass, expecting the tiger to be on its way towards the bank of the tank. The tiger charged as soon as the elephant entered the patch, on which P—, without attempting to fire, sat down in the howdah, and called out "Bhago! bhago!" (fly, fly). The tiger, unchecked by a shot, got on Mohun Peary's head, and



HIS LAST FIGHT O'ER.



THE OLD RESIDENCY, MALDAH.

clawed and bit her till it was shaken off, then, as the elephant turned to flee, it got up on her hind-quarters and almost bit her tail out at the root. On learning the particulars, D—'s wrath knew no bounds; he abused the mahout for going into the jungle, knowing who was in the howdah; he abused his brother for not, at least, letting off his gun; he vowed that his best elephant had been ruined (which, indeed, was likely enough), and altogether gave vent to his feelings in violent language, until I interrupted his flow of speech by suggesting that we were wasting time, and had better go for the tiger. This we proceeded to do, having allowed P— to go home, vowing that never again would he venture out tiger-shooting—a vow most religiously kept. As a precautionary measure, we formed line again on the side nearest the tree jungle—not, however, that this was really necessary, for the tiger evidently meant fighting and not running away.

We had not gone far into the long grass, some roft. high and too thick for one to see anything a yard off, when there was a sudden snarl almost under my elephant, and the next moment Biddya was swinging her body like a pendulum, and I was clinging to the side of the howdah to avoid being thrown out. The tiger had lain quite still till the elephant was almost over it, and then, rising perpendicularly, was hanging on, with one

foot on the side of Biddya's head and with the other on the lower part of the side of my howdah, its head being thus within a few inches of the mahout's leg as he sat on the elephant's neck.

Jumon called out to me to fire, but I could not do so till the tiger was shaken off, when I had a snap-shot at it as it slunk away growling. We then all got out of the long grass, in order to see what damage had been done. Biddya's head we found had been rather clawed, the lower part of my howdah had been torn off, and Jumon's leg had been cut by the tiger as it fell off the elephant; one paw of the animal had evidently grazed the mahout's leg, a claw making a deep gash. We bound up the wound, and I then proposed re-entering the jungle; but to this the mahouts objected, for they said the tiger was a perfect "shaitan" (demon) and had better be left alone. Jumon, however, backed me up, and

encouraged the others; so line was again formed, this time from where we were, without any further attempt to prevent the tiger from escaping. Very slowly we advanced, each mahout of the beating elephants adjuring his neighbour to move faster, and ready to bolt at the first sound; the tension on their nerves was, however, soon relieved by a shout from one of the mahouts, who saw our enemy lying dead in a trampled bit of grass just ahead of him. My last shot had hit him in a vital spot, and he had only gone a few yards after I fired. There he lay, his last fight pluckily fought to the end, a fine, sturdy, thick-set male, measuring as he lay 9ft. 4in. Mohun Peary, I may add, was none the worse for her adventure; she remained as staunch as ever, only she was never again able to flap her tail; it always hung behind her like a rope. Jumon, too, soon recovered, and often expressed his approval of that last lucky shot by

A SLEEPY FLY.

Mr. and Mrs. Hood Wright's Dogs at Frome.

PARK HILL, the quaint old-fashioned residence of Mr. Hood Wright, is near the old town of Frome, or Frome Selwood, as it is called in the old deeds, and is situated in North Somerset, on the borders of Wiltshire. Flat-fronted, with primitive windows, Park Hill presents no architectural beauties; but once inside, its bleak exterior gives place to the perfection of comfort and early English warmth. The town of Frome is celebrated for its parish church, and is near Longleat, the seat of the Marquess of Bath, Maiden Bradley, the estate of the Duke of Somerset, and Marston, belonging to the Earl of Cork and Orrery, and at one time was part of Selwood Forest. It is certainly situated in the loveliest bit of Somerset, and is an ideal training ground for the favourite of kings and queens, the dog of the chase, of history, legend, poetry, art—the handsome Deerhound. "St. Bernard," the cultivated writer and essayist on the dog, who contributed a charming series of papers to *Good Words*

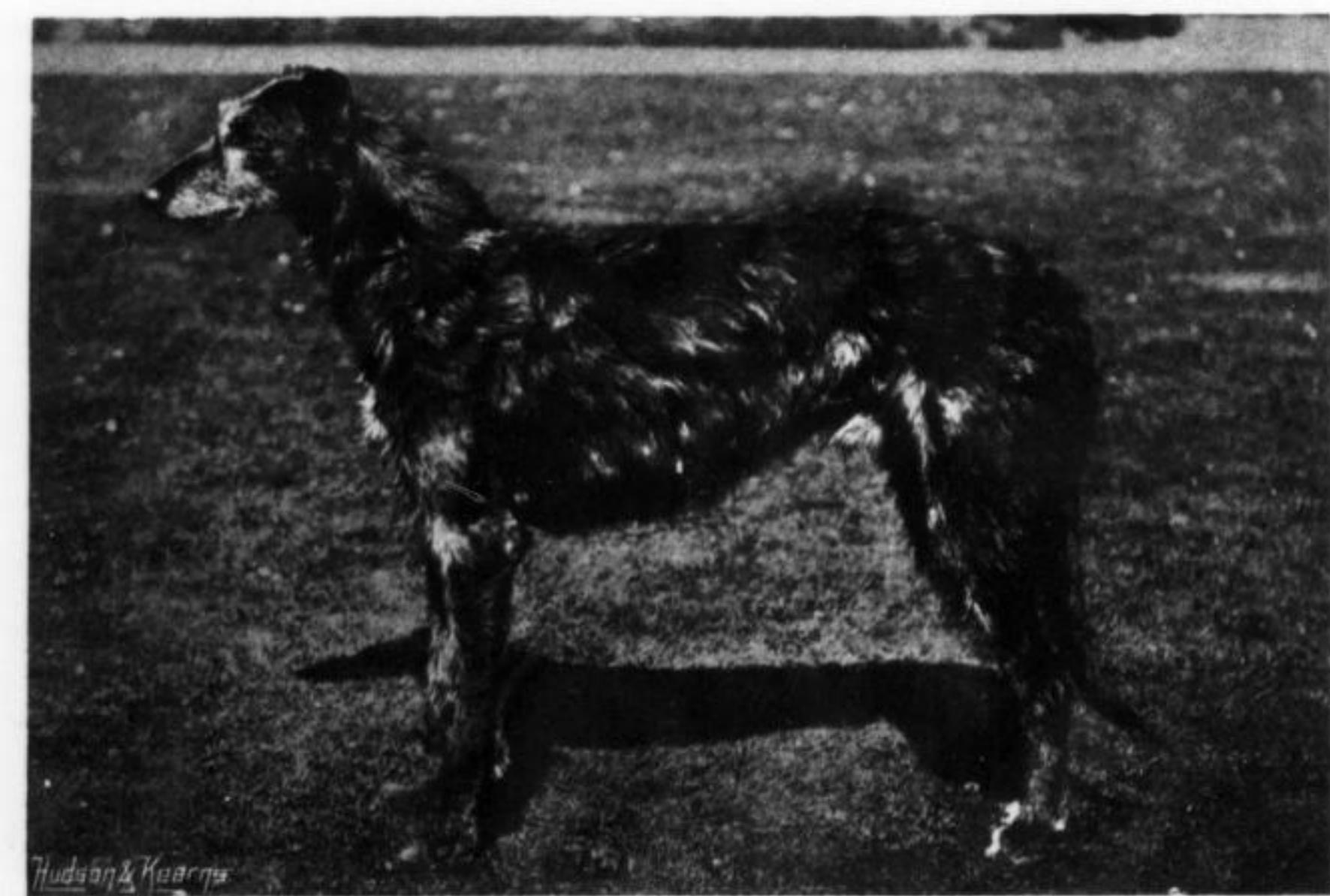


T. Fall,

A CHAMPION TEAM.

Baker Street.

last year, entitled "Notable Dogs of the Chase," gives the information that "both" Her Majesty and the Prince Consort greatly admired them, and possessed some noble specimens of the breed so characteristic of the "true and tender North which they loved so well"; and nothing finer by way of description of the variety has ever been written than the noble word portrait given by "St. Bernard" in the same pages. "Deep chested," he says, "but fine in the loins, where the body is simply bands and knots of muscle, it has straight, strong-boned, flat-sided legs that end in sound, close-set feet with well 'knuckled-up' toes. The deep, flat neck, immensely muscular, springs from between the shoulders on a fine arch. The long, lean head has a high-bred look, and the way in which the Deerhound carries it, looking well up, gives it an aristocratic and commanding appearance; while its eyes, dark brown or hazel, should be brilliant, and with an expression of peculiar intelligence and keenness, heightened by the locks through which, half concealed, they gaze. Though the



T. Fall,

SELWOOD DHOURAN.

Baker Street.

face and body are covered with harsh and rather shaggy hair, the legs should be short-haired and the ears as soft as velvet and turning over at the tips. The colour varies from sandy and light grey to dark brindle, and a perfect hound should stand not less than 30in. at the shoulder, with a rather greater girth of chest." The Deerhound, as everybody knows, was a very favourite subject with Landseer, and in his masterpieces representing Highland scenes many noble specimens of the breed have become immortal. Deerhounds are the principal dogs at the Selwood kennels to-day, and small wonder that Mr. Hood Wright should have consistently kept to the breed which his mother introduced thirty years ago. For she it was who procured a handsome bitch at Caithness from Apple-cross as a present for her son. This gift was subsequently followed by another of the famous McNeill strain from Dr. Cox, of Manchester, and it is from these two gifts that all the Deerhounds bred by Mr. Hood Wright are descended.

Out of many successes in breeding, one of the most noteworthy was Champion Old Bevis (K.C.S.B., 4753), the celebrated dog that was selected by the late C. Barton Barber for a model of Gelert for his picture entitled "The Celebrated Welsh Legend." This notable work was the painting which obtained the prize of £60 offered at the Welsh National Festival, and was subsequently exhibited at the Royal Academy, where it became one of the pictures of the season. It was purchased by Mr. Palmer, of



T. Fall,

SELWOOD CALLACK.

Baker Street.