

SHOOTING

A SHOOTER'S NOTEBOOK.

Kunj.

MANY English readers, I believe, in looking at the accounts of the shooting which the Prince of Wales enjoyed early in December last with the Maharajah of Bikanir, must have been interested in the account of the Indian sport to which the particular place assigned to the Demoiselle Crane was a sporting bird among these big shoots. I remember being surprised when I first heard from an officer home from India at the sport he had had with cranes, for up to that time, looking at the birds in the Zoological Gardens, I had thought of them merely as ornamental and not as game birds at all. But the Kunj or Koolan, as pointed out in the *Field* in describing the Bikanir shooting, is in reality one of the highest sporting birds, being bold, fleet, and excellent for the table. And I think it will interest those whose shooting has been confined to English or Scottish moors and moors to read the official paper given to the guns at one of these big crane shoots, as showing the kind of bird and the kind of shooting expected. Here is a copy of the printed paper given to each of the guns at the shoot at the Kodamesar Tank, where, it may be remembered, on Dec. 3, the Prince of Wales with fourteen other guns killed thirty demoiselle cranes and six duck.

KUNJSHOOTING.

"1. The demoiselle crane (kunj) is a very wily and cunning bird, and a shoot can be easily spoilt by ignorance of the ways and habits of these birds, by impatience, by firing too soon or at the wrong moment, and by the guns being seen by the birds in the butts, &c.

"2. The kunj begin to flight to the water pretty punctually, at times as many as five or six flights follow one another in rapid succession, when a mistake made in the case of the first flight would in some cases minimise or destroy chances of success in regard to the other flights. Unless properly dealt with, these birds, when disturbed, soar high overhead, and with their cry give the alarm to flight which follow even after the lapse of some time.

"3. To show how a shoot can be made or marred—with only about four hours to take a single gun with patience has been able to bag fifty-eight kunj, and similarly, on another occasion with only some 403 birds, a bag of forty-six kunj was made. On the other hand, with some 1700 birds, and the guns firing wildly and in their excitement forgetting the instructions, barely thirty or forty birds all told were shot by six guns.

"4. The flights vary. Some come low within easy range, others high and very high.

"5. In the former case all that is necessary is firstly to make sure that by firing at the flight overhead we are not spoiling a chance of a better bag and more sport all round, which might reasonably be expected from one or more flights which may be immediately following the first pack, but which may not be known to or seen by the guns owing to the birds obstructing the view.

"6. For this purpose a look-out will be kept in various directions by men specially posted on high ground.

"7. The guns will be posted all round this large tank. Our second consideration therefore is to fire at such a time as to ensure as far as possible that the flight after passing above the sportsman will, in their attempts to get away, also give some shots to one or more guns either on each side of the sportsman firing, or of those posted on one of the four sides of the tank."

A Record Bag of Sand Grouse.

And here is another note on record bags, which has been kindly forwarded to me by a correspondent. The shooting described took place on a later occasion, not that at which his Royal Highness was present, but the Gujner Lake is the same as that which was referred to in the *Field* of April 1:

"You recently wrote about big bags, and I think the following extract from the *Pioneer Mail* of recent date may be of interest to you. The imperial sand grouse, perhaps I may say, is a species of pigeon and is very strong on the wing, and a day's shoot lasts about three hours, from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., as it is only during that period that the birds come to drink at the watering places, close to which the guns are distributed.

"During the two days shooting at Gujner exceptionally good sport was obtained, and all previous records were beaten both individually and collectively. On the first day the total bag consisted of 3532 imperial sand grouse, besides thirty-two other head of game, as against the previous total record during the last 10 years of 1700 birds secured in the Valley of 2100 imperial sand grouse. His Highness the Maharajah headed the list with a bag of 466, the Maharajah Kumar securing second place with 405, whilst Lord Rawlinson came third with a bag of 311 imperial sand grouse to his credit. On the second day, in spite of sore shoulders, and paucity of cartridges, the Maharajah Kumar secured a wonderful bag of 558 imperial grouse for 1276 cartridges, beating the previous individual record for 1907, held hitherto by His Highness the Maharajah with 475. Lord Rawlinson, on the second day, bagged 325. Thus the total of the two days came to 6,113 head of game.

"I should add that the Maharajah Kumar is the heir apparent of the Maharajah, and his age about eighteen, so I think you will agree with me that his performance is a very fine one."

Most certainly I do agree.

CHEVIOT.

A ROYAL SHOOTING GROUND.—I.

THE visit of the Prince of Wales to the Nepal Terai as guest of the Prime Minister of the Gurkha kingdom, Sir Chandra Shumshere Jung, will not be the first paid by members of the Royal family to the famous shooting grounds. Many of the old Sarapis and the pictures of the Indian tour and trip to Nepal of King Edward, then Prince of Wales. In 1911, again, our present King received a royal welcome in the Gurkha kingdom, and in the course of a shoot, that I suppose constitutes a record, achieved a great reputation as a shot, one who can deal brilliantly with high pheasants is equal to dealing with most birds in sky, including tigers. I think nearly forty tigers were bagged in a fortnight, besides such "sauvages" as the great Indian rhinoceros.

Tiger shooting is managed in different ways, according to locality. In the comparatively open jungle of the Central Provinces and Central India beaters on foot, with fearsome yell and the din of tom-toms, move the tigers up to guns in *machans*, or raised platforms, which performs the same function, the art in both cases lying in an exact knowledge of the tiger's habits and a knowledge of the ground. Then there is "sitting up" over a kill—the jungle-lover's method. In some places the tiger may be shot on foot—when done with care not so risky as it sounds. In Manchuria it is said a sportsman has to crawl after them into caves! The Nepalese way is different to all these, having been evolved to meet the exigencies of a jungle quite unlike anything found elsewhere.

The range of valleys at the foot of the giant Himalayan ranges is covered with dense vegetation of a thousand different forms. The higher lying tracts consist for the most part of virgin *sal* forest, the tall, straight boles, crowded

together, stretching upward for light and air from a sea of undergrowth. In the hollows and damper stretches creepers are about the trees, and in the forest gloom the one is aware of a silent struggle for existence among the vegetation, the birds, the insects, the small mammals, all coiled up in constrictor-like coils or caught in tangled webs of living rope, a fight between the noble forest trees and parasitic growths. The fight even goes on between members of the predatory, creeping tribes themselves. Mingled with the varied odours of living green things there hangs a faint ever-present acrid smell of decaying vegetation. Elsewhere one finds wide acres of parkland, but "grassy" is not the word, suspended over, tunneled by the fauna of the forest, but other and more penetrable even than the tree jungle. The forest is, indeed, rather like a great city, but peopled by plants of many races and diverse habits; with congested areas where struggling multitudes toil, its spacious residences of sylvan aristocrats, its river ways, streets, and parks. In the stifling, overgrown forest men can only walk by the few well-defined forest paths; wandering of these they are as much penetrable even than the tree jungle. The forest is, indeed, rather like a great city, but peopled by plants of many races and diverse habits; with congested areas where struggling multitudes toil, its spacious residences of sylvan aristocrats, its river ways, streets, and parks. In the stifling, overgrown forest men can only walk by the few well-defined forest paths; wandering of these they are as much penetrable even than the tree jungle. Hence the Nepalese system of ringing by elephants.

I will try to depict the death of a tiger as it in fact occurred, a bald and unvarnished tale. The tiger stretches himself, the sun is high, the circle of tents, the arbour where the skinners work, in which are neatly pegged out skins, large and small, the elephant camp, the various camp noises, the tonk, tonk, tonk of a jungle bird (a barbet), that night and day continues his monotonous machine-like call—he is, I suppose, relieved by his pals—the trumpeting of elephants; such details may be left to the reader's imagination.

As to locality, it is in the famous Chitwan Valley, and the tiger is in the jungle now under preparation for the Royal Camp. It is "after breakfast" time. The elephants are assembled, a picturesque group, on the river's edge. Last touches are given to girths, the guns climb into the howdahs, rifles are stowed into their racks, and the great beasts swing slowly off in single file. The three shikaris, wrinkled, hard-looking little men from the Limbu country, are mounted on like-sized elephants, and the elephant, heavily laden, is trundled along.

The tiger is photographed on one's copy. The cool shadow of the forest on the sand, the long swaying string of elephants—the hindquarters of the one in front of us, with his loose skin, has the ridiculous appearance of a fat old man in baggy grey trousers. A herd of nilgai cross the river half a mile ahead, peacock scuttle into the jungle. A jackal is trotting towards us and now stands. Him the shikaris avoid, turning half left to keep him on our right. The elephant is also a side, and the shikaris keep to the left flank, and Bikram Pershad rounds so quickly that not only my bullet sped "in a totally wrong direction," but I was flung against the howdah rails hard enough to break a rib. I am sure that if the elephant had been facing the tiger he would have stood like an old grey rock.

The Nepalese like eighty or a hundred elephants to form a ring, though this number is not really necessary except in very large patches of *markat*. For the Prince's shoot Sir Chandra will probably have ready 300 elephants, divided into "pounds" of a hundred each, and located in different parts of the ground to be shot over. R. K.

OLD NORWEGIAN GAME LAWS.

AS showing the importance which has always been attached to game in Norway, some references made in a recent number of the *Norsk Jæger og Fisker Foreningstidsskrift* to the old laws are interesting.

Magnus Lagabotir's Law of 1276 merely protected the landowner's interests, it conferred on him the sole right to hunt game animals and birds, except bears and foxes on his property; there was no suggestion whatever of protection. It was otherwise during the time of the Danish rule, when the chase was found to be a very remunerative source of income for the Crown; close seasons for the game animals and birds were appointed, and the ancient rights of the border were very considerably circumscribed. Farms right to hunt the Crown's animals and birds were held on lease or by leasehold, and the income from the rent of the right or lease very considerably. At the same time a large quantity of game and other things had to be sent annually to Denmark. Thus in 1551 from Bergenhus alone there were despatched to the Royal Palace in Copenhagen "43 Skippond" (each 350lb.) dried fish, "3 Laest" (six barrels) of amber, "5 Laest" rein and red deer venison, etc.

The Crown also required that part of the taxes be paid in the form of the skins of bear-baring animals, such as the wolf, lynx, otter, marten, stoat, etc.

The animals to which the oldest Game Laws applied were the elk and red deer; beasts of prey—wolf, bear, and fox and fur-bearing creatures—squirrel, marten, glutton, lynx, otter, and stoat.

Pitfalls were the most common method of capture, and these were not infrequently supplemented with a spear or some such weapon at the bottom, by which the animal on falling in was easily secured.

But at year 1500 poison began to be used. But the old laws contained clauses in regard to hunting with dogs, which were even employed in the pursuit of squirrels. A man thus hunting on his own ground could, according to Magnus Lagabotir's Law, follow outside its limits any elk, reindeer, bear, or wolf which he put up; but if the animal was then killed by someone else the two had equal rights in it. The tiger, it seems, made straight at him, but his elephant was unsteady, spun round; he is afraid—he must have missed. Going to the spot, we find the shikaris on the ground. A speck of blood has been found. Protected by guns on either side, they follow step by step the faint indications. After working through the very thickest tree and creeper jungle for half an hour or more, we come to an almost bare clearing, where the shikaris are joined by themselves in what might be a different country. Forms form a complete carpet under our elephants feet, vistas open here and there, and a fairy stream trickles between banks of speed-wort. Orchids hang on many of the trees. The shikaris here suddenly abandon tracking, mount their elephants, signal to the mahouts, and, with the precision of a disciplined force, horns are thrown out on the flanks and another ring is made. It seems like the last resort of the helpless, for the tiger's strength is failing, very much, and he is now but a cold have travelled miles. He is a lost tiger, that is clear, and the shikaris know it, and are merely doing something to save their faces. However, the net is cast, and we wait, despondent. Suddenly comes the sound of shouting, and mingled with the shouts, the voice of an angry tiger. The short, gruff roars are coming our way. Nearer and nearer. The mahouts steady their elephants. Here he comes, a great striped cat, looking at head, making a roar, noise, and snarl, and becomes a hero, whose conduct will be reported in the proper quarter. Elephants gather, the shikaris take the blood on four leaves, *da puja*, and throw them this way and that, and we congratulate them on a fine and almost mysterious tiger. By what occult perceptions did this little striped tiger discern that the tiger would lie up in their particular patch?

This was not quite typical of a Nepal ring. The tiger generally lies till the ring is drawn much closer. The elephants, as they are moved forward, level down the grass and undergrowth and the smaller trees, so that you have a clear ring, like a broad ride running round the central patch. When the ring is broad enough to diameter of a hundred yards or a little more, a smaller ring than the outer one is made to elephants from bullock two stout elephants are sent in to move the tiger. It is a great sight to see an elephant push down a young tree on the top of a tiger, whose exact whereabouts is often unknown till this happens, or, if may be, till he is hit by a log of wood thrown by a mahout. Then he is up with a roar and charges the ring. Curiously enough he does not often attack the elephant that has run him into the trap. The tiger is a very dangerous animal indeed. The tiger was shot in Nepal last year: A tiger charged through the ring un wounded. After him hurried a shikari on a fast little elephant to head him. The tiger sprang on his elephant, who screaming with fright, bolted back to his companions in the ring. There he managed to stop the tiger, or, at any rate, the tiger dropped off and was shot.

Most likely elephants get hunting scars in the course of their careers. Occasional one was killed. The following letter from Sir A. Zamindar, who had sent some elephants to a big tiger shoot in Nepal, is amongst the archives of the Legation at Katmandu:

"Sir—I request to inform you that my elephant Bakhadan sent to help in great sport in jungle of Nepal died on 21st ultimo of tiger bite. I had been just proud for some time past in showing him to the public, and I stood before the ferocious tigers and faced them with their fierce attacks. The mahout requested that two or three tigers attacked him, but he faced them all and never received a budge. He was severely bitten by one and this brought on rabies, and, in spite of all my attempts to save him by administering all available help, treatment, and medicine, the poor thing breathed his last, to my great sorrow, misery, and mortification. Really I am sorry for having lost such a brave and fearless, at the same time so child-like and innocent an animal."

This ringing is, of course, a deadly sledge-hammer way of shooting tigers, and with a lot of elephants the tiger's chances of escape are small; but howdah elephants, staunch enough to stand when charged, are essential, and these are not easy to find. The best are usually big tuskers, but all are liable to lose their nerve after a few years' experience, especially if they have been "ringed" before they had had their first experiences. The danger from an untrained elephant lies perhaps not so much from the tiger as from the risk of the howdah being swept off in a panic-stricken flight through the jungle, for, in spite of their bulk and apparently equable temperament, elephants are "bundles of nerves."

The writer once, on a very stout-headed old tusker, made the mistake of taking up a "half right" orientation in a ring, so as to get a cleared field of fire instead of directly facing the tiger. The elephant charged, and the mahout, mounted on like-sized elephant, was flung over the left flank, and Bikram Pershad sprang round so quickly that not only my bullet sped "in a totally wrong direction," but I was flung against the howdah rails hard enough to break a rib. I am sure that if the elephant had been facing the tiger he would have stood like an old grey rock.

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Pitfalls in tracts of country where cattle pastured had to be avoided ineffective by day. Among the other regulations which applied to these and such like contrivances was one which forbade the killing of hawks which were placed on human life.

In the event of anyone falling into one of these, in regard to the situation of which no proper public intimation had been given, the owner thereof was liable to pay to the "heirs" the sum of five silver marks!

If deer pits or enclosures for the capture of wolves ("Ulvestene") were allowed to remain unused for ten years, any one who chose to do so could appropriate and put them in order. For this reason, 400 deer pits were placed with some local enclosures and limitations—were enforced, until they were replaced by those of Christian IV, in 1643.

The King's "Lønsherre" and the Foged had a prior right, as representing the Crown, to purchase at "reasonable" prices all skins from the Bønder, but so great was the demand for these that considerable quantities passed into private hands.

Temporary which was at that time Norwegian territory, also furnished Denmark with game and furs. In a partition to the King (1592) the Foged and Bønder of Timpland, "in our kingdom of Norway," begged that they might be permitted to pay their taxes in ermine skins. But it was feared that the animals were being exterminated, and a period of several years' complete protection was instituted for them. Severe measures were also ordered to be taken against poachers.

In the West Country ("Vestlandet") a great falling off in the numbers of elk, rein, and red deer was observed, and in 1551 Christian III, forbade the killing of any "stag or hind" in Bergenhus Læn for three years. A further period of six years' protection was instituted, but even this proved insufficient, and in 1562 it was found that the diminution in the numbers of big game was due to the financing of poachers by German traders, who also themselves hunted all over the country in defiance of the law.

About 1570 the authorities would seem to have come to