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INDIA AND TIGER-HUNTING

J. BARRAS

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R. L. Stevenson

INDIA

AND

TIGER-HUNTING.

BY

COLONEL JULIUS BARRAS.

SERIES II.

LONDON:
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INTRODUCTION.

DURING the time that has elapsed since the publication of my first volume, so many questions have been raised by my friends and acquaintances on certain minor points, that I think a few words of explanation are indispensable before proceeding with the finishing chapters on 'India and Tiger-Hunting.'

Some have objected that there is a too frequent repetition of the first personal pronoun.

Now, not only do I agree in this judgment, but the objection weighed heavily on my mind long before I wrote the first line.

And yet even now I am unable to see how this disagreeable form can be avoided by one who is writing his own personal experiences, and vouching for the truth of the same.

Others, again, have said that I ought to have mentioned the real names of all the gentlemen who took part in my adventures; but as this would have entailed

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writing to each one for his permission, months of delay would have ensued, besides more correspondence, perhaps, than I should have had time for.

But without doubt the most amusing of all the perplexities which I have unwittingly caused my English readers, is in connection with the few lines on the dedicatory page.

These, I had thought, at any rate could not be misunderstood. Lo! then, I find there is a general impression amongst those who have always sojourned in Europe, that the 'Bheema Cup' is a prize for musketry.

To add a syllable in explanation of such an excellent joke would be to spoil it, as far as our Anglo-Indian brethren are concerned. So, for the sake of my home readers only, I must make known that the 'Bheema Cup' is a splendid triumph of pig-sticking, to which sport it bears the same relation in Western India that the 'Grand National' does to steeple-chasing in the British Isles. On the occasion when my friend won this cup so brilliantly, I read of the performance in the newspapers as the greatest sporting event that had taken place in the Bombay Presidency for fifty years.

This opinion of the press I felt cordially inclined to agree with.

No doubt numerous other misapprehensions and

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objections must have been made by those who have perused my little volume ; for writing is very different to speaking. The word of explanation cannot be given in the former case, and it is impossible, even with the utmost care, to prevent the wrong impression from being occasionally produced by the pen.

Such considerations, joined with the assurance that I should at any time be found ready to throw ample light on any matter that may have seemed obscure, will, I hope, cause my readers to hesitate before they pass any final and adverse criticisms on what I have written.

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TIGER-HUNTING

AND

ADVENTURES IN INDIA.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

AS my readers will no doubt remember, my last volume closed with an account of camp life at Neemuch during the rains, and with an announcement that I was to proceed with a native regiment to Delhi at the end of about three months, when the cold weather would be fairly set in. I may here remark that over the greater part of India the year is divided into three seasons—(1) The cold weather—November, December, January, and February; (2) The hot weather—March, April, and May; (3) The monsoon or rains—June, July, August, and September. In Sind and some other parts of India there is no monsoon, and there are consequently only two seasons, the hot and cold weather. Neemuch and Delhi are both within the circle of the rains.

As this march would be a long, and certainly not an easy one, we all became fully occupied in preparing for it. We were not to tread the war-path, be it remembered;

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on the contrary, every one, from Government downwards, was supposed to be intent on deeds of peaceful splendour. How to get over four hundred miles of roadless, and sometimes even trackless country, and look grand at the end of it, was the problem which each one had to solve. I gave up the riddle at once, and was determined to aim only at such rough comfort and enjoyment as seemed compatible with a lowly station and moderate means. With these views constantly before me, I hired ten camels and three good large bullock-waggons, besides a few bazaar ponies, called 'tattoes,' for the servants to ride. Endless were the discussions as to whether carts would or would not be able to do the journey, or whether they would have to be left behind, perhaps in the middle of some jungle, with all that they contained. However, wherever you may break down there is always some village not far off, to which one of your servants can repair for that assistance by means of which he will be able to bring on the wreck to the next camping-ground, where you have been made comfortable long ago by means of what has been brought up by the pack animals. In spite of the dubious nature of the roads, I decided to take a few carts, as they carry so much more in proportion than camels, and are vastly easier to load. The time and labour required to adjust half a dozen burdens of miscellaneous property on to the backs of as many camels, cannot be conceived by people who have never superintended the job. The camel having been got to sit down, one of its front legs is firmly tied in its folded up position, and the butler then calls out to his attendant myrmidons, 'Chalo,' which means 'proceed.'

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On this invitation every one rushes on the prostrate animal, each bearing what he considers the article of most consequence to his master. It may be, a tent, or a basket full of china. After much altercation, the beast's load is at last decided upon, and the business of getting all the things on to the animal's back commences. All shout as loud as they can, and object to one another's proceedings, whilst the dromedary, who has very likely got an awful sore under the saddle, groans and gurgles in tones of such power and volume, that his voice of agony is heard predominating over the rest of the chorus.

I found that however many servants I had, they would never divide themselves into parties, and load several animals simultaneously. All would cluster round the recumbent form of each one in succession, till, after much battling, and perhaps many failures, it would be pronounced 'ready,' and made to stand a little apart till another should be similarly equipped, and fastened by its nose cord to the tail of the first one. In this way the string of ten laden camels would at last be completed, a feat which I found it generally took about four hours to accomplish, though, with good management, the sixteen servants that I had ought to have done it in a quarter of the time. As to the packing of the soldiers' kits, that is a very simple affair. Each bag being identical in shape and weight, the business can be done systematically, and any number of pack animals got ready in half an hour. But what is to be done with an officer's bath? I have occasionally seen one so large, that it really looked when standing on the ground as if the camel were intended to go in the tub instead of

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the tub on the camel! Yet these formidable structures must accompany the column, for in India the poorest subaltern would rather part with his life than give up his bathing machine.

But if I were to write for ever, I should despair of initiating my home readers into the mysteries of an Indian march. If they really wish to appreciate its endless difficulties, vexations, and pleasures, they must proceed to the East and perform one for themselves. It is only for the sake of the many who cannot do this that I shall endeavour to give the best idea in my power of what such a journey is like. If I describe the more salient features, and my readers will endeavour with the aid of the imagination to fill up the inevitable minor details, a tolerably correct picture may, I hope, be the result.

Ours was to be no ordinary march, for, in addition to the peculiar circumstances already alluded to, the monotony of the camp was to be enlivened by the presence of five or six charming representatives of the softer sex, who were bent on going to Delhi to do honour to the Empress's Proclamation Day.

At last the time for setting forth arrived, when each man became too much occupied in his own and the public business to pay any attention to the private affairs of his neighbours. All the amenities of friendly assistance had been gone through in the preceding weeks, and now it was of necessity every one for himself. Each compound after four o'clock p.m. was full of gurgling camels, lowing bullocks, and neighing ponies; whilst at the chief place of rendezvous four elephants and a company of mules made

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up for any deficiencies which might otherwise have been noticed in the grand concert.

At the mess-house much anxiety prevailed regarding the carriage of two vast wooden cases containing plate. These chests had been fitted with every variety of partitions, trays, drawers, etc., till they were miracles of ingenuity, and the just pride of those who had planned and constructed them. They had only one fault,—they were heavy, very heavy. The elephants could not carry them, as these animals were specially provided for the transport of the hospital, and certain other work laid down by Government. Carts, it was urged, might come to be abandoned in the jungle; it would therefore never do to place the valuables in one of them. At last a gigantic camel was found, who was warranted by his owner to be equal to the task of bearing this huge load. He was soon on all fours, his front leg firmly bound with a stout rope, and the two cases slung across his back. No sooner did he feel the crushing weight than he resolved to show at once what he could do. Though deprived of the use of one leg, he was on the other three in a trice, and set off with what speed he might across the plain. He contrived not only to perform a marvellous sort of gallop, but also to kick with such effect that his precious load soon fell with a crash to the earth, reducing the interior of each box to chaos.

But the damage was not long in being repaired, and these packages, like the bath-tubs and other hard bargains, were all at length got ready and despatched during the night, so as to arrive at or before dawn at our first halting-ground. We ourselves rose at three, and started at about four in the

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morning, for not only is the sun very powerful even in the cold weather, but if one arrives late on the ground there is no time to see the beasts of burden fed, or to dispose of any business that may arise on the way, and which may require to be dealt with by military courts and committees. I am therefore always in favour of getting off as early as possible, especially as this is what the natives themselves invariably prefer. No matter how early the bugles may sound the first rouse, numbers of them will, if not prevented, be on foot long before these warning notes are heard, and begin pulling down tents, shouting, and otherwise creating such a disturbance that the Europeans in the camp are in danger of being deprived of quite half the short period allotted for their repose. Therefore stringent rules have to be enacted, and severe punishments enforced, to break our native friends of this their familiar habit, for they are at a loss to understand our feelings on the subject. If a native Indian wishes to sleep, he can always do so though a dozen cannons might be roaring over his head. So great, indeed, is the power possessed by these people of sleeping under difficulties, that many people attribute it to the use of opium, or some other narcotic such as bhang. This latter drug is a kind of hemp, and when partaken too freely of, will often produce a state of frantic and bloodthirsty madness in its votaries, during which they will start off with a sword or other deadly weapon, and slay all whom they may meet. This dreadful performance is well known in the East, and is called 'running amuck.' But I do not think these people owe their powers of sleep to any artificial means, for I have met with many natives who, I am sure, did not

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indulge in opiates, but never with one who could not rival the seven sleepers single handed.

Our first two marches were uneventful, but the third brought us to Gungarar, where, as the reader will remember, I shot my last tiger. Though the jungle was a mass of grass and thick cover, we decided, since we had four elephants, that we would have a 'mogum' (chance) beat. Unfortunately the admirable Roopa had left this part of the country for ever, and was gone to his distant home in Bengal; but Hurrichund was still to the fore, and willing to undertake the general management. We mustered very strong for the occasion, as, in addition to the regular beaters, we had a large contingent of regimental sepoys armed with rifles, and provided with both blank and ball cartridges. The four elephants marked the line of beaters at equal intervals, and fixed the pace at which the advance was conducted. Our old friend Manutdar was on the right of the line where the jungle was least thick, and she walked majestically onwards, as though she had quite forgotten the Ruttongurh tiger who had fixed on to her leg when she last went out tiger-hunting more than two years ago. As soon as the shooting party was properly posted, the beat advanced, and the sepoys, whenever they came to any specially thick cover, fired as many rounds of blank ammunition as they thought proper. It took us some hours to carry out all the details of the beat, but although everything was very well done, no one was fortunate enough even to see anything, so at last the signal was given to return to camp.

On getting clear of the dense jungle, one elephant appeared to be missing. Yes, there was soon no doubt of it,

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Manutdar was gone. The other mahouts said they had taken no special notice, but no one could say he had seen her since the very beginning of the beat. A consultation now ensued, which was brought to an end by the driver of the missing animal appearing in the distance. On his getting near enough to be inspected, it was at once apparent that he had had a rough time of it. His clothes—at least all that he had left of them—were torn to rags. Of course he had lost his turban, and his long hair was full of leaves and thorns. He seemed very much exhausted, but still was able to give an account of what had happened. He said that all had gone quite well at first, as the elephant no doubt thought that she was going out to fetch fodder, but at the very first discharge of blank cartridges she had understood that a tiger might be expected at any moment. Wild with terror, she had at once set off at her best speed, crashing through everything that opposed her progress, and rapidly traversing mountains and nullahs that under ordinary circumstances she would have refused to face. 'I stuck to her,' said the mahout, 'as long as I could, but at last I was knocked off insensible by the bough of a tree that I could not avoid. Of course when I woke up the elephant was gone, and I hope we shall find her in the camp when we get back.'

I devoutly hoped that this surmise might prove correct, as, in addition to the troublesome correspondence that the loss of the beast would occasion, I had taken upon myself the responsibility of all risks at starting, and therefore, in the event of the animal not being recovered, I should have considered myself bound to pay her price. On getting back to our quarters, however, nothing whatever could be learned

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of the absent Manutdar, nor did she return during the night. We knew that she had accidentally headed in the direction of the next halting-ground, so I got permission to go with the mahout and endeavour to track her, and bring her in by nightfall to Amirgurh, as the place where we were next to bivouac was called.

At dawn, then, I and the two keepers started on our mission, and were soon on the trail. It was certainly wonderful to see what steep and slippery places this huge creature had managed to traverse safely when urged by fear to put forth all her powers. After pursuing a moderately winding course for about four or five miles, she had come to the wide beaten track known as the high road to Nussirabad, and proceeded along it for some distance in the direction of Amirgurh. And now several natives journeying along the road from that place said they had heard of the loss of the elephant, and also that she had been recovered; but I should not have believed them, had not a messenger been sent from the camp to inform us that the animal really had been got back. I and the keepers were naturally very glad our tedious task was so soon over, and we at once hurried on to the end of our journey.

As we approached our destination, the first thing I saw was a large tank with three elephants bathing in it instead of four. I knew at once that Manutdar had not come back, and this, on inquiry, proved to be the case. She had been seen by the villagers in the early morning at this very place, which had led to the belief that she had been recaptured; but instead of this she had continued her flight, and no one knew whither she had gone. It was impossible for me to

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go personally in pursuit, so I fitted out a good riding camel, the driver of which took the mahout behind him, and away they went, with nothing more than the simple order that they were to scour the country till the elephant should be found, and then to rejoin the column by forced marches.

Meanwhile the onward journey continued as if nothing had occurred, and as the days rolled on Manutdar ceased to be remembered by any one, except myself and two or three others who were interested in her fate. Of course there had been other and minor mishaps during these early marches, such as carts seen bottom upwards with all their contents underneath them, and the servants or owners making frantic efforts to remedy the catastrophe. My own largest and most heavily laden waggon was one of the first to show how easily a heavy body could turn a somersault. 'See,' said my poor butler, 'the vehicle is so completely smashed that it will have to be left where it is, and I must go to some village and get two other lighter ones in its place. As to the owner of this one, he is weeping behind that bush.' And so he was, poor man. However, the other carts were of course procured, and I never heard anything more of the matter.

As I daresay it would interest many of my readers to know what marching with a regiment in India is like, I will now, at the risk of repeating a few of the details already mentioned, give a succinct account of one day's proceedings, drawn from the imagination, confining myself to such explanations only as will apply to pretty nearly every occasion of the sort in time of peace. Intimation of the 'route' is usually sent to the commanding-officer at least two months

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before the move is to take place, so that every one down to the last joined native recruit may mature such plans for himself as are compatible with those marked out for him by the higher powers. For instance, each private is allowed, say, forty pounds of baggage, but of course he can take forty tons, if he likes to make his own arrangements and pay a bazaar contractor of his own. As a rule, however, they do not very much exceed the Government allowance, and those that do so subscribe in parties for an extra cart. The chief native officer informs the quartermaster, who is a European commissioned officer, of the number thus wanted, and he then makes out a requisition on the civil authorities for the grand total of everything that is required, both on account of Government and of individuals, whether they be European officers or native menials. No doubt this sounds a very simple and easy arrangement, but it is seldom that the unfortunate quartermaster finds it so. 'Old soldiers' abound in every rank who would fain get a few pounds carried for nothing, and to defeat whose sinister aims becomes the one fixed idea of all who think honesty the best policy. I have not only known a poor sepoy to secrete a heavy cooking-pot behind a bush till his bag has been weighed, and then stuff it in afterwards, but I have heard of a doctor carrying his wife's pianoforte as 'medical comforts.' Of course it is always prudent to try and get the civil authorities to have a certain amount of reserved carriages present in the bazaar the day the troops start, to enable any extra calls to be complied with.

At last, however, the vexed question of the amount of carriage required, and the much more, I may say, agoniz-

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ingly vexed question of how much is to be paid for each cart or baggage animal, is settled, and then other equally important if less troublesome details can be attended to. The tents have of course to be put in order, and the hospital arrangement greatly considered. All Government property that is not supposed to leave the station, such as iron targets, etc., must be returned into stores, and so forth, till at last everything has been got through and the time for departure arrives. Officers, and people who have servants, divide their establishments into two parties, one of which goes on ahead, so as to have a tent up and everything ready for their masters on their arrival at the new camp; and the same is done in the case of the mess.

At least one guide, called a 'Bomia,' should be secured and shut up in the quarter-guard every evening at sunset, when troops are going to march at night. If the guides are not shut up they will run away. Even on a grand trunk road I have myself seen a regiment come upon the almost impossible apparition of another equally grand trunk road, and take the wrong one. Whom are you to ask in the dead of night which is the way to 'so-and-so'? As it happened on the occasion to which I refer, there was a travellers' bungalow situated in the fork formed by the two highways, and the messman thereof was looking over the hedge, so I asked him if the column were on the right road to 'so-and-so.' 'O no,' he said; 'you should have taken the way to the left; the one you are on leads to quite another place.' Had it not been for this accidental rencontre, the whole regiment would have gone astray.

It is generally arranged for the first march to be quite a

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short one, to test the capabilities of the transport without trying it too severely, and to enable the sepoys to make the acquaintance of their shoes, which are sometimes little else than fiends in the form of leather. A place, therefore, about eight miles distant, where there is a good camping ground and an abundant supply of water, is generally fixed upon for the first halt, and the village authorities at that place are duly ordered to have the ground swept and cleaned, and supplies of flour, wood, etc., collected to meet the requirements for one day of the force that is to halt there. If you are to march on the 1st of December, then on the 30th of November the fiat goes forth: 'Breakfast at 9 a.m. to-morrow at, say, Naigaum, and dinner at 4 p.m.' This is all that need be announced to the outer world, and to such ladies and families as may be going to grace the journey with their presence. For the military people, of course the 'order-book' contains long and elaborate instructions, from which each man picks out what applies to himself. On the morning of the 1st, the 'rouse' sounds at 3 a.m., which is the signal for general bustle. At such a moment tempers vary according to the aptitude of the owner for early rising. The irascible man, who never sleeps after four o'clock in the morning, is seen at his best. His establishment as well as he himself is accustomed to getting up in the middle of the night, so that the servant who is left behind appears, as a matter of course, promptly with that cup of good tea without which few Anglo-Indians will consent to get up. On the other hand, the mild, good-tempered man, who has ever been addicted to 'Europe sleeps,' as far as the persecutions of the parade-ground will admit, is now either transformed by rage till his terrified

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retainers cannot recognise him, or he sinks into such a state of peevish and fretful hopelessness, that even his own dog-boy thinks him but a feeble creature. Long after the first bugle has sounded he is awakened by his military orderly or batman, who announces that it is nearly time to 'fall in.' 'Eh! what?' says the wretched Sybarite. 'Get up! what for? It is much too early.' 'The march, you know, sahib; this is the day we are to start for Delhi; in about five minutes more the colonel will be on the parade-ground.' 'Yes, yes, of course, I know. Here, Curreem, Curreem; where's the tea, Curreem? you thief, where are you?' But neither is Curreem fond of early rising; on the contrary, he has been buried in that deep repose which is by so much the most favoured pastime of the native domestic, that sleeping is characteristically nicknamed by their masters 'blackman's fun.' At this juncture, however, he appears on the scene with no tea, but plenty of excuses instead. For hours he has been endeavouring to make the kettle boil, but how could he do so, when the commanding-officer's servant has carried off all the dry wood, and left him nothing but a quantity of green sticks! This reference to the commanding-officer is often a master-stroke of policy, and generally causes the wretched 'sub' to scramble into his uniform and hurry to the parade-ground in time to escape a 'wigging.' Occasionally, however, a boot or hairbrush will alight with painful precision on the mouth of that untruthful Asiatic. But the main result is the same: poor Jones has to start on this cold, early first march with no tea, and wearing the very pair of boots which he had expressly said he would not use on this particular morning.

As the final bugle sounds, however, all have managed to be

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present, and the word 'quick march' is given as the clock strikes four. The earlier part of the march is certainly tedious and depressing. It is dark, and often so cold that even those who have the privilege of riding mostly prefer to walk. If there happens to be no road, and the night is not favoured by the moon, every one is too much occupied in looking out for stumbling-blocks and pitfalls to attempt any conversation. Thus the two or three hours before daylight often pass gloomily and silently enough. At dawn, cheerfulness increases, and the pace becomes so much better, that ere long the eyes of the weary and famished Jones are gladdened by spying on an eminence, not far ahead, a shady tree with a fire kindled underneath it, and close thereto a small table with a large teapot on the top of it. This he knows is the early morning coffee-shop, dropped *en passant* by the main body of the mess. Here half an hour's halt is called, which may be described as thirty minutes of real bliss. Yes, the spot has been well chosen for the purpose. Not only does the tree afford a pleasant screen against the rays of the rising sun, but as each enjoys his favourite beverage, we can, with the aid of binoculars, look a long way back on the road or track leading to the camp we have left, and can occasionally even sympathize with the efforts made by our wives and daughters to overtake us. They have not been obliged to start so early as we have done, for amongst the preparations for the journey has been the sale of the state coach, and the purchase of a pony tonga, bullock gharry, or other such wheeled vehicle as will go over almost anything as fast as the animals that are drawing it can gallop.

There can be no doubt who the lady is coming along at a

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great pace regardless of ruts and stones, as she whips up the two smart little grey ponies that draw her tonga. It is the young and beautiful Mrs. Smith, the idol of the regiment. She only started at daylight, yet she dashes up in ample time to accept one of the dozen cups of tea, presented to her by as many ardent admirers with such eagerness, that there is some danger of the other eleven vessels being emptied into her lap. With strict impartiality she accepts the beverage offered to her by Captain White, simply because it comes first; but he, poor fool! is quite certain that he has received in return a special smile, very different to what she would have bestowed on that young booby Gray. Owing to all the chattering and laughing, no one has noticed the sound of a horse advancing rapidly, so that Miss Bold on her dun pony is suddenly in the centre of the little group, all of whom now turn to salute her.

Miss Bold is not so beautiful as Mrs. Smith, but she is a well-grown young woman, and rides her friends' horses with great dash. Unfortunately, her brother, Lieutenant Bold, with whom she has her home, is much involved in debt, and has only been able to give his sister this inexpensive charger, with at least one doubtful leg.

'Here you are at last,' cries Mrs. Smith, not ill-naturedly, but yet with a note of triumph in her voice.

'O yes, dear. I am so sorry I did not get up in time to make tea for you all, but the truth is, just as I got about half way, I came suddenly on poor dear Mrs. Robinson at the bottom of a dry nullah. Her new bullocks had thrown themselves down, and nothing would make them get up, though we lighted fires under them, and did everything

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we could think of. Besides, I am afraid the gharry is smashed.'

At the first mention of Mrs. Robinson, all eyes turned towards Colonel Robinson, the tall and portly commandant of the regiment. He advanced towards Miss Bold with a mixture of real anxiety for his four children, and a despairing conviction that nothing would ever break Mrs. R.'s neck, or even take the edge off her tongue. 'I must go back,' he begins. 'I—er—I'—

But before he has had time even to form a sentence, that smart young man, Captain Smith, is in the saddle, and calling out as he gallops swiftly down the slope, 'All right, all right, Colonel; I will make it all square.' Mrs. Smith, too, who is as good as she is charming, is off after her husband, faster even than she came, to rescue the ruffled matron and her flock; for Mrs. Robinson will be ruffled, there is no doubt about that. Poor Colonel Robinson is already nerving himself to hear how she had predicted all this, when he would insist on buying bullocks instead of a pair of strong ponies to draw the gharry. 'Besides,' thinks the poor man, somewhat irrelevantly to himself, 'I must now certainly grant the leave which I know the Smiths are going to ask for, as soon as we get to our new station.'

We have hardly had a cup of tea, and seem to have spent but five minutes at this delightful little halting-ground, when the sound of the bugle, calling on the men to fall in, informs us that the half-hour accorded for rest and refreshment is over, and that we have still a tramp of six miles before us ere we can reach the halting-ground for the day.

Miss Bold, who can grasp an idea as soon as any one,

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now expresses her intention of getting into the camp as soon as possible. She thinks Mrs. Smith will certainly be kept out in the sun long enough to get a red face for the day, and that she will also be run very short of time to prepare a nice crisp toilette to appear at breakfast in. Accordingly, away she gallops, closely attended by the old syce or groom told off to escort her. At about eight o'clock the temporary camp—to erect which the quartermaster has been sent on beforehand with a large working party—appears in sight. The regiment is soon drawn up in line in front of the tents, and dismissed after the roll has been called, and the absentees marked by the non-commissioned officers. The orderly-room bugle is then blown, and all the European and native officers attend to report anything that may have occurred in their respective commands during the march. At this time leave may sometimes be obtained by a small proportion of the officers to make the next march independently of the battalion, and so form a shooting-party to provide game for the mess. Should anything serious have happened, a committee or court-martial is ordered for eleven o'clock, and the officers to sit on any such duties are now named, and the orderly-room is dismissed. On this, all, without exception, rush off to their bathing-tents, for it being the dry season of the year, every one has become almost unrecognisable from the dust,—head, eyebrows, and moustache are literally caked with it. By half-past eight, however, all are smart, clean, and ready for breakfast, except the officer of the rear-guard, who is bound to see the last cart or camel into camp. No one can conjecture, especially if it is a first march, what sort of luck he may have with his baggage.

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He may get in an hour or so after the regiment, or he may be only just in time for the four o'clock dinner, according to what sort of vicissitudes he may have to contend with. On the present occasion, every one was prepared to note the mien and commit to memory the sayings of Mrs. Robinson; and great was the disappointment of some of the junior and more thoughtless members of society, when that formidable-looking lady entered the mess-tent at the head of her family in unusual good humour. Her eye—known for its hardness and penetration as the 'Snider eye'—was positively soft and beaming. The fact was that the Smiths, besides being really kind people, were full of tact. Mrs. Smith had arranged to take Mrs. and Miss Robinson alternately in her tonga for the rest of the march. And the gallant captain, after dexterously exchanging the Robinson bullocks for a pair of very good ones that he found on the road dragging regimental stores, had said in his most winning manner, 'Now, Mrs. Robinson, if I hear you say a word in disparagement of this fortunate accident, I shall think it is because you do not like *us!*' The result of all this was that Mrs. Robinson arrived at the camp in a good humour, and that her husband began to believe in the millennium. The breakfast-table also was a scene of such good spirits as would have been incompatible with the presence of one gloomy or bitter soul. No one interrupted the business of eating, except to make a joke. This meal was, however, soon despatched, for it would be dark about six o'clock; so the short day had to be made the most of. A few hurried off to get through such duties as might still require to be attended to. Some, including all the ladies, retired to write

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letters; for no one would admit that they were going to sleep. But the great majority of the European officers betook themselves to the enjoyment of such sport as the local inhabitants recommended. Tiger-shooting, pig-sticking, and such-like grand performances are seldom aimed at on the line of march, as they require too much preparation to be so hastily improvised.

Bird and black-buck shooting is all that can be expected on these occasions. Towards dinner time, at about four in the afternoon, most of the sportsmen return to camp and compare their bags. In the ordinary country of the plains, one may expect the united bag to contain black-buck, gazelles, three kinds of partridges, at least one variety of the bustard tribe, quails, ducks of all sorts, hares, and if sufficiently far north, geese, and an edible crane called 'Koolung;' and though last, not least, an immense supply of yarns, which certainly are the best sauce, next to hunger, for the game. Dinner is not lingered over very long, as the large mess-tent, tables, and principal kit are in most cases packed and sent off to the next halting-ground as much before sunset as is practicable. By the time it gets dark a large wood fire may be expected to blaze up with sudden cheerfulness. Every one makes for this, each armed with his or her camp-seat. We find that a Kanāt, or side of a long tent, has been erected like a semicircular wall around the windward side of the fire to retain the warmth, and keep the breeze off our backs. A right pleasant nook to sit in, and calculated to cause even the grimmest people to relax. At all events I have never seen it fail in this respect. As soon as we were comfortably settled, and

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every one had got the right number of wraps, the regimental doctor was called upon for a song. This gentleman possessed a beautiful high baritone voice, which had been well cultivated in Italy. Of course he knew his audience and the situation too well to indulge in an operatic aria, but contented himself with performing 'Home, sweet Home,' which he sang with remarkable taste and feeling. This naturally led to every one performing his favourite ditty. The ladies were shy, and could not be induced to sing unaccompanied solos, though they could have done so had they chosen, but they led very well in some pretty stock glees which many of us knew by heart.

As nine o'clock was struck on the gong at the quarter-guard, Mrs. Robinson rose, and said she at all events must go to bed, whatever others might do. This with a 'look' at her colonel, who was very fond of sipping an extra glass just as his good lady was making 'the move,'—'so tiresome of him,' she said. All the ladies and shooting men would follow this lead, but a good many of the letter-writers would sit down for another ten minutes or so, which was a delicate metaphor for midnight. It is only on rare occasions, such as the Feast of Adieu given by the regiment that is staying behind to the one which is leaving, that any, even of the more ardent and younger spirits, dispense with bed altogether, and keep up the carouse till it is time to start on the march. As a rule, even the most complete letter-writer sleeps from midnight till the rouse sounds, some time in the small hours, when everything begins again as I have already detailed.

I feel I must apologize amply to the reader for introducing

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an imaginary march into this veracious history, but it seemed absolutely necessary to give a good general idea of what an undertaking of this sort was like, to enable any one to follow me whilst relating such incidents as happened to me and my friends on the expedition to and from Delhi. At the same time, I felt that I could not minutely describe any one of the actual days of our own march without risking personalities that might not have been agreeable to those concerned. I trust, therefore, that the reader will see my difficulty, and criticise leniently the few preceding pages of fiction.

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CHAPTER II.

IT is high time now to return to the realm of facts. Several days and as many stages were got over without producing any scenes or incidents worthy of record, till we arrived at a place called Shapoora. Here, as all my people and animals were tired, I set off on foot to a tank or lake about six miles distant, accompanied only by five or six natives of the place, who promised to show me a large quantity of various kinds of water-fowl. On the way out I shot a large cobra as it was wriggling towards a hole, intent only on thoughts of escape. The tank turned out a very good one, and I got seven couple of duck and teal, just one apiece all round, for our daily dinner party. Whilst I was engaged getting these birds, one of the *shikáries* pulled my sleeve, and offered me my express rifle with one hand whilst with the other he pointed to a wedge-like object passing rapidly through the rushes not twenty yards from me. He whispered the word 'muggur' (alligator). I nodded, seized the rifle, which was loaded with a hollow-tipped bullet (not a shell), and fired at the moving object. The result was a great splash in the water, and then a lot of feathers floating about. It seemed like a conjuring trick. At first I thought I had shot an alligator carrying a duck in its mouth, but we were not long in discovering two or three

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other ducks lying dead on the surface of the water, and another, the sole survivor of the little party, swimming away through the rushes, but too much disabled to fly. In short, I had not fired at an alligator at all, but at a small party of ducks, who were swimming so near together as to closely resemble the head of that amphibious animal.

On my return walk home one of my boots behaved badly, and cut my heel. This gave me great trouble, and rendered that foot tender for many months; so I cannot too strongly advise any one going to India, and intending to take foot exercise, always to keep a good supply of really comfortable and serviceable boots in stock, as such things are for the most part quite unobtainable in the East.

Our next march was to a place called Kadero. On the way thither we met with a singular example of the way in which wild animals will occasionally act in a manner quite contrary not only to their usual habits, but even to their very nature. The cruel are sometimes merciful, the bold timid, or the timid bold. The anecdote I am about to relate strongly illustrates the last of my three propositions.

As we were marching along in broad daylight, but before sunrise, a large herd of antelope, called black-buck, numbering about twenty or thirty, were seen skirmishing about on our left flank, well out of shot, of course. No one thought it worth while to dismount and shoulder his rifle, for these animals are so extremely timid and wary, that there is the greatest difficulty in getting up to them by oneself, even under cover of a common country cart driven by a native of the soil, and making a harmless looking ensemble to which they are well accustomed. Consequently no one ever dreamt

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of their coming within shot of a whole regiment on the move. I can only suppose that they had been wishing to cross the road for several hours, but had been prevented by the advanced guard and the long and straggling line of baggage, that had, as it were, occupied the route throughout the preceding hours of darkness. They must have been waiting for daylight to make a dash, for all at once they charged our line at full gallop, and many actually jumped over the heads of the bandsmen who happened to be on their line. Great was the shouting and confusion, every one calling for his gun, and so on, but of course these fleetest of beasts were out of sight long before any one had got his weapon. Such is the effect of life-long discipline, that no one thought of snatching the nearest man's rifle, taking a cartridge from his pouch, and by this means bagging each a fine buck. The whole spirit of the musketry regulations and general orders would have been contrary to such a course of heinous levity.

A few days after this I went out duck-shooting with the adjutant of the regiment. Besides the usual natives of the district, we had with us a private called Akbar Khan, who seemed full of zeal for the sport. I never failed on these occasions to take with me two sets of floats, which looked not unlike inflated bladders, but were in reality dried pumpkins enclosed in rough net, and so arranged that a man could throw his arms over the connecting cord. The pumpkins would protrude behind his shoulders, and support him perfectly in the water, though they would rather impede his speed in swimming after any birds that might fall into deep places.

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We were not long in coming to a very nice tank, about eighty yards in diameter, where we put up a small number of duck. The adjutant speedily brought down a fine mallard, that fell right into the middle of the pond, and there floated motionless. Akbar Ali at once rushed to the front, and was for plunging in at once. We stopped him, and asked if he felt sure of his powers.

'Sure!' he said scornfully; 'why, I could swim five miles.'

'But look at the weeds.'

'Weeds! why, you should see those that grow in the tanks in my country, then you would not think much of these!' With this he launched himself into the deep, and was not long in getting near to his prey. When almost close enough to reach it, he suddenly ceased to make any progress, and one could see even from the bank that he had begun to labour heavily.

'The weeds!' he gasped; 'the weeds! I am drowning.'

This was a pleasant situation truly. How were we to swim in with heavy shooting-boots on, and it was evident the man would sink long before we could unlace them. I remembered the pumpkins or gourds. There they were all right, both pairs slung over the shoulder of a perfectly unencumbered bearer, who of course could swim,—all natives can. 'In with you at once,' I said; which command was no sooner uttered than obeyed. At the same time we called out to Akbar Ali Khan not to attempt to make any progress, but simply to keep his head above water till assistance reached him. This plan proved quite successful, and it was indeed a relief to every one to see the poor fellow clutch the pair of gourds

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held out to him, get them under his arms, and then paddle about triumphantly amidst the thickest and most strangling of this aquatic vegetation. Not only was the mallard retrieved, but several others also, before we had finished with this and a few other adjacent sheets of water.

The next place that we came to worthy of the sportsman's notice was called, I think, Jootwarra. At all events it was within three or four miles of Jeypore, a well-known native town, and close to a railway station. Here I observed more black-buck with long horns roaming about the barren plains than I had ever noticed elsewhere; so, although I do not care to shoot these harmless and beautiful creatures, still I thought I would sally forth and try to get one really good head for my collection. In exactly a quarter of an hour after starting, I knocked over a fine animal, and found by means of the tape I had with me that his horns measured twenty-seven inches. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'if I were to slaughter a hundred of these antelopes, I should probably not match this head. I will therefore go back to camp at once, superintend the preserving of my trophy, and proclaim myself the hero of the day.' Alas, how uncertain is human fame and greatness! I had barely time to flatter myself that I was wearing my laurels with well-assumed meekness, when the adjutant arrived almost upon my heels, bringing with him a buck he had just shot, and whose horns measured twenty-nine inches! My first impulse was to rush forth for the rest of the day, and shoot, or shoot at, everything I could see; but the melancholy conviction that it would be impossible for me to match my rival's prize restrained me. No, I thought it would be better to accept the second place with resignation,

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than to steep myself in blood with almost the certainty of not being first after all.

I used frequently during this journey to take a couple of fleet dogs out with me for the day. In order to do this, I had a rough two-wheeled little bullock-cart with a top to it, for the dogs to follow me about in whilst I was shooting during the heat of the day, for they could not have borne the mid-day sun even in the coldest weather. I had some good runs, principally after jackals, of which I killed forty in this way on the journey to and from Delhi; but I shall not say anything of that branch of the sport in this place, as it is my intention to give an account of my doings with greyhounds and other dogs hereafter.

During the whole of this long march no big game was obtained, and there is but little to interest the general reader in the details of bird-shooting; suffice it to say, that we bagged amongst us an immense variety, and a sufficient quantity to keep the mess well supplied.

Meanwhile, I hope my readers have not forgotten the flight of Manutdar, and that they still feel some interest in that poor old female's fate. About a fortnight after her loss, she reappeared in the camp where we were pitched for the day, driven, as usual, by her mahout, and followed by the camel I had sent in pursuit of her. The little party, as they walked unannounced past my tent, presented a dusty and way-worn aspect. Owing to the devious and uncertain track pursued by the elephant during her wanderings, no word had reached us as to the fate and fortunes of the absentees, from the time they vanished into the jungle till they were seen safe and sound amongst us again. They

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were heartily welcomed back to our wandering home, and at once dismissed to the shady banks of a neighbouring stream, there to picnic for the rest of the day. Towards sunset I went to see how they were getting on, and to receive an account of the mahout's adventures. Plenty of water, food, and a few hours' rest had done much to restore the wanderers to their normal state. The mahout, though looking thin and pulled down, was now clean, cheerful, and able to tell me the story of the pursuit and capture of Manutdar as follows :—

'You know, sahib,' he said, 'as the elephant had been seen only a few hours before you despatched us on a fleet sandni (riding camel) after her, I thought we should most likely overtake her before nightfall on that very day. But although the jungle was not, as a rule, thick, still she always contrived to follow a solitary line, where we seldom met with any one, and still more rarely with a person who had seen or heard anything of the truant. All we could do was to track her, and this, when we came to large areas of sheet rock, was very slow work, so that by the time it was dark we had every reason to fear that the distance between ourselves and the elephant was increased instead of diminished. Of course we had to put up for the night in some village, which was often a good deal out of our way, and then resume our search the next morning. In this way many days passed. Sometimes we would come to fields of grain, where she had consumed a large quantity of the standing crop. At others, her footprints would be found on the muddy margins of tanks and streams. At such places there were generally some people who had seen her, and could point out the direction

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she had taken on having satisfied her wants. She seemed to have no intention of stopping anywhere, and I almost began to fear she might reach some vast forest, and be lost for ever. At last we came to a good-sized village, where the people responded eagerly to our inquiries. The elephant, they said, had now been with them for two days, and that the whole village considered itself in a state of siege. Her great voice, which she was so fond of using, had completely terrified them all. 'But where is she?' I said. To which they replied that she was probably in a large and reedy sheet of water, about two miles off, where she had, so far, spent most of her time. Though it was dark when I got this information, I determined to set off at once for the tank, but not one of the villagers would consent to accompany me. They had never heard an elephant roar like this one; they were quite sure it was mad, and even in their houses they did not feel safe. At last, however, I induced a man to go far enough with me to put me on the right road. On coming to a narrow track, he said if I kept to it for about a mile and a half, I should get to the lake, and probably discover the elephant in the water. I followed these directions, and very shortly, in the silence of the night, I could hear the deep thunder of Manutdar's voice.

'This was a most welcome sound, and I hastened on as fast as I could. At the end of about another mile, I came suddenly upon the tank, in the middle of which the starlight revealed to me the dusky form of the elephant. I took off my shoes, and began wading in, calling at the same time, "Manutdar! Manutdar!" The moment the animal heard my call she ceased her roaring, and came joyfully towards

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me. She was evidently delighted to see me again, and carried me back to the village at her briskest pace. The people were all much surprised on seeing what a gentle creature they had had to deal with all this time. Now, of course, she was quite silent; for, as you know, sahib, this elephant only roars from fear, and never with rage. It now only remained to overtake the column, and this we hoped to do in a few days, as luckily the elephant had pursued a not altogether contrary direction to the road to Delhi. By going about forty miles a day, we have not been very long in overtaking you.'

Thus ends the story of Manutdar. As she never had been such an elephant as I cared for, and was now useless even for beating a tiger jungle, I bid adieu to her for ever.

As I have already said, there was nothing about this march to Delhi except its length to take it out of the category of such journeys during a time of peace; but my readers will no doubt have perceived, that what with the duties of his station and the pleasures of small game shooting, coursing, and such-like, an officer has no cause to complain of tedium by the way. For the ladies who may accompany the camp, I fear it must be otherwise. Throughout this long trip there was but little for them to enjoy after the first few days, when the sense of novelty had worn off. I was therefore really glad, when we were within one stage of Delhi, to find that we were only a few miles from the celebrated minaret known as the 'Kootub Minar.' This I was sure it would give the ladies great pleasure to behold. I therefore drove some of them over to see it on an

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elephant, the road not being suitable to any other equally comfortable mode of travelling.

As there could be no heat at this time of the year over and above what could be successfully neutralized by good thick umbrellas, we had every reason to anticipate an enjoyable ride, and a feeling of exhilaration took possession of us when we were informed that the tusk elephant Heera Guj was awaiting us outside the mess-tent. We were soon on his hospitable back, and on our way to visit this famous monument of a bygone time. As the elephant marched slowly, surely, and majestically onwards, we could not but feel that we matched well with the surrounding scenery, and that our appearance at the Kootub would harmonize well with such a building and its associations. In less than an hour and a half from the time of starting, we stood in the presence of the Kootub Minar, a tower that looked about eighty feet high, and in perfect preservation. This building is considered one of the finest in the whole of India, some even thinking it superior to the Taj itself, though I do not myself see how two such different structures can be made the subject of a comparison.

The Taj, as I have already mentioned in a former volume, is a large-domed mosque in white marble, whilst the Kootub is a tower whose prevailing colour is a deep red, such being the natural tint of the stones of which it is constructed. If I remember rightly, it is hexagonal, and rises by a succession of five storeys to its full height. Each storey is of a different stone, always red, except the top one, which is mostly of white marble. The carving is of the utmost richness, is deeply cut, and covers the whole of the surface,

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not an inch of which is blank. It also changes in design with each stage; yet the whole is so exquisitely blended as to form a most splendid and unique ensemble. A winding staircase in the interior enables the visitor to ascend to the top of the edifice, whence a good view of the surrounding country is obtained. So rich and massive is the decoration of the outside of this tower, that the whole has an encrusted appearance. The windows that surround each gallery seem only accidental openings indispensable to the sculptor's design, and not, as is so often the case in architecture, necessary evils that have to be made the best of. Paradoxical as it may sound, the top of the Kootub, when I was there, was at the bottom. The elaborate white marble ornament, which was to have crowned the edifice, had been put together on the ground in the courtyard below, and had—at all events up to that time—never been placed in position. All that we regretted, whilst feasting our eyes on this astonishing work of art, was our sad lack of architectural education. But surely so perfect a creation may rank with the beauties of nature which we are all privileged to try and describe.

Immediately below the Kootub are some celebrated wells, which those who visit the minaret always go to see. They are very solidly built of masonry, and are of considerable width, perhaps thirty feet square. Their depth is also very great. From the brink to the surface of the water is, I believe, about sixty feet, and from this numbers of natives, varying in age from ten to fifty years, dive for the sum of sixpence each. They clap their hands and arms flat down their sides, and go plumb down feet foremost. As soon as

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they see the visitors looking jaded, and about to depart, they offer to perform the same feat off the top of a little tower built in one corner, and about twenty feet higher. But for this they charge a shilling, so it is a good plan to choose the youngest and the oldest of the competitors at this stage of the proceedings. If the extra twenty feet are a mere bagatelle to them, it may be presumed that the increased height can make no difference to the others.

Having thus seen everything, and only spent such time and money as was becoming to busy persons of moderate income, we once more confided ourselves to the faithful Guj, and wended our way homewards, beguiling the way with reflections as to the changes that time brings about. There was once a day when the Kootub and the costly tanks we had seen were the constant resort of the powerful rulers who had built them. Now, with the exception of a humble and straggling village, the vast surrounding plain is uninhabited.

Owing to the dry nature of the soil, there is but little vegetation, either cultivated or wild, in the immediate neighbourhood, and it may be truly said that desolation has taken the place of life and splendour. Doubtless there are occasionally gala days, when the inhabitants of Delhi and the surrounding country flock to the spot, but generally speaking the Kootub reigns in solitary silence over the scenes of its former greatness. On the occasion of our visit there was not a single other pilgrim either to sympathize with us or to jar upon our nerves. So complete was the calm repose, that we might have imagined the grounds, with the splendid monument in the centre, to be all our own. And this, I

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believe, is the general experience of all other admiring travellers.

The next day we arrived at Delhi. What a transition from the past to the present! No words can be sufficiently abrupt to convey to the reader even a faint idea of the violence of the contrast. We had made our long march over solitary cross roads and footpaths. Scarcely had a sign been manifested to us of the vast gathering throng which we were slowly advancing to join. We left the deserted neighbourhood of the Kootub in the early hours of the morning, whilst it was yet dark, and soon after sunrise we found ourselves at Delhi, an immense city, called into existence but for a few brief weeks,—the canvas Delhi of the Kaisar Victoria! Let the reader imagine a boundless plain, where as many miles could be taken up in any direction as might be required, and on which a town of tents had been erected, perhaps as large as Brighton. Such was the modern Delhi. This camp was indeed a credit both to those who had made and to those who had carried out the plans. Many were the streets of immense width and great length, each composed of fac-simile tents, and pitched consequently with the regularity of masonry. In a quarter of a mile of tent-pegs not one would appear an inch beyond the other.

The longest and finest streets were of course for personages such as the Viceroy, the governors, lieutenant-governors, the native princes, and their suites. Here sufficient space had been allowed for each lofty and spacious suite of tents to stand in a lovely flower-garden, and the floral display was in many cases quite beautiful.

As a matter of course, the quarters of the Viceroy outshone

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all others both in size and magnificence. The appearance of the 'durbar' tent in which public receptions were held was especially striking. When lighted up for an evening display, it more resembled a regular hall of audience than a mere edifice of canvas, that could have been taken down, packed up, and carried off bodily in the course of an hour or so. But although the streets in which dwelt the great officials formed the crowning glory of this huge camp, yet its great extent was mainly due to the other inhabitants. Each corps had its own lines, with a space near it large enough for a regiment to manœuvre upon; and finally there was the grand stand, past which the troops would march on the great day of the Proclamation. This building resembled structures of the same class that one sees in Europe, and therefore need not be described here.

Such was the *mise en scène* as I marched into tented Delhi on the morning of the 16th December 1876.

The great event for which we had all been called together —the Proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India—was fixed for the 1st January 1877. But besides this, there were to be other imposing ceremonies and festivities, such as the entry in state of the Viceroy, who had not yet arrived, receptions on a large scale, rehearsal parades, and, to wind up with, three or four days of racing. Meantime, as it was the wish of the ruling powers that there should be as much holiday-making and as little work as possible, each man had ample time for sight-seeing and such other pursuits as in his own opinion constituted happiness.

Fear not, O reader, that I am about to weary you with the oft and well told tale of this the last great Indian pageant,

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which has already been placed before you by many writers of renown.

I myself have read several of their able descriptions, and might have remained mute for ever had it occurred to any of 'our own correspondents' to describe the feelings, impressions, and little doings of such a being as an officer holding a subaltern position in a native infantry regiment. But of course they could only chronicle the actions of those with whom they consorted, and these were mostly governors, generals, princes, and other splendid sun-flowers. Yet humbler plants, even the grass on which we tread, are surely worthy of some notice; I will therefore without further preamble at once descend to small personal matters, and inform my readers that I could know no real peace of mind at this time, by reason of being unprovided with a proper charger whereon to march past the Viceroy on the ensuing 1st of January. I had a feeling—no doubt an erroneous one, but apparently fully shared in by my narrow circle of acquaintances—that the attention of the Viceregal party would be especially fixed upon my poor Arthur, an excellent and well-meaning beast which I had purchased for £12, with a view to pursuing the wily jackal in the company of my greyhounds. This duty he performed most creditably; but I could not disguise from myself that he was ill calculated to shine amidst a galaxy of Imperial splendour. Arthur was of the sort known as country bred. He was of a mealy colour, and nearly charger height, because his legs were abnormally long. No one, however, could point the finger of scorn at us, for the very day after my arrival in Delhi I caused an advertisement to be inserted in the local newspaper, demanding a

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good charger, and stating that a good price would be given.

It was now confidently predicted that my tent would be surrounded, to the extent of becoming a nuisance, with a crowd of high-caste Arabs. 'It is well,' I said, 'let them come!' Meanwhile I would bestride Arthur at break of day, and canter off with two greyhounds and a half-bred mastiff to scour the plains in search of jackals, wolves, foxes, or hares.

Notwithstanding my almost daily excursions, and the many miles of wild country that I covered on each occasion, I never sighted a single wolf or hyæna during the whole of this period, though I had been assured beforehand that these animals were extremely plentiful. My method of proceeding was to take the two greyhounds in a long leash, to prevent them from running herds of gazelle, and the heavy half-bred mastiff would follow loose. I could thus go at a hand gallop, and accomplish distances which would have been impossible had I been accompanied by a 'slipper' on foot. The foxes that one finds on the plains of India run in the same 'form' as hares do in England. They are extremely fast, and will turn and double with extraordinary dexterity and endurance. A large one will not weigh more than six pounds; it is therefore not to be wondered at that their style is quite different to that of the European animal, which I suppose often attains to twenty pounds.

The Delhi plains could boast of two varieties of this beautiful little animal,—the common grey, with the black tip to his brush, and the black-breasted yellow one, whose tail is white at the end. I believe this latter fox to be

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almost, if not quite, identical with those that I afterwards killed among the mountains and on the high plateaux of Afghanistan, though these last are larger and much more furry than the Indian ones. I have preserved stuffed specimens of all three kinds, which may some day come to be classified by a capable naturalist.

The jackal is a much larger beast than the ordinary Asiatic fox. He will sometimes weigh as much as twenty-two pounds. These animals used often to give a very good run, as they would start at full speed when more than a quarter of a mile ahead, then when the two greyhounds came up they would perhaps be unable to pull him down, and the chase would continue with much animation till the heavy dog could get up and terminate the conflict. In the cold weather these animals have very handsome coats, and beautiful carriage rugs can be made of their skins.

The only interesting animal that I killed with my dogs at this time was a wild cat. One morning, whilst drawing through a long narrow tract of withered grass, I saw what I thought to be a jackal speeding on ahead towards some very dense cover. I slipped the two greyhounds, and, with the aid of Arthur, I headed the quarry, and obliged it to break across an open space to the left. I then saw that it was a wild cat, which surpassed all that I had ever seen for size and beauty. The greyhounds were soon up, but were unable to do much with their enemy, who would doubtless have escaped but for the timely arrival of the large dog Carlo. He at once closed with and killed it, but not till he had received many wounds, one a severe and deep one on the face. This cat was in colour very much like an

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English hare. It weighed sixteen pounds, and was three feet four inches long, including its rather short tail.

Though my country rides were productive of much pleasure to myself, still I can hardly recommend the plains of Delhi to the intending sportsman. It might be supposed that the near neighbourhood of a large army had driven away the wild animals, but this view can hardly be accepted, as I extended my excursions far beyond the limits of other marauders, and seldom encountered any friends or rivals in the jungle. All were too intent upon the object of the assembly and general sight-seeing, to give much of their time to excursions into the wilds.

Within two miles of the camp lay the time-honoured and ancient city of Delhi,—the real Delhi,—the seat of a fallen dynasty. Here, mixed up with the native town, were the residences of a permanent and considerable European population, protected by a British garrison. The camp and the city were a mutual wonder to one another, and the road between them was consequently always crowded with two opposing streams of passengers, many on foot, and others in carriages and on horseback.

What with the drought usual at this time of the year, the eternal sun, and vast amount of traffic, this piece of road soon became a purgatory of dust. But it was well worth traversing for the sake of what was to be seen at either end of it. The city of Delhi contains many interesting monuments of the past, some of which deserve to be called splendid. There is, for instance, the 'Jumma Musjid,' where the faithful have long been wont to assemble for prayer and exhortation. This is built principally of red

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stone, and struck me as being nothing more than a magnificent façade surmounting a flight of steps, immense both as to height and width. Having ascended these, and entered the vast arches that would have made a noble entrance to a colossal temple, one finds oneself, in comparison with one's expectations, confronted by a blank wall. On grand occasions the bulk of the congregation must occupy the steps and the plain below, whilst the chief moolah harangues them, standing on the top of the steps, and in front of the great façade. Such a position might easily be made the scene of the most impressive displays; but whatever may or may not be the accepted opinions of the learned, I have no hesitation in saying that the building I admired not only most, but without reserve, was the famous white marble palace of the Moguls.

My readers are doubtless aware that till so recently as within the last thirty years, the nominal, perhaps lineal, descendants of Aurungzebe still reigned as titular 'Kings of Delhi.' They were, of course, no more than the shadows of departed greatness, whose only use, perhaps, had been the thorough keeping up of this splendid mansion in which they lived.

As in the palace at Agra, all is of white marble. The massive and finely-moulded pillars and arches, the beautifully perforated screens that support or divide the different apartments, are all executed in this beautiful and costly stone. There is also a great deal of the mosaic jewel work inlaid upon the walls, such as I have described when writing of the Taj at Agra. One room was indeed splendidly decorated in this way. The two ends of the apartment were

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almost covered each by a large circular design of the finest work of this sort, reminding one, by its brilliancy, of the peacock's tail. The front of this chamber opened with wide arches, sufficiently sheltered to keep out the rain, yet admitting the full flood of Eastern daylight. And the work was worthy of the illumination, for even with the searching aid of the sun no flaw or roughness was perceptible in this bejewelled *chef d'œuvre*.

All was no doubt kept up to perfection till the period of 1856–57. Then came the great mutiny, when the Bengal sepoys rose *en masse* against the English Government, a subject far too important to be more than mentioned here. In the convulsions that ensued on this terrible outbreak, the aged king of Delhi was hurled from his throne, and with him ended what had long been but a line of puppets. Disorder had evidently held its sway in the palace at this time, as many of the more precious stones had been gouged from their marble beds by the bayonets of the rebel sepoys. There were still, however, some emeralds left amid the cornelian, jade-onyx, and other such-like stones with which the work is principally executed. One interesting effect of these depredations is to show the wonderful solidity and depth with which this inlaying has been done. The unscrupulous and rapacious mutineers evidently found the task of hacking out hardly repaid the labour, and the many broken bayonet points that must have been expended on their praiseworthy efforts to get rich. They had not been able to remove sufficient pieces to have any effect on the ensemble, and where the holes they had made were deep enough to attract the eye, a careful Government has caused them to be filled

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with pellets of paste, which, though rough and dull, are nearly of the right shape and colour, and are really better than nothing.

No doubt, in addition to the two buildings of which I have given a cursory description, Delhi is full of beautiful and interesting monuments of former ages, which I have neither the ability nor the space to do justice to. Fortunate are they who can go and see them with their own eyes.

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CHAPTER III.

TIGER-SHOOTING.

THE Proclamation festivities at Delhi were marked by two principal sights or pageants. The first was the arrival of the Viceroy, and his passage in state through the ancient and picturesque city of the Moguls on his way to his own quarters in the camp. The troops lined the road on both sides throughout the entire distance, and with their endless variety of brilliant uniforms, and the different nationalities of the regiments, formed in themselves a wonderful sight. I was myself stationed in the principal thoroughfare of the town, called the Chandni Chowk. I could see a considerable way down the long and narrow street, with its double row of tall houses, dark coloured with antiquity. It was indeed a scene in which Europe and Asia were singularly blended. The locality was entirely of the ancient East, the troops startlingly heterogeneous, the order and discipline among the crowd even more than English. The appearance of an Indian crowd is very gay, on account of the many-coloured and bright turbans that they all wear. None of the vast numbers, however, that had assembled to do honour to the British Raj, attempted to break through on to the narrow snake-like path kept clear for the long-expected

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procession. All were content to form a bright background to the military. Suddenly as I looked down the vista it became blocked, as though one of the houses had stepped forward with impertinent curiosity. This was the leading elephant of the procession. His appearance was the signal for all the people on horseback, and they were many, to sit tight. Horses have rightly enough a great dread of this huge beast, for there is no saying with certainty when an elephant may or may not take upon himself to administer a death-dealing fillip to any other animal who may get too close to him; and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that throughout the entire length of the narrow streets everything was within range of their trunks. I saw many chargers cowering in corners, who would gladly have run away, only there was nowhere to run to.

On they came in single file, richly caparisoned, and with their faces and trunks illuminated with an elaborate pattern done in gold-leaf and other brilliant pigments of every colour. In many instances a heavy embroidered and fringed cloth covered the entire body of the animal, almost sweeping the ground, and on the top of this drapery was perched the state howdah of the rajah or other grandee taking part in the ceremony. Each native potentate was, of course, allowed to attire himself and his elephants according to his own ideas of what was fitting. In most cases they displayed a fine Oriental taste, themselves being covered with fine raiment, and heavily weighted with diamonds and other precious stones, while the howdah would resemble a graceful pagoda of the most ornate description. One magnate, however, had secured a yellow-bodied mail-phaeton, minus the wheels, on the back

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of his great steed, whilst another had fitted a large glass-shaded candlestick on the end of each of his beast's tusks. These were the only eccentricities that I observed as these stately creatures filed past me with their noiseless and swaying gait.

In due time came the Governor-General's elephant. From afar he could be discerned from his superior size, it being etiquette on occasions of this sort that the greatest man should ride the tallest animal. Of course everything had been done to adorn this mighty tusker, from the centre of whose back sprang a beautifully designed pagoda of solid silver,—the moving throne, in fact, of the Viceroy, who looked very well as he sat in the seat of power. But it was not he who crowned the spectacle. This honour fell to his noble consort, who sat by his side, and was really a vision of grace and beauty. She was deservedly the cynosure of every eye. It would ill become a person of my sex to try and describe her toilette. To me it appeared a marvel of white silk, a Paris bonnet, and a parasol lined with pink. It is seldom that any lady called upon to occupy such a prominent position is able by her personal appearance to outshine her gorgeous surroundings, yet such was the case in the present instance.

After the passing of the Viceregal pair, nothing more remained for the troops to do but to march back to their respective quarters, and this they speedily proceeded to do. Meanwhile time was flying, and the day of the grand Proclamation Review began to draw near without any one having intimated to me that he had a horse with any good qualities for sale. All such animals were no doubt engaged, many

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to the personal friends of their present owners, whenever they might feel inclined to part with them.

Only one candidate for a 'good price' presented himself. This was a European inhabitant of the city of Delhi, who appeared before my tent leading by a rope a sorry-looking grey animal, with very long hair, and of no breed in particular, not to be compared with Arthur either for beauty or spirit. As we met, the owner wore a sheepish expression of countenance, much as if he expected to be forcibly helped back to the town. 'Well,' I said, 'and how much do you want for this first-class charger?' 'I would take fifty pounds for him,' said he. 'Not from me, though,' I replied, and this terminated the interview; nor were there any further results from my daily-repeated advertisement. I never experienced any pleasure in buying horses in India, for they nearly always turned out to be screws, and to have in addition some fatal vice, such as stumbling, or rearing and falling backwards on the top of you. The more you paid for an animal the less likely you were to get a satisfactory mount. However, I was not much troubled on the subject at this time, as no one took the slightest notice of my plaintive request to be furnished with a valuable charger. In short, the great day arrived, and I had nothing wherewith to excite the admiration of the numerous great officials, ladies, and other beholders than the strange-looking Arthur. His panoply left nothing to be desired, and was polished with extraordinary care; but still I was conscious, sadly conscious, that I was not up to the mark. It was a very splendid sight when all the troops were drawn up in front of the grand stand, which was, however, dwarfed

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by the magnitude of the space occupied by the different regiments. The march past was conducted in the usual way, but of course presented a very different appearance to anything of the kind ever seen in England. Even among our own regular troops there was the utmost variety of nationalities and uniforms. But in addition to this there were the contingents sent by the different rajahs, who are allowed to keep up each a few regiments of his own. These corps, though drilled and dressed in imitation of our own, have nevertheless their distinctive features. Then there were all the elephants. They were marshalled in long rows, and marched past as a separate corps. There was the yellow-bodied carriage, conspicuous in its lofty position, and also the pair of glass candle-shades already referred to, and which the huge bearer evidently knew were made of glass, and must be taken care of.

It took a long time for all the troops to arrive and get into position, but at last the host was assembled and standing in silent and serried ranks. It was the first of January, and the scene was lighted by a scorching sun in a sky of cloudless blue. A dry, cold, and searching east wind completed the most enjoyable weather ever known in India. I was glad, whilst standing at ease and waiting our turn to move, to dismount and sit on the ground under the grateful shade of Arthur's body. At length the time came when I also found myself 'marching past' in rear of the native regiment to which I was attached for duty. I had furnished my heels with a pair of sharp spurs, and at the critical moment, when I felt sure the British Empire was looking at me, I applied these to Arthur's flanks. I was confident that

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he caracoled very prettily. Alas! I only heard afterwards that he had kept his tail, which of course I could not see, firmly wedged between his legs. Thus was the effect marred, and my well-conned plan for carrying off the situation frustrated.

After the review came the races, and these terminated the proceedings. I was not sorry when all was over, for, with the exception of one or two big 'tumashas,' as the natives call shows, there were no amusements other than one was used to in cantonment life. One certainly met all one's friends, but they seemed ever hurrying on, as though bent upon finding out what it was all about, and seemed incapable of realizing that there was nothing of special interest going on at the moment. The races, as far as I could judge exactly, resembled all other large meetings of the sort, the only novel feature being the extraordinary complexions attained by the lady spectators, from their long-continued practice of going out in the middle of the day. One had to make great allowances even for those that one knew to be young and lovely.

On the breaking up of the camp, I was not destined to return to Neemuch, as the regiment I was attached to was to take up fresh quarters in quite another direction. A long march to Mehidpore, in Central India, lay before us, and on this journey we started on the 11th January 1877, after a month's residence under canvas in the Delhi camp. During the cold season in Northern India, a certain amount of rain may be expected, which often comes in the form of tremendous thunderstorms. For some days before starting, the heavens had constantly assumed a very threatening

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aspect, but the black, heavy clouds had always cleared off without making us acquainted with their contents. Treachery was in the air, however, for on arrival at our very first encamping ground, after a march of seventeen miles, and before the camp was properly fixed, we were visited by a tremendous tempest, made up of rain like water-spouts, terrific thunder and lightning, and a hurricane of wind. Many of the hastily-pitched tents were blown down, and I only saved my own by propping up the pole with my own body, whilst my faithful attendants went to work with mallets and extra tent-pegs. But the next day it was fine again, and as we were journeying on the great Agra trunk (*i.e.* bridged and metalled road), there was nothing to stop our progress. During our forty-nine days' march we only encountered two more storms worth mentioning. One of them occurred during the afternoon, when we were all prepared for it, and I might have forgotten its occurrence, but that simultaneously with a deafening crash, a thunder-bolt was seen to tear up the earth close to where several of our chargers were picketed. The third and last storm occurred, as is so often the case, at night. In the darkness, every one had to fight for himself, and it was not till the next morning that I heard how that a very large double-poled and double-roofed tent, occupied by one of our subalterns, had subsided on to the top of the unconscious slumberers within. Such is the sleep of youth, that the raging elements had passed over the young man without disturbing him. At length, however, a feeling of being smothered dispelled his slumbers, and caused him some curious sensations. There was no getting from under the soaking mass, and as he crawled

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about seeking an outlet, he continually came upon various natives who had taken refuge under this fine-looking edifice, and who were also unable to find an egress. However, as I have no deaths from asphyxia to record, the reader may safely conclude that they all got out at last, and even lived to be much amused at their own sufferings.

With the exception of these three thunderstorms, fortune played us only one more shabby trick, which was on this wise. It had been decided to make a long double march by starting soon after dinner, and halting for two hours' *al fresco* repose when at about half way from our destination. Part of the plan was to travel across country, over some nasty cart tracks, because, you see, the weather was quite fine, and it was the night of the full moon. We all liked the idea very much, and started with the notion of quite enjoying ourselves. And so we did, up to about nine o'clock, when, in spite of the moon, the stars, and a cloudless sky, the lanes through which our path lay seemed to have acquired a sudden and unhappy knack of keeping themselves in the dark. At first I ascribed this effect to a want of good temper on my own part, or something of that kind. But the darkness increased, so that we were soon enlightened as to the cause,—a total eclipse of the moon; and on this night of all others! I had often seen this phenomenon before, and was at this time under the impression that the total process was, from beginning to end, one of about ten minutes' duration, that being about the period of time that I had been in the habit of contemplating this interesting sight whenever it had occurred in my neighbourhood. Alas for our illusions! I was destined

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to find out on this trying night the result of the earth, the sun, and the moon getting, as it were, mixed up together! I wish the astronomer-royal had been riding with us on a lame or stumbling horse; I warrant he would have struck for a much longer period of total darkness than science at present allows. As long as there was the slightest bit of eclipse going on, there was no improvement in our condition. Certainly one could generally see a portion of one side or the other of the moon shining brightly, but the rays seemed to be diverted in some way from the lanes in which we were groping, making only the darkness more visible. We accomplished all the first part of our march in this unexpectedly disagreeable manner. All was still Cimmerian gloom when we arrived, about midnight, at our two hours' resting-place; but by the time we had had our nap, and were ready to make a fresh start, the orb of night had resumed her sway, and we accomplished the rest of the distance with comparative ease and comfort.

The sport that we met with on the march from Delhi to Mehidpore was much the same as what we had enjoyed on our way to the former place. Birds were often plentiful, and even at the worst of our camping-grounds something could always be got by a good shot. I myself considered coursing the most agreeable form of sport obtainable at this time. For although wild animals suitable for this form of the chase were scarce, still I had occasionally very good runs, and it was always pleasant to roam for miles on horseback over an ever changing country. It must not be imagined that I had only one horse, and that the poor brute was worked to death. Arthur, the state animal, was the only one worthy

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of a description, but I had several others, one of which was always fit for a long ramble.

After we had been marching nearly a month, we arrived at a place called Seepree. Here we had a day's halt, and I took a long round in the morning, followed by my dog-boys leading three or four of my hounds. For a long time we tramped the country in vain, when I suddenly saw several jackals scud across some open ground a quarter of a mile in front of me. I caused all the four dogs to be slipped, and gave chase, but the jackals succeeded in getting into a tract of country covered with crops and long grass before we could come up with them. I knew that the dogs were unsighted, and were only rushing round about in bootless excitement, so I pulled up and shouted to the attendants to come up and get their charges into the slips again as soon as possible. It was at this moment that I saw a black mass rushing at great speed through a field of standing wheat. This proved to be a wild pig, with a very handsome greyhound called Budli in pursuit of it. Of course in a pig-sticking country, where the mighty boar must be encountered with nothing but the spear, I should have been bound by the laws of sport to let this animal kill my greyhound, but as it was not a pig-sticking land, and was even destitute of European inhabitants, I resolved to kill the pig instead. I had nothing but an ordinary whip in my hand, but amongst my followers, who were by this time within two hundred yards of me, was a gun loaded with two charges of shot for quail or partridges. I dashed up to the bearer of this weapon, seized it in my right hand, and raced off to the support of Budli, who was by this time nearly out of sight. He proved unable even to check

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the speed of his enemy, which I began to think would escape, when I caught sight of the other two dogs coming up behind me. I laid them on to the track, and as soon as they came up the pig turned and charged. It displayed a mass of bristles, and had such a fine mane, that I made sure it was a young boar instead of a savage old sow as it turned out to be. Such was her pluck and strength, that even the three dogs could only effect momentary pauses in her flight, and thus the hunt went on for about two miles, and across very bad country. All at once it seemed to me as if the earth in front of me was rolling and tumbling about. A second glance showed me that this was caused by a flying squadron of the greatest number of wild pigs I had ever seen in one herd. On they were going as hard as they could in a compact phalanx. I felt it would never do to let my little party get mixed up with this mighty host, so, urging Arthur to increased efforts, I got ahead of the dogs and their quarry, and then uttered the most discordant shrieks of which I was capable. This manœuvre was successful, and caused the sow, who had not seen her friends, to alter her course. I continued to pursue the main army, so as to increase the distance between it and my own game. I came close up to them, and it was really a wonderful sight to see the line of great boars bristling all over, and leading the van like the 'Conscript Fathers,' whilst close behind them hurried the mothers and many rising generations. Of course, whilst driving off the main body, I kept an eye on the animal I hoped to secure, and before long I saw her dart into a thick thorn-bush with the evident intention of stopping there. I rode up to the spot and encouraged the dogs, but they could

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not draw her from this cover, so I fired a charge of shot into the thicket, which caused the animal to fly out at great speed and make for another very similar refuge; whilst Arthur, who had never had a gun fired off his back before, rose desperately on his hind legs, and wheeled round and round in his frantic efforts to get rid of what he considered this infernal machine, so I thought it best to seize the gun by the muzzle and lower it on to the ground. I did this with sufficient dexterity not to injure the weapon, and as soon as the offending implement was off his back the horse became quite quiet.

I now kept guard over the pig's new asylum till my men came up, when one of them picked up my gun and supplied me with a ball cartridge. Thus freshly fitted out, I advanced on foot to the scene of the conflict. On my approach to within about ten yards, the pig charged out, but was seized by the nape of the neck by my half-bred mastiff. At the same time I sent a bullet through its heart. On this the dog fled to some distance, and looked as if something was wrong, and no doubt he must have received some splinters from the muzzle of my gun, two inches of which had been blown off with the discharge of the bullet. An inspection, taken all too late, showed that in dropping the gun a lot of dust had got into the mouth of the barrel, and this had doubtless been the cause of the ruin of my thirty guinea weapon. Whatever the opinions of the orthodox in sport may be regarding the demise of this lady-pig, I met with nothing but thanks and congratulations on my return to camp, where game had been scarce of late, and all were sighing for something better to put in the flesh-pots than the

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half-starved sheep and fowls, such as are alone attainable in Indian villages. The pork which was the outcome of this little adventure was of undeniable quality, and such as one might expect from an animal that had been feeding for months on wheat and sugar-cane. The head proved a *plât* of extraordinary delicacy, and I don't believe any one will forget it of those who saw it triumphantly placed for breakfast in front of the accomplished lady who had previously superintended its confection into a 'souse.' Every morsel of it was eaten, not a scrap being left for the cooks. Out of the almost endless variety of game that was put on the table during the course of this long march, I think it was generally allowed that this head, and such half-grown pea-fowl as we were fortunate enough to get, formed the best dishes. The old peacocks we valued for the sake of their skins, and their bodies made excellent mulligatawny soup; otherwise they were useless for culinary purposes. The Hindoos object strongly to the destruction of this bird on religious grounds, but in some districts they are held much less sacred than in others, so that in the course of extensive travelling one has no difficulty in obtaining a few good specimens. A learned and very friendly old Pundit once explained to me that he and his fellow Brahmins did not consider that the peacock was a god. 'But you know, sahib,' he said, 'there is no doubt whatever that Krishna rides upon this bird whenever he goes abroad; he looks upon them as his horses. How then can we countenance their destruction?'

Our march terminated on the 28th February 1877, by which time the heat of the sun during the day was such as to render every one grateful for a good roof overhead. On

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arrival in quarters, I was at once relieved of my duties by the officer whose *locum tenens* I had been during the past few months, and I immediately began to travel towards my new sphere of duty, namely to Ahmednuggur, in the far distant Deccan.

The journey was performed partly by rail, and partly by the pleasant and patriarchal system of marching which I have already described. Being unencumbered by any commanding-officers or other troublesome details, I contrived to enjoy the trip very much. I always started on the daily stage very early, so as to get under shelter by eight in the morning; for the sun, in addition to being disagreeable to myself, would have actually killed all my valuable dogs, which were invariably led in slips behind me, and with which I used to course as soon as it became light enough to see anything. It was at a place called Munmar that I finally quitted the line of railway, and commenced a march of eighty miles to get to Ahmednuggur.

At the very outset, on this last portion of my journey, I was struck with the dried-up appearance of the country. True, we were in the month of April, when no green things (except forest trees) are expected to appear upon the face of the earth; but during other 'hot weathers,' as I roamed the country followed by my dogs, I would come upon constant patches, or even extensive tracts of herbage, bleached, it is true, by the scorching rays of the sun, but still affording food for the deer, hares, and other herbaceous animals, besides harbouring plenty of insects, for the flocks of ortolans and other ground birds to feed upon. This year, however, the eye failed to detect even the roots of any former grass. The

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hard-baked soil presented an almost shaven appearance, no matter whither one bent one's steps. Certain of the principal watercourses which took their rise afar off still yielded a diminished stream, and along the banks of these rivulets antelopes were still to be seen. These animals can travel immense distances for their food, and are, besides, very clever at scratching up the roots of any vegetation that may suit them. I have seen in dry countries large patches of ground picked up by their sharp-pointed hoofs whilst in search of food. With the exception of these animals, however, the country appeared deserted. Every day I met with one or more 'earths' of foxes, but they had invariably been dug up, and the inhabitants eaten by the starving natives.

The deer were too wild to be taken, so, as there was absolutely nothing to be got out of the country, the people had retired into their villages, and the sun shone with a fierce and never-failing splendour over a lifeless waste. It was the year 1877, and, owing to the total failure of the previous monsoon, one of the worst famines ever known even in India was raging in the land. During the eight days that I was travelling, I saw nothing of the starvation that was going on, for the travellers' bungalows were generally clear of the villages, and in any case the precincts would necessarily be kept clear of beggars by the efforts of the native police. My knowledge, therefore, of the terrible visitation that was weighing upon the people was for the moment confined to hearsay, and to my own observation of the desolate state of the land.

On arriving, however, at Ahmednuggur, that selfish bliss which is born of ignorance was no longer possible to me.

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Here one would constantly see parties of natives passing by in the last stages of emaciation, and many would come at different times and sit piteously in front of the door of the large and very comfortable house in which I lived. On one occasion, a poor woman, having passed through the drive gates, was found by the friend with whom I lived reclining under a large banyan tree that shaded the entrance to the verandah. In her trembling hands she held a little wooden bowl for the reception of any scraps of food that charitable souls might throw into it. 'This woman,' said my friend, who was a medical man, 'is a genuine case, and is evidently dying of starvation.' On this I called loudly to my faithful attendant Chand, and commanded him to fetch some of his own favourite cakes, that the poor creature might eat and live. This was quickly done, but, alas! the poor woman was so far gone that she felt she could not swallow a morsel. She bent her head over the cakes, and wept. It was a dreadful sight. Fortunately I had some excellent goats, that were always kept at home and fed in the compound, so that in a few minutes we were able to present her with a very large tumbler full of foaming new milk. This she drank with an air of indescribable satisfaction, and handed back the glass with a deep sigh of relief. I now presented her with a red English blanket to wrap around her ill-clad frame, and promised her fourpence a day till such time as she could find means to support herself and her two small children, whom she had left in the town. The red blanket, however, had not proved an unmixed blessing. The possession of such a magnificent garment by one so squalid had aroused the suspicions of the Ahmednuggur police, whose vigilance

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nothing could escape, and they had even charged her with having stolen the same. The result of this was, that I received a morning visit from the lady, accompanied by a 'man in charge,' who was no doubt glad to hear that his misgivings were for once unfounded. Indeed, she proved a really good, respectable woman, and did not long take advantage of my charity, for in less than ten days she appeared in very different condition to claim her daily dole for the last time, for she informed me she had heard of work to be had in her own somewhat distant hamlet, and that she was now on her way thither.

This was the last I ever saw or heard of poor 'Luximee.'

No doubt vast numbers of wretched people died of hunger at this time. The relief afforded by Government did a great deal for the sufferers, but the only way to deal with famines is to prevent them. Once a real dearth has set in, it is impossible to do more than partially alleviate its effects. In guarding against the abuses which invariably attend the administration of charity on a large scale, many of the most deserving persons come to be classed with the impostors. Nor do even the genuine cases always behave well, as the following instance will show.

As time went on, I found it necessary to forbid those whom I assisted out of my private means to enter my grounds. They therefore used to assemble in a double row just outside my drive gate, where I would appear regularly at three in the afternoon with a bag of small silver coins worth about twopence, and give one to each applicant. This, notwithstanding the famine prices, was sufficient for one person to live upon; and where there was a family of children, who

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each received the same gratuity, their circumstances really approached affluence for the time being. All went well for many days, till the number of my flock reached to thirty or forty souls. One day I had gone carefully down the right-hand line, and given to each, one of the two-anna pieces. I then turned to travel down on the other side, when, with a simultaneous swoop, like a flight of birds, those already relieved settled amongst those who had received nothing. As it was quite impossible to sort them, I congratulated them on the success of their manœuvre, as some of them would certainly receive a double allowance on this occasion. But, I added, I am the greatest gainer, as I shall never give any of you another farthing.

If I found it so difficult to bestow alms on a few people on my own account, what must have been the task of Government when dealing with millions of claimants?

I was never employed on what was called 'famine duty,' but I can well imagine the insuperable difficulties that must have beset those that were.

Owing to the signal failure, as above recorded, of my attempt at private benevolence, I became a subscriber to a public 'relief fund,' and during the time that I remained in the large cantonments of Ahmednuggur, except through the price I paid for the feed of my horses, there was nothing to remind me of the great dearth. Hereafter it was only on those happy occasions when I could get three days' leave to go out panther-shooting in the hills, about twenty or thirty miles distant, that I saw any more scenes connected with the terrible tragedy that was being enacted on so vast a scale in this part of the world.

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At this station I was very lucky in meeting with my old friend Sandford, a 'shikarie' of wonderful energy and determination, besides being a very good shot. This gentleman had established a little hunt for himself, and when news was brought in of a panther being in the neighbourhood, he would, if unable to get any one to accompany him, as had been sometimes the case before my arrival, proceed alone to the scene of action. I was always fortunate in being able to get leave to go with him, but of course I always considered him as the head of the family, and implicitly followed his directions during the chase.

Before giving an account of our adventures, it will be well to give a general description of panther-shooting on the hills of the Deccan. Owing to the nature of the ground, the sport is not only different to any yet described, but in many respects more interesting.

About thirty miles to the east of Ahmednuggur is to be found an extensive range of hills, varying in height till some might be considered mountains. The slopes range from the gentle to the precipitous, but are mostly so steep that it is very hard to get up them even at a slow pace, and with the assistance of the hands.

During the hot weather there is hardly any vegetation in the ordinary sense of the word, and the cover is composed of rocks containing caves here and there, and scattered clumps of cactus. The latter, which is independent of rain, flourishes in some places so as to form a more or less continuous growth of perhaps occasionally an acre in extent. This is especially the case where the ravines are deepest and most sheltered. Yet even in such localities the bird's-eye view that

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can always be obtained from the heights above will, owing to the entire absence of grass, reveal any creeping movement on the part of the enemy. There is not a tree anywhere to be found, seldom even a rock of sufficient magnitude to afford any vantage to the shooter. Neither would elephants be of any use, as they would not be able to travel fast enough over that sort of ground in pursuit of swift game.

The plan of proceeding is therefore as follows:—

The panther—for there are no tigers in this part of the country—having dashed into one of the villages on the plain and killed something during the night, the native 'shikaries' of the district get out before it is light, and, wrapped in their blankets, man all the heights in small parties. The correct positions have been long established, so that each party can go direct to its post in a very short time; and when daylight appears, the whole of the country leading up from the plain to the hills is under a perfect sort of panoramic surveillance. At about dawn the panther retreats from his feeding grounds on the level and open plains where the villages are built, and is sure to be seen by some of the watchers, taking up his position in the hills for the day. As soon as he has settled himself comfortably in a dense cactus bush, or under a heap of rocks, two or three men immediately run into the tents of the shooting party to lead them to the spot.

On arriving near the scene of action, it is very pretty to see the men on the distant heights signalling to those guiding the party below. This they do with their long sticks; and such is the result of practice, that they contrive to make themselves perfectly understood even when at such a distance as to appear mere specks upon the sky line.

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No matter how devious our wanderings, there was always in the near or far distance a beacon figure pointing our onward course.

Suddenly, and in obedience to signals not understood, or perhaps even observable by us, the chief 'shikarie' stops and whispers, 'The panther is in this bush.' Silently but swiftly the two or three shooters make the best arrangements they can for commanding the lair on all sides. As the preparations merely consist of dividing the standing ground around the bush, all is generally ready in half a minute, and then we have the following tableau. Two or three Europeans grasping their guns, and with their eyes intently fixed on the panther's stronghold; whilst a little way farther off stands the chief shikarie with a stone in his hand, awaiting the nod of the leader, which is no sooner given than the stone is hurled into the cover.

This is an exciting moment, as there is no telling what will be the result of this in itself trifling action. Sometimes nothing breaks the profound silence. The brute is satisfied with the security of his retreat, and does not mean to leave it,—no, not even when stones are thrown in volleys. Ensconced under a dense mass of cactus, not one of these missiles can penetrate to where he is crouching. The more the animal sulks, the braver we all become; the distant natives close in, and at last there is a perfect din, and even shots are fired by ourselves into the lair. Just as a good many have come to the conclusion that the signallers have made a mistake, and that there is no panther there at all, out it rushes from its hiding-place at lightning speed, and with fierce roars charges right and left. Then they whose

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valour has been built on incredulity fly like chaff before the wind. We of course fire, but so swift are the animal's bounds that he is seldom hit in this first rush, and if he means murder he is certain to catch some one before he is despatched. Sometimes, however, he merely tears headlong for some new citadel stronger than the first, and then the same game is played over again. But unless he can make his escape into some extensive system of caves, which are not common in this country, he is always killed in the end.

Having, as I hope, rendered clear to the reader the nature of the country, and the method on which the sport is conducted, I shall now proceed to give an account of my first expedition into the Nuggur Hills, under the able leadership of my friend Major Sandford. About thirty-five miles from the cantonments was a large village called Murree, chiefly known in the neighbourhood by its imposing-looking temple, called the Tomb of Kanoba. In the wild hills a few miles from this place a large panther had been marked down, so four of us having got a promise of three days' leave, we proceeded to lay out a 'tonga-dāk.' A tonga is a two-wheeled little vehicle with a hood, and is drawn by a pair of ponies. A dāk simply means a relay. The tonga-dāk was one of the few things in the East that never disappointed me. It did not profess to be comfortable, but it seemed endowed with a sort of iron will to get over everything at a steady pace of six miles an hour. Each can carry three passengers and the driver. But we were four, so we had two of these carriages, and went in pairs. For the first seven miles, *i.e.* as far as the hill finely crowned with Soolabat Khan's tomb, the road was really good, but then there was a sudden change for the

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worse. The track now became a 'ghat' or mountain pass, guarded at the entrance by a turnpike, meant to delude the ignorant natives with the idea that there was a road beyond. However, I daresay it took all the tolls to keep up even this steep and rough zig-zag. The effect of watercourses cut artificially in the sheet rock at all the sharp turnings may be better imagined than described. In the midst of a rapid descent the vehicle would suddenly become stationary, with such a bump of agony, that at last one wondered whether the groans came from oneself, the tonga, or the straining ponies. Yet we always rallied, and sped on again under the burning sun, and invariably arrived at our journey's end without an accident, and with a headache.

When steering as on the present occasion to Murree, it was cheering, whilst descending the last mountain, to see the snow-white temple of Kanoba appearing like a palace on its distant hill, and to know that the remaining five or six miles would at all events be over a flat surface. As the short twilight of evening was setting in, we arrived hungry, thirsty, and tired under the magnificent grove of forest trees adjoining the village. Here we found the tents pitched, and a table spread in the open air for dinner. Lamps suspended from the boughs cast a pretty glimmering light among the dark shadows, for of course everything that could possibly be required to make the trip enjoyable, had been sent on with a staff of servants in ample time beforehand.

Dinner with all the *agrémens*, including the final cup of coffee, being over, our couches were brought out and placed according to the fancy of the intending sleepers, one under the deep shade of a tree, another quite in the open under the

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canopy of the starlit heavens, where there was nothing to impede the faint cool breeze usual at such an hour in such a clime. In a short time, all, including our numerous train of tired followers, were buried in deep repose. Seldom would a sound break the solemn silence of the night, for even the pariah dogs would, owing to their dread of the panthers, be chary of rushing about and barking at imaginary foes, as they are so fond of doing where there are nothing but stray donkeys and goats to scold. At about five o'clock in the morning daylight would rapidly appear, accompanied by a crescenda of sounds, increasing, however, so gently in volume as rather to lull than to startle such of the upper four as were in the habit of sleeping late into the morning. At first would be heard the sleepy voices of the butlers, reminding their assistants that it was time to get up and boil the water for 'early tea.' This would shortly be followed by a little bleating and other sounds, indicative of milking the goats we had brought with us; then the horses, picketed near at hand, might be heard neighing and stamping as they were receiving their first rub down. At last we would all find ourselves lounging in easy-chairs round a little table, bearing fruit and other light refreshments to amuse us till the nine o'clock breakfast was ready. At this time we would discuss with much fruitless ardour the chances of news being brought of the panther having been marked down; for unless his quarters for the day were known, we could not even attempt to look for him, and should have to return to camp with the finger of scorn pointed at us.

So large was the extent of country under surveillance, that there was always hope, even up to one or two o'clock,

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of a distant messenger rushing hot and breathless into our camp, calling out the much-desired news of 'Hai, Hai Bāgh hai,' which means, 'It is all right, we have ringed him.'

On the present occasion our patience was not kept long on the rack, for we had only just finished bathing and breakfasting, when a messenger arrived with the information that the largest panther they had any of them ever seen, had taken up his position for the day in a difficult but by no means inaccessible situation. The spot was several miles off, and it was thought that as the sun got round the animal would probably have to change his lair, and we were consequently implored to make all haste.

In less than ten minutes we had quitted the deep and grateful shelter of the mango trees, and plunged as it were into the burning sunshine. We were followed by a long line of attendants, some carrying guns, some skins of drinking water; whilst on the head of a really trusty henchman loomed the luncheon basket, containing, I must say, more to drink than to eat, for who could face solids in such a temperature? The mile or two of plain was soon crossed, and then we found ourselves pursuing a winding course amongst the barren hills towards our unconscious prey. Owing to the entire country of the Deccan being raised two thousand feet above the sea-level, I found this jungle a vast deal cooler than any other in which I had ever indulged in this kind of sport. Still it was terribly hot, and the glare was unbroken by any shade whatever. The country through which we were passing, though not grand or smiling, was extremely picturesque in its way. As the more energetic amongst us topped the first high eminence and looked backwards, our

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party could be descried following the winding track like a string of ants a mile long. Midway, and conspicuous in the landscape, towered the cherished 'tiffin' basket, which eventually came to regulate the pace. In vain did one push on with Spartan contempt of thirst and other hardships. Some one or other was sure to manage a halt until the edifice overtook us, and then there could be no harm in a bottle of cold soda-water a-piece, taken out of the wet straw. It was delicious, I must say, and, taken without any wine or spirits in it, did one a great deal of good. Still delays are proverbially dangerous; so I was much relieved, on getting within view of the much-wished-for spot, to see a friendly stick telegraphing that the panther was at home.

A short halt was now called, to enable the main body of followers to be collected far enough off to be out of danger. They soon all ran up, and were placed so that no sounds they might make could reach the dozing animal. Particular pains had been taken in this respect, as one of the beaters had with him his two well-tried pariah dogs Baja and Buchi. These, though I never heard them do it, might in a moment of forgetfulness bark, which would at once have aroused the panther.

As these were the only two dogs I ever saw used in big game shooting, I consider them most interesting animals, and worthy of the best description I can give of them. Both were lemon-and-white in colour, and in size, texture of coat, and many other points resembled the Scotch collie dogs. Baja was a good deal the larger of the two, but otherwise very like Buchi, to whom, however, he was in no way related. It would be useless to give their weights,

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for a meagre diet, and still more a constant exposure to the sun, had reduced them to such a pitiable state of skin and bone, that it was astonishing how they could not only trot about all day deeply interested in the sport, but would gallop any distance close at the heels of a retreating panther. Poor Baja, when nothing was going on, always wore a look of touching patience, whilst Buchi kept up a continuous low cry as she felt herself being roasted to death. Such had ever been their lives with their native masters, who refused every offer that we made to purchase them. Could I have foreseen their ultimate fate, I would have taken forcible possession of them, but now-a-days the stars are silent, and the 'mediums' never give us any practical hints as to what is coming. I did, however, know that no black man was fit to be trusted with a good animal, but failed to act upon this conviction.

Well, then, having dropped nearly all our people and the two dogs in a sufficiently distant and deep ravine, we advanced, each followed by a principal shikarie carrying a spare gun, thus making eight in all, as far as I remember. This last stage of our walk was not more than a quarter of a mile in length, and almost from the start our native guide could point out the knoll, capped with loose rocks and cactus bushes, which the panther had chosen for his retreat. As we pursued our up and down way, drawing nearer every moment to the living masked battery, of course our excitement naturally increased, till at last we stood at the foot of the little hillock, which had looked so very small and insignificant in the distance, especially when compared with the mountains that surrounded it. Now,

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however, it assumed quite an impressive aspect. Formed of rough boulders, and jutting out into a little plain, from the spur of the parent mountain, it seemed no easy place to attack. The position, indeed, reflected great credit on the strategical skill of the feline race. We made our approach by ascending the high ground on the mountain side, and then we gradually formed a wide circle round the apex of rocks and bushes that formed the panther's retreat. The next thing was for each to advance on his own line towards the centre, where some natives posted higher up signalled that they could see the beast crouching. To us, however, he was invisible, so we continued silently to move inwards. The circle became every moment smaller, and the enemy nearer. When at about fifteen or twenty yards distant, my sharp-eyed gun-bearer, who was immediately behind me, whispered, 'I can see him; he is on the alert, and peering at us over that large stone.' Unfortunately I could distinguish nothing whatever of the animal, so it was impossible to fire. All that could be done was to continue advancing, so as to compel him to show himself either as an attacking or a flying foe.

I had not advanced more than three yards farther, when I heard a sudden rush, accompanied by a shout from the watchers on the heights, announcing the flight of our intended victim. Notwithstanding our close proximity, none of us could see more than a piece of yellow skin flashing rapidly at unexpected places between the rocks. We all fired, but no one had any luck, and the animal succeeded in crossing the valley to the opposite mountain side in safety. A glimpse of him, as he flew across the

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open, showed him to be a magnificent specimen of his kind. We all hurried after him as fast as the difficult nature of the ground we had got upon would admit of, and in some five or ten minutes the signallers intimated that we had arrived at the new destination. But where could the animal be? There was less even than the usual amount of cover hereabouts, and stones had soon penetrated every bush that could possibly have accommodated so large a beast. The signallers, who are never far wrong, intimated caves; but although there were some solid masses of projecting black rock to be seen, I could observe no openings large enough for the passage of anything much bigger than a rat.

At this juncture Baja and Buchi were liberated, and invited to show their cunning. Of course, under such conditions of heat and drought, there could be no scent in the ordinary sense of the word, and the two dogs, though well aware from verbal instructions that one of their deadly enemies was close at hand, could only trot round and round in a state of helpless excitement. All at once, however, Buchi stopped as if she had been shot, and made a dead point at a small crack in the rock on which we were standing. The panther was under our feet. This led to a minute examination of the ground, and the discovery of a well-concealed opening at the foot of the cliff,—narrow, it is true, but quite large enough to admit the animal we were seeking, and of whose hiding-place we were now certain. The new plan of attack was now discussed with great animation. Digging was quite out of the question, owing to the solid nature of the rock. It was therefore decided to

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place the two best shots on a high crag close at hand, that afforded a good aim in every direction, whilst the two others, attended each by an armed gun-bearer, should make every conceivable noise over the head of the panther, especially just where the crack was, in hopes that by such means he might be induced to break. But though we worked very hard in the manner indicated, we failed for a long time in making any impression whatever on the hidden beast, who refused to answer our vociferations with even the faintest growl. At last it was thought that smoke applied to the principal, and indeed only entrance, might cause the animal to spring out. A native was therefore ordered to collect a large bundle of the sun-dried underwood, which would blaze like tinder. This, assisted by the others, he very soon did. I placed myself in front of him, and proceeded to pick my way amidst breathless silence over the rough and awkward stones to the mouth of the cave. But who can say that he will not be upset by the unforeseen? As I was getting quite close to my destination, closely followed by the faggot-bearer, a loud and unexpected shout arose from all the natives far and near. I looked up to the heights above, lost my footing, and fell flat on my back, just as the panther, who was doubtless aware of my near approach, dashed from the den at full speed. I pointed my gun at him from between my feet, in case he should come at me, but neither I nor Colonel Ullathorn fired at that moment, as a well-directed shot from Sandford, posted on the crag above, brought the animal up with a jerk, causing it to whisk round and tear back towards the cave it had just quitted. Of course this charge was received

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with a general volley, and the animal was brought to a stand just in front of the hole he was making for, and consequently quite close to where I was. I sent a bullet through him, and he dropped in a heap to the ground. And so did poor Baja also, greatly to my surprise.

The faithful and sagacious dog had remained in close attendance on the panther, ready to mark him down wherever he might lie up, but too wise to attempt to come to close quarters, which could only have resulted in certain and instantaneous death. As, therefore, the panther pulled up, so did Baja at a distance of ten or twelve yards, with his eye carefully fixed upon the foe.

It seemed strange, then, to see the dog fall without any apparent cause, as if killed. Of course I rushed with several others to pick him up. He had a large open bullet wound in the centre of his chest, and no one doubted for a moment that his life was ebbing fast. A further examination, however, revealed a bullet under the skin, outside the right shoulder, flattened out to the size of a five-shilling piece. It was the bullet with which I had finished the panther; it had gone through that animal, flattened itself on the solid rock beyond, then turned off at right angles, and struck the poor dog full in the chest. Owing, however, to the flattened state of the missile, and its great loss of velocity, instead of penetrating to the vital parts, it had traversed under the skin, where I could feel it quite plainly. I immediately took out my penknife, made a slit in the hide, and with a little squeeze caused the bullet to come out much as it had gone in. Still poor Baja was much shaken, and we were all so greatly concerned for him, that

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we quite forgot all about the magnificent panther lying dead close by.

One of the long 'cumblis,' or blankets, carried about by the natives in all weathers, and a couple of long sticks having been procured, the invalid quickly found himself in a comfortable litter. He seemed quite to understand all that was going on. He scarcely uttered a sound, even of complaint, and never dreamt of snapping at any one. We had water, though nothing for him to lap out of; but this did not matter, for, on Major Sandford offering him water in the tiny goblet belonging to a small brandy flask, it required scarcely any manipulation to get him to drink out of it as we do. Poor fellow, he looked very grateful for the cooling beverage! No doubt he must have been suffering from a raging thirst. He was now despatched home, and we turned then to inspect our prize.

It proved to be a beautifully-marked male panther, and measured eight feet three and a half inches in length. It was speedily adjusted on poles, and carried briskly back with us to our camp. It was whilst walking beside this trophy that I was struck with the great difference there must be between the structure of the tiger and the panther. Two men, one in front and the other behind, were amply sufficient to carry this large specimen of its kind, whereas a tigress, measuring perhaps less in length, would have required at least six men to move it with the same facility.

The walk back to Murree seemed shorter than when going the other way, owing probably to my having no particular anxiety to get there. On arrival, whilst the skinning of the animal and the preparations for our return to cantonments

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were being proceeded with, I thought I would stroll through the village and up the hill to look at the temple of Kanoba, which made such a grand feature in the landscape for miles around. It proved, as I expected, to be only another instance of the general rule that the buildings in most parts of India are all built for outside and distant effect. The walls were roughly constructed of whatever materials might come first, and their whiteness was not of marble, but of whitewash. Still, by consulting the shape of the hill itself, and enclosing or connecting distant points, it appeared, when viewed from afar, an imposing edifice. The natives of India have a naturally good eye for the picturesque, though, by a strange contradiction, they never seemed to me to value it much. In the ancient time, voluntary contributors to a beautiful public building were simply, I should think, non-existent. Great men in those days built their own memorials, and they were indeed monuments of their power, for they forced the people to erect them. 'Who,' said an intelligent Hindoo, as we gazed together on one of the proudest of these structures, 'who would have built this monument to his memory if not himself? He died before it was finished, so of course it never could be completed.' And, notwithstanding the advance of education, my dusky friend seemed to think the old view of the fitness of things was the right one.

When, therefore, there was not much power for enforcing labour, the most had to be made of natural advantages, and certainly this had been done in the case of Kanoba's tomb, the whitewashed walls of which contrasted finely, when seen in the distance, with the dark masses of mango groves which surrounded the foot of the hill.

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On returning to our bivouac, the tongas were ready, the baggage-carts loaded, and all prepared for the start home. The last thing I did was to hand over a good allowance to the owner of Baja, so that the wounded hero might have a good drink of milk every day for as long as he might require it. On this we set off at a gallop for our thirty-five mile drive, and arrived at our destination in time for dinner, without having encountered anything worse than the usual shaking, but with the full amount of that.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE panther whose destruction I have just recorded, was certainly the longest, if not the heaviest, that I ever saw, whilst the next which we killed near the same spot, a few days afterwards, was one of the two smallest adult specimens I had ever seen or heard of.

Having again gone out to Murree, and thence walked forth into the hills, in exactly the same manner as has already been described, we found the panther marked down in such an unusually rough and thickly-planted ravine, that the exact bush in which she was reclining could not be intimated by the signallers. We therefore stood about in such positions as seemed most advisable, whilst some thirty or forty beaters, commencing from the precipitous heights above, came towards us, hurling showers of stones, and making such a terrific row as to ensure the animal moving on before them. And sure enough, before long the panther was dislodged, as we knew by the increased acrimony of the shrieking, swelling as it did into a perfect chorus of 'Bāgh! Bāgh!'

Each grasped his rifle, not knowing exactly from which point the animal might suddenly bound upon him. No one, however, was destined to be clawed yet, for the beast was only viewed as it rushed past our posts at full speed. There

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was a great deal of firing, but though some of the party were remarkably good shots, fortune declared for the other side, and the panther, though wounded, and, I think, with a broken leg, vanished with the speed of a racehorse. Since all had failed to bag the animal, no one could reproach his neighbour, that was some comfort, and we all set off in pursuit without wasting any time in words. I forget if the dogs were with us on that day, if so, they found no opportunity of distinguishing themselves; but I may mention that it was about this time that I again saw Baja, not only quite recovered from his wound, but, thanks to his potations of milk, looking many times a finer and handsomer dog than he had ever appeared before.

We had not proceeded more than a few hundred yards in the required direction, when it was signalled that we were close to the enemy, whom we speedily tracked by the blood into a deep tunnel excavated by porcupines. These creatures like plenty of room underground; and such is the facility with which they dig, that even tigers and bears can sometimes make use of their homes. For safety, they rely more on the extent of their ramifications than on the narrowness of their passages. All other wild animals that I know of contrive passes in their abodes through which, having squeezed themselves, they can turn round and almost block the aperture with their extended jaws. But the porcupine does not require to turn round. His quills point backwards, and when extended in self-defence will completely fill up a very large space. Luckily the present domicile was constructed on a hillside, where there were no rocks of sufficient magnitude to impede the use of the pickaxes which, as usual, we

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had with us. Mining operations were therefore at once resolved upon.

The first thing to be done was to block the principal entrances with sufficient earth to prevent a sudden rush by the panther upon the diggers, and yet to leave openings large enough to look through, and to introduce long bamboo rods to ascertain the direction of the galleries. These preparations having been rapidly accomplished, our followers proceeded to sink shafts from above, so as to break up the enemy's position. This was no light task, as there was a depth of six or eight feet of soil to be got through, baked throughout almost to the hardness of rock. Though we began the work at about one o'clock p.m., and had relays of labourers, it must have been four or five in the afternoon before the well-directed pick went suddenly through the roof, and let an unexpected ray of daylight into the tenement below. On this the animal made a rush at the entrance in front of which I was standing, and endeavoured to get out. I fired almost into its face, and thought I must have killed it, but, on the smoke clearing away, it had disappeared into some recess, and it was impossible to know whether it had even been disabled. There was nothing for it but to proceed with the digging, and, while that tedious process was going on, we fired several shots as the panther was seen from time to time passing the openings. We now opened the principal hole, in hopes that it would come out before darkness should set in, and that we could shoot it as it charged. But it refused to quit its underground shelter, and we had to continue excavating by the light of the withered cactus branches, which, when ignited, formed

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excellent torches. At nine o'clock we were still working, and might have gone on much longer, but just then I saw the panther's tail within reach. Grasping it firmly, I pulled with all my strength, and brought the beast sufficiently forward for Sandford to shoot it in the body. But even this did not kill the beast. On the contrary, it made such a violent plunge that it burst from my grasp, and again retreated out of reach. Luckily, ere long Sandford was able to execute the manœuvre I had first thought of, and I finished it with a final shot.

It proved to be a full-grown female, though of very small size. That it was an adult animal could be seen from its teeth, which were a remarkably fine and mature set. Much has been written about the different breeds of panthers, but I think that throughout India there is only one kind. Every very large one that I have ever heard of has been a male, and every very small one a female. Quite the smallest of both sexes have probably had a hard youth, and thus failed to attain the stature originally intended for them by nature.

For the benefit of my untravelled readers, I must point out that the animal they may have seen in pictures, trained to the sport of hunting antelopes, and which in many respects looks like a variety of the panther tribe, is in reality quite another sort of beast. Though it is coloured and is in general appearance similar to a panther, it has long, thin legs, and small feet like a dog. Its claws, also, though seemingly of the same material as the panther's, are small, and not retractile. Such differences of structure are apparent even to the most superficial observer, and must effectually

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prevent the hunting cheetah from being confounded with the panther. Indeed, I have always understood that learned naturalists consider this creature to be a link between the canine and feline races.

As we had shot this animal so late at night, we of course did not return to cantonments till the next day, and I rather think it was on this occasion that we had a fracas with the natives of the village, which it may interest some of my readers to hear about. There can be no doubt that a strong natural antipathy exists between the black and the white races throughout the world, which is never so thoroughly overcome as to cause any two of the opposite colours to feel themselves entirely on the same platform.

The reason is that they are not on the same platform, and never will be. I have myself greatly liked and sympathized with many of the natives of India, yet always 'with a difference,' even under the most favourable circumstances. Now the hill districts in which we used to go panther-shooting were in what are called, with a sort of serious sarcasm, the 'independent' dominions of His Highness the Nizam, and consequently there was a large party of the natives who regarded us with a deep hatred, compared with which their feelings towards the panthers might be described as friendly. On our side were ranged the shikaries of the district, who were in our pay, and who, when assembled for the occasion under the leadership of Major Sandford's head man, would generally outnumber the inhabitants of the particular village where we might have our camp. Thus, owing to our having a preponderating force at the required point, we were not only safe against attack, but could also

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procure such necessaries as we might have forgotten or been unable to bring with us. Such things, however, were always yielded with the utmost grudging and difficulty, although we always paid for them ourselves at more or less exorbitant rates, and never failed to take the receipt of the village chie to the effect that every claim had been fully discharged.

On preparing to return home from the present trip, it turned out that the baggage-carts we had brought with us had been allowed to leave at their own request, as it was well known that there were plenty of quite unemployed ones at this time of the year in all the villages with which to replace them. On applying, however, in the proper quarter, we were gravely assured that the inhabitants were much too poor to possess carts, bullocks, or any other property, and that if we could not move our own luggage, it must remain where it was, on the ground. Of course this story could not be maintained for a moment, and ere long the native magistrate was obliged to confess that there was a party formed for the purpose of refusing us everything on principle.

'The ringleaders,' he said, 'are two brothers, who are now arguing the point with your people in a neighbouring field.'

On this we all repaired to the spot indicated, where we found a hot altercation going on. The malcontents were not yet assembled in force, but the ringleaders seemed full of insolent confidence. They were two brothers, remarkably fine young men, and endowed with an athletic physique such as I have seldom seen equalled among native Indians. Notwithstanding that one of them had, as I afterwards saw, some malformation about one of his knees, yet either, I felt, was

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more than a match for myself in personal strength. Besides, English public opinion insists upon gentleness and persuasion!

Actuated by such considerations, I advanced, and, assuming an air of extraordinary benevolence, began to parley. Alas! the more reasonable my arguments, the more uncompromising was the opposition they received, till at last the brothers informed us roundly that on no conditions whatever would they allow any carts or bullocks to be produced for our service. This ultimatum was accompanied by such gestures, that, oblivious alike of the Nizam and the British public, I struck out right and left as hard as I could, at once furnishing each brother with a black eye. This strong measure immediately produced a dead silence, in the midst of which the brothers set off without a word for the neighbouring village, which was a large one, to raise the inhabitants against us. Failing in this, however, they speedily returned, and were foremost in assisting to load those carts which in their absence the other people had been very glad to let us have on hire. I was so amused at seeing the poor fellows' crestfallen appearance as they performed their voluntary duties, that I gave a rupee (two shillings) to each, to console him for his sore head. After this we returned to Ahmednuggur without any further difficulty.

The reader must not, however, suppose that all our intercourse with the non-sporting section of the inhabitants was confined to the administration of black eyes. Indeed, the very contrary was the case, for whereas we only beat two aggressive mutineers in self-defence, we gave many a plenteous meal to the poor starving wretches who squatted in gangs round our little camp in hopes of charity. It was really an

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awful sight to look upon the almost naked frames of so many of both sexes and all ages reduced by famine to the state of skeletons. The sights we saw at this time equalled, if they did not surpass, the scenes depicted in the illustrated journals of the time.

We were obliged to keep these unfortunate people at arm's-length till just before leaving, otherwise they would have plundered us like a pack of starving wolves. But when all was packed up we would call them up, and distribute money and food.

On one occasion a little juggler boy appeared alone before the company under the trees, and it was very touching to see him, reduced as he was to a pitiable state of weakness, going through all his tricks with painfully assumed vivacity. Owing to his want of strength, the eye could just follow his neat little feats of legerdemain, with which, had he been in proper health, he would doubtless have baffled us all. We gave this little artist, who was only seven or eight years of age, enough to live on for a month, and then turned to deal with the posse of twenty or thirty emaciated beings huddled together in a despairing group a few yards off. To each of these money was given, which they received in sad silence; but when my butler appeared with a board bearing a huge mass of dough ready prepared for making into cakes, a frantic energy suddenly ran through the bones of those amongst whom it was to have been divided. Each summoned the last remains of his dying strength, and rushed upon the bewildered domestic like a hungry flock of over-tamed poultry. The bearer was soon relieved of every scrap of the frugal composition, and I even now seem to see the wasted forms

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of the sufferers as they retired with long strings of it hanging from their fingers. They ate it raw!

I have now described the most painful scenes that I myself witnessed during this memorable famine, but there were much deeper depths of misery which it was not in my province to explore.

Think, for instance, of the high caste Brahmin ladies found dead behind their screens, because religion and pride of race alike forbade their attending in person the public places appointed for the distribution of food.

In the East the highest caste is not incompatible with the direst poverty, and unfortunately it was found impossible to do much in the way of relieving people who could not even be seen at their own houses, as doing so would have led to a wholesale system of deception. What is known in England as 'common honesty' is at a sad discount among Asiatics.

We had now got to June 3, 1877, and by this date the lifegiving monsoon might, if it meant to be early, burst over the parched and famine-stricken land. For the last ten days heavy black clouds, driven by the strong south-west wind, had drifted in great low-flying packs over the expectant country. But the appearance of these harbingers brought with them only a doubtful hope, for during the previous year, when the rain should have fallen according to its wont, the cloud-show was as abundant as ever. At every instant it seemed as if the usual torrents would descend to fertilize the soil, but disappointment, that gradually became despair, always took the place of hope, for no rain came. Hence the cause of the terrible famine which it was my fate

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to witness, and some of the effects of which I have endeavoured to describe. This year, however, Providence was merciful, and, after a few preliminary storms, the monsoon began in earnest on the 8th of June. Such was the magic effect of the deluge acting on the heated ground, that in less than a fortnight, what with the lowering of prices, abundance of work, and the rapid growth of vegetables, all trace of grim famine had disappeared, and has so far not revisited that part of the country. Let us hope that as time rolls on schemes of irrigation and increased facilities of transport may render such terrible scourges practically impossible.

Of course this change in the seasons, hailed though it was with joy, put an end to all excursions into the country for the next four months. Indeed, the barren hills, where we had lately had so much enjoyment, would now become covered with long grass and other annual vegetation, which would remain in large quantities, at any rate till the ensuing month of March, and render it impossible to bring any wild animal to bay.

We therefore retired into monsoon quarters, and were once more in the enjoyment of that pleasant sort of life which I have already depicted in a former volume. It was at this time that the station was visited by a well-known and talented company of Parsee actors, who played in a very large temporary booth, with a stage at one end, similar in all respects to those constructed in English theatres. The structure, including two sides and the roof, was composed chiefly of canvas, which, had one thought about the matter at all, would have suggested the idea that the whole

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audience could, at need, have rushed bodily through such a weak-looking barrier in a minute or two at the most. Subsequent events, however, proved otherwise.

As the language used by the performers was Hindustani, we were all able to follow the plot, and we went frequently after mess to witness the representations.

One night, having attended as usual, I retired early, leaving the rest of my friends to see the piece out. Having got home, I had just sunk into my first sleep, when my servant rushed to my bedside, and informed me that the theatre was entirely destroyed by fire, and that a large number of people, including many belonging to my regiment, were lying dead among the ashes.

In less than ten minutes I was dressed and on the spot, where a truly ghastly sight met my eyes. The fire had already burned itself out, though all the upright poles were still on fire, each giving out little dying flames here and there. The rows of wooden benches, flooring, etc., had all been reduced to black ashes. Out of the debris about twenty corpses had already been drawn, and lay in two ghastly rows before me, whilst the search for more was still going on only too successfully. At the same time, of course, great numbers of sufferers, many of them with their ears burnt off, or otherwise mutilated for life, were being conveyed to the different hospitals. I was, of course, much relieved to find that all the Europeans present had occupied seats near the door, and had been able to escape, though Major Trevanion was all but sacrificed in his gallant and successful efforts to save some Parsee ladies.

It would seem that during the performance a sudden light

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was seen to appear on the high canvas roof at the end opposite to the stage. The wind was from that quarter, and so high that in a moment the whole ceiling was a sheet of flame. The sudden confusion must have been something frightful to witness. In vain did the affrighted throng endeavour to creep from under the curtain-like sides of the booth. To prevent unpaying trespassers from obtaining ingress, these had been effectually roped, and pegged down on the outside, where, for the same reason, a stout paling breast-high had also been erected. This last obstacle prevented the people outside from getting hold readily of the canvas hangings, which, from being made out of the tops of worn-out tents, were composed of five or six layers of stout cloth. Such a substance was not easy to grasp, and before anything could be done it was a mass of flames, giving out a heat that rendered all approach impossible.

Thus it was that sixty or seventy persons were destroyed on the spot, and more injured than could ever be known of. The gloom cast over my surroundings by this melancholy incident could not soon be dispelled, for of course I paid daily visits to the regimental hospital, where many old and faithful soldiers, who had been known to me for more than twenty years, lay in a state of great suffering, some to recover, others doomed to die. In the regimental lines or barracks were also many bereaved widows and orphans to be cared for. Many of our native soldiers, some belonging to the higher ranks too, had lost their lives in the conflagration. But the greatest disasters cannot be dwelt upon for ever, and sooner or later we must turn to other themes.

'What,' said Major Sandford to me one day, 'would you

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think of going tiger-shooting next hot weather in the Berars?' 'Why,' I replied, 'I think it would be very nice.' And so it was settled that we would at once register our applications for two months' leave, and set about all the lengthy arrangements which have to be made beforehand for big game shooting. As the necessary introductions to the country were to be obtained by Sandford, he kindly undertook the chief management, and became the leader of the party, a less onerous post than usual, for we were to be by ourselves, and were much too old and tried friends to be likely to disagree about anything. The tract of country known as the 'Berars' is situated in the Deccan, and forms part of the Nizam's Territory, the capital city of which is called Hyderabad.

The jungle we were going to hunt in was too far from Ahmednuggur to be convenient, but the promises of sport were such that no distance could have deterred us, provided it could be got over in the required time. To accomplish this, it would be necessary to give our servants and heavy baggage one month's start, and to take care that we should not, by forgetfulness, be behind-hand in any particular.

The elephants were the first things to be thought of, and I undertook to procure and take general superintendence of these animals. I at once wrote off to the proper authorities, and secured the services of two fine old tuskers mentioned in a former volume, namely, Futteh Alli and Bundoola. These animals were still at Poona, where it will be remembered that Futteh Alli, in a fit of rage, had tossed me in the air, and nearly killed his keeper at the same time. Ever since that ungenerous attack on two pigmy foes, who were in

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reality his friends, I had longed to bestride his neck, and drive him to battle against a wounded tiger. Now this dream seemed to be on the verge of fulfilment.

Towards the end of February these two magnificent animals arrived at my quarters, with everything complete except a howdah. This I had caused to be built for the occasion. It was to be borne by Bundoola, and was for the accommodation of Sandford, whilst I would sit on the neck of Futteh Alli, and do my best to cope with whatever difficulties might arise. Futteh Alli, who was ten feet three inches high at the shoulder, was well known as a dangerous character. His mahout, Mahomed Yacoob, was furnished with a document, showing how a certain Colonel H. and a Captain B. had on a former occasion been hunted through the jungle by him, and their lives only saved by the skilful driving and cool courage of the said Mahomed Yacoob, who was fortunately firmly seated on the animal's neck at the time that he made his murderous onslaught.

Besides these well-attested evidences that Futteh Alli was of a tragic temper, it was well known that he had, in the course of his long captivity, killed two or three natives. To ride such an animal was therefore in itself an adventure, and I lost no time in getting on to his neck and urging him across the plain to the clump of trees, about a mile off, near the fort, where he was to be picketed. The mahout walked by my side, and I was in sole charge. Never before had this huge beast been under the control of a white man. Every time I spoke to the mahout I could feel his flesh quiver beneath me, and the tip of his trunk was curled tightly up as near to my foot as he could get it. 'Sahib,' said the mahout, 'you

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must not speak; the elephant is already deeply moved, and the sound of your voice will certainly cause his fury to burst forth, and be the death of you.' On this I continued to talk a good deal louder, but with great calmness, for if I was to be afraid of him now, what was likely to be my fate when further complicated by the presence of a wounded and infuriated tiger? It was clearly my only policy to get on to the best terms I could with him, during the three days' rest he would have at this station before starting on his long march to Wurdah, where we should join him by rail. Of course, during this first walk I kept the sharp point of the 'ankus' or goad firmly pressed on the softest part of his crown, ready to drive it in up to the hilt on the smallest sign of mutiny. Such an intelligent and sensitive creature as the elephant is, was sure to be impressed with consistent behaviour; so, notwithstanding many unmistakeable signs of aversion, he behaved well throughout this trial trip, knelt down at the end of it, and suffered me to dismount unmolested. The next thing was to make him open his mouth, and allow me to place a lump of brown sugar behind his tongue. This, with the mahout standing close to me, I accomplished without accident, and I now considered myself on the most intimate footing that I should ever attain to with Futteh Alli.

Bundoola was a very different beast to the one I have just described. He was not so tall as his great rival, but he was built on very solid and magnificent lines. He had a fine temper, too, and a high courage. Futteh Alli, as already stated, was afraid of him, and yielded him obedience. The former was fat, and, for an elephant, jovial-looking; whilst the

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latter had such a gaunt and sombre aspect, that I suspected he did not receive all the food allowed him. 'Well,' said the mahout, when I pressed him on this point, 'if I were to feed him up and fatten him, his pride would become so great that he would obey no one. Why, sir, as it is, I feel certain that some day or other he will do for me.' There was so much truth in this, that I ceased to argue on the matter.

As there was a good photographer here, we had the portraits of both these elephants taken, with ourselves on them in the positions we should occupy when in pursuit of the wounded tigers. This and every other detail having been successfully carried out, our little troop of devoted adherents went forth on their long tramp about the 1st of March.

During the ensuing month there was ample time to make all the necessary arrangements for our own unencumbered and rapid transit, which commenced on the 3rd of April 1878. By means of a tonga-dāk we traversed the eighty miles that separated us from the railway station at Munmar in the course of one day, and arrived at that place in time to take the express train for Wurdah, which started at two o'clock at night. By four in the afternoon of the next day we alighted from our comfortable first-class carriage on to the platform of the Wurdah station. We were very glad to find that the elephants and kit had all arrived safely a day or two previously, and that they were all comfortably located in the compound of the travellers' bungalow close at hand.

One of the elephants, however, had narrowly escaped losing its life. It seemed that close to one of their

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camping-grounds was a pool of water, with so hard a bottom, that carts were daily driven through it in large numbers, and from time immemorial the basin which contained this water had been supposed to consist of a formation only inferior to rock in point of solidity. It had never been tested before by an elephant, however, for no sooner had the unfortunate Futteh Alli got into the centre of the shallow water with a view to being washed, than the veneering of hard crust gave way under his enormous weight, and he sank up to his chin into the dismal swamp which lay like a hidden enemy beneath. The mahout assured me that he would certainly have been engulfed under their very eyes but for the successful exertions of Bundoola, who, by means of such ropes and chains as could be procured in the village, pulled him out bodily from the 'Slough of Despond,' none the worse for the agony of fright that he had gone through.

But we were still just sixty miles from Mardi, the first place at which we might hope to kill a tiger, so no time was to be lost in getting on. When within twelve miles of that place, we found ourselves at Warora, well known for the large coal mine which is no doubt still being worked there. As we really knew nothing of the country we had got into, we decided to make a halt of two days in this large place, in order to make inquiries, and get all the information we could. We put up in the travellers' bungalow, and received much civility and all sorts of useful directions from the only European inhabitant, an English gentleman, who was the engineer in charge of the coal mine. This mine seemed to be worked on the same principle as the

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English ones. I did not descend the shaft, having already been down a very much deeper one in my own country, where the state of one's health and the temperature of the climate are so much more favourable to such excursions. The powerful pumps that were used to keep the mine from being flooded, caused a never-failing stream of considerable volume to flow through the country, baked at this time of the year to the dryness of a desert. In one of the marshy pools formed by this brook, notwithstanding the lateness of the year, I shot a true snipe, which I was as little on the look-out for as for a tiger.

On the second morning of our stay, we strolled before sunrise to the banks of the large tank or lake that lay just outside the walls of the city, principally for the sake of enjoying the air during the one or two hours of its nearest approach to coolness at this season of the year. On getting within view of the water, we witnessed an unexpected scene of excitement. A thick cordon of people was drawn across the water at one end, where the banks were crescent-shaped, and enclosed a sort of miniature gulf with a narrow entrance. All the people were beating the water with long sticks, and shouting loudly, whilst every now and then some one would plunge forward and seize something. This turned out to be the annual 'take' of murrel, a fish which is, when in good condition, as good eating as any that swims, whether in fresh or salt water.

The whole sheet of water being now at its lowest, and not exceeding two or three feet in depth anywhere, the natives had all assembled in force, and driven a great quantity of these fine large fishes into the confined corner

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that I have spoken of. Here they gradually closed in upon them, till the poor creatures could be seen making frantic efforts to bury themselves in the soft mud of which the bottom was composed. It was whilst doing this that they were pounced upon by their ruthless pursuers, by whom we saw about fifty captured in this way. We decided upon only purchasing a single specimen, for we felt quite sure, from the nature of the tank these creatures had been grovelling in for some months past, that they would be strongly impregnated with the muddy flavour which so often completely spoils this fish. The murrel we chose weighed, I should think, about four or five pounds, and looked in fine condition. As we were so near home it was only just dead when we got there, and in a few minutes more it was chopped in two, and half of it was in course of being boiled for breakfast.

For once our gloomy anticipations were met by an agreeable surprise, for I never tasted a more delicious fish than this one turned out to be. It was as white, crisp, and sweet as possible. Not a soupçon of the muddy taste we had expected to encounter spoilt our enjoyment of this salutary change of diet, after the tough meat and fowls we had been subsisting on during the march. As the cook had contrived to keep the remaining half of the murrel in a cool place, of course we expected it would be all right for our dinner at four o'clock in the afternoon. But in this we were mistaken, for the fish in that short time, though apparently quite fresh, had acquired the taste of mud in its fullest force. This led me to the belief that many a good murrel has been lost to the table through not having it cooked sufficiently soon after

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death. This is a point well worth the consideration of those who frequent the jungles in the hot weather, when an occasional supply of good fish comes like manna in the wilderness. Often, after a tiger has been shot, the stream from which he drank is watched at suitable elevated points, in hopes of seeing a murrel rise, and bask within an inch of the surface, which is a common habit with these fish. Then the hungry hunter, having loaded his gun with a bullet, takes, as he hopes, a deadly aim at his victim's head. He pulls the trigger, there is a great splash and a cloud of smoke, but nothing to be seen of the fish unless the water is very clear and shallow, for if killed in this way he sinks instantaneously, and like a stone, to the bottom. If, therefore, the pool be at all deep, it is necessary that some one should dive and explore the bottom immediately under the spot where the fish was lying when fired at. I hope details such as the above may not prove very tedious to some of my readers; but if so, I would ask them to exercise their patience in consideration of the benefit that many of their friends may derive from the perusal of them when wandering under similar circumstances in sunburnt jungles, the scattered inhabitants of which can only supply one with grain and coarse flour. Owing to the intense heat, I for one used to lose all appetite when wandering in a really hot jungle, and I am convinced I could have died of starvation without feeling hunger. Death under such circumstances would, I believe, only have been preceded by faintness. For the majority, therefore, of the comparatively few who go out on these trying excursions, diet is a most necessary consideration.

Firstly, what can one get?

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Secondly, what can one eat?

Tinned provisions, especially soups and vegetables, are a necessity, but one cannot live entirely on these, nor even on Bologna sausages! One soon begins to long for something fresh, and even to feel that one must have it.

On arriving at any place where eggs could be procured, I used to buy them all, and have them hard boiled, in which condition they would keep for three or four days. If, at the same time, we were in possession of any oranges, I felt myself for the time being equal to any one with a hundred thousand a year!

At the first halt in the beating after one o'clock, to sit under a beetling rock, secure from the sun, with a pool of clear water at my feet, a hard-boiled egg, a thin biscuit, and an orange by my side, was the embodiment of earthly luxury. All would enjoy the half-hour allowed for this necessary refreshment. The natives and the elephants would be splashing about in the adjacent brook, whilst the horses, which we always had with us, would be discussing the contents of their nose-bags. Sometimes there would be but one patch of shade for the whole party, and then it was amusing to see the sly way in which the elephants would insinuate their trunks amongst us, in hopes of picking up anything that might be in their line, not disdaining crumbs such as a sparrow might have attacked.

Owing to the presence of a large and flourishing coal-mine, Warora, whatever it may have been before the discovery of minerals, had now become a considerable place. What with the numerous animals to be grazed, and the great demand for firewood, there was no sign of any jungle as far

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as the eye could reach. But a short march of twelve miles brought us to a small hamlet called Mardi, where the scene was entirely changed. Here all was so wild that it was hard to realize there were such things as cities and railways in existence. Not that there were any mountains, or magnificent tracts of large forest trees in the immediate vicinity, but the scrub jungle, covering more or less steep undulations, seemed endless, and was traversed in all directions by dry nullahs, which would be full of water during the rainy season. The shrubs were of course nearly all leafless, but, covered as they were with thorns, and plentifully mixed with long, tall dead grass, they formed a splendid cover for wild animals. The korinda bush was an exception to the general rule, for, rejoicing in drought and heat, it was in full bloom. It has a dark, thick little leaf, and the foliage is luxuriant from the ground to the summit. It usually grows in detached bushes of from three to fifteen feet in height, and bears a very nice sweet fruit, in appearance resembling our sloes. Its growth is such as to form a beautiful and shady bower within its circumference, a really delightful lair for the creatures of the forest at this time of the year. It was asserted that two tigers were the ruling spirits in this fine domain, and of course we immediately began to look fo them.

During the first day's hunt we had great hopes of success, as the fresh 'pugs' or footmarks of a tigress were seen in many of the dried watercourses, but the beaters failed to turn her out. This want of success was ascribed to the absence of Shaik Boodun, the principal shikarie, who was still absent on his tour of inspection in the distant jungles,

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and would not join us for three or four days to come. Whilst waiting for him, therefore, we continued to look for the royal pair, and to discuss the probabilities of their having taken themselves entirely out of the neighbourhood. I myself believed them to be still present, but the general opinion was the other way.

One morning our somewhat flagging energies were stimulated to fresh exertions, by one of our scouts bringing in the head of a large boar which had been freshly killed and eaten by one of the animals we hoped to encounter. But a beat, even when arranged in accordance with this clue, led to no satisfactory results, and but that we were waiting for Shaik Boodun, we should certainly have packed up our traps and changed our ground. In the absence of our head man, we had no one on whom we could rely as to the freshness of the tiger's footprints and other points of jungle lore.

Still we did the best we could with such materials as we had, and followed up the advice of the great man's brother, notwithstanding our want of confidence in him. Beating having failed, the poor man, who did his best, advised another course, in pursuance of which he took us alone and on foot up to the favourite lurking-places of the tigers, which they had been known lately to frequent. These were always under the shade of some large, solitary korinda bush, which would stand like a tower among the surrounding shrubs and grass, dried to whiteness by the scorching rays of the sun. Having circled as silently as possible to within twenty or thirty yards of one of these leafy dens, our guide would indicate the side which was open, and from which a view of the tiger, if he were at home, could be obtained. We visited

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many such citadels without finding the beast we were looking for, but out of almost each one would trot an immense solitary boar, often when we had succeeded in stealing close upon him. I never saw such large animals of their kind in any other jungle, and they were all in splendid condition. As we were only a party of four, including our two native guides, and our movements were very silent, these fine animals would generally make a slow and dignified retreat, turning round from time to time to look at us. At such moments they presented a good broadside for a shot, but we neither of us felt any temptation to fire, as the mighty boar should only be slain by the bold horseman with his spear, and, besides, the sound of a gun would have effectually driven off any tigers that might have been anywhere within a mile of us.

Having fruitlessly visited all the shady retreats known to be favoured by the tigers, our guide informed us that he knew of some caves about a mile off that were often occupied by large wild beasts, and he suggested that perhaps the tigers had taken up their abode in them. We started at once with hope renewed. The way led us through a thorn jungle, constantly increasing in density, till at last we came to a dense mass, in the centre of which, we were told, we should find the mouth of the den. We commenced forcing out way through the cover, which we found masked a sudden rise in the ground, terminating in some boulders of rocks, amongst which we should no doubt find the mouth of the cavern. It was a lonesome spot, well suited to the character of its reputed inhabitants. After some scrambling and much struggling against the thorns, which varied from little hooked

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contrivances like cats' claws to the smooth Babul thorn, quite straight, very sharp, and two or three inches in length, a few steps brought us to the centre of the position, and we found ourselves standing over a large black hole, wide enough to admit the passage of a tiger's body. It was inhabited. The crackling of the underwood as we approached had roused the slumbering residents, and we could distinctly hear the trampling and growling of some large animal close beneath us. We waited in breathless silence for what might happen next. Our nerves were strung with expectation as we stood with our guns at the shoulder full cocked, and ready to let drive for dear life should the yellow face of a tiger make its appearance. In less time than it takes to tell, the rush from below was made. But the face that appeared in the opening, though large, was black! Neither of us was hurried into firing, and a pair of hyenas dashed out within a few inches of us. With something between a laugh and a howl, they speedily vanished from view, and we returned once more disappointed to our camp.

The opinion of the people of the village, however, was still that tigers visited the jungle by night, though they might possibly retire to a great distance before the approach of dawn. Some even went so far as to state positively that one of these animals came nightly to drink at a pool, not more than a mile and a half distant from our tents. So, as the moon was at the full during this very night, I somewhat reluctantly agreed to wind up this day's proceedings by sitting up with Sandford over this drinking-place. I say reluctantly, for this is very tedious work at the best, and in

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my case would entail no shooting the next day, for many successive 'hot weathers' in the hottest climates in the world had so far weakened me, that seven or eight hours' rest in the twenty-four had become a matter of necessity.

But as we had tried everything that could be thought of during daylight without success, there seemed nothing for it but to give the night a chance. Accordingly, towards sunset we found ourselves at the rendezvous,—a small pool with a muddy bottom. Close by grew a giant mango tree, and in an advanced bough of this two 'machanes' or platforms had been contrived for us to sit upon. They were both comfortable, and admitted of a semi-recumbent position, but one only was really fit to fire from, the other being behind the first, and too much retired to afford a good shot. We drew lots for seats, and I got the bad one. I made the best of it, of course, and soon we were both comfortably located in our respective berths. The natives, with the exception of the chief shikarie, who would be quite happy on the sharpest bough that could be found, provided it was out of reach of the tiger, then withdrew to the nearest village, where the elephants were already located, and we were left alone in our leafy bower to watch the shades of evening as they fell rapidly o'er the silent scene. Close at our feet was the pool of water, the margin of which was clearly defined, and so free of all cover that we should at once see anything approaching it.

Soon the moon rose in impressive splendour over the huge dark trees that bounded the horizon. All the open spaces seemed flooded with a silver light equalling that of day, whilst the shadows appeared blacker and more impenetrable

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than ever. For an hour or two I contemplated the quiet beauty of the scene with great pleasure, but at last the refreshing coolness of the air, combined with the stillness of the night, unbroken as it was by any sound of bird or beast, induced a delightful drowsiness which I felt would sooner or later overpower me. For about ten minutes a sense of shame kept me awake, and I felt that it would be a disgraceful thing to go to sleep. These fine feelings might perhaps have enabled me to fight against the weakness of the flesh a few moments longer, but for the insidious suggestions of sophistry. Of course, I said to myself, if I were the occupant of the front seat, I should not even wish to close my eyes, certainly not; but, situated as I am, forty winks would not only be justifiable, but even meritorious, for at the report of Sandford's gun I shall spring up to support him, all the fresher and more efficient for having allowed myself this necessary repose. Hereupon I fell into a deep, delicious, and dreamless slumber. The last glimpse I had of this world was most satisfactory,—Sandford sitting erect, motionless, and ready for anything. The very attitude, I said to myself, that I should have adopted if I had only been lucky enough to have got the best place.

I lay as in a trance only less complete than death itself, and then I found myself suddenly awake and listening to the stealthy footstep of some large animal immediately underneath me. It makes no noise to open one's eyes; I therefore did so, and saw by the moon that I must have slept for two hours at least. I also became aware that Sandford had at length been overcome by that lethargy which probably no one, unless he had slept all day, could have combated for

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long under the same circumstances, for he was also in a recumbent position. On whispering his name, however, he answered in the same low tone, and said that our visitant was a pig; but I forgot to ask if he had seen it, or was only guided by the sound of its footsteps, which to my ear seemed hardly loud or grating enough to proceed from the hoof of a boar traversing ground covered with stones, and nearly as hard as rock. Of course the slight rustling of the leaves as I turned to try and get a glimpse of the beast caused it to steal away, and I never felt sure of what it might have been. Of course, had we but thought of it, we ought to have divided the time for occupying the shooting seat, and allowed the one in rear to go to sleep comfortably. This would certainly have entailed the risk of being on the move just at the critical moment, but still I am convinced it would have been the better plan, for it can rarely be possible for any one to keep on the alert all night through at a stretch.

Having yielded so far to the imperative demands of nature, I now felt that no man calling himself a sportsman should think of falling asleep when sitting up for a tiger.

Once more the scene appeared to us as one of unmixed beauty and enjoyment. In a few minutes from the time of being again prepared, we heard sounds of a large family of pigs coming to the pool. So cautious and anxious were their movements, that one could only wonder how any creatures could continue to live in such a constant state of trepidation. Some time before they became visible we could hear their pattering footsteps. They would advance a little way and then halt by common consent, so as to use all their faculties in making out whether danger of any sort might be appre-

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hended. At last the dusky forms of the leaders could be discerned, by whose movements the conduct of the others was entirely guided. The advance was still slow, even when they got near enough for us to distinguish their attitudes clearly, and for them to be within a tempting distance of the water that was to slake their parching thirst. On the very brink there was a long halt, when not only their sharply-pointed ears, but their whole bodies seemed given up to the collection of sound. For some seconds they could have heard a pin drop. All at once there was a rush, and fifteen or twenty of these animals were rolling in ecstasies in their much-longed-for bath. To the casual observer discipline might have seemed forgotten in this moment of stolen enjoyment, but any one interested in the ways of the jungle could not have failed to be struck with the anxious manner of the elders of the herd. These, it was easy to see, were always on the *qui vive*, and one or other of them would run up on to the bank to sniff the air and listen. Moreover, even the youngest and most thoughtless pigling seemed aware that life was never entirely free from care and responsibility; for the grunting was kept down to *pianissimo*, and not a single penetrating treble note was to be heard. In short, though these beasts were swine, their manners and appearance savoured but little of the sty.

Whilst the revelry was yet at its height, in some mysterious way the alarm was given. All seemed to know at the same instant that danger was imminent.

With a simultaneous and frantic rush the pool was cleared, —the pigs gone! As silence was restored, we could distinctly hear the advance of some heavy body, and soon an indistinct

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form could be discerned advancing towards the pond. Instead of the tiger, however, it proved to be a boar of immense size, completely dwarfing by comparison all those that had just come and gone *en famille.* This powerful and savage brute approached the water with the same caution as his preceding and weaker brethren, thus establishing pretty clearly that other creatures more powerful than himself—tigers, in fact—might be expected at such an hour. The boar was soon in the centre of the shallow pool, where, stretched out at his ease, and his body half concealed in the soft mud, he for the most part resembled a large stone more than a living animal. Anon his ears would twitch, a limb move, or a deep sigh be emitted, which would have betrayed him to a constant observer as a thing of life, notwithstanding the caution and silence which evidently presided over the siesta.

And now, if I were writing fiction, I should introduce a magnificent and bearded tiger on the scene. I should describe a combat between these two monarchs of the forest, all the better perhaps for never having seen such an encounter. But I am only recounting truth, and that compels me to state that no tiger came. The boar continued to enjoy his bath, and we the tedium of a fruitless watch, till the moon sank behind a huge mass of trees, and the pool was so completely enveloped in darkness that it would have been impossible to have aimed at a tiger even if it had paid its hoped-for visit to the spot. We therefore decided on returning home, and getting off to sleep before sunrise.

As we made our first move, the boar sprang from his watery couch and came to bay on a little open space still lighted by

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the moon. We could distinguish the line of his mane as it stood erect all along his back from his crest nearly to his tail. As he stood facing us, filled with mingled rage and fear, he looked a formidable antagonist even for that imaginary tiger which so obstinately refused to bound upon the scene. Feeling himself unpursued, he turned round and slowly retired across the plain towards those forest depths where we had perhaps met before during the daytime.

Having descended from the tree, we proceeded homewards, followed by the elephants, which we picked up on the road, together with two large English dogs, half-bred mastiffs, that we had also brought in our train. The last might have turned out most useful, for had we been so fortunate as to have wounded a tiger, we meant to have followed him up at once, instead of waiting for daylight, as is, I believe, the usual custom. We somewhat imprudently gave the dogs their liberty, and the result was that they suddenly brought something to bay close to us. We advanced at once to their support, and found that the enemy was a pig. We did not wish to shoot it, and I was consequently very glad when the dogs gave up the fight without having got ripped. After this little incident, a short walk brought us to our tents, with our comfortable little camp-beds laid out in front of them. A grateful sight indeed, for two hours' sleep up a tree, however sweet at the time, was hardly sufficient to recruit the jaded frame, and enable it to go through another long day, during which the thermometer would surely register ninety-seven degrees even in the coolest spot that could be found.

After this nocturnal expedition we rose late, and discussed our future plans over a delicious dish of mango fool, made

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from the unripe fruit of the immense trees under which our camp was pitched.

By this time Shaik Boodun, the veritable chief shikarie, had joined us, and by his advice we decided to try the jungle once more under his leadership. Then, if unsuccessful, we would start without any further delay in pursuit of the numerous tigers which he assured us he had marked down, either personally or by the aid of trusty coadjutors, within a moderate circle of a hundred and fifty or two hundred miles.

One more effort, then, having been decided upon before leaving Mardi, we proceeded as usual at about eleven o'clock in the morning into those jungles which we had begun to know well enough to feel a little tired of them. A beat was arranged, which it was hoped would prove a masterpiece of strategy; and as soon as Sandford and I had got into our posts, the band struck up in the distance as it advanced towards us from different directions. I felt sure there was a tiger, or at least a panther, in the jungle, for the music had hardly struck up when from a distant point I heard a peacock loudly give forth its note for special danger,—a peculiar cackle which they never use except to denote the presence of the worst enemy they have any experience of. When this cry, therefore, is heard in a large jungle, the hunter may be sure this bird thinks he is close to a tiger or a panther; and, owing to his acute sight, he is very seldom mistaken.

This drive, however, like so many others we had had lately, produced nothing; so, as there were a great many spotted deer (cheetul) in this forest, with very fine antlers, we determined to have a final drive, with a view to securing a good head or two.

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My lot fell to the stump of a tree overhanging the bank of a nullah, the bottom of which would be about ten feet below me, whilst from the bank I and the native who was holding my spare gun were not more than four or five feet from the ground. Sandford was about two hundred yards distant, out of sight of course, and standing on the ground behind a tree. Any place was safe to shoot a stag from, and, after all the row that had just been made, how could there be a tiger within miles of us? But our arguments, though specious, proved to be fallacious, for I had not sat many minutes listening to the sound of the advancing line, when I suddenly saw the form of a full-grown tigress standing motionless in the centre of a korinda bush, on the same bank of the nullah as myself, and not more than thirty yards from me. I remained perfectly still, and resolved not to fire till the advancing line should cause her to step from her cover. I was afraid of the possibility of a tough, knotted bough turning the course of my bullet. But I was reckoning without my native companion.

As I sat gazing intently on the interesting occupant of the korinda bush, I felt my sleeve pulled. I turned my eyes, and saw, close to my elbow, a face distorted by an unearthly grin. 'Bāg hai! Bāg hai! there is a tiger,' was uttered in a whisper all too loud, and with a profuse accompaniment of nodding and pointing. I extended my clenched fist close up to the poor man's teeth, and just breathed the words, 'I know, let it come on.' The man, however, who was a stranger to me, had evidently no nerve, and was unable to keep quiet. Already I had observed the listening tigress turn her ears restlessly in our direction, as though suspicious sounds had reached her from our quarter. At any moment,

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too, I might expect my companion to utter a loud shout, or even tumble out of the tree, which would in either case have caused the tiger to disappear like magic, without perhaps my even getting a snap shot at it.

I therefore raised my smooth-bore gun to my shoulder, and, having taken careful aim, I fired at the tigress. She was face on towards the nullah, across which she flew almost with one bound on receiving my shot. As she reached the opposite bank she perceived whence the blow had come, and, whisking round, she charged across the shingly bed of the broad watercourse, and with suppressed roars of rage came straight at me with all her might. I fired my second barrel, but as the principal bough on which I was supported gave way just at this critical moment, my aim was spoilt, and I only hit her on the hind foot. This, however, turned her, and she fled with the same wild speed away into the jungle, before I had time to right myself, or take my rifle from the hand of my native attendant, who was quite steady in the moment of danger, notwithstanding his shaky behaviour beforehand.

In a few minutes, Sandford, with the elephants and the whole gang of followers, had arrived on the spot. The ground was examined, and found to be blood-stained. It was therefore certain that the animal was hit. But when I pointed out the bush in which the beast was standing when I fired, it was unanimously considered that I ought to have killed her on the spot. By the time we had got to the end of the trail, and still no signs of the tiger, my character was gone, quite gone.

The native shikaries were certain the wound inflicted had

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only been a slight one, and that the tigress must have gone up the nullah towards some very rugged and rocky slopes, where once housed she would be safe. 'But if,' they said, 'she is badly hit, she may not be able to get so far, and in that case we may yet fall in with her.' This I devoutly hoped we might do, for in addition to feeling myself bound to atone for my own shortcomings, I was now driving the redoubtable Futteh Alli, who, as the reader will remember, had when in Poona attempted my life as well as that of his keeper. Now, if the tigress should suddenly spring on him, it would be seen whether his ferocity was accompanied by courage, or whether he was only a bully. Animated by these feelings, I urged him into all the darkest and most likely-looking places, all of which he confronted with a sort of calm swagger, that might have either denoted pluck or merely an absence of all suspicious circumstances.

After a long and tedious search, we at last reached the limits beyond which our guides said it would be useless to go, and the chase was abandoned.

As soon as this point was settled, I said I would now look for the beast on a plan of my own. Having got back to the spot whence I had taken my two shots, I proceeded to go round it in ever-widening circles,—at least such was my intention; but before I had completed the first round, I saw the tigress stretched out under a korinda bush, not fifteen yards from me. She was not dead, though apparently too far gone to charge. Futteh Alli viewed the enemy simultaneously with myself, and, drawing himself together, with head and ears raised, he stood for a moment quite motionless, prepared either to fight or bolt, it was impossible to say

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which. Aiming behind the shoulder at the recumbent animal, I fired, and struck her just over the heart. She started convulsively, and uttered her last savage roar. The sound of her voice settled the question of Futteh Alli's character. Like most bullies, he was a coward. He spun round with extraordinary velocity, and fled at a rapid gallop. The pace was so well marked, that it would be useless, as far as I am concerned, for any one to say that it is mechanically impossible for an elephant to use this pace. To such learned objectors I would point out that impossibilities are of daily occurrence, and I would further beg them at least to suspend judgment till they have sat on an elephant's neck with a wounded tiger roaring close at his heels.

Away then sped Futteh Alli at a breakneck pace through the thorn jungle. I had thoughtlessly allowed the goad or ankus to remain with the two keepers, who were behind me on the pad, instead of having it secured by a line round my waist, so I could not use the sharp hooked end of it to stop him. Neither were my shouts to obtain possession of this weapon of any avail. I had a firm seat on the great beast's neck, but the two unfortunate natives no doubt required the use of all their arms and legs to enable them to cling to the heaving mass of bedding on which they were wont to repose so luxuriously at ordinary times. I, of course, could not look round, but I knew from their suppressed ejaculations that both the men were safe on the elephant's back. Fortunately Futteh Alli had chosen a line free of forest trees, but the thorns were often tall and formidable to us, though to him they were but as grass or rushes. For about two hundred yards the elephant went in a perfectly straight line through

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everything at full speed, and then pulled up as if he had been shot. Instantly a naked black arm, with the hand grasping the ankus, appeared over my shoulder, threatening the elephant's head with the spiked end. In another instant it would have been buried inches deep in the poor brute's flesh. I arrested the blow, and turned to confront my two assistants. I was astonished at their appearance; nor even now can I imagine how they had contrived to become such entire wrecks in so short a time. The flowing turbans were gone, of course,—that I should have expected,—but much of their thick shaggy black hair had evidently been also sacrificed, whilst the missing locks were replaced by an abundant head-dress of withered leaves, dried twigs, thorns, and other jungle produce. Their clothes, too, were torn in all directions. 'Why,' I said, 'Mahomed Yacoob, do you wish to strike the elephant?' 'Why, sir, to stop him,' he replied, in accents still trembling with excitement. I pointed out that the animal was standing still, and that a good dig with the goad would probably set him off again. 'That is quite true,' replied the misguided man, 'but it is always the custom to use the ankus whenever anything happens.'

The elephant, feeling that he was not being pursued, was by this time perfectly tranquil and obedient to my slightest hint, marched back at once to the bush where the tigress was lying motionless, and in fact dead. At the word of command, 'Bait, bait,' accompanied by a gentle pressure on the crown of his head, the huge animal at once came to the kneeling position, within twenty feet of his detested foe. But notwithstanding the elephant's air of resignation, it was deemed advisable to bind his forelegs with a strong cable

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chain, so as to confirm him in his good intentions. This necessary precaution having been taken, the tigress was, without any unusual difficulty, hoisted on to his back, his legs were liberated, and thus loaded, I headed the return procession, and drove back in triumph to the village outside of which our camp was pitched.

But our joy over this auspicious event was destined to be but of short duration. Our souls, indeed, were about this time suddenly filled with dismay and confusion. One fine morning, a wild-looking being called a runner appeared before us as the mandatory of an evil genius. He was the bearer of a hideous brimstone-coloured envelope, a missive from that infernal machine called the telegraph. For a moment we stood minutely interrogating the unconscious and smiling countenance of the runner, as he stood extending towards us this odious emblem of the nineteenth century. Sandford was the first to rally. He tore open the document, and read, 'Return at once, the regiment is going to Russia.'

We did not weep, having unfortunately arrived at that mature age when the source of tears is dried. I say unfortunately, for had our united ages been under forty instead of over eighty, either our grief would have assuaged itself in the manner indicated, or we should have been wild with delight at the prospect of hurling the great Autocrat of the North from that throne which has from all time been India's bugbear. As it was, we could only look at one another, sigh, shake our heads, and so forth; for though, on second thoughts, our united ages were not quite so great as above stated, yet were we both old enough to feel sure that the native regiment to which we belonged would never get to St.

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Petersburg. On the other hand, in the eyes of an unthinking world, we were now called upon to perform deeds, compared with which the dealing with any number of wounded tigers or mad elephants could only be looked upon as child's play. If, therefore, we were to ignore the telegram, and go on with our shooting, what, we asked, would become of our characters? No; there was evidently nothing for it but to pack up and return at once. A hard blow after so much expense, and the toil and trouble of months of preparations. Shaik Boodun, too, was in despair, for he had more than twenty tigers marked down, and there seemed to be no doubt that we were to miss a brilliant trip, and he, Shaik Boodun and his colleagues, a fine harvest of rupees.

Even the forest round Mardi, which we had been so anxious to quit as not being good enough, now seemed a perfect Eden, and we determined to have another beat just before leaving, whilst our heavy baggage was being got under weigh.

In pursuance of this plan, the whole party of men, elephants, etc., assembled under an immense banyan tree in the heart of the jungle. From this point we started for our advanced posts, whilst the lines of skirmishers were thrown out in the manner best calculated to ensure success. During the beat I heard distinctly the subdued roar of a tiger close on my right, but nothing was seen of him, and it was supposed I must have been mistaken, till we were joined by a scout, who had taken some time to descend from the topmost heights of a great tree, and who had seen the animal slip away under cover of a shallow nullah. As the thorn bushs ewere so dense as to render the passage of men

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almost impossible, we followed on the elephants, in hopes that the tiger, relying on the security afforded by so much underwood, might allow us to get within shot of him. But though we made every effort we were not destined to be lucky, and our last day in the Berars proved a blank.

I think our experiences at Mardi go far to prove that tigers are often given up prematurely, for, acting on the usual principles, we should have left the place, at the latest, after the second day of unsuccessful beating, on the ground that the tigers must have vacated that part of the country. Yet the pair of them must always have been close to us during most of our 'drives.'

It might be supposed that an examination of the foot-prints of these beasts would speedily decide the question of their presence. But this is not so; for none of the shikaries that I have met with, except the Bheels, can determine the freshness of the tracks to within a few hours. And all the people we had with us at this time were remarkably deficient in this useful kind of lore. They could only say that the footmarks were made at the latest during the preceding night; and this information was of little use, as the tigers might have travelled eight or ten miles in the meantime to take up their quarters for the day. A really good tracker from the Bheel country would, I daresay, have been able to follow the trail, even over the parched and difficult jungle we were about to quit. But such a man, had we taken one with us, would infallibly have clashed with Shaik Boodun and his set, so that his presence would have done us more harm than good. If jealousy did not prevent this combination of talent, no doubt much

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larger bags would be made, and big game would become scarcer than ever. It is certainly wonderful how a good Bheel will follow an animal by signs which seem to be quite invisible.

I remember many years ago being taken after a wild pig by some of these people, who whenever they saw a mark made a little tap at it with their long sticks. Our way lay over hard and rocky ground; not once could I see a vestige of any footprint. Yet they kept up a pace of two or three miles an hour, and very rarely came to a halt. After going a couple of miles in this way over the barren mountains, I began to think they were only earning their money by taking me for a walk, and this exercise under a May sun I could well have dispensed with. I therefore dismounted, and requested them to point out the footprints at which they kept on tapping. This they did with cheerful alacrity; but with my eyes held steadily only a few inches over the right place, I failed to make out anything whatever. My suspicions naturally increased, but still I felt bound to go on, when suddenly a voice joyfully exclaimed that here indeed was a prodigious mark, that even the sahib himself might see a mile off. I hastened to examine it, and found that this signpost was merely a little stone, no bigger than a sparrow's egg, that had just been turned over. It was certainly a trifle less sun-baked on the side which was now exposed to view, and which fitted neatly into a tiny little cup-shaped depression close to it. There could be no doubt it had been just turned over; but when I saw what they considered the equivalent for a fingerpost, I felt that the business was beyond me, and there and then gave up all

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hope of ever becoming a tracker. That they had been all along going on a certainty was shown by their leading us up to the very animal they were looking for lurking alone in a solitary bush on the mountain side.

But it is possible that even such men as these would be powerless if transported to the Berars and other similar jungles, where withered leaves and quantities of dried grass would materially change the face of the earth. In the present instance, if we had had a cunning Bheel in our train, he might have enabled us to get the male tiger which we knew to be near us, but more even he could not have done for us, for were we not bound to give up this trifling, and proceed at once to humble the power of Russia? All our baggage was packed upon the backs of the camels, and despatched on the first stage of the homeward route. Only our bedding, materials for early tea, and a gun a-piece were left behind.

It was on these occasions that we would add to our ornithological and other minor collections, for at such times there could be no objection to the sound of firing, as our departure was the signal of rest for all big game for at least a year to come. The vast forest trees that our tents had stood under had been frequently visited by the beautiful 'widah' or phantom bird, allied, I believe, to the 'paradise' tribe. In size it is not much larger than a robin, yet this small body has two narrow feathers about a foot in length drooping in a straight line from the tail. The plumage is very soft and silky. In the adult bird the colour is white, with a black line pencilled down the centre of each feather. The head also is black and crested. They look very beautiful,

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whether flitting in a ghostly manner among the enormous limbs of the great trees they frequent during life, or after death when tastefully displayed in a screen mixed with jays, king-fishers, mango-birds, and golden-backed woodpeckers, all of which, including the phantom bird itself, are to be met within the gardens throughout the stations of India. When skinned they will keep for twenty years before being set up. Each specimen should be secured in a stout brown-paper bag, and the mouth well tied up and kept quite close with string. I would myself keep a lump of camphor in the box in which they are stored, but I am assured by those who should know that this is not necessary.

I would not advise people when out tiger-hunting to shoot peacocks, or any other animals revered by the natives. I certainly did so myself at first, when the leaders of the party gave permission. But though I hope it caused no harm, still it could have done no good, and might at a future time militate against the goodwill of the inhabitants, on which so much depends for success in this kind of sport. But there is an immense variety of beautiful and interesting birds the destruction of which gives no offence whatever. We therefore thought ourselves fortunate, in a small way, in securing each a good specimen of the widah bird just before leaving Mardi.

I do not think that our march of fifty or sixty miles back to the Wordah railway station was productive of a single incident worth recording. On getting to the line of rail, all we could do was to expedite our servants with the elephants and heavy baggage by the way they had come, and suffer ourselves to be hurried back by steam on our way to Moscow.

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In two days we were back at Ahmednuggur, where we might reasonably have expected to find everything in such a state of excitement and confusion as would naturally precede a march to Russia. Instead of this, however, the hot-weather apathy and general dead-aliveness seemed more pronounced than was usual, even at this season of the year.

Our intimates received us with this sort of greeting, 'Hullo! you're very soon back; tigers too much for you, apparently!'

When we spoke to our parboiled chiefs of St. Petersburg, they said, 'Eh, what? St. what?'

'Why, the expedition, you know,—the great European war!'

'Oh, to be sure. You don't mean to say you have come back for that? We were obliged to send you the telegram, but we thought you were both much too knowing to take any notice of it. Why, it's quite all over. "Peace with Honour" was telegraphed from England long ago.'

The effect of this announcement was such that I have not, even at this distance of time, entirely recovered from it. For many ensuing days poor Sandford and I wandered about the sun-dried cantonments with a distraught air, peculiar, as I had hitherto imagined, to persons crossed in love. We were losing weight rapidly, and were in danger of dwindling into perfect skeletons, when news was brought in that a panther was committing nightly ravages in the Murree district, and that it could no doubt be easily marked down if we would get three days' leave and go forth to hunt it.

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Though this sport was very different to the grand encounters with the monarchs of the forest, of which we had just been so cruelly baulked, still, on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread, we hailed this little diversion as a godsend. The leave was obtained, and all those preparations made for transporting ourselves and followers into the Murree jungle, with which a previous account has already rendered the reader familiar.

Our party consisted of three only,—Sandford, Franks, and myself. The two former occupied one tonga, whilst I travelled in a second one by myself. After the usual frightful jolting over the rocky mountains, we arrived towards dinner-time at a village somewhat less distant than Murree, where our tents had been pitched under a neighbouring grove of trees.

This village, called Ghat-sirus, was the favourite resort of the panther, who no doubt paid at least one visit nightly to the darkly-shaded spot which we had chosen for our temporary abode.

The night was fresh, and admitted of sleeping inside the tents, though, of course, with the doorways open. Just inside I had chained my two dogs Carlo and Putty to a tent-peg, driven firmly into the hard ground, so as to prevent them from getting loose. Carlo was a very large half-bred mastiff, as I think I have already mentioned, whilst Putty was an ordinary light greyhound. It was foolish of me to bring these two animals with us, for, owing to their inability to go out in the sun, they could be of no use in the chase, and during the night they would be a constant source of anxiety to me, lest they should be carried off by the panther.

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But the night was cool and refreshing, and the fatigue of the journey had been great; it was therefore with a delicious feeling of peaceful repose that I sank on to my couch, contemplating Franks in the opposite corner, already well off into dreamland, and the two faithful hounds curled up motionless and silent in another retired nook sheltered by an arm-chair. They had been trained not to bark at stray village curs, nor to take upon themselves any of the duties of night watching. In fact, they quite understood that I would rather die of anything than from want of sleep.

Our coolness was the result of the height at which we were above the sea. There was no wind, nor sound even of a falling leaf outside the tent.

All nature seemed intent on repose after the grilling heat of the previous day. I was not slow to follow the universal example, and in less than five minutes from lying down I was wrapped in dreamless slumber, which must have lasted some hours, when I suddenly found myself springing up to the sound of furious roaring, whether of dogs, panthers, or both combined, I could not say. For an instant I saw the outline of Carlo standing on his hind-legs, with his arms spread out, occupying the whole doorway of the tent; another instant and he was away into the jungle with such speed as he might exert, with Putty and a long tent-peg firmly attached to him by means of a strong English chain, which no dog could break. I seemed to know instantaneously what was the matter. The panther must have been stalking the dogs. There was no time even to stick my feet into my slippers; if I would rescue the dogs it must be done at once. So I dashed barefooted in pursuit, uttering the most discord-

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ant shrieks of which the human voice is capable. The ground was, of course, plentifully sprinkled with thorns, so that it was well I had only twenty or thirty yards to run before I nearly tumbled over the two dogs, now hopelessly entangled in their own chain. I have little doubt that the panther was the cause of the row, and that but for my timely demonstration it would have turned on the dogs and slain them the moment it perceived them to be in difficulties. As it was, I rescued my two canine friends, and again made them as safe as I could inside the tent; whilst the panther proceeded on to the village, and, having pounced on a goat, carried it off to a neighbouring nullah, where it enjoyed its last meal in safety.

But this latter circumstance was not known till the next morning, when we were called upon to go and view the mangled remains of the poor victim, whose fate, now I come to think of it, did not inspire us with much sorrow; on the contrary, we were all immensely glad to have this convincing proof of the proximity of the depredator, who from early dawn must have been under the careful surveillance of our parties of scouts. These assistants had, as usual, gone out over night to man all the well-known points of vantage, whence every movement of the animal could be watched, as it prowled about, perhaps for hours, before the heat of the sun would force it to select some suitable piece of cover into which to retreat for the rest of the day.

As we had every reason to expect an early summons to the chase, the necessary preliminaries of the bath and breakfast were got over with even more than the usual alacrity, and those who would have to accompany us to the mountain

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side were ordered to form up for inspection in battle array. First in importance were the three gun-bearers, with a quota of ammunition for each weapon. Then came a man holding two hog-spears, which I had fortunately brought with me on this occasion.

These four persons were naturally the first to be overhauled; but behind them were gathered another group, scarcely less interesting. In the centre of these people was the luncheon basket and the water-carriers, with skins just filled from the great well close at hand, whence water was being drawn by the aid of two bullocks for the purpose of irrigating the sugar-cane fields.

We always took with us as much of the precious fluid as we possibly could, for we might very possibly have to climb the arid mountains all day long without falling in with any water whatever. In such cases it was no uncommon case for a parched follower, yielding to the tortures of thirst, to pour the whole contents of a small water-bag down his own throat instead of down ours. He would then, poor fellow, explain how he had fallen down, and been quite unable to pick up the water; or perhaps the sun had been so hot on a certain hillside, that it would have dried up a lake, so it was no use expecting a little bag of leather to resist such an ordeal. Of course all the water we could carry would be powerless to slake the thirst of the many natives we had with us, any one of whom would have got through a couple of gallons in the course of the day; it was therefore usual at stated intervals to call a halt, and allow them all to depart to the nearest place where they could get a good drink.

We had hardly finished looking to the various preparations

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above alluded to, when the anxiously-expected runner made his appearance with the good news we had felt so confident of receiving. The panther was, of course, a remarkable animal in every way, full of cunning, and likely to disappear suddenly at any moment. In short, we were not to lose a moment, but to hasten with great speed to the hillside, where the animal, it was hoped, would await our arrival if not too long delayed.

As all was ready, we departed at once, and, after the usual hot march of three or four miles, we came upon the chief shikarie, who was speedily to place us face to face with our hidden foe. On arriving at the scene of action, we found that the panther had taken up her quarters on a steep hillside, which was much more thickly covered with the cactus plant than usual. The top of the hill was flat like a tableland, and devoid of cover. The last short rise up to this eminence was so steep, that a line of beaters had drawn themselves up in tolerable safety all along the crest, prepared to hurl showers of rocks and stones down the steep declivity should the panther assume an upward course unfavourable to the shooting party. All, however, at present maintained an immoveable attitude and a dead silence, whilst in a whisper, scarcely to be heard, our guide pointed out the exact bush in which the enemy was said to be concealed.

We divided the distance round it, and gradually closed in towards the centre of attraction, till not more than five or six yards separated us from the bush. It took us some time to get as near as this, for we called frequent halts in order to listen for that rustle which might be expected to precede the charge. Though invisible to us, we felt sure the animal was

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aware of our approach, and that its eyes were doubtless fixed upon us as it crouched for the spring. But though we paused in circumspection, with every sense strained to the utmost, no sound struck upon the ear, nor did a leaf so much as quiver a warning to the eye. All remained as under a spell of silence, till the charm was broken by the sound of a large stone hurled into the middle of the cactus plant. We grasped our guns, fully expecting that the brute would now rush forth, but in this we were disappointed. Eventually we fired our guns into the lair, and even pushed our bodies in as far as we could, in our endeavours to see beneath the thick and knotted roots; but all without success. So, after a time we called a council, and debated as to what our next measures should be.

Whilst we were discussing various ideas, my dog-keeper asked permission to ascend the slope of the amphitheatre on the side of which we were standing, that he might join the line of beaters on the ridge above. Permission was accorded to him, but he was strictly enjoined to make a circuit outside the track of bushes, to enter which would have been dangerous. He had not gone many yards, however, when with true native perversity he struck well into the middle of the cover, and stumbled right upon the panther, which to his no small dismay sprang from a bush that was only a few feet in front of him. Owing to the unusual contiguity of the shrubs, the animal had perhaps been able to shift its quarters without being seen, or it may have been, as we afterwards suspected, another panther. At all events, the brute suddenly appeared before us, going at a great rate through the underwood. As it flashed across small open spaces, we

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all took snap shots at it, which, as is usual under such circumstances, had little or no effect. We all, however, agreed that it seemed an unusually fine specimen as it strode along the hillside, and then vanished into a deep ravine. The excitement now was great, but had to be subdued whilst the chiefs assembled to form a new plan.

The telegraphists, whom I have described in a previous chapter, intimated at once that the beast had taken shelter in a tuft of thorns on the steep side of the rift, at but a short distance from where we were standing. As the animal was now thoroughly on the alert, it would have been useless trying to surround it at close quarters, for on anything like a near approach it would at once have made another bolt; therefore three posts were at once selected for us to occupy, so as to command the ground to the best advantage, and we then drew lots to decide how they were to be distributed.

Two of the stations were close at hand, but the one that fell to me involved the long and arduous ascent of a steep and rocky mountain, high up on the side of which could be seen the black openings of a system of caves so extensive and ramifying, that if the panther once got into them all hopes of success must be abandoned for this trip. I was to make a detour, and then scramble up to these caves, sit down in front of them, and shoot the animal should it endeavour to enter this subterranean abode. On arriving at my post I liked the situation very much. I had such a fine view in all directions, that I was certain at all events to see the quarry whenever it should make its next start, and I thought it extremely probable that it would charge for the caves I was defending; in which case I should have a chance of firing off

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all my battery in succession, which, though it may not imply fine shooting, has a most enlivening effect.

On my arrival in position, the signal was given to the beaters, each of whom had employed the interval of rest in making little preparations of his own for a brilliant response to the wave of the distant conductor's baton. Some would collect heaps of gravel to send in penetrating showers on to the dense cactus plants below, whilst others would loosen overhanging rocks, so that only a slight push was required to send them bounding, amidst showers of splinters, down the steep declivity. The effect was excellent, for, on the sign being given, the perfect stillness was instantly replaced by a wild shrieking, a rushing sound of falling rocks, and a waving about of people and bushes, as though the whole mountain were commencing to slide into the valley beneath.

No panther could withstand such a pressing invitation to move as this was, and our friend accordingly started at full gallop for other quarters. She did not, however, ascend towards the caves, but, keeping to the bottom of the ravine, she raced for dear life along the base of the opposite hill, giving me two shots with my express rifle. Both bullets fell short, but that was not to be wondered at, as the distance was, I should think, about four hundred yards. No doubt the smack of the lead on the rocks caused the animal to redouble its speed, and it was soon out of sight. I at once hastened down the slope, which in places was so steep that I was obliged to slide down in a sitting posture, but I made the descent without accident to myself or gun, then scaled the opposite side, and, with what breath I had left, ran across the flat top of the hill, in hopes of overtaking the rest of the party,

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who had got so great a start of me. I had not gone far when I came upon Sandford, Franks, and a posse of natives, all drawn up at some little distance from a very stiff though not extensive piece of cactus, into which the panther had been seen to go.

'They say,' said Sandford, 'that the brute is in here, but we shall never get it out without fireworks, so we are waiting till the man who has them can be found.'

It is so very nice to have a leader to make up one's mind for one that I at once exclaimed, 'Excellent plan! excellent plan!' Then I consulted my watch,—just one o'clock, and consequently the proper time for lunch. I suggested that we should have it, and my proposal was received with acclamations of joy. But where, oh where was any shade to be found? The thoughtless beast had brought us to a barren spot, where the bushes were few, far between, and not more than two or three feet high. Only one in the whole vicinity gave forth any shadow, and in that lurked the panther. Of two evils we are told to choose the least. Now, a wild beast at luncheon-time is a bad thing, but an Indian sun is much worse. I therefore requested that the tiffin basket might be placed against the shady side of the panther's bower, that we might there recline and eat in comfort. This notion was not at once received with great favour, and the native in charge of the basket even deemed it desirable to throw stones into the little surrounding shrubs, where he must have known the animal could not be. 'But,' I said, 'if the beast won't come out till we throw in the fireworks, what objection can there be to our sitting close to it till the crackers and things come up?' This

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argument was conclusive. The basket was put close up to the cactus, and Sandford and I sat down beside it, while the natives retired to some little distance. The side of the bush was about fifteen feet high, quite flat, and perpendicular like a wall; thus at one or half-past one o'clock there was a well-marked line of perfect shade. The thorns on this kind of cactus are small, and had on this one been worn away a good deal, so that one could lean most comfortably against this densely knotted plant, and at the same time enjoy complete immunity from the rays of the sun. The first thing we did was to take off our heavy helmets, with their thickly-wadded curtains, which in mine extended down to the shoulders; then we propped our guns up against the wall of cactus, and ourselves sank down beside them with a feeling of intense relief. I daresay the thermometer, if placed on the ground beside us, would not have registered more than 98° Fahrenheit, a great and delightful change after being exposed to the burning sunshine incessantly for several hours. The wind, too, in this part of the country is not very hot, and, playing as it did on our moistened skins and clothing, it felt for the moment almost as if it came from Brighton.

For a few minutes we sat quite still, and made the most of these delicious conditions. Then it occurred to us to try and peer through into the centre of the mass, to see if we could make out anything of its present occupant. But there was no chink in the almost solid block on the side where we were reposing. It was an isolated bush, about fifteen feet in length and seven or eight in width, the entrance to which must have been at the narrow end next to me, which

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I had not seen, having approached from the other direction. Not seeing anything, then, in the cactus to interest me, my thoughts turned naturally to the tiffin basket. There it stood, just on the other side of Sandford. I stretched across him to reach it with my right hand, and had just grasped the handle, when a succession of short savage roars broke upon my ear, mingled with the wild shouts of the natives, who were evidently being chased by the now furious beast. At this crisis I felt that my hat would probably do more for me than my gun, so I crushed the former on to my head, and, without waiting to adjust the chin-strap, I seized the latter in my hands and faced the enemy. The panther meanwhile had floored a beater, and got him by the arm, but, dropping him, she at once came for me with lightning bounds. I could see nothing, owing to the beast's tremendous speed, but a shadowy-looking form with two large, bright round eyes fixed upon me with an unmeaning stare as it literally flew towards me.

Such was the vision of a moment! My presence of mind did not desert me. I raised my gun and fired with all the care I could at such short notice. But I missed, and the panther landed light as a feather with its arms round my shoulders. Thus we stood for a few seconds, and I distinctly felt the animal sniffing for my throat. Mechanically I always turned my head so as to keep the thick wadded curtain of my helmet-cover in front of the creature's muzzle, but still I could hear and feel plainly the rapid yet cautious efforts it was making to find an opening, so as to tear open the jugular vein.

I had no other weapon but my gun, which was useless

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with the animal closely embracing me, so I stood perfectly still, well knowing that Sandford would liberate me if it were possible to do so. At the first onslaught we were so placed that he could only have hit the panther by firing through me, which would have been very injudicious, to say the least of it. As may easily be supposed, the animal did not spend much time in investigating the nature of a wadded hat-cover, and before my friend could get round and take an aim without jeopardizing my own life, the beast pounced on my left elbow, taking a piece out, and then buried its long sharp fangs in the joint till they met. At the same time I was hurled to the earth with such force, that I knew not how I got there or what became of my gun. Still throughout I maintained a clear impression of what was going on. I knew that I was lying on the ground with the panther on the top of me, and I could feel my elbow-joint wobbling in and out as the brute ground its jaws with a movement imperceptible to the bystanders, but which felt to me as though I were being violently shaken all over. Now I listened anxiously for the report of Sandford's shot, which I knew would be heard immediately, and carefully refrained from making the slightest sound or movement, lest his aim should be disturbed thereby. In a few seconds the loud and welcome detonation, which from its proximity almost deafened me, struck upon my ear. I sat up. I was free! the panther gone! I looked around and found I was some distance from the place where I had fallen, so the beast must have dragged me some little way. Sandford, as soon as he had got the chance, had placed the muzzle of his rifle to the side of my antagonist and fired a large bullet right

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through it, which had caused it to dart back with the speed of thought into its well-chosen lair.

There it was left for a while, partly to enable the fireworks to come up, which, now that the animal had received its first wound, it was felt would be more than ever required, and partly that the state of my arm might be ascertained. The instant I was free, I felt myself recovering rapidly, and should have been quite restored even without the brandy and water, a few mouthfuls of which I was obliged to swallow out of deference to British customs under like circumstances.

I was not in much pain as long as my wounded limb was let alone, but of course it had to be looked at, so the sleeves of my coat and shirt were hacked off with a knife, and opinions duly passed upon the state of the case. Only one place, where the piece had been torn out, looked bad, and even here the artery, though exposed to view, had not been severed. Owing to this my life was saved, and there was very little bleeding. By means of my horse-keeper's turban, such an ample and comfortable sling was speedily fashioned for my arm, that by the time the fireworks came up I was able to select the sharpest of my two spears, and again take up a front position close to the cactus bush.

No one was directly in front of the hole which the animal used as an entrance, but it was commanded on all sides, and, owing to the isolated position of the shrub, and the perfect smoothness of the ground around it, we expected to see the beast the moment it showed itself; yet, on a few crackers being thrown in, the panther managed to discover a depression in the ground not visible to us, and, creeping out unob-

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served, was first seen at a distance of thirty yards, making swiftly for fresh cover. My companions both fired at and hit the retreating enemy, but still it contrived, though with diminished speed, to gain the new asylum.

This consisted of a comparatively large patch of miscellaneous cover, such as korinda, acacia, and other thorn bushes, whilst the centre was fortified with a quantity of long, coarse dried reeds and grass. Sandford and I stood close together, whilst Franks nobly took up a position without any one to support him. Of course I had no gun, as I was too much disabled to employ such a weapon, but there was no reason why one sound arm should not use a spear with good effect at a critical moment.

When all was ready, each grasped his weapon and fixed his eyes intently on what he thought the most likely spot for the panther to break from. The signal was given, and three or four fireworks were thrown together into the middle of the retreat. This was followed almost instantly by the conflagration of the grass and reeds, which snapped as they burned, making reports almost as loud as pistol-shots. A bright and lurid flame of considerable volume rose at the same time, which would have made a grand scene on a dark night, whilst even in the day time, to any one sitting in the midst of it, as the panther was, the effect must have been irresistibly startling.

Just as the interior of the bushes became lighted up, and the crackling of the blazing herbage was at its loudest, the animal, roused to frenzy by the overwhelming nature of the attack, girded itself up for a last desperate effort, and, unmindful of its wounds, it rushed from the now untenable

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hiding-place, swift and straight as an arrow, upon myself and Sandford, who fired both barrels of his rifle at the beast, but without stopping it in the least. We had just time to open one pace outwards from each other, and the momentum with which the animal was moving almost carried her past us. As she brushed my right leg, however, I saw her twist her supple neck, and literally stop herself by clasping Sandford's thigh in her extended jaws, and bearing him down to the ground, where they lay for a moment in a close embrace. I at once adjusted the spear behind the shoulder of the animal, and with a steady push drove it right through her heart. Franks also fired at the same instant, so it would be difficult to say which of us actually caused the panther to give up her last breath. She was dead, however, though still maintaining the position of life, and her teeth were so firmly locked in the flesh of her foe, that I was unable with one hand to open her jaws, which felt like iron to the touch. The natives, however, when they saw the *coup de grâce* unmistakeably given, at once rushed in, some to liberate poor Sandford, which they did at once, others to bury their knives in the carcase, a useless proceeding, but one which they discharged with such mistaken zeal, that, had I not speedily interfered with the butt end of my spear, they would shortly have reduced our trophy to mincemeat.

The question now was what to do for Sandford. His wounds, besides being more severe than mine, were in the leg, and therefore to walk a step was of course simply impossible. Close at hand stood a thick cactus, which, now that the sun was declining, afforded a small patch of complete shade as far as the direct rays of the sun were con-

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cerned, but still the glare and hot wind were very trying to us both. In this shadow, such as it was, we examined the wounded man. Again, most fortunately, no arteries had been opened, so that, although the limb presented a dreadful appearance, full of livid holes, still there was no dangerous amount of bleeding, so we were not sorry to be left in peace, leaning against the cactus, whilst Franks departed with a body of natives to bring up the tongas by such navigable channels as might be found, whilst most of the others went to the nearest village to manufacture a litter, which I felt certain was the only thing fitted to transport my poor friend over the rough jungle.

For a brief space, then, we were left to our own reflections in complete solitude, for the two or three attendants who remained had crept into adjacent bushes, and were hidden from view. All was very still. In front of us stretched the barren hills, bathed in sunshine; at our feet lay the dead panther, blood-stained and grim; whilst overhead hovered the birds of prey. Attracted by the carnage, they swooped lower and lower, till two or three settled so close that we could see their bright eyes shining as they waited for the good time. But they were doomed to disappointment, for in about half an hour the two relief parties returned from opposite quarters almost at the same moment. The litter was not long in being perfected. By means of a few sticks, a rude canopy was erected overhead, on which were spread plenty of the blankets (cumlis) which we borrowed from the natives. The conveyance, though rude, was comfortable, and calculated to reduce the pain of movement to the least possible degree.

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Whilst Sandford was being carefully settled on the litter, the panther was accommodated with a good strong pole, to which she was bound by the legs. Then the signal was given, and every one cleared off in procession to the village where our camp was. As I walked off, spear in hand, behind the litter, I did not forget the kites and buzzards. There they sat, still bent on picking up the pieces!

I had to walk three miles over hill and dale before reaching the tents, and by the time we got to them I was so thoroughly exhausted that I sank upon my bed, and really felt very ill. I remember that the cup of tea my butler brought me seemed as tasteless as water, from which I imagined that fever was already setting in. My arm, too, with so many holes in it, and a piece torn out, was getting every moment more painful.

I felt no inclination to join Sandford and Franks, whom I could see trying to make out all the bullet marks which were plentifully distributed over the panther's body. A difficult task, it struck me, considering all the shooting and stabbing the unfortunate beast had gone through before it would consent to depart for the happy hunting-grounds.

As soon as I saw that the tongas were ready, I shook off my lethargy, rose from my bed, and proposed that I should start off by myself for Ahmednuggur, whilst Franks should occupy the other vehicle, and convoy Sandford in the litter. This was not, however, entirely agreed to, and the plan finally arranged was that I should hasten into cantonments as fast as I could, whilst the other two would follow, as quickly as circumstances would admit of, in the other tonga, to meet such assistance as I could get sent out along the road

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from headquarters, and the humble litter was to be discarded. On this being settled, I flung myself on to the back seat of the little cart, feeling too wretched to care for my own comfort or anything else. Fortunately my servant ran after the gharry, which had started at a jolting canter, and threw a nice large soft pillow on to the top of me. And heartily I blessed his forethought long before I got to my journey's end, for I doubt if I could have got over the first ten miles of the twenty-three to be traversed without the aid of this article. I thought I knew from experience what to expect when being drawn over this rough mountain track, but I had counted without a mangled arm. Anything to equal the bumping was not to be conceived. At first there were moments when I fancied my wild Jehu had left what was euphoniously called the road, and was hurrying about among the precipices, but soon I ceased to think, and applied all my fainting energies to clutching the back of the seat and keeping the pillow in position.

It was just ten o'clock at night before I got into the camp, and nearly nine hours since I had been mauled, so I was naturally very tired. Still I pulled myself together for a last effort, drove to the mess, where I knew I should find the doctor, briefly told him what had happened, asked him to send out the hospital palankeen to meet Sandford, and then hastened to my own home, to throw myself on to that bed where I was destined to pass so many weeks of terrible suffering. As it turned out, I think it would have been better for my friend if he had taken my advice, and stuck to the litter, for, unable to bear the series of violent shocks which constituted the progress of the tonga at anything

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like a brisk rate, the pace had to be reduced to a walk. His journey lasted all day and the next night. He was not brought in till eight o'clock the following morning.

During the whole of this time his sufferings must have been frightful, and, to make matters worse, the native lessee of the toll-bar at the end of the made road, seven miles out from Ahmednuggur, refused to allow the palankeen to pass on, because the bearers had not been furnished with the few ha'pence of which the toll consisted.

Owing to this piece of cruelty, poor Sandford could only exchange his bed of torture for one of comparative ease, when, owing to the real goodness of the high road, it was no longer much of a boon.

Each of us was now laid up in his own house, and received every attention from the regimental doctor, to whose skill and untiring care we doubtless both owe our lives at this moment.

The great heat was of course very much against us. I had to lie on two thick mattresses of cotton-wool, as I could not bear the slightest jar. The effect of this in an atmosphere ranging steadily from 80 to 93 degrees, night and day, can scarcely be imagined. In most stations it would have been just ten degrees hotter at this time of the year, and then I suppose we must have sunk under all we had to go through.

For the first month our state was, to say the least of it, very precarious. Great pain and scarcely any sleep reduced us speedily to but little more than living skeletons. But at the end of that time we began to be better and worse by fits and starts, so that at about the termination of the fifth week I could stand with the aid of an attendant on each side of me. It was therefore time to think of going for that change

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to Poona, which our medical officer was so anxious to see carried out.

The railway station was about forty miles off. I therefore preferred going the whole way by the road, which was in first-rate order, and could be traversed in a comfortable carriage, with relays of horses every six miles. From the time the arrangements were made till the morning of departure, nothing could induce me to leave my room; indeed, I would scarcely quit my bed for fear of being thrown back in my recovery, and being unable to start when the long-wished-for moment should arrive.

At last, just six weeks and three days after the accident, I heard the welcome sound of the great hired carriage as it drove up under my porch.

It was three o'clock at night, and every one was asleep except myself; but I had no difficulty in rousing my followers. All preparations for an early cup of tea had been made over-night; so that, in a quarter of an hour after the arrival of the vehicle, I made my way to it, supported, of course, on both sides.

Owing to the way the interior was stuffed with all kinds of bedding, pillows, and wraps, it seemed a complete puzzle how to get in; for, need I say, my attendants could not pass through the doorway with me. In spite of the fright I was in lest I should bump my wounded elbow, I could not help laughing at the ridiculous figure I must have cut during my brief struggle. My slippers of course came off to begin with, and my toes went through the perforated iron step of the carriage like the claws of a bird. With my sound arm I grasped the doorway with all the little strength I had, and in

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this position tried to think, Should I say to those behind 'Push!' or should I fall back into their arms and confess to a failure?

'Push!' I said, as I gave myself a cant to the right, and in a moment I found myself lying in a heap across the carriage, but with the wounded limb uppermost, and none the worse.

Throughout the journey of seventy-two miles I remained much as I had fallen, not having had strength to completely right myself. Towards the afternoon the sun shone in on my unprotected shoulder, which it burned severely; but though I had two servants in a tonga close behind, anything seemed better than stopping even for a single minute, and by the time we got to the next place for changing, the sun had shifted.

At about fifteen miles from Poona I had to cross a large river, which was in flood. This was accomplished by taking out the horses and running the carriage on to the ferry-boat. The appliances were very rough, but as there were plenty of hands for the work, it was accomplished with smoothness, and I suffered none of the shocks I had dreaded during the transit. My journey was, in fact, as successful as could have been expected, and I arrived at about five o'clock in the afternoon at the house of some friends, who had most kindly consented to act as good Samaritans to me in my difficulties.

But I must not say good-bye to Ahmednuggur for ever, without testifying to the extraordinary kindness I and my unlucky friend experienced at the hands of our fellow-exiles.

One kind lady sent us both our dinners every day for the

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whole six weeks from her own house, though at least a mile separated us.

This and similar acts of goodness from other charitable souls were the more a boon, inasmuch as my chief domestic, a hideous Goanese, known as 'Nutt,' or 'the Boomerang native,' took advantage of my helpless condition to get quite drunk every day. When in this state he would offer to my parched palate food scarcely fit for a healthy dog, and which, of course, I could not touch. I did the best I could to cope with this person, even having his head presented to me by the other servants that I might pull his hair. This I managed to do with considerable vigour, and I am sure he drank somewhat less in consequence. Still it did not keep him sober; and I believe that, without the assistance of the friends above alluded to, I should have died of starvation.

And now I must say I hope that my readers have felt sufficient interest in our humble four-footed friends not to be indifferent to the fate of some of them.

On arriving on the ground, preparatory to our last hunt, we at once asked after the dog Baja, and were informed that he had been carried off from before his owner's door, in the middle of the night, by the panther, who had devoured him. 'And Buchi,' we said,—'where is Buchi?' To which they answered, 'Woo bee margai,' which means, 'She is dead too.' None of them seemed to care in the least for the cruel and untimely fate of these two interesting and valuable animals.

The elephant Futteh Alli is no doubt still alive, but he is no longer the property of the English Government. In a fit of rage he killed two native soldiers, as he met them com-

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ing from a well; so he has been handed over to an Indian Rajah, who is, we may suppose, suffering from a surplus of population.

This animal and Bahadoor Guj might possibly be procured, even now, on loan by any one wishing to drive a sporting elephant after tigers; but Bundoola would be the best one to inquire after, as he was younger than the others, and would still, I should think, belong to the Commissariat Department. The finest of all, Roghanath Guj, died a dreadful death, as I have before stated; whilst another very favourite beast, not previously mentioned by name, but who will be well remembered by many of my readers as Jye Malee, went stone blind with cataract in both eyes. In this doleful state of total darkness I last saw her drawing a roller over one of the camp roads in Poona; thus furnishing a melancholy example of the sad fate that so often overtakes the great and the brave in old age. I felt that we were companions in misfortune, for my wounded elbow, in addition to being still very painful, showed no signs of regaining the use of the joint.

Poona, where I now was, enjoys, with the rest of the Deccan, a splendid climate for India during the monsoon. From June to September, there are periods, varying from a day to a week at a time, when the rays of the sun are continuously intercepted by thick clouds, and the air cooled by copious falls of rain. At such times I almost ventured to compare the place with Torquay or the Isle of Wight during an unusually wet summer. Poona, as my readers are doubtless aware, was once the capital of the Peishwahs or Mahratta chiefs.

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Like all native towns, it consists of a vast quantity of long, winding, narrow streets, with houses, in the principal thoroughfares, of three or four storeys in height, whilst in the more outlying quarters the tenements will consist of nothing but the ground floor.

Even in the grandest edifices, as many unbaked bricks, stuck together with mud, are used as is compatible with the more or less doubtful safety of the building. Labour is cheap, and materials are dear; it is therefore on the latter that the people naturally try to economize. Walls two or three feet thick are not uncommon, but when they consist of mud throughout, the rain, if it effects a lodging on the top, is apt to play dangerous tricks with the whole structure. For this reason it is a common practice to plaster mortar over such places as the builder considers critical, and even to point the most exposed face with the same costly material. Here and there, too, sections of good burnt bricks properly cemented may be observed, which seem to be constantly trying to break away from the viler stuff adhering to them. By means, however, of a persevering system of patching and whitewashing, such an appearance of stability is maintained as effectually to impose on the superficial observer, but the Indians themselves are well aware of the nature of these patchwork erections, and dub them all with the term 'kutcha.' A building constructed throughout of bricks, mortar, and well-seasoned timber is called 'pucka.' These two expressive words are now applied by the natives in a most various and comprehensive sense.

If a Governor-General is sent to rule them as a temporary measure only, he is called 'kutcha,' the out-and-out term

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'pucka' being reserved to designate none but the statesman nominated by the Empress-Queen as her Viceroy. And so on, in all the relations of life these two significant words are always being used.

From beginning to end a native city may be described as 'kutcha.' The shops containing the finest merchandise are dark, and all the goods are packed away, and only to be seen when asked for. The streets devoted to the sale of hardware present much the most brilliant and lively appearance.

Articles made for use or ornament, whether of glass, earthenware, or metal, have nothing to fear from either the elements or the clouds of dust which frequently fill the air. Consequently the dealers in such things, who live mostly in one long thoroughfare, make a fine show by piling up all their stock in an ornamental manner in front of and just outside their houses. In the midst of this gaudy display sit the vendors of the same, in their many-coloured and flowing garments. All the shop, in fact, is outside; within reside the family, in true Eastern seclusion, in the small and dimly-lighted apartments. The state bed is not unfrequently laid over the mouth of the pit which contains the wealth of the merchant, and which is closed by a lid of wood laid over the aperture, and daily plastered with a fresh coating of mud and cow-dung like the rest of the floor, which it is made closely to resemble. Thus the good man sleeps in peace, in close proximity to all he holds dear,—his money and his wives. They are equally jealous of both, and do not like either the one or the other to be spoken of. To ask a native of any position how his wife was getting on, would be a terrible

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breach of Oriental etiquette, savouring perhaps of sinister designs; and as to his money, who but thieves or Government assessors could possibly want to inquire about *that?*

The bent of the native mind is to trust no persons further than they can see them; so, since they keep their wives always in view and under inspection, they get whatever confidence it may be in the nature of their lords to bestow. Other relations, even fathers and mothers, are not, as a rule, expected to devote themselves beyond a certain point, as I think the following illustration will show:—

During the great mutiny, I had sometimes to parade with the rest of the troops to see one or more of the rebels blown away from the cannon's mouth. Three sides of a square would be formed, with the men facing inwards, whilst on the open face were stationed the avenging guns, one for each culprit.

On one such occasion there was but a single traitor, a ring-leader, selected to expiate his own and his followers' dark crimes. He was a Havildar (sergeant), and was well known to myself and the inhabitants of the cantonment generally, either personally, or by report at least. The open spaces on each side of the gun were occupied by the crowd, among whom were many friends and acquaintances of the condemned criminal. These were all kept in awe by a battery of artillery, ready to rake them at the first sign of resistance to the law. All was silent and motionless as the wretched man was brought forward, and tightly bound by his extended arms to the wheels, so that his back closed the muzzle of the cannon, which was loaded with a charge of powder only. When all was ready the fatal signal was given. There was a flash, a

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loud report, and a shower of gore. The mutineer had gone to his last account.

For all this I was prepared; but what, I wondered, could have happened to the crowd around the place of execution? Numbers of them had fallen on their faces among the ghastly remains, and appeared to be scrambling for what they could get. And such was literally the case, for the Havildar had died with his fortune in cash around his waist. Three hundred pieces of silver represented what he had saved out of the pay of that Government which he had basely plotted to betray. He had failed; so now, what could his late confederates, who knew where he had placed his treasure, do better than fling themselves on his shattered corpse, and kick and buffet one another, as each struggled desperately to obtain all he could of the blood-drenched pelf.

Such conduct was of course precisely what might have been expected, under similar circumstances, in any country in the world, but, being as anxious as ever to study native character, I took an early opportunity of discussing the event with a few of my own native officers, well-educated and excellent fellows, who used to pay me daily visits.

'Why,' I asked, addressing the meeting, 'did the sergeant go to execution with all his money round his waist?'

'Why, sahib,' answered the senior officer, 'you see he hoped to the last that he might only be tied up as a warning to himself and others, and that at the final moment he would be undone from the gun, and pardoned.'

'But why did he not give his money to some one to keep for him?'

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'Why, sir, whom could he trust with such a sum when all his power and influence (abroo) were gone?'

'Why, his mother, to be sure. I know that he lived with his mother in the lines.'

'His mother, indeed!' they all answered in chorus. 'His mother! How could she ever have given him his money back if she had once got hold of it? No, no! she would certainly have kept it.'

The unhesitating assent with which this proposition was received, more even than the sentiment itself, was calculated to throw an unpleasant side-light on family relationship in the East.

On the other hand, speaking in a general way, the natives are extremely alive to the ties of blood; but they seem to act in such matters entirely from a sense of duty and 'dustoor,' not from affection and confidence towards the individuals who may happen to be concerned.

Such being the case, one cannot wonder at the almost prison-like precautions that are taken in the construction of their houses. The windows are either mere holes, or they are placed very high up, and all spaces that in a European town would be open gardens are shut in by long, high walls. The larger and more Europeanized a native city may be, the more these conditions are modified, but still there is always a tendency to the style of building described above, except perhaps in the great town of Bombay itself, which, from its size, commerce, and long-continued English rule, can scarcely be called a native city. But Poona is so much like all the other Indian places that I have ever seen, that I should think it could not have changed much since the days of its

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native princes. It is a large town, and contains, I believe, about 30,000 inhabitants. That it should not have grown more in size, and further changed its Asiatic character, is easily accounted for by the fact that another, an English Poona, has grown up outside the ancient Mahratta capital. Here all the changes and improvements that time loves to bring about have found, and ever will find, ample scope for development. The cantonments, as such modern growths in India are always called, have sprung up here on a flat and practically boundless plain, affording unlimited space for building purposes. What was once, in the not very distant past, nothing but a rough camp, is now a settlement of great luxury and beauty. The *tout ensemble* is in a style that has no counterpart in Europe. Every one (including the officers of the garrison) lives in a house or bungalow of his own, surrounded by a more or less spacious garden, filled during the greater part of the year with beautiful flowers, from the midst of which rises the châlet-looking residence itself, often a mass of brilliant tropical creepers. The outer hedge is kept in good order, and on sanitary grounds is not allowed to be more than three feet high. Thus each person's floral display is visible to all members of the community, as they roll in luxurious carriages along miles of good roads laid out in this way.

Modern Poona is an immense place, and almost rivals London for the distances that society has to traverse in the pursuit of pleasure. Kirkee, where the famous battle was fought, and which is now principally occupied by the artillery, must be included within its limits; and besides this, there are other outlying quarters, such as Guneshkind, where the

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Governor's palace stands in inconvenient solitude and grandeur, but which all are bound to flock to if they wish to be considered of any account in high life.

To say that Poona is built upon a river, would mislead those who have never been to India; it boasts, however, of a very wide, rough, and rocky bed of a stream that is never dry, and which, during the rains, assumes really grand proportions. Of late years, a 'bund' or dyke of solid masonry has been constructed at a suitable point from bank to bank, so that throughout the year there are several miles, in an upward direction, of a broad and picturesque watercourse, that not only entirely satisfies the eye, but also affords an excellent arena for all sorts of aquatic doings,—from the engaged young man taking his lady-love for a row, to the grand regatta, in which all the pulling-matches of the season inevitably culminate.

The Bund above alluded to forms, during the monsoon, which is also the fashionable season, a beautiful waterfall, two or three hundred yards wide, and ten or twelve feet in height. An immense volume of water is here precipitated in a foaming torrent on to the rocks below, upon which it falls with a sound of distant thunder. Close above this great dam, the boat-house, with a commodious landing-place, has been constructed, and this again is surrounded by a beautiful public garden, that rises in terraces on the right bank of the stream. These grounds include a spacious carriage-stand, shaded by large forest trees, and affording a very beautiful view to those who are not too much engrossed by other thoughts to look at it. The contrast is very fine, as seen from the pleasure-grounds above, of the broad river,

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studded with rowing-boats and flowing with unconscious calmness towards this barrier, and then the sudden leap of the waters on to the rugged bed beneath, over which it continues its journey through the country as a raging flood.

Many broad roads lead from different parts of Poona and Kirkee to this delightful spot,—roads that are in many cases sheltered by avenues of trees, under which rides have been laid out for the benefit of equestrians. From five to seven o'clock in the evening is the time when the 'Bund' is visited. A military band is generally in attendance, to add the charm of music to that of scenery and social intercourse. The strains of Verdi, mingling with the continued sound of falling waters, produces in some a dangerous inclination to sentiment, whilst others are merely lulled into a delightful sense of rest after the heat and labours of the day.

But although the Bund, with its boating and many other attractions, may take the lead among the places of amusement in Poona, still it is closely emulated by many other resorts for public enjoyment. The racecourse, the gymkhana, and lawn-tennis ground form daily rendezvous for the young, the beautiful, and the brave, whilst nightly there are balls, dinner-parties, theatricals, and all the other entertainments usual to a luxurious society, where good incomes are the rule, and credit is unlimited.

And yet I did not like Poona. On the contrary, I found it the most disagreeable place I ever had to earn my pay in. The amenities were not for cantonment hacks such as I was. A ceaseless round of courts-martial, committees, and musketry left no time for any sort of dalliance. I consequently spent my time at this station in planning how to get out of it.

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To be sure, on the occasion of this my last visit, which I am now recording, I was on medical certificate, and had nothing to do; but this latter state was worse than the first, for I was for the most part unable, on account of my wounds, to leave my couch or to get an ordinary coat on. All I could do was to work conscientiously to get myself cured; but though my general health improved, the elbow remained stiff in spite of all that could be done, such as placing me under chloroform, and then forcibly breaking down the joint, an operation that caused great pain and suffering afterwards. I also went through a course of galvanic shocks that took a good deal out of me. I was therefore very glad, as soon as the rains were over, when the doctors recommended me to go to a hill sanatorium for a couple of months, that I might be effectually set up for another spell of regimental duty.

I chose the well-known settlement of Mahabuleshwar for my retreat, partly for its proximity, and partly because I liked it better than any other place of the kind I had seen. Most of these magnificent and fairy-like chains of villa residences, such as Nynee Tal and other Himalayan stations, are built upon such steep slopes that roads for carriages are simply conspicuous by their absence, and even riding on horseback is pursued under difficulties. This is, of course, just what robust pleasure-seekers, bent on enjoying ten days or a month among the hills, would most enjoy; but I, being really an invalid, thought good roads and easy carriages most desirable.

I therefore fixed upon Mahabuleshwar, and on the 1st of November 1878 I left Poona for that place, in a comfortable

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vehicle, furnished with frequent relays of horses. The distance is under a hundred miles, and the ascent, when the mountain-foot is reached, is not more than 2500 feet; but as this range springs from the elevated plain of the Deccan, its total height above the sea is about 5000 feet. This is a quite sufficient altitude to secure cool and bracing air in the shade, and I never found that any superior elevation, no matter how great, would nullify the scorching heat of the sun at mid-day when exposed to its rays. The hood of a carriage or a heavy solar hat are always required if you would avoid headaches and sunstroke when going out between ten in the morning and four in the afternoon; in short, the climate (I say nothing of the scenery just now), though paradise when compared with that of the plains, is but a poor equivalent for what we can enjoy in—say the underground railways of London.

I had been to this, the principal hill station of the Bombay Presidency, before, and was therefore prepared for the generally flat and uninteresting nature of the greater part of the route. The eye does not begin to be charmed till the ascent of the mountain is actually commenced by means of a good road, with ten or twelve miles of easy gradients, but then a sort of transformation scene is rapidly effected. The sides of the mountains become covered with vegetation more or less dense, and of great variety. The timber is not fine, for the trees are low, and individually scrubby; but as they grow very thick upon the ground, they constitute collectively an unlimited and imposing forest. Having passed the intermediate station of Panch-gunny, and reached the foot of the final rise, from

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the top of which the first bungalow, called 'Lake View,' smiles upon the expectant voyager, the traveller finds himself on the borders of a fine lake, and not far from quantities of gardens, where vegetables and fruits, especially strawberries, are largely cultivated by industrious Chinese, who water the plants from picturesque and curiously-constructed wells.

The moment your carriage has surmounted the ridge over the lake, roads stretch right and left, lined on each side by furnished bungalows, each of which stands in its own grounds. I can give the reader no idea of the mileage available for carriages on this unrivalled tableland, but I believe the distance from the camp, as I must call it for want of a better name, to Arthur's Seat, a point whence a magnificent view can be obtained, is nine miles. Where there are such stretches of high road, no one can feel cramped and shut up, as they might do in other mountainous regions.

There is, of course, a church, a library, a lawn-tennis ground, and other places of amusement for the visitors, besides hotels, where they can be entertained during their stay. The season at Mahabuleshwar is from the 1st of March to the latter end of June, but it is also much visited by ladies and children from November till March. During the rainy months it is uninhabitable, owing to the heavy fall with which the monsoon visits these heights.

One of the chief delights of the place is its comparative immunity from official boredom. One actually may venture to go to Mahabuleshwar without any uniform, and, at any rate, pretend not to be afraid of the great civil and military hierarchs who congregate here during the hot months.

Owing to the peculiar form of this range, many 'Points'

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jut out, and drop precipitously into the valley beneath. Some, like Bombay Point, are protected by a dwarf wall, by which a splendid, spacious, and safe carriage-stand is effected, the view from which is very extensive and grand. At Arthur's Seat the spectator looks down on the valley of the Concan, at a depth, I was assured, of two thousand feet.

Of all these picturesque and striking positions I admired Sidney Point the most. The carriage road, having branched toward it, terminates in a winding foot-path, that, as the jungle clears, is seen to lead towards a bold promontory of black and solid rock. This track gradually contracts till it forms quite a narrow foot-way of short length, but not more than four or five feet wide, and a dangerously steep slope on each side. This safely passed, you find yourself on the flat circular, tower-like top of the projecting cliff. The whole space is not larger than the floor of an ordinary-sized room, and to leave it by any but the narrow passage already described, would be to plunge several hundreds of feet into space.

This is a favourite spot with many people to assemble for an evening chat, and no great amount of nerve is required to reach it, for the narrow pathway leading thereto is not quite precipitous, and one can, of course, keep near the centre of the enlarged space after crossing over to it. Such being the nature of the locale, any one who stated that nothing extraordinary or romantic had ever occurred there, might at once be dismissed as a witness in whom there was no truth! I therefore hope that the few simple anecdotes connected with Sidney Point, for the veracity of which I can vouch, either on my own authority or that of my intimate friends,

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may not be treated with that scant interest accorded to the mere inventions of a fertile brain!

For instance, I heard that an Arab riding-horse, the property of a well-known member of the Civil Service, having been let loose by its careless attendant, had at once set off at full speed along the well-known road to this celebrated trysting-place. With no restraining hand to guide it, the animal flew at racing pace towards the fatal abyss. In one stride he had crossed the narrow little path that connected the top of the promontory with the mainland, and sprang with a mad bound into space! He must have fallen hundreds of feet before touching land, even for the first time. I never heard anything of the finding of the body, but I should think it must have been in an unrecognisable state.

On another occasion, a lady, young, beautiful, and witty, with whom I was myself personally acquainted, arrived on horseback to enjoy the air and the view. She must have been accompanied by a band of admiring cavaliers, because she was never known to stir abroad without such a large number of them, that they became known as her regiment of horse!

It was the custom for equestrians to gather at some little distance from the narrow passage leading to the eerie-like headland on which pedestrians sat and gossipped; for of course the horse, being a beast so liable to panic, was quite unfitted to pose on such a lofty and unprotected pinnacle. What, therefore, must have been the feelings of the lovers, when each saw his fair divinity spring across the narrow chasm, and rein up her steed in the centre of the small and giddy platform! This feat, I was assured, the young damsel performed, but I quite forgot to inquire how many of her

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devotees followed her daring lead. When I heard of it, I was really thankful that she had, whilst safe on the flat ground in the plains, shown no appreciation of that worship which I had so anxiously offered, for to have followed her on to this dangerous elevation would have been very unadvisable for one who had not yet finished his memoirs, whilst to shirk would have been a blot in these very annals! The heroine got back safely, and, as I was not even present, no reasonable person could sneer at me for not following her.

I myself only witnessed one striking scene at this spot, and that was less dramatic than either of the two which I have only told as they were related to me.

One evening, a little after sunset, I was reclining alone on this solitary height, immersed in my own reflections, when I became aware of two figures approaching me in single file. I was surprised at their appearance, for they were natives, and what could they require at such a place at any time of their lives. The leading figure was that of a small, well-built woodman, apparently about two-and-twenty years of age, with nothing on but a cloth around his loins, and the inevitable little axe in his hand. Close behind him came his wife, a wee little woman, decently and even gracefully clad. Every moment I expected they would stop short, or turn off, for what could a young couple, evidently returning from a long and tiring day's work in the forest, want at any of the 'Scandal Points' frequented by their foreign lords and ladies, and always at Mahabuleshwar terminating in a *cul de sac*? Yet on they came, and never paused till they had passed my recumbent body, and were standing on the very edge of the beetling precipice. Then this nice little wild

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couple halted, and exchanged some words in the Mahratta tongue. His tones and looks were full of encouragement, whilst hers were all of timidity and hesitation, as, suiting the action to the word, her husband, grasping the projections of the rock, began to descend, as if down steps cut in a wall, till only his head was visible above the brink. Then, indeed, further argument was useless, and it was evident the plunge must be made; so, having tucked her legs under her, the little wife sat for an instant on the edge of the chasm, and then slipped down, so as to be wedged between the rock and the body of her protector, whose means of support must have been some tough thorn bush that he knew could be relied upon. They then vanished instantly, and I was very glad, a few minutes afterwards, to see them far below me, threading their way rapidly down the steep crest of a mountain spur, at the foot of which could be seen their little thatched village.

I was unfortunately prevented by the weak state of my health from visiting many interesting places in the neighbourhood, such as the ancient native stronghold of Purtabgurh, which most people would like to see. I did, however, manage to get to the source of the river Krishna, and was very much surprised at what I saw when I got there. The top of the lofty mountain whence the water flows is of very small extent, in fact, but little more than a peak, and that too of solid rock, about as unlikely a place as one could well think of to expect any water, much less the never-failing source of a mighty river.

A massive sort of apartment has been constructed by the Hindoos round the holy spot, before entering which they

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expect you to take off your shoes, but I found the presentation of one rupee to the shrine, which I should have given in any case, fully dispensed with this troublesome ceremony. Having entered the gloomy portal, the structure presented all the appearance of a well-constructed granite swimming-bath, except that it was not deep enough to plunge into.

At the far end a handsome effigy of the sacred bull's head has been hewn out of the rock, and from the beast's mouth pours a continuous stream of perfectly pure water, about the thickness of a man's arm, and falls a distance of about four feet into the basin below. I daresay an engineer or other talented person could have pointed out whence all this water came, but to me it seemed an affair of some mystery, as it issued from the highest point of an isolated rock, and, if you viewed it in May, there would not have been a drop of rain for hundreds of miles round for eight or nine months.

The Mahabuleshwar range is not at all famous for sport, and I was much struck, during my rambles, with the absence of life in the forest. The immense extent and unbroken nature of the jungle enables the wild denizens of the same to take up each a solitude for itself. I never even saw a single pea-fowl or other large bird during the whole time I was there. It is difficult to account for this sparsity of animated nature, but there is no doubt something in the air that disagrees with the generality of birds. Sparrows do not exist there, even amongst our dwellings; and not a single head of young poultry could I rear of the dozen or two that I either took with me, or had hatched whilst on the hill.

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On the other hand, there are quite enough tigers and panthers to make people who do not want to hunt them uncomfortable. The latter are particularly troublesome in carrying off valuable and favourite dogs, the largest and fiercest of which are powerless when single-handed against such an enemy. On one occasion, a panther sprang out and swept off with a dog from between two carriages, one of which was closely following the other home in the gloaming of the evening. Again, a gentleman told me that as his sister-in-law was driving with her lady friend in a tonga to Arthur's Seat, a tiger sprang from his ambush at her ponies, who in their turn plunged, vehicle and all, over the hill-side, where they were only saved from destruction in their downward flight, by a dense patch of such underwood as in the tropics contrives to grow on the steepest declivities. Meanwhile the tiger, having missed his mark, retired again into the wilds, and the ladies, with the assistance of their coachman, got the ponies disentangled from the débris, and rode home as well as they could, in the absence of side-saddles and such other trammels of civilisation.

With a sprinkling of such adventures as those I have narrated, occurring annually during the season, it is not to be wondered at if many people felt nervous at times. The fair sex were allowed to own to such sensations, but of course a person who, like myself, had encountered these ferocious beasts many times in mortal combat, was supposed to anticipate with pleasure the chance of waking up at night with a panther sitting on his chest! As a matter of fact, I could think of nothing that I desired less at any given moment, and, moreover, I was really anxious lest one of

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these thieves should make a dash and carry off one or more of my tiny earth-terriers, of which I had three of matchless qualities, and weighing only from four to five pounds each.

For the benefit of these priceless treasures, I always slept with them in a vast four-poster, with mosquito curtains of fine net tucked in all round, which I hoped might baulk the aim of any beast of prey, and give me time to throw the pillows at it. Such were the only precautions I took on my own account; but some charming young ladies of my acquaintance, whose loss, had they been swallowed by a feline monster, would have been a national calamity, always drove out in the evening with the dinner-bell under the seat. This, I had explained to them, would, if rung violently, drive away any tiger that might appear with felonious intent, and I really think it would have done so. I devoutly hoped, however, that this defensive measure might never require to be put in practice, for, as they drove a fine pair of spirited horses, the roars of a tiger and the ringing of a dinner-bell combined would have most likely led to disastrous results.

At the risk of tiring the patience of my readers, I must venture on one more short story to show with what dangers and frights the many joys of the ladies are flavoured and enhanced at this splendid hill station. Once, in the cool of the evening, I had the good fortune to be one of a walking party that comprised many extremely fascinating belles. A pair of matrons, not old, but of high rank, led the way, whilst those whose circumstances still admitted of a little harmless flirtation followed behind at intervals. Thus we strayed in careless mood through the forest, along never-ending footpaths, some clear and open, and others covered

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with herbage, whilst we all conversed on such subjects as were most agreeable to us.

In the midst of the general hilarity, the two leading ladies suddenly halted, and seemed to fall into one another's arms with cries of alarm. One of them had trodden on a hideous, cold, black snake, at least ten feet long, that, half concealed, was lying across the pathway. It was dead, having been killed by some native, who had assuredly not anticipated the shock he was destined to cause to my accomplished country-women, by leaving the reptile in such an injudicious position.

By the time I had spent two months at Mahabuleshwar, I found my general health sufficiently restored to enable me to return to Poona, where it was thought the 'Faculty,' owing to the superior means at command, would be able to restore the power of movement to my wounded elbow, which was becoming steadily stiffer as the pain diminished. Accordingly, as soon as I got back to that station, which I have already attempted to describe, I began to undergo many things, amongst which was a course of galvanic shocks. But neither that nor other severer measures produced any good result, so ere long I made up my mind to put up with an arm crippled for life, and to set off with all my domestics, horses, and dogs, to rejoin my regiment, which was stationed at a place called Ahmedabad, in Goozerat. In pursuance of this plan I left Poona on the 20th February 1879, and thus bade adieu for ever to the tablelands of the Deccan.

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CHAPTER V.

AHMEDABAD is one of the principal cities of Goozerat, and is reached from Poona by rail *via* Bombay, after a run in the train of from ten to twelve hours from the latter place.

Few people ever pass through the capital of Western India without staying there a few days for the purpose of seeing their friends, and of fitting themselves out with a variety of things not to be obtained elsewhere; so, as I required another charger and a few other articles, I followed the usual custom, and arranged to spend a week in this vast place, thus pleasantly and usefully breaking the journey from Poona to Ahmedabad.

As it would take at least three hundred pages to describe Bombay as it was twenty-eight years ago, and three hundred more to give even a faint idea of what it now is, I will spare the reader all but a few general remarks, which perhaps may prompt him to make further inquiries, or even to journey forth to visit this wonderful possession of the British Crown.

Twenty-eight years ago Bombay was surrounded by a moat and a dark stone rampart, presenting a sort of dismal resemblance to the 'Upper Town' of Boulogne. The native population were greatly dependent for their drinking water

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on the contents of the ditch, which was not supplied by springs, but merely contained the drainage of the great annual deluge known as the monsoon. The streets inside this 'fort' were like those I have already described when speaking of other native towns, only they were more cramped and gloomy.

Now, in 1883, the walls have been knocked down, the ditch filled up, and a magnificent city has been constructed outside the old one, on the space between the sea and the line of the ancient ramparts. All the innumerable rich and costly buildings that have been called, as if by magic, into existence, have been planned, not only with a view to the appearance of each structure, but also with a strict regard to the grandeur and harmony of the whole, including any future additions that may yet be made. The result is an ensemble which is perhaps matchless in the whole world.

Bombay boasts, as we all know, about half a million of inhabitants, to accommodate whom, should they increase at the ratio that may reasonably be expected, will be no easy problem to solve in the future. Not only is the site insular, but a great deal of the comparatively small quantity of land still remaining clear is so very low-lying as to render good drainage impossible.

Besides the new town, to which I have already alluded, Bombay consists of a vast number of quarters and suburbs, such as Colaba, that runs out on a flat spit into the sea, and forms one of the shores of an inland gulf called Back Bay, whilst the opposite side is composed of a long mountain spur called Malabar Hill, which is covered with verdure

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and fine residences. The view from this eminence is most beautiful, and on a grand scale. Across the water, at a distance of two or three miles, can be seen a large number of the new public buildings, which seem to rise like palaces out of the sea. From them as a base starts out the Colaba spit, several miles long, crescent-shaped, and with a fine light-house at the end. Over and beyond this arm of land can be again seen the ocean, with the masts of innumerable ships lying in the celebrated harbour of Bombay, second only, as I have been told, to that of Rio Janeiro. To sit in a well-shaded verandah in the evening on Malabar Hill, and look across at all this, almost makes one forget that one is, after all, but an exile in a foreign land.

Then there is Byculla, famous for its excellent club, good racecourse, and the main drain. This is the district that suffers most from flatness, and consequently inefficient drainage. Yet it is a large and very important part of Bombay. It is approached, on leaving the Fort, first by passing through all the spacious turf-laid esplanades on which the troops exercise, and then by traversing an immense native town, known as the Bhendy Bazaar. The roadways at Byculla are spacious, and many fine houses have been built for the accommodation of rich natives, and also of many English residents, who cannot find house-room in the more favoured localities.

Most of the institutions of Bombay have their counterparts in all European cities. Racecourses, clubs of all sorts, whether of the land or sea, theatres, and the like, are all worked as much as possible on English models. Even the hotels, though too execrable to be considered like

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anything but themselves, are still intended as copies of the best that are to be found in the white man's land.

Native thought, in its unsullied purity, is now only represented by the Pinjra Pool, an establishment supported by pious Hindoos for the preservation of the lives of the lower animals. Here a considerable number of beasts of all kinds are supported by the charity of the orthodox. It is situated somewhere in the Bhendy Bazaar, and consists of some cramped courtyards, surrounded by the stables and huts of the animals and their attendants. The religious feeling on which this refuge is founded appears to be satisfied with keeping as many different kinds of creatures as possible from the jaws of death. They are housed and even well fed,—nothing more. The convalescents may never expect exercise, nor the diseased any remedies worth mentioning. The mange, for instance, which rages in the large compartment set apart for dogs, is simply awful to behold.

It must be admitted that the pious Hindoo is thoroughly logical. He considers a flea as being of equal consequence with an elephant. Accordingly, in the centre of the chief yard stands a dark-looking little mud hut, with a small wooden door, but, as well as I remember, without windows. This is the asylum of bugs and fleas. I am sorry now that I never ventured to look in, to see what arrangements might be considered necessary for the comfort of such beings when growing old and decrepit. I have, however, been frequently assured, by those who should know, that a native devotee, deprived of all clothing, is nightly induced to sleep in this hut for a guerdon of one rupee.

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Considering the immense sums that have been spent on public buildings in Bombay, it seems quite unaccountable why Government should have done nothing to provide suitable quarters for the use of the English officers of their own army. It is true that the greater number of those forming the regular garrison are able to provide themselves and families with a home on the esplanade, where an insufficient number of houses are kept for their convenience. But those arriving suddenly on detachment duty, sometimes in considerable numbers, and others who may be sent singly on medical certificate, and who also, in the aggregate, form a large body, often know not where to lay their luckless heads. For three or four months in the year the rain is so severe, that tents and other temporary shelter cannot be made use of, and the hotels, bad as they may be, are crammed at this season of the year.

There is a fine site on the esplanade, the property of Government, taken up with three wretched little hovels, with only a ground floor, yet dignified with the name of Sanatorium Bungalows. It was once my good fortune to secure one of these desirable residences, on being ordered suddenly to Bombay during the monsoon. Unfortunately I met with an accident whilst out riding. My horse fell on the top of me, and crushed my foot so badly that it looked as if it never could come right again. I not only had to lay up, but, owing to the pain and inflammation, I could not move much when lying on my back in bed. Then the rats, which swarmed in these old dens of wattle and daub, seeing my defenceless condition, would come in twos and threes, all through the night, and actually jump into my bed repeatedly,

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to see if there was any chance of gnawing me. I had a lamp always burning, and would wake up and frighten them off.

About this time, in this very bungalow, a friend of mine, who was suffering from some nervous complaint, took an overdose of chlorodyne, which rendered him unable to move; so, when his servant went to call him in the morning, he found him expiring, and with holes eaten into him by these disgusting vermin, large enough, I was assured, to contain an egg. These were the rats that used to sit nightly on my bed, and chatter their teeth at me!

But on the occasion of the visit which I am now recording, I was on leave, and consequently allowed to live wherever I liked, so I went at once, with all my large family of servants, dogs, and horses, to that best of all residences, the Byculla Club, which is really quite the nicest institution of the kind that I have ever had any experience of. It is of immense size, and stands in grounds of its own that border the racecourse, on to which the gardens open by several wicket gates. The offices and stabling are so extensive, that it matters not how many horses or dozens of greyhounds you may have in your train, all are hospitably taken in, and you are made to feel at home in the best sense of the word. Nothing that you could do in reason is ever objected to. The cooking, too, far surpasses anything I have ever been treated to elsewhere. Bombay is celebrated for its fish, among which the pomphlet is king, and this delicate nourishment is always served in great variety and perfection by the *chef* of this club. Some people object to the situation as being too remote from the chief centres of business and fashion; but to me this was one of its greatest charms.

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There is no denying, however, that the 'main drain' before alluded to is a drawback to an otherwise perfect institution. This odious canal, though it is a long way off, and has been roofed in, can still make its existence known more or less dimly when the wind is in a certain quarter. But then, as I have already hinted, nothing is perfect!

Owing to the approaching expiration of my medical leave, I could only stay a week in this pleasant abode, so I made the most of it by devouring the greatest number of mangoes that I thought would fall short of cholera, and by visiting the caves of Elephanta by moonlight. The mango is certainly one of the finest fruits in the world, but I think the caves, though so celebrated, are rather poor things. They are finely placed on an island or headland, rising abruptly out of the sea on the other side of the harbour, so that a visit to them involves a water picnic. This is delightful in calm weather, but on one occasion we spent such a long time trying to discover the beauties of the low, den-like apartments, that, on emerging, we found the waters of the vast haven lashed by the rising wind into a very good representative of the open sea. The result was a voyage of such dreadful suffering that it nearly killed me and the accomplished lady for whom the cruise had been undertaken. It was a whole hour, which seemed a lifetime, before we were hauled out of the boat, and placed safely, but without much animation, on the Apollo Bunder, whence we drove to our respective houses, and went at once to bed. But though I was unable, from want of sufficient education regarding the architecture of remotest antiquity, to be much pleased with the excavations of Elephanta, I must not quit this part of

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my subject without recommending my readers to make expeditions, whenever favourable opportunities may offer, for exploring the Bombay harbour. It resembles a vast inland lake, surrounded by wooded mountains, studded with bold islands, and indented with frequent creeks of the most picturesque type. One of these leads up the Tannah River, itself a perfect vision of fairyland. Of course all such places are reached after seeing as much or as little as one likes of the miles of shipping lying in the water districts allotted to them. All this is lighted by a brilliant atmosphere and a never-failing sun, which, however it may, when at its height, spoil the enjoyment of a well-worn Anglo-Indian, nevertheless must add greatly to the splendour of the panorama as viewed by the new-comer.

Though my stay at the Presidency town was to be so short, I contrived to get a good deal of pleasure during the time.

There are some very good clubs in the Fort, which is close to the harbour. Shops and other centres of civil, mercantile, and military business also abound.

Being, as I have said, on leave, I had no duty to perform at this time, and only one serious piece of business to do, which I have before hinted at,—the purchase of a new horse.

How any one in the East can take a pleasure in this anxious operation is what I never could understand. No matter what trouble you take, or what price you may give, the animal, nine times out of ten, turns out a trial and a failure! If it is good-tempered it is sure to stumble. It will then fall down and cut its knees to pieces within the first month. If it does not stumble, it is because it is full of rage

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and fury, using only two legs at a time, whilst the other pair are working out independent and awful problems of their own. This is the more exasperating, as the structure of the Arab horse is so very perfect, that it can, when put to it, perform wonders. But one cannot always be going full tilt on a runaway steed along a crowded thoroughfare. I have done so more than once, but I did not like it; and as to the other wayfarers, they fled, panic-stricken, in obedience to my vociferous warnings. Scenes of such mutual execration were so invariably the result of these misadventures, that of course I avoided them as much as possible.

I think the cause of Asiatic horses being such failures, is the way they are brought up by the native breeders. Nothing whatever is done to teach the animal its paces in early youth, and after four or five years of age it is no longer able to acquire a steadily correct and workmanlike action.

Such having long been the views which much painful experience had forced upon me, it was with no enviable feelings that I meditated investing some more of my hard-earned savings in another charger.

The advice I received beforehand from a numerous circle of friends and acquaintances was in itself, from its conflicting nature, enough to have bewildered a stronger brain than mine. But I had gone through it all many times before, so without much hesitation I selected an adviser who, besides being a first-rate horseman, was noted as a good judge of these beasts, and together we betook ourselves to visit 'The Stables.'

Now, as 'The Stables' are, in the opinion of at least half the British residents in the Presidency, the most important

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and interesting feature of which Bombay can boast, some description of them becomes necessary at this point of my narrative. There are a great many of these horse-marts all situated in or near the district known as Girgaum, which forms part of the native town that has to be traversed when going from the Fort and Esplanade to Byculla. The most esteemed and aristocratic of these dealers do business only in Arabs, all of which they represent to be of pure blood. There is, however, one grand establishment near the club for 'Walers,' as Australian horses are called, in honour, I believe, of New South Wales, whence the greater number of importations used to come. Then there are 'The Stables' which confess to 'Persians,' and others that are not ashamed to own to 'Country-breds.' All are presided over by some man who owns none of the beasts himself, but who endeavours to make a fortune out of the 'commission' of one pound fourteen that he charges each purchaser of a single animal, besides what he may get one way and another from the rough and unkempt breeders that annually throng his premises. There is such a strong family likeness between all these places, that the description of one will do for all, allowance being made for some variety in the quality of the steeds offered for sale. The chief difference lies between 'Walers' and the various Asiatic sorts, of which there are an endless gradation of kinds, but all more or less tarred with the same brush, too small, full of tricks, and, when not excited, untrustworthy in their paces. The Australians, on the other hand, though free from most of these defects, are not equal as a class to the saddle-horses of England, and they are very liable to fever when exposed freely to the action of the

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sun. My friend and I therefore decided on patronizing one of the chief importers of Arab horseflesh, and to his establishment we repaired at a suitable hour in the afternoon.

From the street an unpretending gate, such as one finds on barns in Europe, gave entrance, under the houses, to a wide unpaved passage, down one side of which seats were arranged, principally for the accommodation of the native sellers, who sat upon them and sipped black coffee in the intervals of business. Right and left of this roadway were arranged several hundreds of horses in closely serried ranks. They were secured by head and heel ropes, without which there would be incessant combats. There were a few loose-boxes, in which grand-looking horses were placed as a snare for the unwary, the real gems being carefully stowed away for the approval of those who keep great racing studs. With such a vast number of animals to choose from, and the limited space available for exhibiting them, it can be no wonder if many a purchaser should yield to a feeling of bewilderment.

Such beasts as are looked upon favourably, as they stand in the tethered rows, are brought out and galloped violently up and down the narrow passage, which may in its entire length be fifty yards by five in breadth. As the horses are all young, untrained, and full of fire, they rush madly up and down this sort of alley, with a native on their backs, who has much difficulty in preventing them from rushing against the wall at the inner end, or into the crowded street at the outer one, where the gate is always left open. Naturally, under such circumstances, they all show an action calculated to clear at every step whatever may lie in their path, while any

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faults they may display, you are told, must be excused on account of the extreme novelty of the situation in which they find themselves.

This and all the rest that they say may be true, or it may be false, so what is a man to do who is not blessed with a deeply-rooted faith in his own opinion? Why, rely on the judgment of a friend, of course. Accordingly I did so, and one wild figure after another whirled, like lightning, past my dazzled eyes. Sometimes the steed would swerve violently when close upon us, and then it was a mercy if there was a post or a good stout coffee-table to get behind. On they came, an endless succession of bays, chestnuts, and greys, with a few blacks, but not one pie or skew-bald did I ever see on this on any other occasion of visiting the Arab stables.

At last, after I had become perfectly giddy with trying to distinguish some difference other than of colour amongst all these flying forms, and inwardly deciding that they were all alike, I was suddenly, and to my great relief, told I was to buy a certain flea-bitten grey. The moment it was seen that my friend approved of this animal, it was backed up by all who were interested in the sale. 'Yes, yes, master, buy this 'os; this best 'os, very cheap,' etc. Even the head of the establishment, who advanced with Oriental gravity to conduct the bargaining, so frequently spoke of this beast as 'Best 'os,' that that became his name when I made him my own property for the sum of eighty pounds. It seemed a very wild sort of creature, and kept up a continual neighing, snorting, and plunging; but these symptoms of bad temper, I was assured, would disappear after living for a few days in a quiet stable.

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I certainly hoped that this prediction would be verified, for, with my bridle arm almost useless, and a drawn sword in the other hand, how could I, if the beast remained in his present frame of mind, correct the faults of the sepoys on parade with that judgment and temper so strongly insisted upon in the regulations. Was it not more likely that I should dash violently into their midst, and thus spoil those masterly manœuvres in whose development I was expected to assist. Time alone could solve this question, and as I had now nothing more to do in Bombay, I put myself, with all that belonged to me, into the train, and arrived without any *contretemps* at Ahmedabad. I had never visited this station before, and my first impression of it was favourable.

The cantonments and the country all around is very flat, and as the soil is sandy, it is free from the cracks and holes, often of great depth, which completely scar the surface of so many other districts. The ground was also free from those stones and rocks which cover the face of the earth in so many parts of the Bombay Presidency. In short, I found a country peculiarly well suited to riding, an exercise of which I was very fond. The horses, too, could be relieved of their shoes, which was very nice for them. Large and shady trees, principally of the mango kind, also abound in the neighbourhood of all the numerous villages that are scattered about the country.

Such being the general character of the whole province of Goozerat, my readers can well imagine that life there during the cold weather has many charms for those who like sport, and are not prevented by duty from indulging in it. In the vicinity of Ahmedabad itself, there is not

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sufficient cover to accommodate any of the large beasts of prey; but there are great tracts of coarse grass, out of which the wild boar may be turned, for the benefit of those who profess that finest of all sports, 'pig-sticking.' In the open country, large and frequent herds of antelope can be met with any day, within four or five miles of the cantonment. In pursuit of these animals I have spent many a pleasant holiday. The plan was to hire two good riding camels from the bazaar, to drive the best one myself, with a friend sitting behind me on the back seat, and be followed by the second animal, conducted by the camel man, and bearing my shikarie Lalla, together with the guns and a good basket of provisions. Thus we could scour the country in any direction we liked for the livelong day at the rate of six miles an hour.

The camels, having been fed and watered overnight, of course required no food. Yet they always got plenty, for, as soon as a herd was sighted, it was necessary to dismount, because the deer in this part of the world were very suspicious of people riding on dromedaries. Whilst, therefore, the stalking was going on, these animals would be hurried under cover of the nearest babul hedge, where they thoroughly enjoyed themselves by making a meal of thorns several inches long, and as sharp as needles, such being the camel's substitute for strawberries and cream. The country is very open, and we can see for miles in every direction, from the lofty back of a dromedary, so, about breakfast or luncheon time, there is no difficulty in steering for the shelter of a good clump of trees, where there is sure also to be a good well, perhaps even a sheet of water with wild-fowl

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upon it. In such a case, whilst the kettle was being boiled for tea, we would endeavour to shoot some duck or other water-fowl. However, during the hot weather, which set in soon after my arrival, only one species of such birds remained in the country. This was so singular a variety, that I think a short account of it may be of interest to the reader.

It is called the 'Nukta.' The drake is almost the size of a goose, and has a large black comb extending the whole length of the beak, and measuring two inches in height. The back and wings are of a dark metallic green, shot with bronze, whilst the neck and breast are white. He is a fine-looking fellow, as he floats on the water surrounded by the ladies of his harem, themselves poor-looking little drudges by comparison with their lord. They are no bigger than the common duck, their colours are a dingy copy of the male bird's, and his fine comb is reduced in them to a mere knob, no bigger than a nut. But if the appearance of these fowls is peculiar, their habits are much more so, for not only do they sit on the lofty boughs of forest trees, but they also nest in the same, often a long way from the water, and at a great height from the ground.

Lalla, on whose information I could implicitly rely, told me that one morning, as he was sitting over some water looking out for other game, he saw a fine male nukta resting on the water just outside the rushes in front of him. In a short time the hen bird came flying from the country towards him, carrying a freshly-hatched duckling in her bill. This she deposited in charge of the father, and then flew back to a distant mango tree, from the top of which she emerged with another, that was given over in the same way to the care of

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the drake. The mother repeated her journey many times, till, the nest being cleared, the pair, surrounded by a numerous family of fifteen or twenty, swam away into the weeds, and were seen no more. I feel that the reader who is interested in natural history may believe this story, for my Lalla was the real Lalla of Sycepoor, noted for his truthfulness and reliability, very different to the numerous other shikaries of other 'ilks,' who had taken his name without trying to emulate his good qualities. Against him of Burgaum, for instance, Ananias would have had but a feeble chance.

But the veracity of my native friend and follower was destined to receive corroboration other than that to be derived merely from a study of his really good and simple character. As these birds were not migratory, it followed as a matter of course that they must breed in the country. I therefore ordered Lalla to look out for a nest, and if he found one, to report the circumstance to me before in any way disturbing it.

One morning, then, he arrived at my quarters with the information that the desired discovery had been made, inasmuch as a female nukta was known to have arranged her domestic affairs in a hole in a certain mango tree, at such a height from the ground that it would be necessary to bind together the three longest ladders of the neighbouring village in order to reach it. I at once sent to the bazaar for a couple of brooding hens, and arranged a basket for each like a nest, with a chalk egg at the bottom of it to keep up their illusions.

Lalla was now instructed to have these stepmothers carried out to the foot of the tree, and cause the eggs of the

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wild bird to be handed down and placed under them at once, so that they might experience no chill. Then the baskets were to be very carefully conveyed into camp, where the domestic fowls would complete the process of incubation.

All these important arrangements were properly carried out, and the result was the arrival at my house of the two hens, at the head of a triumphal procession, each in charge of eleven eggs. This was another instance of the soundness of Lalla's information, for he had told me to expect at least that number. The process of hatching proved to have been far advanced, for, in less than a week from the date of capture, twenty-one infant nuktas appeared upon the scene all in one day.

Number twenty-two was evidently an after-thought, as that only emerged from the shell after a delay of two days. These little ducklings were not unlike the tame ones that we see every year in our own farmyards. They were very dark, with yellow stripes, and the whole twenty-two were as like one another as so many peas. In manners and customs they were different to the domestic sort to a bewildering extent.

What to give them to eat? That was the question which every moment became more harrowing. They were born with a ravenous appetite; that was evident from the way they rushed into their large flat pan of water, and began frantically to shovel with their beaks, and scratched the bottom with their sharp little claws.

I put everything into the water that seemed to my mind suitable to a duck's babies. Flour, pounded grain, finely-chopped vegetables, minced sheep's liver, were speedily presented; but all in vain. It was evident they had not got

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what they wanted. The poor little things would every now and then, as if moved by a common instinct, suddenly form a group in front of the hen, and look up in her face, appealing for that help which, from ignorance of their wants, she was powerless to give. Sometimes one or more of the little creatures would dart with extraordinary rapidity to the top of the high basket-like coop that was standing close by, at which times the resemblance to ordinary ducks was reduced to a minimum. On the second day they became visibly weaker and lighter in weight, and soon some of them died from absolute starvation. It was really dreadful; but neither doctors, cooks, nor sportsmen, who were all called in, could suggest any nutriment that had not been tried. Already there were eleven little pluffy corpses, and the others could not survive much longer.

I was quite distracted, when a happy thought suddenly struck my intelligent young friend, Arthur Ford.

'Worms!' he said; 'worms are probably what they are trying to scratch up out of the ground.'

To seize an old knife, and rush to a hideous drain that I knew of at the back of the house, was the work of an instant only. One of the largest worms on record was speedily unearthed, and dropped in the midst of the poor little famished mites. It was delightful to see them pounce on it. There was no difficulty about the carving; each got hold and tugged till it got as much as it could swallow. Of course a huge banquet of these reptiles was speedily provided, and the young nuktas at once assumed a very different appearance. The next thing we thought of was chopped fish, and this also proved highly acceptable. It was not long before

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they could take grain, and then there was no more difficulty about rearing them. They grew up, and some of them are, I believe, alive at this moment.

The city of Ahmedabad differs from most other thoroughly native towns, in that it contains many good houses, surrounded by extensive grounds, and inhabited by considerable numbers of English civilians. It is separated from the cantonments by about three miles of road, lined on each side by a row of noble trees. These form an ever-shaded avenue, which much facilitates the visiting that goes on between the two settlements in the day-time. The way is bordered by a running stream, from which water is taken to lay the dust. Myriads of green parroquets and large troops of the handsome 'Lungoor' monkeys give life to the scene.

At night, especially during the stormy period of the monsoon, intense darkness reigns along this route. So black, indeed, is the shade, that every native firmly believes that it is peopled, at such times, either by the wicked spirits of the departed, whose sins allow them not to rest, or by dreadful goblins, who have never known human shape or feelings.

This road had to be traversed once or twice every week in the year, at night, by the field-officer going his rounds, for in the city itself was a circle of guards that had to be visited and inspected. Not having a wheeled vehicle, I generally rode the whole distance, though I always previously sent on to the gate of the town the infantry escort required to constitute me a 'grand rounds.'

On such occasions I had no time to think of ghosts, for 'Bestos,' in spite of all the comforting prophecies that had

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been made to the contrary, was 'Bestos' still. His voice had a compass of at least three octaves, and the top notes were of such power as to shake me in the saddle. With this instrument he kept up an insane concert the whole time one was on his back, besides which he would almost throw himself down with pretended fright, whenever he divined that my thoughts were far away.

I mention these little circumstances as a warning to any man who is going to buy a horse at 'The Stables,' for though he may get a better, he will most likely get a much worse animal even than this one; for Bestos was quite sound, good-looking, and never did more than threaten to run away or rear. To be sure he would stumble heavily in his canter, but still he never once came down on his knees.

Of course it would have been madness to have parted with a beast possessing so many more good qualities than any other I was likely to get in his place. Hence the many night rounds and other duties that I performed upon his back.

On one occasion, however, I happened to be the temporary possessor of a carriage hired for the use of some friends, so I took advantage thereof, when my tour of duty came round, to send on this wonderful charger, with his groom and the escort, to the city gate, where my imposing duties would commence. On arriving at the place of meeting, and alighting from my conveyance, I perceived at once that something was wrong with my little party. A large pariah dog, it seems, had come at great speed from the direction of the country, and had fixed on to the uplifted hand of my unfortunate groom, and, before anything could be done to ward off its attack, it further severely lacerated other parts of his body.

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The brute then made off in the darkness of the night, and nothing more was ever seen or heard of it. Of course the first thing I thought of and dreaded was hydrophobia, so, as there were European hospitals in the town, I at once took the poor man to the principal one, and had all his wounds cauterized.

Time went on; the groom's wounds were soon healed, and his nerves completely restored to that calm which is the reward of Oriental apathy and fatalism. He believed in destiny, I in caustic; and thus this sinister adventure was soon buried in oblivion.

About six weeks had passed over our unsuspicious heads, when I went one morning to feed the young nuktas, who were enjoying themselves in the verandah outside the stables. Whilst engaged in this congenial occupation, I observed one of my horse-keepers moving about in a restless way, and then standing still and staring at me. It proved to be Gopal, the attendant of Bestos.

As soon as I spoke to him he became much more excited, and began hurrying up and down the verandah. I accused him of being tipsy, for I had once before seen him the worse for liquor. This charge he repudiated in such a strange and pleading voice, that I at once felt I was on the wrong track. His eyes, too, wore a startling aspect. They were dry, wide-open, and of extraordinary brilliancy.

As I stood looking wonderingly at him, my butler stole up behind me, and whispered, 'Don't you remember the mad dog?'

At once the dreadful truth burst upon me. The poor man was doomed to death by hydrophobia. Of course I

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now spoke very kindly to him, which, however, only seemed to make him much worse. Intense misery seemed to pervade his whole being.

Over and over again he exclaimed that he had no friend in the world but me, his master, for whom he was ready to do anything. I observed that he never once referred to what was really the matter with him. He only wept without tears, and entreated of me not to send him away.

This request I tried to comply with, but, as he got worse, I found it impossible to take care of him in my own quarters. So the regimental doctor was obliged to remove him to the hospital, whither he was conveyed, much against his will, in a palankeen. Here everything possible was done for him; but when I went to see him the next morning, I was shocked at the ravages this awful malady had made on him.

The poor fellow recognised me, and, running up to me, again began his heart-rending lamentations, varied now with spasmodic opening of the mouth and the utterance of cries really not unlike the howling of an animal. He so begged and entreated of me to take him home with me, that it was not in the power of human nature to resist. So I spoke to the doctor, and said I would get a sufficient number of men of the sufferer's own caste to restrain him when required, if he would sanction his removal. He replied that there could be no objection to this course, but that it would be necessary, before starting, that the patient should have some morphia injected under the skin.

Poor Gopal seemed, without attending to anything, still to understand, as if by intuition, all that was said, even in a foreign tongue, for no sooner was the little instrument

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required for the operation brought out, than the unfortunate man seized my hand, and entreated that nothing should be done to him.

'These people,' he said, 'are all my enemies; they will kill me.'

'But,' I replied, 'this process will not hurt you, and it is only by submitting to it that you can go home with me.'

'Then,' he said, 'you must do it for me. If you do it, all will be well, for I know you would never do me any harm.'

On this I took firmly but gently hold of his arm, and so placed myself that, as he fixed his burning eyes intently on my face, he could not see the hospital assistant, who adroitly pierced the skin a little above the elbow, and forced in the soothing drops. In another minute he was sitting with me in the bullock-coach, and being driven to that home which I am afraid he had been pining for all night.

Owing to the gratification of his wishes, and also, no doubt, to the morphia, I had none of that trouble with him that I had expected. The poor fellow went quietly into his dark but clean little room, and there, surrounded by his friends, he expired in the course of that same day.

I have described this painful event at length, partly in the hope that thereby some, if ever so little, light may be thrown on this fatal disease, and partly because the symptoms were so nearly repeated in another equally sad case that I was destined to witness. If I am right in thinking that the symptoms are alike in all sufferers, it would lead one to suppose that if ever a cure were found, it would be efficacious in all cases. The victim in the second instance was a woman

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who got dreadfully mauled by a mad wolf, an account of which I propose to give in a subsequent volume.

Mature reflection has led me to believe that hydrophobia may not be absolutely incurable. As the same treatment seems always to be pursued, and that with an invariably fatal result, is it not time to try a change of plans? It seems to me that the natural desire of the sufferer to rush about should be encouraged to the utmost, and that this might be alternated with the hottest of Turkish baths. Instead of this, as far as I know, personal restraint, and sedatives, administered with the sole object of enabling life to ebb easily, is the invariable line taken by the 'Faculty.'

I know of at least one reliable case of a dog struggling through hydrophobia, so why should not a human being do the same, if similarly treated? At any rate, experiments might be tried without any cruelty on animals thus affected, if a suitable building were constructed for their accommodation. Of course, having been a traveller all my life, I have been obliged to meet every case of rabies in my own kennel by shooting the poor beast through the head.

In Ahmedabad and its neighbourhood there are many interesting Hindoo temples in good repair, besides many picturesque ruins. There is one called, if I remember rightly, the Lall Bāgh, within a short evening drive of the cantonments, and very well worth a visit. One of the mortuary chambers was remarkable for its windows, of which there were a great many of perforated white marble, resembling lace-work, and each of a different pattern.

But the principal group of such buildings is to be seen at a place called Sirkej, about ten or twelve miles distant, and

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arrived at by a road that at first sight looks like a good one, but which does not improve upon acquaintance. Owing to the sandy nature of the soil, the ruts are deep, and all the worse to negotiate for being concealed by a thick covering of dust. It is much more suited to riding than driving upon; and the kit, if you mean to put up for a night or so in the temples, can travel either on the backs of camels or in country carts drawn by the huge Goozerat bullocks, for which this part of the world is famous. The tombs and temples, which make a spacious residence for any one who likes to go and stay there, are enclosed in a large and well-kept courtyard, which on one side overhangs a lake, or tank, as all sheets of water, whether great or small, are called in India. These premises make a very nice retreat for a small party to live in when out for a little change into the jungle. The day can be spent in stalking antelope, shooting small game, and even in the noble pursuit of pig-sticking, whilst afternoon tea, and such-like moments of repose, may be enlivened by taking shots with the rifle at the snouts of the alligators, which are continually appearing above the surface of the smooth, deep water of the lake.

There are no panthers, bears, or tigers anywhere within a considerable distance of Ahmedabad; and yet there was some large wild beast or other, that had for a long time past made, almost every night, attacks upon human beings. I had seen notices in the newspapers of this mysterious creature, long before I arrived at the station, and was soon in receipt of extraordinary verbal accounts of the same. The beast, whatever may have been its form or nature, was never seen except at night, but then often very plainly, for, having no

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fear of man, it would boldly advance upon any one it took a fancy to, without caring much whether he were asleep or walking about quite on the alert.

There was no part of our open camp safe from the inroads of this brute, but its favourite point of attack was the site occupied by the lines and bazaars of the native regiments. These were built upon the bank of the great river Saburmutti, that flows through the town and camp, making a nice jungly line of country by which wild beasts could come from a distance during the night, and prowl about in the very heart of civilisation, if they were so minded. Children were frequently pounced upon and carried away by this animal, whilst many full-grown men were severely mauled, and some, no doubt, killed by it.

Most of those who were favoured with a sight of this scourge during the dusky hours of the night, were so terrified as to be unable to give any coherent account of it in the day-time.

Once a servant of mine, who happened to look out of his hut one night about two o'clock, saw it standing in front of his door. He said it was large, with long ears, and eyes that shone like fire. He added that he was afraid of this apparition, and slammed his door in its face.

It was really amusing to listen to the various opinions expressed, both by the European and native inhabitants, on the real nature of this uncanny nocturnal foe. The majority of the white people who had not seen it were convinced it was an animal known as a 'grave-digger;' whereas the natives 'plumped' almost to a man in favour of a semi-supernatural monster, known to them as a 'Boot.'

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As I was well aware that neither one nor the other could achieve the feats performed, probably every night, somewhere or other by this monster, I consulted that ripe shikarie Lalla, who had never yet led me astray.

'Sahib,' said my valued native friend, 'the animal which has become a source of so much danger to the camp and city is nothing more than a very large hyæna, whose foot-prints I have always seen plainly on visiting the scenes of its crimes. But unfortunately the marks it leaves on the ground are so similar to the tracks of a large dog, that only an experienced hunter can tell the difference; but to a professional "puggie" (tracker) the variation is so great, that he cannot understand how any one can hesitate between the two.'

To this I replied, 'It is well, Lalla; I quite agree with everything you have said; and though we shall probably get no credit, and the offered reward of twenty pounds will probably be refused you, we must, for our own amusement, and at my expense, set about the circumvention of this disturber of the peace. And now, tell me how you intend to commence the proceedings.'

'Well,' replied Lalla, 'the moon is now at the full, so I shall begin this very night by walking about the Kunkria Talao (tank), in company with an assistant whom I shall hire for the occasion. It is my belief that the creature lives in some of the many holes and corners that abound in this neighbourhood; and my object, of course, will be to mark down his abode, by, if possible, seeing him come out of it.'

The Kunkria Talao was about four miles from my house, and consisted of a large sheet of water about half a mile from the other side of the native town.

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In India, one is often struck with the strange mingling of teeming, and even crowded human life, with the existence in its very centres of animals between whom and man there is, and always has been, war to the knife. The denizens of the forest seem as though they had always the boldest of their leaders on the watch, ready to take up their abode on any spot that might come to be deserted by the lords of creation. Night, especially in the dark and stormy period of the monsoon, is the time for them to carry on their operations.

Once, on returning home late on foot in the large cantonment of Mhow, the moon burst suddenly from behind a dark cloud, and I found myself confronted on the high road by a fine wolf. He looked quite placidly at me, and then trotted off through a neighbour's hedge, whose servants, I hoped, had shut up the goats. But I was sure he would range about till he found something.

The canine tribes, such as jackals, wolves, and hyænas, may be considered as the *avant-couriers* of the jungle. They are peculiarly fitted for this duty, not only by reason of the great distances that they like to travel at night, but also because they are capable, should dawn surprise them, of retreating for miles across the plains, at a pace that the fleetest horse is not always able to match.

The Kunkria Talao is a spot highly suggestive of this kind of border life. In the day-time it is, in appearance at least, entirely the property of man. A well-kept highroad leads up to it from the crowded city. Its waters, which must be three-quarters of a mile or more in circumference, have been surrounded by terraced steps of masonry leading down to the

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shore; whilst the island in the centre has been adorned by a well-built cottage for festive purposes, and connected with the mainland by a fine, broad, and well-raised walk. No place looks less likely than this for the abode of wild beasts, and, but for the superior intelligence of one's dogs, one might drive there every evening without suspecting the presence of anything beyond a stray sheep or goat. The faithful hound, however, immediately points out to you that the land side of the road round the tank is bounded by a steep bank of exceedingly rough rocks, covered with profuse vegetation, in the midst of which he smells at least a rat. Many a time have I amused myself here of an evening, hunting up jackals and hares, which were sometimes killed in spite of the difficulties of the ground. Mixed with the rocks were some deep caves, which from time to time were known to shelter hyænas; and it was principally to watch these that Lalla and his attendants proceeded to pass the night in prowling about the Kunkria Talao.

Early the next morning they appeared at my quarters, looking very much excited. 'Sir,' said my worthy factotum, 'the brutes were there sure enough, but we could not see whence they had started; we met them suddenly on the road. The large male animal looked extremely dangerous. He stood with his bristles up, quite close to us, and seemed as though he were about to spring, notwithstanding that we all raised our lathies (iron-shod sticks) at him. We could see his jaws trembling, and his eyes gleaming with rage. You must certainly give me a written permit to carry a gun in future, otherwise we may get the worst of the encounter.'

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After this there could be no reasonable doubt as to what animal it was that was doing all the mischief, so I gave Lalla one of my guns, and told him to devote himself entirely to the discovery of the enemy's stronghold; but this he would probably never have done merely by walking about at night, for even during the brightest moonlight one can really distinguish very little.

We had not, however, long to wait for something to guide us in our search, for, only a few days after the rencontre above described, there was a great outcry raised in the regimental bazaar, whence a child had been carried off in the night.

My old shikarie was on the spot at dawn, before the traffic had obliterated the marks upon the ground, and he at once saw the footprints of a large hyæna. These he instantly commenced to follow up, and they led him by a circuitous route to a nullah about four and a half miles distant from the camp, and about a mile from the other side of the city. The tracks led into a hole in the bank of this ravine, which ran through a cotton-field into the river, and was destitute of all trees, rocks, or other cover. Fortunately a solitary but stout little thorn of the babul tribe grew to a height of about twelve feet on the opposite side, and afforded a close view of the suspected hole, from which it was not more than ten or fifteen yards distant. Into this tree climbed Lalla as soon as it got dark, prepared to spend a nice cheerful night by himself, for there was no accommodation for company. He saw nothing emerge from the mouth of this underground tunnel, as he had not taken up his station early enough. His object was to see the brute

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come back from its nightly expedition, and take up its quarters for the day. And I must say I should have liked to have seen what Lalla saw in return for his patience and perseverance.

At about two o'clock, when the smooth turf bottom of the nullah was brilliantly lighted by the moon, he saw coming along it, all unsuspicious of a human eye being fixed upon them, a nice little family of hyænas. The father, a large and powerful animal, led the way with a big fresh-killed pariah dog in his great jaws. Behind him came his wife and two children. They all entered the dark opening, and disappeared into that hideous abode which I shall describe farther on.

Such was the report brought to me by Lalla at the early hour of four o'clock one morning in the month of May 1879. One of the advantages connected with life in the 'gorgeous East' is that all establishments, great or small, are prepared to march off anywhere at a moment's notice. You have only to hurry into your clothes, mount your horse, and as you are starting along the road, say to your butler, 'Follow me to Jericho.' If the movement is to be for ever, you must accompany this mandate with a bag of rupees, out of which to settle your monthly account, and you need take no further trouble.

The reader will therefore not be surprised to hear that in half an hour from receiving the summons, I and Lalla found ourselves journeying along the road, followed by a long and motley train. First there was Lalla, flanked by two men carrying pickaxes; then came Curreem, my permanent gun-bearer, who was also an accomplished taxidermist, in

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charge, however, this time of a collection of spears only, for I would never use firearms against anything of the canine species. After Curreem came three dog-boys, who were, notwithstanding the term of boys, powerful men, called in the native tongue 'Kuttewallas.' These were presided over by the one called 'Lumboo,' a tall fellow with only one eye, who through living with me for ten years became very handy in the management of the canine species. The dogs themselves were such splendid animals, that I mean to describe them and their many great and devoted deeds in another volume. Besides these people, there would generally be a small group with a basket of provisions, with skins full of drinking water, and one of them always carrying a thickly-wadded umbrella and a French novel. The two latter were the most deadly of all the various weapons, for without them I should always have succumbed either to the sun or want of patience.

Owing to the extremely early hour at which we started, it was still dusk, as, followed by this motley queue, I wound my way under the beautiful avenue of trees leading to the city through which we had to pass. After emerging from the town, Lalla guided the party along a suburban road leading past some large cotton-mills, with their tall chimneys and other European adjuncts. It was close to one of these buildings that we turned off sharp to the right, and entered a nullah that led through a large tract of cotton-fields (on which the crops were still standing) towards the great river bed of the Saburmutti.

The ravine was a small and insignificant-looking one, being quite devoid of rocks, stones, and vegetation, whilst

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the rounded banks were nowhere more than twenty feet in height.

We had not proceeded more than three hundred yards down this natural sort of sunk road, when Lalla stopped and said, 'Here we are.'

We had just passed a spot where the watercourse separated into two, and between which the land lay like a kind of delta or promontory. We were in the left arm, and there, in the right bank, was a single round, smooth black hole, not more than two and a half feet in diameter. 'There,' said Lalla, pointing to this sinister-looking orifice, 'these pests are all in here; and if your honour will only give the order, I will dig them all out in no time (ek dum), and you can either spear them as they come out, or you can run them with the greyhounds, as you think fit.'

No doubt this would have sounded very feasible to an inexperienced person, but I knew what digging almost always meant, and never resorted to it except in extreme cases, and then only with a dreadful sense of oppression.

'Don't you think,' I said, 'you could, now that you know where these beasts live, watch their movements, and put me on to them with my dogs, some day in the early morning, when they happen to be out late enough to be seen?'

'Sahib!' was the reply, uttered in tones of virtuous indignation, 'the father of this family is a born rogue and thief. Do you think he has ever seen daylight, or ever will see it, unless I dig him out for you now? Think, too, what luck it is that they have taken up their quarters here, for if they were living among the rocks at the Kunkria Talao, which is not far off, and is doubtless often visited by them,

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we should now be without the chance of either digging or of undertaking any other operations whatever.'

I felt the truth of all this, and as there could be no doubt that it would be a really good work to make an end of this dangerous and harassing brute, I gave my consent to this arduous business. 'But,' I said, 'you must go to the town at once, and fetch out not less than twenty men and an overseer, with plenty of mining tools; for it will work out to a heavy job, I am certain.'

On receiving this order, Lalla vanished at once to fulfil it, and I proceeded to commence operations with the few men and tools we had brought with us.

As I mounted above the hole on to the flat tableland in the bifiurcation of the nullah, I observed that some one had evidently attempted to get these beasts out before, for there were several pits, sunk to a depth of five or six feet, and all bearing upon the underground passage to the hyæna's home, wherever that might turn out to be. But for want of Lalla, an umbrella, and a French novel, the former operator had failed, and, judging by appearances, the place had not been touched for a year or two at least.

Long before my worthy chief returned with his working party, I had discovered how utterly powerless we should have been against this subterranean citadel without a regular siege train. The more we dug, the harder and more compressed the soil got, till it was but little easier to work than rock itself.

Our feeble efforts had subsided into little more than a pretence of doing something, when Lalla appeared, bursting with confidence, at the head of his crew.

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'Well,' I said, 'how long do you think you will be in unearthing these thieves and murderers?'

'Oh,' he said, 'you will see in an hour, or an hour and a half, I will expose these infamous creatures to the light of day.' And with this he turned his forces on with great spirit, to dig down on a spot indicated by a long rod introduced through the entrance, and reaching as far as the first turning. At the expiration of an hour, however, they had failed to break into the roof of the tunnel; so, as the sun was already getting hot, I began to look about for some shade for myself and the dogs. The small tree in which Lalla had passed the night was but little better than a point of attraction for the sun's rays, but just below it the bank rose to a height of twenty feet, and beetled over at the top, so as to promise an impervious shelter for hours to come. Here I anchored myself, and brought the French novel to bear on the situation.

For a long time its entrancing pages so enthralled my attention, that I was but dimly conscious of the dull thud of the pickaxes, working ceaselessly at a few yards from me, nor did I realize the constantly-increasing irritation of my skin, which, if I had thought at all, I should have ascribed, as also the fidgeting of the dogs, to the great heat of the atmosphere. At last, however, this latter symptom became so urgent, that I was suddenly recalled from the world of fiction to the reality of fleas. I and my poor dogs were swarming with them! We were evidently occupying a favourite lounge of the hyænas, which they kept clear of any débris or other litter. I must here inform my readers that I am not above taking notice of a flea! Now these were

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very different to the beautiful polished black fellows whose agility we all know and admire so much. My present tormentors were quite red, besides being weak and thin-looking. They were languid, too, and were much more addicted to creeping than hopping. From all of which I gather that fleas, like all other things, are modified by their food and the circumstances of their existence! The hyænas seemed to have some sort of erratic notions of tidiness, as there were great quantities of bones and withered hides of animals collected in different nooks and corners about the place. We naturally searched for some trace of human remains, but we found none; so I suppose that any small children whom they destroyed, they devoured before reaching home.

The friendly shade of the embankment being no longer available, I was preparing to make the best I could of the wadded umbrella on another spot, when I was informed that there was a small empty bungalow in a garden close by, in which I and the dogs could be made quite comfortable whilst the mining operations were being proceeded with.

To this retreat I betook myself, on the understanding that I should be called directly the probing rod gave any indication that the animals were being come up with.

Hours thus elapsed, and the cooler period of the afternoon was reached without any herald from the seat of war!

So, at about four o'clock p.m., I again proceeded to the spot, and found that my people had sunk the first shaft to a depth of eight or nine feet, and had thereby got into the subterranean passage. From the hole now made they had ascertained the new line of direction, and had more than half completed another excavation, which Lalla confidently

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anticipated would, when finished, enable us to terminate our labours by despatching the animal in any way we thought fit. For of course the destruction of this most dangerous and skulking brute was our sole object. Sport had nothing to do with the matter.

The second hole, however, proved deeper than the first, and the ground still harder, so that, notwithstanding an increase in the number of miners, it was nearly dark before we were gratified by seeing the pickaxe break through the tunnel below.

The long pliant rod was now eagerly thrust in by Lalla himself, who rose up from the experiment with a very elongated countenance.

'Sahib,' he said, 'this burrow really seems to go on for ever; I must have got this rod in nearly twenty feet, and yet there is nothing to stop its further progress. Of course we can do nothing more to-night.'

We therefore made the following arrangement. Lalla with his adjutants and the twenty or thirty coolies (labourers) would bivouac round the mouth of the hole, which would be banked up so as only to leave space enough for the inhabitants to get air, though from what I afterwards saw I thought they must require little if any of this fluid.

Then the dog-boys, spear-bearers, and my other servants would retire to the empty bungalow, which was only on the other side of the field, whilst I would canter back to camp, and return to the scene of action by dawn on the morrow. This scheme was duly carried out, and much the same performance was gone through on the second day as on the first. The two or three friends whom I had induced to

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accompany me, in the belief that the denouement must now be close at hand, were unable to hold out, even with the aid of cold 'pegs' plentifully and gratuitously administered to keep up their drooping spirits, and I was soon left to conduct the further operations alone.

During this second day there were many indications to show that we were on the right track. In the course of our digging and probing with sticks and spears, we came upon frequent depôts of bones, in some cases amounting to skeletons, and emitting such a fearful stench, that, deprived as the burrow was of all ventilation, it was simply impossible for anything with lungs to exist for five minutes in such an atmosphere.

What then, I would ask of my scientific critics, have hyænas in the place of those respiratory organs?

That a whole family lived and flourished in these strange quarters, was proved during this very day, for on one of the coolies pushing a spear up a side passage, it ran into something soft, which on being got out proved to be the two cubs, looking quite strong and well, notwithstanding all they must have endured during the siege. Unfortunately both were wounded, though but slightly, in the stomach; so, to prevent them from dying a slow and painful death from inflammation, I thought it right to put them out of their misery; otherwise, I would have brought them up, and educated them to the level of the requirements of good society. Of course, as soon as we had actually captured the young people, we thought the parents must be within reach. But this was not so. The indicating rod still pointed onwards, and night closed over us for the second time without reaching the

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cunning old robber, whom we had now become so eager to capture.

After so much labour, I must say I did wish that it might charge alive on to the end of my spear, but I thought in all probability we should come upon its body dead from suffocation, fright, and hunger. Imagine any animal confined in such a heat and stench for two days and nights without either food or water!

But it was a criminal steeped in crimes, and there was no other means of stopping his career of wickedness than by persevering in the course we had adopted.

I confess that I was heartily glad when, on the morning of the third day, soon after I had retired to the shelter of the bungalow, an excited native rushed in, and said, 'It is all right, we can touch him with the end of the stick; he will soon be done for now!'

I at once sent in word to the cantonments, and my friend Captain Bowles immediately came out to join me.

The position, as it turned out, was singularly well adapted to a picturesque finale. The long, narrow underground passage had led right across the high land lying between the two branches of the nullah, and had terminated within a foot or so of the opposite chasm, into which the animal could have dropped by means of a few minutes' vigorous scratching, and thus have saved his iniquitous life. Either he did not know this, or he had perhaps burrowed to the utmost of his power to get as far as he had. However that may have been, we could now, by descending into the ravine, and placing an ear against the scarped earthen bank, distinctly

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hear the heavy panting, by means of which the hunted brute caused the thin wall of his prison to vibrate.

Whilst we were thus standing, we were joined by a third gentleman, whose real name, Jones, I think I may venture to give. He was a young engineer, belonging to a neighbouring cotton-mill, and he told us that about three weeks previously, as he, his brother, and another English engineer had been walking in the vicinity of these fields, just after dusk, they had been suddenly confronted by this family of hyænas. The male at once came on to attack Mr. Jones, but as he raised his stick energetically, it swerved, rose on its hind legs, and seized his friend by the shoulder. Together they beat the beasts off, but the wounded man was much hurt, and, as he afterwards informed me, had been laid up for a fortnight in hospital, before he was sufficiently recovered to move about again.

Mr. Jones, who informed me that he and his friends had long made fruitless search for their assailants, was naturally very much pleased at the unexpected prospect of being able, in the course of an hour or so, to avenge with certainty the injuries which his comrade had sustained. The finishing strokes, however, took longer than we had expected, as it was necessary to get very close to the beast before it was likely that he would consent to bolt.

It was, in fact, close on sunset when Lalla said, 'All is now ready; if you give the order, I will, with the pickaxe, break in the crust of the outer bank, where you can hear the animal panting, and he will immediately rush forth. Only say what you have decided to do.'

Of course the temptation was very great to let him out,

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give him a start, and then hunt him with the dogs. But the ground was broken, and surrounded by fields of standing cotton. If one lost sight of him for a moment, he might succeed in retreating to the caves of the Kunkria Talao, which was not very far distant; or he might know of some good retreats quite close at hand. So, considering the nature of this particular animal, and all the mischief he was in the habit of doing, I decided against giving him any chance. I therefore took a spear with a deep socket that terminated in a cross-bar, and, supported by Mr. Jones, placed myself immediately in front of where the new hole was to be, whilst Captain Bowles, with a stout ordinary hog-spear, occupied the ground just above.

The officiating coolie now plied the axe with all his strength, the earth fell like a curtain, and daylight streamed into this hitherto secure haunt. The hyæna, with glaring eyeballs and its mane erect, uttered low sounds of rage as it rushed towards me. I received it on my spear, and in spite of having only one sound arm, I held it against the wall of its den till my friend, who was posted above, drove his spear with great force through its shoulder-blades. This killed it, but not before it had mashed the tough spear with its powerful jaws into shreds, as though it had been sugar-cane. The creature was now dragged out, and certainly he looked the villain he was. Owing to the heat of the past months, he was naked with the exception of the huge mane that stood up intact from his ears to his tail, whilst the crushed spear was so firmly embedded in his muscular body that no efforts could dislodge it. There he lay, with his black face and long ears, dead, and looking very grim. Owing to his coat being in such a

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bad state, his skull was the only trophy which I could keep, and that I still have.

What had become of the mother of this family was never known with certainty. My dog-boys and other regular servants were so unanimous and positive in their assertions that she had escaped at the beginning of the proceedings, that I believe she did so. They asserted that on the evening of the first day, when I had left, and Lalla had also gone to fetch something, they had heard a frightful clamour among the coolies, whose very words they had been able to distinguish at the bungalow: 'Are bapre, jata jata, wah wah,' meaning, 'Good gracious! it is gone, it is gone; what now, what now?'

This, it seems, was shrieked frantically in every tone, and my people had no doubt that the missing female had succeeded in making a rush and escaping. The charge, however, was vehemently denied, and the coolies explained on solemn affirmation that they had merely raised these cries to signify that Lalla had taken his departure, and they were afraid he would not make a successful journey in quest of what they wanted for sleeping out all night.

On this statement being made, Lumboo wagged his head, and rolled his solitary eye in a manner that said clearly, 'This is another instance of Oriental duplicity.'

'Well,' I said, 'where is the missing beast?' To which Lalla replied that it must have got up some siding which they had failed to hit off, and there perished miserably. With this explanation I was obliged to rest satisfied, and as I was convinced that the old male we had killed was the real offender, and the author of all the innumerable attacks on

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human beings that we had heard of, there was not much to regret in the escape of his consort.

The sepoys of my regiment were all jubilant when I brought the head of the hyæna into camp, and from that time they and their children resumed their cherished habit of sleeping out-of-doors. Moreover, neither they nor any one else was ever molested again, for whenever there was a rumour of any person having been attacked, I always sent at once to the Kotwal, or native magistrate, to make inquiries, and was invariably informed that the reports were without foundation.

Under these circumstances, I think it was hard that the £20 reward should have been refused me. It was offered by Government for the destruction of this obnoxious beast, and I should have at least shared the sum with poor Lalla. We were not, however, disappointed, for Lalla had worked to please me, whilst I had laboured for my own gratification alone. I expected no praise, and far less payment, for I was well aware that most people would refuse to believe that a hyæna would attack a human creature, even though they themselves were being devoured by one. Such is the force of preconceived opinion.

This incident of the man-eating hyæna brings me to the end of my present subject, for it was about this time that I voluntered for employment with the transport train in Afghanistan, where the war was going on.

My services were accepted, and in two days and a half from the time of receiving the order, I was on my way to that wild, melancholy, and distant land. This may seem to those who may deign to peruse these lines a most matter-of-

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fact proceeding, and one scarcely requiring comment in the life of a soldier. To this I can only reply, that the most intelligent of readers cannot expect to be always right. Of course I was most anxious to go to the front, or I should not have applied to be sent. Nevertheless, when the order did come, I was thrown into a state of great excitement, as I did not see how I should get through the winding up of my voluminous affairs in the short space of two days that I had allowed myself to get ready in, and which I was determined to make any sacrifices rather than exceed.

Why my preparations should have been so ponderous, before I could make a satisfactory start, and all the experiences and adventures that I met with in the enemy's country, will be related in a future volume, to be entitled 'Afghanistan and Wolf-Hunting.'

THE END.

HOWE BROTHERS, PRINTERS, GATESHEAD-ON-TYNE.

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