him back. Resenting their interference in his plans, he charged at them, knocked one over and passed over his body, luckily without staying to inflict any further injury than that he had already caused.

When the shout arose that a man was attacked, all three of the hunters ran from their positions towards the spot to which they were directed. They found the man lying on the ground and moaning; but though the bear had left the impress of his claws on the fellow's chest, making several deep holes in the flesh, they soon saw that he was not dangerously wounded, and indeed more frightened than seriously hurt. Giving orders that he should be conveyed to the gosein's hut and there have the wounds well bathed with cold water, they continued in pursuit of the bear under the guidance of one or two men who exchanged a running fire of questions and answers with the look-outs, now springing along from point to point and marking the bear's course. Dubious though the directions and signals thus given might appear to the uninitiated, they were quite understood by the men who accompanied the hunters.

Stopping now and then for guidance as to their further course, the party went along at a fast walk or jog trot. They had been told to make a short cut across to a large ravine, which they reached;

and, after a few half intelligible shouts, were assured by their guides that the bear was said to be in the ravine and moving parallel with them. Accordingly they kept along one side of it, hoping for some opportunity of getting a shot. The place was filled with trees, and above their tops on the other side could be discerned the upper part of the cliff which formed its boundary.

The hunters could now distinctly hear the beast as, having slackened his pace, he made his way apparently along the base of the cliff. The crackling of the dried leaves and sticks plainly indicated his whereabouts, but as yet no view of his body was afforded them. Any attempt to approach him by descending into the ravine would have been useless, and only caused his more rapid flight, leaving them far in the rear before the manœuvre could be executed. All they could do was to keep on their present course and await some chance of a view.

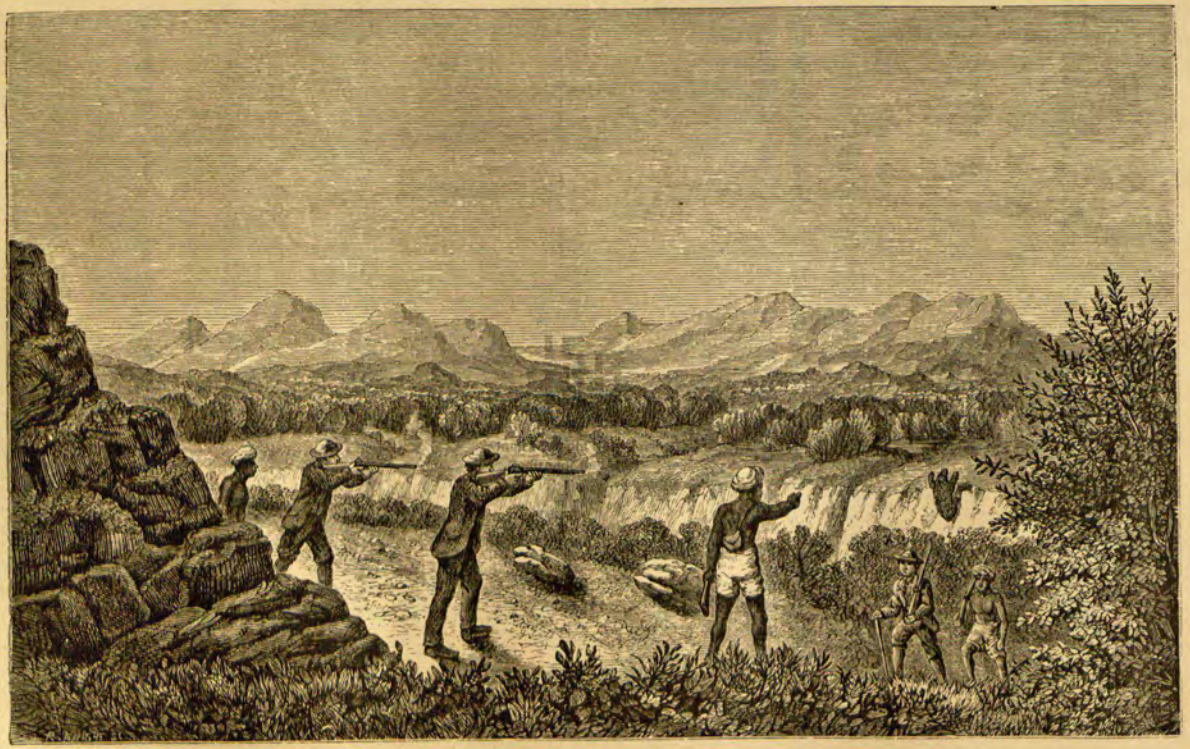
Mackenzie had been unable to keep up with his lighter companions, and was now lagging considerably in the rear; when the leaders pulled up to listen, as the sound of the animal's progress had ceased.

Suddenly Norman cried "There he is!" and Hawkes in the same instant caught a sight of the bear appearing above the tops of the trees. It was

visible in its whole length and breadth, stretched to its utmost extent, as it strove to drag itself on to the top of the broken cliff, and presented a most tempting shot. It had surmounted all but the last ledge, and was in the very act of scrambling up that—in which case it would probably have escaped in the neighbouring jungle—when the two rifles, fired so exactly together as to give but one sound, simultaneously sent forth their death messengers.

Up went the animal's fore-paws, and with a loud roar he toppled over and disappeared behind the foliage of the trees. Headlong he fell into the underwood at the foot of the cliff; nor did his progress stop there, for the crashing of bushes and his incessant growling announced that his involuntary career was unchecked, and continued down the slope into the lowest depths of the ravine. There he managed to recover himself, and slunk back on the line by which he had advanced. He was shortly viewed by some look-outs, and marked into a thick bit of jungle of small extent, where he lay up.

The hunters were quickly again in pursuit; and, as a man declared he could take them up to the very spot in which the wounded beast was lying, they prepared to assail it in the recesses of its stronghold. Leaving Hawkes to guard an outlet in one



A SPREAD-EAGLE SHOT. P. 234.

direction, the other two crept in, and with much difficulty forcing their way through the tangled undergrowth, soon came upon him looking nearly expended. He was evidently awaiting their close approach, and directly he saw them, jumped up, and charged at them. But a couple of bullets at close quarters effectually stopped his onslaught. "Don't fire any more," said Mackenzie. "He's meat :" and meat he proved to be.

The speedy end to the encounter enabled the sportsmen to get to their tents while the sun was yet high ; and as it was their last beat before leaving Mungaum, Norman raised no objections to the firing of guns in any direction. A raid was therefore made on the jungle and pea-fowl in the neighbourhood. Several were bagged, and thus ended the sport of the week, which had been pleasantly and profitably spent at Oonge.

"The man who was boned to-day got off cheaply, did he not ?" said Hawkes that evening. "I thought bears seldom let anyone they attacked escape without mauling them a great deal."

"Nor do they as a rule," replied Norman. "They have an unpleasant habit of rising on a man, seizing him with their claws, and holding him in their embrace, gnawing at his face all the while. I have seen some frightful objects who have been

thus made examples of their wrath, and lucky I daresay they thought themselves in not being killed."

"Do bears always rise on their hind legs when attacking a man?" inquired Hawkes.

"Some suppose so, I believe," was the answer. "But I have been charged home, and dropped them at the end of my gun almost, without their doing so. It depends, I should think, on the circumstances attending their attack."

"In some parts of the country," Mackenzie said, "the natives funk bears far more than tigers. The latter, they say, nearly always endeavour to sneak away unless wounded; while bears, being of an inquisitive turn of mind and withal of a rough, uncouth, pugnacious disposition, will frequently, when casually disturbed, endeavour to ascertain who the intruder may be, and resent the intrusion. Now my first adventure at Mungaum was a case in point. They will go out of their way to attack, where a tiger would probably slip away."

"They seem plucky enough with them here," said Hawkes.

"Yes, these little hill fellows have not half so much fear as some of the tribes of the low country that I have come across. I knew an officer once shooting in the hills, who was charged by a wounded

bear. He fired, but the bullet glanced off his head, and he was immediately seized by the enraged brute. As it was, he was severely hurt; but he might have been killed, had not some of the beaters, who were at hand, rushed in with their little axes, and either drove the beast away or killed it—I forget which."

"I heard from a friend in Rajpootana not long ago," said Norman, "and he told me of a case which had recently occurred near them in the country of one of the rajahs. There is a good deal of outlawry goes on in the petty states under native government. That is to say, if any member of the family, or a noble, feels aggrieved at the conduct of the rajah, he becomes 'Barwutteah,' or places himself in outlawry, thereby causing loss and trouble to the state. Two nobles—sons, I believe, of the rajah in the petty state near which my friend resided—were in this condition; and sought to do all the injury they could to their lord paramount. Towards this end three of their armed followers seized a couple of herdsmen, and were conducting them through the jungle to their chiefs—probably with a view to ransom—when a bear, without the slightest provocation, attacked the party.

"As luck would have it, or with a discriminating

sense of poetical justice, he first attacked one of the outlaws; then, having mauled him, turned his attention to another, the herdsmen and remaining outlaw in the meantime escaping. Having satisfied the pugnacity of his nature, he decamped, leaving the two men very badly hurt. They were subsequently taken into the hospital of an irregular corps stationed in the district, when it was found that one poor wretch was quite scalped and blinded, and he soon after died. The second one was also very severely wounded; but whether he subsequently recovered or not, I have not heard."

"I remember a similar instance of determined hostility," said Mackenzie. "A native was journeying on the public made road up the mountain which led to one of our hill stations, and along which numbers of people were in the habit of passing daily. He went a few yards aside to get a drink of water at a spring frequented by the people, and was there seized by a bear, who had probably come with the same object of slaking his thirst. The beast left him, I think, on a number of other men coming up; but the poor fellow was brought into the hospital very much the worse of his undesired interview.

"At the same station," continued Mackenzie, "there is a pretty little lake, with hills sloping

down to the very brink. A friend of mine and his wife were one evening walking round it, and had reached the furthest and widest portion of its jungle-covered shore, when to his horror a bear presented itself. He was an old sportsman, and knew if the beast were irritated by shouts or efforts to drive him away it would probably attack. So, seizing his wife, he silently waded as far into the water as he could take her, and there awaited the brute's further movements. He was fortunately a strong swimmer, and had determined to endeavour to save his wife by swimming with her should the bear attack them. However, after being in this unpleasant predicament for some time, he had the satisfaction of seeing the bear take itself off, and he brought his wife to shore, and hurried her away in an opposite direction, vowing he would carry a rifle in future when extending his walks to such lonely places, though across the lake, and not more than a quarter of a mile off, the bungalows were distinctly visible."

"Natives have told me," said Norman, "that besides attacking a man's face, a bear has an ugly custom of using the claws of his hind feet at the same time, and sometimes succeeds in disembowelling him."

"In fact," said Hawkes, "they are decidedly

unpleasant companions when one has not a trusty double-barrel to depend upon."

"Just so; and even that does not always render one perfectly secure; as, for instance, in the case I mentioned, and others I have heard of. But it is hard if a couple of shots at close quarters do not either kill, disable, or turn a charging bear. It is said that a bullet, striking within the yellow horse-shoe mark on his chest, is sure to drop him. They are wanting in the structure of that part of the body; though I am not anatomist enough to know precisely in what particular bone, or how otherwise they are deficient."

The exertions of the two previous days had not tended to improve the condition of Mackenzie's feet; a complete day of rest was therefore hailed, by him at least, as not undesirable. Sunday was passed much in the same manner as the former one; orders being issued for the main camp, with spare horses, under Sheik Hussein, to move early on the morrow back to Mungaum, Manuel and Baloo, with a few cooking necessaries, being detailed to accompany the hunters themselves to Bhilgaum.

The tents were struck at night; but Sheik Hussein had requested that the march might be postponed till an early hour on the following morning, as he had a profound horror of night

jungle travelling, and was temporarily impressed with a conviction that his destiny would be to become tiger's meat.

As there was no hurry, his prayer was acceded to.

Long before dawn, the jabbering of servants, and anon the unmusical noise of the camels as they were being loaded, aroused the hunters, who, turning round, anathematised the hubbub, and endeavoured again to drop asleep.

But soon the early cup of tea, brought to their bedside, warned them it was time to be up and doing themselves.

A few of the villagers had been engaged to carry the bedding—consisting of a rug and couple of blankets each—a few cooking pots, a limited amount of supplies, both edible and potable, and the small quantity of linen and other necessaries requisite during an absence of a couple of days; for to that space of time they proposed extending their "dour" or flying expedition into the more unattainable part of the hill country which they intended visiting.

Rugonauth had gone there on the previous day, with the object of examining the country during the early morning, before the arrival of his masters.

With the first streak of dawn the sportsmen mounted their ponies, and in company with the line of coolies—each of whom carried his burden on his

head or back and shoulders—proceeded towards a pass in the highest range of hills.

Although the ponies could not exceed a walking pace over the rugged hill path—indeed, in many parts were obliged to be dismounted and led—still, as it became light, they outpaced the burdened men. With their guns carried alongside, therefore, and with some cold provisions, which rendered them independent of the light baggage till evening, the riders left it under the orders of Mr. Manuel, to follow them as best the coolies could manage, and themselves rode on ahead.

From the top of the pass a wide view was obtained, but all hills and jungle—an unreclaimed waste, except where, in the valleys, every here and there a cleared space and the presence of trees of more imposing height, perhaps also a sheen of water, denoted a village settlement. Smoke rose in many places in thick volumes, partially obscuring the valleys. In that region the jungle is often set on fire, with the view of encouraging the growth of the fresh green grass, the blades of which soon spring up midst the blackened *débris*. With the same object of promoting fertilisation, the little fields are thickly strewn with small boughs, twigs, and leaves; and this coating—several inches thick—is fired. The ashes, into which the foot sinks deep

when crossing, thus afford a manure obtained by a clearance of the neighbouring jungle.

From these causes, columns of smoke were, as I have said, frequent and prominent characteristics of the scenery.

The only sign of intercourse and communication between the different valleys connected by the wild track the sportsmen were pursuing, was a small drove of diminutive bullocks, across the pack-saddle of each of which was balanced a sack laden with either grain or charcoal.

At the unusual apparition of horsemen, and, more particularly, of white-faced horsemen, the leading bullock stopped dead, and stared. Meeting on the narrow road, one party would naturally have to make way for the other; and when the drovers observed the Englishmen, they attempted to shove some of the rear bullocks out of the path, so as to allow the gentlemen room to pass. The latter, too, were willing to turn aside into the jungle, and let the drove proceed. But the leading bullock soon settled the question. After a hearty stare, it suddenly wheeled round and dashed into the jungle, upsetting its load, and kicking up its heels in delight at the riddance. The second was not slow to follow, and in a very brief space, with the exception of the last two or three, who were hustled aside, the entire

drove was pushing and scrambling about in the jungle, most of them with their loads thrown off, or in imminent danger of being so.

The drovers were yelling and shouting, and dashing about to try and stop the runaways; and after the hunters passed, were still heard bestowing on their refractory animals the choicest epithets of Hindoo objurgation. For, though all were soon collected, it was a matter of some small time and trouble to reload and resume the march.

It was ten o'clock before the sportsmen reached the Bheel village, most of the male population of which had accompanied Rugonauth into the jungle to look for game. An old man, however, the senior of the community, was ready to receive them; and many a dusky matron and maid, from the doors of their huts or other vantage-ground, examined the hunters curiously as they passed to the shade of a tree adjacent to the village—the spot selected as their present head-quarters.

The only incident worth recording, before they reached the village, was the death of a peacock, through which Norman neatly drove a bullet at a distance of sixty yards.

The village of Bhilgaum was situated on a table-land, a portion of which had been cleared; but surrounding—and in many parts protruding on to—it,

the jungle grew thick and luxuriant, with fine forest trees here and there rising from amidst it. It was a place which might be full of game, but the difficulty would consist in finding it.

Rugonauth had not yet come in, but he had despatched a man to advise the Sahibs, on their arrival, that he was on the pug of a very large tiger. About mid-day, the old fellow himself made his appearance, and he then informed them that, though he had not positively been able to mark the beast down, owing to the extent and thickness of the jungle, he had good reason to believe that it had taken up its position in a rocky ravine about a mile distant.

On their way to the spot, the animal's pugs were shown to them in several places; indeed, during the night it had evidently been wandering in the immediate neighbourhood of the village.

The ravine—a mere rocky chasm, which seemed a collection of low jungle-covered eminences—was beaten by the few men assembled, but in vain. If "stripe-jacket" had found his way into it during the course of his morning's rambles, he had also found his way out again. It is true that only some thirty beaters could be mustered, and those included a third of the number brought on from Oonge; but the gully itself was narrow, and enclosed within

precipitous walls of rock, so that it required no large number to penetrate its recesses.

Rugonauth confessed himself at fault, and advised the sportsmen to sit up at night over a pool of water, which he assured them was much frequented by animals of all kinds.

"That 's not a sort of sport I care much for," said Mackenzie. "What do you fellows say?"

"Neither do I, Mac," replied Norman; "but I am afraid it's our only chance of getting anything in this interminable jungle."

"And then the tiger seems to be such a whopper, by his pug," added Hawkes, who was not so well versed as his companions in the uncertainties and disappointments attending night shikar. "It would be a pity to lose any opportunity of bagging such a grand fellow."

"Well, then," Mackenzie rather grumblingly observed, "I suppose it is decided that we give up our natural rest and risk our precious limbs on 'muchans,' for the chance of an uncertain shot. Norman, you know how often we have been sold. I confess I think the time is far more profitably employed in sleep."

But Norman was more sanguine, or less lazy, and adhered to his opinion, in which he was stoutly seconded by Hawkes.

"You are two to one, so I must give in," rather lugubriously responded Mackenzie to the joint remonstrances of his companions. "Are we to fire at anything that comes, or reserve ourselves for the tiger? Though I don't myself believe we shall see anything to fire at."

"Not at deer of any description, I vote," said Norman. "We can get lots of them by daylight; only at tigers, panthers, or bears,—first come, first served."

Both of the others agreeing to this resolution, it was considered carried, and under Rugonauth's guidance they went to inspect the place, and select trees overlooking the pool, for the "muchans," or rude platforms on which the sportsmen would keep their night-watch.

The trees were soon chosen, and the men set to work to cut boughs, strips of bark, supple withes, and collect leaves. They were not allowed to do this in the immediate neighbourhood, for the wild animals, with a natural distrust of the signs of man's presence, are chary of approaching a place which shows any recent alteration; and, rather than face any concealed danger, will seek other spots to slake their thirst. On this account boughs were cut and brought, and the articles collected from such a distance as should leave no lurking suspicion

in the breast of any nocturnal visitor that the vicinity of the water had been the scene of man's labours.

The branches when brought were fixed crossways, some in the forks of the trees where possible, and firmly fastened where such a rest was not obtainable. On the little platform thus constructed small branches and twigs were interwoven, and a layer of leaves placed on the top of all. The "muchan," now completed, was then concealed by arranging the boughs around it, and breaking off or turning aside one or two which intercepted a view of the water. It formed rather a hard seat for a length of time, but the watcher was able either to sit or recline in a doubled-up posture. Two were made, one on either side of the pool. One was destined to contain Mackenzie, Hawkes, and an attendant; the other, Norman and Rugonauth.

After the completion of these nests the whole party betook themselves to the village.

On their return it was found that Manuel, with his train, had arrived. He had procured three rough bedsteads from the village, and on these spread the gentlemen's rugs, so that they were able to lounge about at ease. They were engaged in this agreeable occupation, when it was announced

that the old white-bearded patriarch of the village had come to pay a formal visit and present his humble "nuzzur" (the offering of an inferior to a superior).

The "nuzzur" proved to consist of the most esteemed produce of the village, namely, a small portion of grain and of clarified butter—used in cooking—and four hen's eggs. These were handed over to Mr. Manuel; but a rupee, offered at the same time, was only touched by Mackenzie and returned. It would have shown a want of courtesy and hurt the old man's feelings had the produce been rejected; but it is an understood thing on these occasions that a touch shall be equivalent to acceptance of the money.

Manuel, assisted by Baloo, cooked and served up dinner. The box which contained the beer and supplies constituted the table, around which were drawn the beds, officiating as chairs. A stout ship's lantern, which had borne the battering of many a jungle trip, gave light enough to eat by; this was, however, supplemented as the empty beer bottles became adaptable, by their conversion into candlesticks; Manuel having taken the precaution to bring a few candles with him. A tin of soup, the peahen shot in the morning, which was converted into a stew, and a bit of very dry cheese, formed the bill of

fare. It was not a sumptuous repast, but good enough, and enjoyed as much as though it had consisted of innumerable delicacies. What mattered if the peahen did prove to be an old bird, with sinews of the very hardest texture, and altogether as tough as leather? If the soup was by no means fresh, and the cheese like wood? Their jaws were young, their digestions good, and the effeminacy of a pampered life had gained no emasculating sway over their appetites. They liked good things, though their absence caused no lament; but the English soup was a great stand-by. I think the mere fact of its being English had something to do with the approval it met with; for I doubt if any cook in England would have much cared to present it at table.

The mug, too, afforded as much gratification to the thirsty well-exercised sportsmen as the choicest vintages had done at other and more luxurious times.

"Toothsome stuff that soup," said Mackenzie, as he dug into the peafowl. "I bought a lot cheap the other day."

"Good enough," said Hawkes, who had yet some lingering reminiscence of English cookery. "A trifle stale though."

"Why, what an epicure you are!" returned Mackenzie.

'It was an improvement on the stewed-eel soup at any rate," remarked Norman. "It had a tinny sort of flavour, it is true; but it was good, decidedly good. I say, Manuel," he continued, turning to that person, "this is as fine a specimen of an 'old female' as ever I chewed. Something like the Brigadier Mem Sahib, eh?"

"Master, please not make too much fun. It come into the ears of the Mem Sahib, then much bobbery make."

"Well, I dare say; but don't you think you deserve it for speaking so disrespectfully of ladies?"

Manuel visibly shuddered at the idea of Mrs. Jenkins's anger, and he tried to explain. "I not mean it that, Sahib. If master please make the fun of servant-man, then how I help?"

"Well, well, Manuel, I daresay you'll escape this time. I don't think any of us will tell Mrs. Jenkins."

"No, sar, I do not fear that. But at mess, sometime, plenty much talk to other gentlemen. Then master tell story to make pleasure. Gentlemens laugh, and tell story again to young Mem Sahibs. Young Mem Sahibs laugh too; not like the burree Mem Sahib, and tell her for to make angry."

"Why, Manuel de Sousa, you are a philosopher.

Such is, indeed, no unusual way by which things get about. But rest at peace: we will be very careful."

"Thanks to master. I hope he not make more fun; but I much fonk before."

CHAPTER XIV.

The night Ambush—Its efficacy—A morning Visitor—The Visitor accounted for—*Dies faustus*—Samber right and left—A doubtful neighbour—Gaelic *versus* Latin.

DINNER concluded and cheroots smoked, the party proceeded to take up their positions in the "muchans."

The moon did not rise till about ten o'clock, but they thought it best to establish themselves before that hour.

The pool was not more than half a mile distant from the village, so it was soon reached. After some trouble and a good deal of skinning of knuckles, the mighty Mackenzie was, with some aid from the whole party, hoisted on to his nest, where, with his red face and tawny beard, he looked like a bird of very questionable omen.

The others, being lighter and more active, easily established themselves in their respective positions. Guns, rugs, bottles of water—some pure, some well dashed with brandy, but all wrapped in wet

cloths—were handed up, and all made snug for a prolonged watch.

The moon was bright—but little past the full—and its rays seemed almost to carry heat as they flickered through the foliage and fell on the watchers. The pool, with its surrounding of light and shadow, glittered like a huge sparkling gem set in silver and bronze. As from their perch the hunters covered the water and the open ground near it at a distance of not more than five-and-twenty paces, it may be considered that the shot would be a tolerably certain one ; but the most brilliant moonlight is inadequate to give the sportsman perfect sureness of aim with so fine-sighted a weapon as a sporting rifle. It is said that a strip of paper along the rib of the barrel, and a touch of phosphorus to the sight, act as great auxiliaries in taking aim. On this occasion our friends had either not heard of these aids, or for some reason had neglected to make use of them—perhaps, indeed, had no faith in such devices. They hoped that, though perfection of shooting could not be relied on, they could make it sufficiently telling to kill a beast at such close range.

More than once during the first two hours the attention of the watchers was attracted by the crackling of leaves, as some animal brushed through

the jungle. But it only proved to be samber or some smaller deer coming to slake their thirst. These little interruptions served to keep them wakeful and on the look-out; but when some three or four hours had passed, and oft-repeated disappointments had cooled the sanguine hopes with which the animals' approach was heralded, their vigilance relaxed, and more than one began to feel drowsy.

Mackenzie was the first to succumb to the influence of the hour and the stillness of the place. Giving strict injunctions to the attendant to pinch and shake him on the first intimation of the approach of any game coming within the category of those at which it was lawful to fire, he stretched himself out and, disposing of his legs as best he could, was soon fast asleep.

Hawkes had tried to dissuade him from giving in so soon, and had Norman been there he might, possibly, have been induced to hold up for another half-hour; but all his companion's expostulations were of no effect. He slept, and would have continued to do so indifferently well, notwithstanding the discomfort of his position, had not his rest been distracted by sundry punches in the ribs. These Hawkes occasionally administered as the sleeping man's heavy breathing ripened into a snore or

approached a grunt. But soon even these reminders ceased to interfere with the peaceful slumber of the prostrate giant, for the operator himself was ere long stretched beside him and tranquilly reposing.

Norman could manage to make out, through the foliage, that the position of the dark objects on the opposite "muchan" had become more horizontal than vertical, and readily guessed how the case stood. But he yet awhile held up manfully. A pair—nay, I am sorry to say for his constancy—two pair of bright eyes looked down on him through the leaves as he ever and anon glanced at the moon and heaved something approaching a sigh. One pair had been seen recently; but it was long years—away in the old English home—since he had looked lovingly into the other with a boyish admiration for their owner. And both would perhaps be succeeded by others, in the future, on some such occasion as the present. But the summer moon was glorious, and induced sentimental reverie.

Another half-hour passed, and the moon played through the foliage in little jumps and starts of light on the faces of three slumbering Englishmen. The natives alone kept watch and ward.

"Bappoo is off to sleep too," muttered Rugonauth, as he regarded the twin place of ambush,

and saw that the partially vertical character which the native's sitting form had hitherto given it had disappeared. "The lazy villain!"

Rugonauth, now the solitary watcher in the jungle wilderness, looked at the sleeping form beside him, and thought how much the Sahib must be enjoying himself. Then he thought of his hubble-bubble. Yes, there it was, quite safe, stuck through the folds of his waistcloth. How he would like a few puffs at it! He had got his piece of cotton and flint and steel. Yes, there would be no difficulty in striking a light. A delicious whiff or two would revive him immensely, and keep him well awake, for he felt a little drowsy. But no! Its effects in both sound and smell alike forbade.

While thinking of the delight it would afford him, and how he would compensate in the morning for his present forced abstinence, his head dropped forward and was brought back again. He looked at the pool, but there was nothing there. Once more he nodded, and, this time, with a deeper droop; but from it he also recovered himself. Then after two or three rapid nods in succession his head fell forward with a jerk which almost made his neck crack; but again his sense of duty and desire for "Inam" brought it once more erect. For awhile his senses of seeing and hearing were alert; but it was

only for a minute. Intense drowsiness at last overcame him, and he coiled himself up, and was soon sleeping soundly beside his master; but with as much space between them as he could manage to place with safety to his own limbs. Of the whole ambushed party none remained awake to learn what came or went.

The repose of the Englishmen was not unrestless. The knobs in the branches on which they reclined, uneasiness of posture, and the general roughness altogether of their place of slumber prevented their enjoying it with uninterrupted soundness. Each frequently gave a turn, or made a movement to avoid some irritating stump or twig and half awoke; but never became sufficiently aroused to be conscious that no sentinel was left in the ambuscade.

It was drawing on towards dawn, when a low grunting noise some distance away scared two or three cheetul, which, after circling round, had approached the water with timorous steps.

Whether it was the near approach of the usual hour for rising, the rustling made by the cheetul in their flight, or the distant growl, which aroused the shikaree, none can tell. But certain it is, that from whatever cause, Rugonauth's gaunt figure rose from a recumbent to a sitting posture; and the experienced old man, accustomed to rely on his

sense of hearing, was at once wide awake and listening earnestly.

His gaze in the first instance fell on the pool and its bank, but it was vacant.

After remaining for some time in an attitude of fixed and wrapt attention, but without any special sight or sound attracting his senses, he ceased to look or listen so fixedly. He turned his head and gazed at the waning moon, then at the morning star just risen, and calculated by its height above the horizon the time yet wanting to dawn. He was engaged in this inquiry, when again the grunt sounded, and this time somewhat closer than before. His calculations were in a moment upset, and he put his mouth close to Norman's ear. "Sahib, Sahib, get up," he said whisperingly; at the same time shaking the sleeper by the shoulder.

"Eh! eh! what is it?" answered Norman, who however, thus suddenly roused, spoke in an undertone. "What is it, Rugonauth?" he repeated, as he sat up and stretched out his hand to grasp the rifle lying beside him.

"There is a tiger close by. I heard his voice this moment," the shikaree replied.

"Have you seen him?" Norman asked.

"No, Sahib, but he will be coming to drink. It is nearly daylight."

This brief colloquy was carried on in the lowest of whispers, as Norman assumed a convenient position and cocked his rifle.

"They all seem to be asleep on the other tree. I can't make out that any are sitting up, can you?"

"Sahib, they are all asleep. That lazy, ill-begotten rascal, Bappoo, is not keeping watch. He deserves punishment, the bad-born, duty-deserting villain!"

Afraid to call out to the sleepers, they were obliged to leave them as they were, and keep a vigilant look-out themselves.

Without uttering another word, and hardly stirring, both awaited in breathless silence the approach of the game. Some time had elapsed, when suddenly Rugonauth laid one hand on Norman's arm, and pointed with the lean, scraggy fore-finger of the other towards a bush which stood a little removed from the pool.

Norman looked and looked, but for the life of him could make out nothing; though by the shikaree's movements—as of bringing up a gun—he evidently wished him to fire.

He was just beginning to fancy he could make out the outlines of some creature in the shade of the bush—but too indistinct to admit of his firing, —when, from quite another part, an animal stalked

into the moonlight across a little bit of open ground which bordered the pool, and commenced drinking.

The noise of its lapping was quite audible, and the fore part of its form stood out prominently, well defined against the moonlit water.

Cautiously the rifle was brought to bear, and Norman pulled; then, without waiting to see the effect of the first shot, rapidly drew the second trigger also.

A tremendous roar, and the beast sprang into the air and rolled over; but almost immediately got up and dashed into the jungle.

This sudden awakening of the jungle echoes was instantaneously followed by a howl from the tree opposite. Then an ejaculation of "Halloo! what the devil!—what's the row? Where the deuce am I?"

"Can you see him?" roared Norman. "He is hard hit, he is hard hit."

"See what? What's hard hit? Hold your row, you infernal nigger. What is it all about?"

"Oh, Bopperie!" cried the native. "I thought the tiger was in the muchan. Oh, pardon, Sahib!" he continued, as certain sounds indicated that Mackenzie was cuffing the frightened Bappoo, who, suddenly awakened from pleasant dreams by the rifle crack and tiger's roar, had instantly started up

and given utterance to the howl under the impression that the tiger was on the top of him.

"It was a tiger or panther," replied Norman. "I couldn't make out which. I rolled him over, but he recovered himself and bolted into the jungle beyond your tree."

"Confound it, and this brute, Bappoo, must have been fast asleep. You were asleep, you scoundrel, you know you were," said Mackenzie, turning to the slumber-loving sentinel. "Just wait till I get down, I'll give it you."

"But what is to be done now?" asked Hawkes. "I can't see the beast anywhere."

"It will soon be dawn," replied Norman. "I suppose we must wait till it is light," and he turned to Rugonauth and consulted him on the subject.

"Yes, Sahib, we must wait," he said. "It is no good looking for the beast in the dark. It would be madness. He eat the bullets well, and is badly wounded; but we had better be quiet," continued the cautious old shikaree. "Something else may come. Will the Sahib be pleased to speak to the gentlemen in the other tree and tell them to be silent."

Norman did so, and quiet was soon restored; the whole party now remaining on the *qui-vive*. Ere long a gentle gurgling sound was wafted across to

Norman's tree, and he rightly conjectured that Mackenzie was refreshing himself after his long nap; and perhaps endeavouring to soothe the wrath which the culpable negligence of Mr. Bappoo had aroused.

Before a brief half-hour had passed a jungle cock uttered its shrill crow of welcome, as dawn opposed the declining moon. Imperceptible at first, after briefly battling with the moonlight, it triumphed over its paler antagonist, and rushed with tropical celerity over the waste of jungle. The first jungle-cock's crow was quickly caught up by numbers of others, and the jungle awoke as its feathered denizens greeted the approaching day, and seemed to enjoy its first fresh hour.

When it was fairly light, the two parties descended from their respective perches, and met over the pool. After a good shake and stretch they proceeded to examine the marks by the water's side.

A very brief inspection of the footprints showed that large clots of blood had fallen from the wounded beast. These increased in quantity as they advanced, and plainly indicated the path by which it had fled. With rifles cocked and ready they followed the track thus easily discernible, and about twenty yards further came on the dead body of a fine panther. Both bullets had taken effect behind the shoulder,

and probably cut some artery in the region of the heart, which accounted for the great quantity of blood.

"Just my ill-luck again," said Mackenzie; "but I'll have it out of that scoundrelly Bappoo," and he clutched the unfortunate fellow, who was like a mere reed in the grasp of the powerful Highlander.

The wretched creature turned almost white with fright and prayed for forgiveness. His trembling appearance was so ludicrous as to make Mackenzie burst out laughing. So after giving him a shake, as a terrier would a rat, he let him go.

Immediately he was released, the man glided to a respectful distance and made himself as small as he conveniently could.

Seeing that the danger to his comrade was at an end, Rugonauth considered it became him, and his exalted position of head shikaree, to reprimand his subordinate. Accordingly he poured forth the vials of his wrath, oblivious of his own short-comings, which he wisely and discreetly kept to himself.

"What, you call yourself a shikaree, do you?" he began, addressing the man. "Is it a shikaree's duty to go to sleep, when the Sahibs, leaving their ease and comfortable beds, come into the jungle at night for sport? You are like a fat Bunneah, oh, you wretched one, faithless to your salt! What would

have become of the spotted one, if I had been like yourself and deserted my duty? Go; it is a case of shame. You ought to conceal your face. Enough!"

Leaving the culprit to keep watch by the dead animal, the others returned to the village and thence despatched men to bring it in.

"Just catch me sitting up again," said Mackenzie, as he reclined on his bedstead enjoying the more than usually welcome cup of tea. "I declare I feel as if I had been most unmercifully thrashed all over, I am so awfully sore. There was a broken twig which stuck into my ribs all night; and, oh! how fearfully hard some of the knobs of the boughs were!"

"You managed to take it out pretty kindly, too, considering," Hawkes observed. "I confess, though, I am a trifle sore also. What a sleepless beggar that fellow Rugonauth must be, to keep awake the whole night, and after working most of the day too. Be hanged if I could have done it, if there had been any number of tigers about. I think after all 'it is hardly worth the candle.'"

"I strongly suspect old Rugonauth had his nap also," said Norman. "I have a faint indefinite sort of recollection that some one was snoring precious near me; but I cannot recall it for certain. Though I have been successful, I confess I don't think night

shooting is worth the bother. But here is Manuel with breakfast; I for one am quite ready for it. Have you boiled the eggs, Manuel?"

"Yes, sar. Here are the four yegges which Patell give for nuzzur. They not big; but in jungle plenty big yegges not get."

"Quite a treat," said Mackenzie, as he prepared to assault the articles which Manuel placed on the box. "Who is to have the fourth one? I vote we draw lots for it."

This was acceded to by the others; and bits of grass, of different lengths, were held by the proposer in his hand. The longest was carefully pulled out by Norman, who thus became entitled to the coveted delicacy.

"Mine, by Jove!" he exclaimed, as he compared his grass with the others. "Luck is with me to-day. It is a regular *dies faustus*. I am in favour with the fickle goddess, and will make her a votive offering of the shell, when I have consumed its contents. Sitting up at night is appetising work. Here goes for number one!" And, suiting the action to the word, he tapped the top of the egg, and began to peel off the shell. "Rather suspicious-looking!" he said, as he eyed it doubtfully, on completing this preliminary operation. "A decidedly bilious appearance about the white! But, courage!

it may be all right; and a little extra age won't induce me to part with it." So saying, he dipped in the spoon. "Eh! Oh, Lord! a regular knock-downer! Rotten to the last extent!" And he hurled the now objectionable article far from him.

"Well, come! that makes all square, at any rate!" growled Mackenzie. "Your goddess is only in a humbugging mood, after all. And how about the votive offering of the emptied shell, Norman? Really, you ought to have scooped out the contents, in order to fulfil your vow. Mine is a good one, I am happy to say; and so is Hawkes's."

Norman had in the meanwhile cautiously opened his second egg, which, on being submitted to a searching olfactory test, gave indubitable symptoms of its also being anything but desirable food.

"Sold! as I am a sinner!" he ejaculated with disgust, as he threw it after its companion. "The goddess is fickle with a vengeance. Just fancy my having the luck to secure the two, and those two being the bad ones!" And Norman was obliged to turn to some cold pea-fowl, amidst the derisive laughter of his comrades.

After a good nap during the heat of the day, the sportsmen arose, much refreshed, and with some slight abatement in the prominent parts of the tenderness induced by their rough night lodging.

Still, Mackenzie was lazy, and disinclined to take the trouble of going out in the afternoon in search of deer. Norman and Hawkes, however, determined to try and get a venison-steak for dinner for themselves, and, if possible, a good feed for the beaters and villagers also. So, summoning the gun-bearers, and an experienced man from the village to act as guide, and show the haunts of the game, they sallied forth in company.

They had not proceeded far, before the villager detected a herd of samber peacefully feeding on an open slope, and a brief consultation was held regarding the best plan of circumventing them. It was decided that Hawkes should stalk them, while Norman made a considerable *détour*, so as to place himself between them and the thick jungle, into which, if they once entered, it would be useless to follow. The men said that, if startled, they would probably leave the open glades in which they were grazing, and seek the denser coverts in a direction he pointed out to Norman. This, accordingly, the latter took, and soon established himself in a favourable position, trusting to their making towards him after Hawkes had got a shot. Hawkes, meanwhile, had gone to the further side of the deer, and advanced on them up wind. He had little difficulty in approaching to within about a hundred and fifty

yards, by keeping himself concealed behind the ridge on the other slope of which they were feeding. But nearer than this he saw no chance of getting. So, peeping cautiously over the low ridge, with his face and shoulders protected from observation by a bush, he sighted his rifle for the distance, and brought it to bear on a young stag, the only one in the herd.

The "thud" announced a hit, but, unfortunately, not a deadly one, for the beast only kicked up his heels and sprang forward. The startled hinds at first ran hither and thither, uncertain of the position of the enemy, and undecided, in their confusion, as to the line of escape. But this hesitation did not last long; for, led by a large old hind, who had evidently come to some determination on the subject, they dashed away from the lurking-place of the sportsman, and made straight towards Norman.

Hawkes watched them with anxious interest through his glass, as they streamed away in single file, and, after clearing the open land on which they had been feeding, entered a strip of jungle. On the other side of this, however, he soon saw them emerge, and continue their flight, though less precipitately, towards the thick jungle, just within the skirts of which he believed his friend to be waiting in ambush. After the impetuosity of their first frightened rush, the herd had fallen into a long lob-

bing gallop, which now became slackened to an easy canter. Suddenly, however, as Norman watched them, they divided into two parties, and, racing at full speed, dashed off to the right and left. In the same moment almost, a little blue puff of smoke broke from the thicket, and the wounded stag rolled over headlong. Another little puff, and the last hind of the same detachment staggered, ran a little forward, and rolled over also. This was quickly succeeded by the double crack of Norman's rifle, and Hawkes knew that a brace of samber, right and left, had fallen before his friend's unerring aim.

"Hoorah! old fellow! Well done!" he shouted, waving his cap. "A royal shot!"

"Shabash!" exclaimed the astonished villager. "Two found death in one moment. I never heard of such excellent shikar!" And the fellow was wrought to a pitch of genuine enthusiasm as he thought of the abundant meal he should, in all probability, that evening dispose of.

Though Norman was too distant to catch Hawkes's words, his shout, and the waving cap, attracted his attention as he emerged from his ambush and approached the fallen game. He answered with a wave of his hand, and then stooped to inspect the stag.

Hawkes, who had now reloaded, was on the point

of starting to join his friend and view the slain, when he observed Norman suddenly spring up, seize his second gun from the man beside him, and throw himself into a posture of readiness; while the gun-bearer crouched down in an attitude of terror behind him.

Hawkes watched for a moment, and then hastened towards him as rapidly as he could, vaguely anticipating, without being able to assign a specific reason, that his assistance was required. Long ere he reached his comrade, he heard the latter shout his name, and, answering with a halloo, ran at a pace which soon brought him to the spot where Norman, still on the alert, held guard over the dead samber.

"What is it?" he asked, as he arrived, breathless and panting with his exertions.

"A tiger, bedad! and I must have been close to him. But here, keep guard while I reload my double rifle. I think he has gone, but it is just as well to be prepared. Keep a look-out there towards that clump of korinda bushes," and he pointed to a green patch only a few yards distant from the place, whence he had shortly before emerged; and about thirty from where they then stood.

"Was he in it?" asked Hawkes.

"Yes," was Norman's reply. "Just as I got here, I heard a grunt, jumped up, and saw a great

whacking fellow trot away quietly from the midst of the korindas. I hadn't time to fire; and I am precious glad I hadn't, for I had only the single barrel to depend on, as the double was still unloaded."

"Was he lying there, do you think, or only casually passing?" asked Hawkes, still keeping a good watch over the place.

"I don't know; we'll have a look directly I have reloaded. But he must have been lying, I should say; for several times, while waiting for the samber, I fancied a tigerish scent came between the wind and my nobility."

After Norman had reloaded, with weapons on full cock, and the gun-bearers in close proximity behind, the two advanced to the clump of korinda bushes, and inspected the place.

"Yes, by Jove! Here is his form," exclaimed Norman. "We must have been close neighbours for a good quarter of an hour. I was standing behind that tree, and it is not more than fifteen yards distant." So saying the speaker pointed to a small tree on the very skirts of the jungle, about that distance off.

"I wonder he didn't hear you," remarked Hawkes.

"He was probably fast asleep," was the reply. "I took up my position from the opposite side

very quietly and cautiously, for I saw a neilghye in the jungle while I was coming round, and thought I might get a chance at it should the samber not come my way. My shots must have roused the brute, who, when he saw me in the open, decided, I suppose, on abstaining from any closer acquaintance, and moved off; for which I am uncommonly thankful."

"I saw you bowl over the samber," said Hawkes. "And, by the way, that was done right royally. Then I saw you come to the stag, and all of a sudden jump up. I couldn't make out what was the cause, but I hurried towards you, and was already on my way when you shouted."

"Ay, that was when I saw the tiger take a stare and then trot off. But let us see if we can make anything of his pug. I wish old Rugonauth was with us."

With the assistance of the natives, the two tracked the tiger for some distance; but the jungle was very thick, and as they saw no prospect of overtaking the beast, they soon relinquished the endeavour, and returned to the dead game.

Cutting off a large steak, they despatched it by one of the natives to the village, with instructions to direct its preparation for dinner, and to bring out men to carry in the rest.

Hawkes' shot, it was found, had struck in the hind-quarter, but without breaking any bone, and hence the animal was but little impeded in his flight.

The hunters after this made a detour on their return towards the village; but though they saw one herd of cheetul, were unable to get any other shot.

"I take my Davy, all the luck is with you fellows," observed Mackenzie, on being made acquainted with the afternoon's adventures. "Samber right and left after running on the top of your gun. A tiger viewed. Then the other day you had the scrimmage all to yourselves. Your confounded goddess avoids me, Norman."

"Didn't she do you a good turn with the black cobra, you ungrateful fellow?" inquired Norman. "Was there not enough of risk in that to content you?"

"Well, I forgot that little episode; but all the jolly incidents befall you. This has been a regular "dies—what-do-you-call-it—for you to-day. All my Latin has been sweated out of me long ago," Mackenzie added, parenthetically, and then continued, "You are awaked, just in time to kill the panther. Then you get the two eggs, though they were bad. Then you get into a scrape with a tiger,

and out of it all serenely; to say nothing of having just made a successful right and left shot."

"And might not you, too, have been in the enviable position of near neighbour to a sleeping tiger, and have seen the samber foolishly rush on death, if you hadn't been so lazy? 'Labor omnia vincit.' Bear that in mind. If you won't exert that great carcase of yours, what can you expect? Tigers and samber are not in the habit of coming to be shot without being sought for. You must work for sport. 'Ex nihilo nihil fit.' Really I feel quite classical to-day!"

"I tell you what it is, Norman," said Mackenzie. "If you are going to make yourself disagreeable by quoting a few scraps of your school Latin, I'll talk Gaelic,—I swear I will."

"You needn't be alarmed, old fellow. I assure you I have astonished myself at my twin delivery. I don't often attempt such a thing, you will bear witness. For even if dear old Rugby's early classical training had not become somewhat obliterated, I know it would all be lost on you."

"Well, don't make any endeavour to lose it. It is so valuable, you had better keep it to yourself. I have half a mind to treat you to a Gaelic song as it is."

"Now the gods forbid!" earnestly responded

Norman. "Gaelic words, and your voice and execution, Mac, would be a combination of sounds which would turn the very beer. I know something of your pipe. 'Vox et præterea nihil.' And a most damnable bad one, too."

"Here goes," ejaculated Mackenzie, as he began to chant through his nose in the gruffest and most unmusical of voices.

"Pax, pax!" cried Norman, putting his hands to his ears.

"No Latin," was the rejoinder. "Say, peace, and apologise; and then perhaps I may postpone the rest."

"Peace, then; I freely apologise. Put some more sugar in the mug, though I fear it will be spoilt. Oh! Mac, where did you acquire such inhuman sounds?"

"Never mind. Though as far as the Gaelic words are concerned, I consider them far more human than yours. They must be so, for I spoke in a living, you in a dead language, which I hope you will carefully bury for the future."

During the evening a man came in from Mungaum, with the information that a family of tigers had taken up their quarters in one of the rivers, in some part of which they were in the daily habit of lying, and that Manajee earnestly entreated the

hunters to lose no time in coming to compass their destruction.

On this advice they determined to act; for they had little hope of being able to do much in the country they were then in, owing to the density of the jungle: orders were therefore given for an early start on the morrow.

CHAPTER XV.

Termination of the "dour"—A family party of Tigers—An unlucky Day—A Jungle rendezvous—A lucky Day—A charging Shot—A Beater's danger—A saving Shot.

At dawn the hunters were in the saddle, their guns having been despatched some two hours previously. They had a journey of about eighteen miles, the first part of which—owing to the nature of the ground—was necessarily performed at a walk. They were able, however, to get along a little faster during the latter portion, and so reached their camp at Mungaum in good time. Bath and breakfast were barely finished, when men came in to say that two or three tigers were marked down in one place, in the bed of the river Morun—that in which the tigress had been killed. Fresh horses were accordingly saddled, and the sportsmen proceeded to the same collection of wood-cutters' huts of which mention was formerly made.

There they found Manajee full of zeal and deeply impressed with a sense of his present importance. In the absence of Rugonauth he had, of course,

undertaken the whole of the arrangements, and made the entire "bundobust."

"Sahib people," he said, elatedly, as the hunters rode up to the shade of a tree near the village and dismounted, "you shall see to-day what Shikar Manajee will show you. It will be a big day for sport this, Sahibs; I know every bush and stone, and the striped ones can't deceive me."

This was said in such a genuine tone of exultation that Mackenzie was fully persuaded the "khubber" was reliable. "Is it true," he asked, "that three tigers are marked down?"

"It is a true word, Sahib. I have seated three regular striped ones in one patch of jungle."

"Is it a large one?" was Mackenzie's next inquiry.

"No, Sahib," replied Manajee. "It is a small one of large rocks and jow in the river."

"Good, Manajee. Now we shall see if your 'bundobust' is as good for tigers as it was the other day for bears. Come along, let us lose no time."

With many and oft-repeated directions, and vehement exhortations, loudly expressed to those under his rule, Manajee gave them a taste of his authority, as he marshalled the beaters; but at the same time neglected no precaution to ensure success.

The place in which the family party had taken up their residence was not more than half-a-mile from the rendezvous, and consequently was soon reached. It was a small patch of jungle in the river bed, from about the centre of which four or five massive rocks rose high above the low jow bushes, which completely concealed their bases. What there at present was of the stream flowed alongside the jungle, and between it and a high bank. On the other side was a bank also ; and some open ground lay at the end of the cover, between it and the water. Trees were plentifully scattered about on both sides. The tigers were supposed to be enjoying their siesta in the vicinity of the rocks above referred to, perhaps in their shade and shelter. Manajee's plan was to beat the patch from the further end, after establishing the hunters on each bank commanding the open part at the opposite extremity.

Norman and Hawkes were stationed on the side overlooking the water, Mackenzie being placed on the other bank. All were in trees, as they thus obtained a better command; though Mackenzie grumbled a good deal at having so to contract his huge limbs, as to take advantage of a fork of the tree into which he had climbed. But his maledictions, though deep, were not loud, for he feared to disturb the sleeping game by any excessive noise.

When Manajee saw that all were ready, he went round and put the beaters in motion. They entered the patch in one compact body, breaking only so much as to enable them to thread their way through the bushes.

For the first fifty yards nothing was seen, and no sound heard above the deafening noise of the tom-toms, drums, and the yelling of some half-hundred beaters. A moiety of the jungle was beaten, and the line was still advancing, when, without any warning of their presence, or being previously seen by anyone, a couple of tigers broke together from its extremity at full gallop, and just in front of Mackenzie. Though somewhat taken by surprise, he managed to discharge three barrels in rapid succession before they dashed, roaring, up the bank some distance further on, and disappeared. Norman and Hawkes also each got a longish snap shot from the other side ere they made good their retreat.

"Confound it!" ejaculated Mackenzie, "that's bad. But I hit the leading one hard, I'm certain."

At this moment, a look-out stationed in a tree in the line the tigers had taken, shouted out that one was badly wounded, and had nearly fallen as it passed under him.

Mackenzie immediately prepared to descend from his perch, and was soon in the agonies of that slip-

pery, shin-scraping, and, to a man of his weight, somewhat difficult performance. In the very middle of his exertions, when he was about half-way down, the beaters—who had ceased beating on hearing the shots—again struck up with a vigour which announced the excitement attending the view of game or knowledge of its being afoot. This caused him to pause in his descent; and cries of "Bagh! bagh!" and a loud roar, soon satisfied him that another tiger was coming on. He struggled hard to regain his position; but before he could do so, a very large tiger burst from the jungle in the track of the others, and galloped past at full speed. Instead, however, of following the example of his predecessors, and rushing up the bank, he held on in a dip in the bed of the river, hidden, except for a brief moment, from the two sportsmen on the other side.

Ere Mackenzie could re-establish himself in a posture from which he could fire, the beast had disappeared, having thus the luck to escape without a single bullet being fired at it.

"How old Mac is swearing!" said Norman to Hawkes. "And, by Jove! it is tantalising! I am really quite ashamed to meet Manajee. Fancy all three getting off in that way! I couldn't for the life of me get more than a transient glimpse of the last one's yellow fur. Could you?"

"No," replied Hawkes; "but from what I did see, he is a whopper. What's to be done now? Here come the beaters out of the jungle."

"Let us go to Mac, and consult!"

This they did; and were shortly joined by Manajee, with quite a different expression of face to that with which he had entered the jungle. The elongation of his round, bullet-like countenance intimated how crest-fallen he was at the want of success attending the beat from which he had anticipated such splendid results.

"It is a piece of very bad luck, Sahib," he said, dejectedly. "All three to get away, after being so well marked down and driven out, is strange. The hands of the Sahibs are light to-day, or some evil spirit turned aside the bullets."

"Arree, brother! not so!" said a little fellow who then joined the group. "They passed under my tree, and I saw that the Sahib had fed them well with bullets. One was wounded here, and here—" and suiting the action to the word, he placed his hand first on his bare shoulder, and then on a still more prominent part behind. "Blood was dropping."

"Is it true? Sahib, did you hit one?" asked Manajee, excitedly.

"Yes, I hit one," was the reply. "You had better

go and take up the pug, Manajee. We'll follow when I have loaded, and had a drink of water."

Beckoning to two or three of the best trackers, Manajee lost no time in doing as directed; and, having reached the spot, found indeed that there was blood on the tracks.

He was joined by the sportsmen, and the trail was followed by the little party, the beaters being ordered to keep aloof. For a couple of hundred yards the blood was sparingly sprinkled about, but after that it ceased. The ground, too, which had been pretty open, studded only with trees and little isolated thickets, now gave place to a continuous tract of jungle, and Manajee advised them at once to proceed, without loss of time, to another patch of jow in the river bed, for which he thought the tigers must have made.

This was done, and the hunters went to the further end; but although that and a cover still further on—the latter, indeed, that in which the tigress was killed—were successively beaten, no tiger was seen either by them or any of the men.

Manajee was greatly dispirited at the want of success attending these operations; and, deeming that it was useless to contend on that day with a remorseless destiny, advised the Sahibs to take no more unnecessary trouble, but return at once to

their camp. He said it was fated that nothing should be killed; so all toil would be fruitless.

The Englishmen, however, were not so profoundly impressed with the conviction of an unalterable ill-fortune, being of opinion that it often changes under the influence of determination and exertion. They decided, therefore, to go back to the place where they had left the trail, and endeavour, by following it further, to find out what had become of the missing game.

This resolution they at once proceeded to act on, and made their way by different paths through the jungle towards the spot.

Hawkes and Norman were sauntering along together, discussing their want of luck, when a shout from Mackenzie, who had struck into a different track, induced them to make the best of their way towards him.

"A brace of tigers have just moved off," he said, rather excitedly. "Manajee here seemed to sniff something, and was poking about, looking for a pug, when they got up, out of those bushes, and trotted away. I didn't see them myself; but look! here are the pugs."

Manajee, with two or three others, was already on the trail, and the hunters joined him. They continued tracking for some time; and at one place,

where the trail crossed the river, found the foot-prints still wet, and the adjacent ground yet damp from the water which had been splashed about it. They hurried on as fast as they could, and hit off the pug, but without coming up with the tigers, who, Manajee considered, were still on foot, and keeping well ahead.

As evening was falling, and there seemed no prospect of overtaking or intercepting the enemy, the hunters were induced, reluctantly, to relinquish the attempt, and return to their tents, very wearied and somewhat disheartened at their unsuccessful day.

However, there could be no doubt that several tigers were now about; and as they seemed to prefer the country about the river Morun, the hunters resolved to move their camp to a village more in its neighbourhood, and thereby save the journey to and fro. Orders were accordingly issued for a march next morning to Seitwarra, a village large enough to furnish some supplies, and distant about six miles.

Rugonauth—who had arrived from Bhilgaum, having *en route* diverged to examine a part of the country of which he had heard some report—smiled grimly as he was told of the ill success attending the day's proceedings, which he seemed inclined to

attribute, in a measure, to his absence. He would have found some difficulty in assigning any reason; indeed, when invited to do so by Manajee, was quite unable to explain why he spoke slightingly of the "bundobust," except that three tigers had escaped. This led to some interruption of the harmony with which the Shikarees had hitherto worked in concert; and, unknown to their masters, the two arranged that next day each should work on his own account, and not on any combined plan.

Next morning the tents were struck, and, after an early breakfast, the hunters, by arrangement with the Shikarees, rode leisurely to a spot between the two villages. This being in the vicinity of the river Morun, was deemed a good place at which to wait for the morning's "khubber."

It was a place they had previously several times passed and noted, being sufficiently distinguishable from the surrounding jungle to render it marked and easily found. A bare, level, open space of hard-caked mud, cracked into fissures, indicated the shallow, dried-up bed of a small pond. In the monsoon—and perhaps, in a greatly diminished degree, during a portion of the cold season also—the water may have lain to some depth, of two or three feet possibly; but now the summer heats had evaporated it, and not the slightest moisture was

left on the surface. Four or five trees, however, which stood at the edge of the dried-up mud, probably drew some sustenance from a deeper source, for they were comparatively lofty, and towered over the low jungle, thus rendering the place easily discerned, even from a distance.

At the roots of these trees were several blocks of stone, rudely shaped, so as to represent some one of the hideous image gods in which the Hindoo Pantheon is so prolific. Tailed or trunked monsters, daubed with the sacred red paint, here gave their protection to the solitary wayfarer, and shielded the humble devotee from the jungle perils.

With a few muttered words, and an obeisance or two, the natives besought their favour, and then sat down without any further notice, and made their preparations for a smoke. Pipes were produced, and small stores of tobacco disentangled from the recesses of their puggrees or waistcloths, in secluded corners of which a limited supply had been cunningly stowed away; and they smoked regardless of the proximity of their protecting images.

The fumes of tobacco, both from the above-mentioned pipes and the more refined manillas of the white faces, was wafted away into the jungle, and could be traced at a considerable distance. Two emissaries from Rugonauth, who were approaching

the place, as they thus scented the tainted air, became aware that the Sahibs were already at the rendezvous, and awaiting their arrival. This caused them to exchange their fast shuffling walk for a pace more indicative of zealous haste; and they emerged from the jungle on the other side of the pond, and broke across it at a long swinging trot. Ostentatiously panting with their exertions, they informed the smokers that a tiger had been ringed in the same jungle as that beaten the day previous, and that Rugonauth requested their immediate presence. Under their guidance the hunters soon reached the vicinity of the place in question, and, after a brief conference with Rugonauth, it was determined to beat the cover in the same manner as before. But, instead of two being stationed on the bank which had been occupied by Hawkes and Norman, the former alone on this occasion was posted there. Mackenzie and Norman agreed to stand together on foot, and hold the opposite side against all comers.

Anxiously and expectantly the hunters looked and listened as the living wedge of beaters approached the rocks in the middle of the cover. The look-outs, too, strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of the game, as the beaters stopped a little short of the rocks, and yelled with additional vigour. The

tom-toms also were whacked with more violent blows, the bushes thrashed harder with the sticks of the invading force, and more frequent volleys of stones and clods of earth hurled in front. A flower-pot likewise was lighted, and sent sputtering among the jungle at the base of the rocks; but all without effect, for no tiger responded to these delicate attentions.

After thus remaining for some time stationary, and exhausting all devices to induce the tiger to leave his probable lair, the beaters, under the directions of Rugonauth, again advanced, beat right up to and past the rocks, and then on to the end of the jungle without stirring anything.

When this was done, Rugonauth, with a few others, went back to inspect more narrowly the favourite resort among the rocks, and endeavour to ascertain what had become of the tiger.

The disappointed hunters had meanwhile exchanged their attitudes of preparation for one less ready, and rested their weapons on the ground. The beaters also, after emerging from the jungle, had ceased to shout, and in little detached parties were now earnestly engaged in discussing the bearings of the question, chattering with great volubility as they did so.

Suddenly a shout rent the air, and was heard by all above the jabbering.

"There's a tiger lying in that clump!" yelled a black object in great excitement, as he came springing towards his comrades. "I saw him with my own eyes, and he's all ready, and is wagging his tail."

As the man reached his neighbours, who huddled together on the first intimation, he pointed to a small isolated patch of jow, consisting of not more than half-a-dozen bushes, and which stood apart from the cover just beaten. It was only by accident the man had approached it, no one having thought it worth while to examine a place so unlikely to be preferred to the more concealed and shady recesses of the main jungle.

Rugonauth quickly re-appeared, and marshalling the men, took them back in a body, so as to get on the further side of the little clump, and endeavour to drive its occupant towards the hunters.

The retrograde movement was effected without the tiger moving, though he was doubtless furious at being disturbed, and quite prepared to visit his wrath on any intruders.

Having gained a sufficient distance to the rear, the beaters, in one solid body, now again advanced, and made free use of stones and fireworks.

With a tremendous roar, the tiger sprang up, leapt from the bushes which had concealed him, and dashed straight towards the advancing column. Luckily, the men remained compact and firm, waving their sticks and swords in front, and, of course, redoubling their shouts. When within some eight or ten yards, the brute, intimidated by the determined appearance of the wedge of human beings, shirked the attack, and turned aside into the jungle. Had it, however, been but a small party, or had any stray outsiders been separated from the main body, it would probably have gone hard with them. Not for a moment did the animal now loiter in the cover, but, turning back, broke from it in nearly the same place as the others had done on the previous day.

Catching a sight of the two hunters standing on the bank, he changed his direction—which was along the bed of the river—and charged right at them, tail on end, and roaring with full tiger power.

Perfectly steady, the wary hunters waited till he had passed one or two intervening bushes, and then, when he was distant from them about fifteen or twenty paces, touched their triggers, and a couple of bullets crashed into his body. He sprang into the air, stood for a moment on his hind legs, and then commenced dancing round and round. A second

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time a brace of bullets sped their way, and he rolled over. Quickly seizing their second guns, another volley was fired, and the tiger's further charging was stopped for ever.

"That's a settler," said Mackenzie, as the two instinctively reloaded before going up to the dead foe.

"Yes, rather a neat job altogether," was Norman's reply, as he drove home a bullet, and then shouted to Rugonauth that the game was bagged.

"Sharp, short, and decidedly decisive," observed Hawkes, as he joined them over the body of the striped beauty, now so still, but within so brief a space exulting in the unequalled combination of power and agility belonging to its kind. "You 'slacked his limbs in death' pretty sharply. All I could see after he appeared out of the bushes, was a yellow streak, then a slight dance, a roll over, and muteness succeeded his roaring. He was straight between myself and you, so that I couldn't have fired, even if I had had time."

"Ah!" said Mackenzie. "If we had only been on the ground yesterday, instead of being perched in those confounded trees, we should have given a better account of the family party. I wonder if this is one of yesterday's? It's odd, his returning to the same place."

While they were discussing this, one of the hunters observed that Manajee was not present, and asked what had become of him. Before Rugonauth could reply, a man stepped forward and said that Manajee had also marked down a tiger two or three hours ago.

"Then why were we not told so before?" he was asked.

"Sahib," the fellow replied. "I went to the sacred spot, where I expected to find you, but you had left. I came on the track of the horses, and arrived here while the beat was going on. It is finished; if the Sahibs please, I will guide them to Manajee."

"By Jove! we are in luck," exclaimed Mackenzie, as he rubbed his hands. "We'll make up for yesterday, I dare say. Has anything been heard of the one which was wounded yesterday?"

"It has not been seen, Sahib," was the reply, "and Manajee thinks it must have died in the jungle."

After letting the man have a drink of water, and leaving one or two to look after the dead tiger, the hunters sought the tree, in the shade of which their horses had been left; and, with the beaters in company, were soon following their guide to the place where Manajee was expecting them.

A ride of a couple of miles brought them to the neighbourhood of another river, which somewhat lower down joined the one they had left. Here they found the Shikaree, who expressed his surprise at the Sahibs being so long in coming.

When he heard, however, of the success already achieved, he was pleased to express his firm conviction that this day was destined to be an important one in matters of sport. There could be no question, he considered, that the fates on this occasion were highly propitious, and the presiding deities of the jungles favourably inclined.

Assured though he professed himself of this important circumstance, he nevertheless deplored the paucity of the beaters, as the cover was very extensive. As heretofore consisting for the most part of jow, it spread over a large area nearly level with the bed of the river, and which during the rains was probably flooded. Its extreme length may have been half a mile.

Owing to its extent, the hunters were placed in positions widely apart one from the other. Each had to guard various outlets which led to the surrounding jungle, and, at the same time, obtain as commanding a view as possible of the breaks and openings in the cover itself.

To each was assigned a tree; but Mackenzie

resolutely refused to avail himself of its advantages, declaring that he preferred taking his chance on terra firma, as he attributed the preceding day's ill-luck entirely to his being "perched up aloft, like a confounded old crow," as he expressed it. So a convenient spot on a rising ground was found for him, and there he established himself behind the trunk of a small tree, into which he made his spare gun carrier climb, and keep a look-out.

The cover was of very unequal thickness, some portions being much denser than others. As one or two of these were known to be favourite haunts, it was thought advisable to keep the men together, and beat from one to the other, instead of extending them over the whole width.

This plan soon proved successful; for from one of the first of the thickest patches, a tiger was observed by a marker to steal away. This being notified to the beaters, the line was still further contracted, and followed in the direction the animal had been seen to take.

Hawkes, who was stationed in a tree just within the confines of the cover, soon caught a sight of the tiger with his head turned towards the beaters, and evidently listening, quite unconscious of the proximity of any other danger. He levelled and fired, and the beast acknowledged the compliment by

turning and darting down the jungle towards Mackenzie in a series of tremendous bounds, at the same time giving audible signs of his dissatisfaction at the treatment he had met with.

The beaters continued on; and when they had reached the level of Hawkes' tree, he descended and joined Norman by a circuitous path. He had hardly done so, and from the bottom of Norman's tree was exchanging with his friend above a few brief inquiries, when a man was seen to advance into the jungle and move across an opening, as if to communicate with a marker in an adjacent tree.

"What is that fellow doing there, I wonder?" remarked Norman, angrily. "The man is mad. Do you see him, Hawkes?"

The words were hardly spoken, when the tiger sprang out of a thick clump of bushes, and charged straight at the man, who, apparently petrified, made no effort to escape. Indeed, there was no time to do so.

The man was, unfortunately, directly between the enraged beast and the two spectators, so that they were unable to fire; and there seemed no hope for the wretched creature.

"God of my fathers! he'll be on him in a moment," ejaculated Norman, with horror. "I must risk it,—I'll fire."

But even as he thus rapidly spoke, and suiting the action to the word brought his rifle to bear, the tiger rolled over in a heap, and a rifle crack sounded sharp and ringing.

"By Heaven! That dear old fellow, Mac, spoke there. Do you see him, Hawkes, from where you are?"

"I can see Mac," was the reply. "He has changed his place. But I can't make out the tiger: he must be down, for the man has bolted."

"Here, hold aside this bough," Norman said to his gun-bearer. "Let me see! Ah! There he is struggling. I have him now. Steady!"

It was a long, a very long shot; but the bullet sped on its way, and the wounded animal ceased to struggle. The beater, released from the numbing effects of his terror by the overthrow of the tiger, had already, with monkey-like agility, climbed into a tree. The crisis was over, and the man saved; and it mattered little whether Mackenzie's or Norman's bullet had given the death wound.

"The old trump! There he is looking quite unconcerned, and as cool as a cucumber, I bet," remarked Norman, admiringly. "Is it all right, Mac?" he shouted. "Is he finished?"

The answer was another rifle shot, succeeded by a stentorian roar. "All right, he's meat! I just fired

to make certain. A neat shot that of yours at the distance."

The three soon met over the dead animal, and exchanged notes. Rugonauth, Manajee, and the beaters also were shortly engaged in discussing the affair; and, among them, the rescued beater, gesticulating wildly, narrated his escape, with occasional interruptions and corrections from a marker in the tree near the spot, who, at the same time, was favouring another portion of the audience with his version of the story.

This, after a while, attracted Mackenzie's attention, and he called the rescued man to him.

Looking upon himself evidently quite in the light of a hero, the fellow ceased his narrative, and advanced towards the little group of sportsmen. He felt that, at that moment, he was an individual of no little importance, and the envy of his fellow-villagers, whose eyes he knew to be fixed on him. Perhaps, indeed, he had very strong hopes of "baksheesh." If this were the case, his hopes were quickly and rudely dispelled; for, directly he came within reach, Mac gave him a cuff on the side of his puggree, then seized him by the shoulders, and shook him violently.

"Ah, you baseborn!" he said; "you deserve a hearty thrashing. What made you go into the

jungle, contrary to orders, when you knew the tiger was about? You shall have no pay for this day, and not a drop of mowrah. My heart went right into my mouth," he continued, turning to his companions, "when I saw the tiger dash at him. The idiot deserves a sound hiding." And he gave the culprit a shake which almost made the teeth rattle in his head, as he remembered the disagreeable sensation he had experienced.

"Don't spare him!" said Norman. "It will be an example to the others, besides being some satisfaction for the anxiety he must have caused us all. Better tell Rugonauth that, in consequence of his disobedience of orders, he is not to be employed the next time we beat."

This was done; and Rugonauth, with the air of a judge delivering sentence, expressed his entire approval of the order, and added a few observations of his own when commenting on the circumstance. The decree was confirmed, without hope of amelioration, when it was ascertained that the man had deserted his own post, and gone towards a neighbouring look-out to borrow a pipeful of tobacco.

Manajee, too, admitted the justice of the decision, although the wrong-doer was one of his most important assistants, and a fellow-villager. His regret, however, at his friend's misdemeanor was eclipsed

by his satisfaction at the speedy death of *his* tiger, and the realization of his predictions.

"Ah! Sahib people," he said, "I told you I was a good Shikaree. How could the tigers escape? I saw a hare this morning on the proper side, and some partridges flew in the right direction. I felt sure your honours' bullets would be carried straight, and Manajee's tiger be laid this evening in front of the tents. In my opinion, yesterday's wounded one will yet be found. Luck is great to-day, and the omens favourable." And, in effect, Manajee's prediction ultimately proved correct; for, on the following day the skin and head of the beast were brought into the camp—the former, however, in such a decomposed state as to render it useless as a trophy.

That night, among the Shikarees, there was a grand carouse on the strength of the success—some mowrah, or other spirit, having been procured to supplement the limited allowance authorised by the hunters. Some samber flesh, also, dried in strips, and of an exceedingly leathery nature, served as food palatable enough to the not very fastidious tastes and digestions of the consumers. And there is reason to believe that Rugonauth and Manajee became reconciled during the course of the evening's festivities.

The hunters—who did not reach their new camp

till after dark—found the tents pitched in the shade of some tamarind trees ; a small pool of water here, also, serving as a bathing-place, though hardly large or deep enough to admit of swimming beyond a stroke or two.

CHAPTER XVI.

A proposed Visit—A native Cavalcade—The Ceremonies of the Mulakat or Visit—Arrival—Departure—Punctiliousness of native Etiquette—Anecdote in point—Another Cow killed—A dead Panther brought in—Incident in Travelling—Riding Panthers—Lions—"Riding a Pig."

FATIGUE and drink had somewhat knocked up the Shikarees, who professed themselves next day unable to mark down any game—having probably not gone out at all. Manajee, with half-a-dozen of his fellow-villagers, had followed the camp to its new ground, and taken up his residence under a neighbouring tree.

The last two had been days of rather severe work, so the hunters themselves were not reluctant to take a rest.

During the forenoon, a herald came in from some petty chieftains—Rajpoots, whose dwelling was about three or four miles away—and announced that, if convenient to the gentlemen, his masters proposed a "mulakat"—in other words—paying them a visit that afternoon. At the same time an official

brought to them a tray of sweetmeats, almonds, small raisins, and sugar-candy.

As it would have been discourteous to decline the intended honour, the hunters, though anything but relishing it, intimated the pleasure it would give them.

They were the more inclined to do the civil thing from the circumstance of its being their intention, after leaving their present place, to hunt in the neighbourhood of some villages which belonged to the chiefs, and whose good-will it was, therefore, desirable to secure.

As military men serving with their regiments—none of them having ever been employed in the civil or political departments—our hunters were not very well versed in the formalities and ceremonies attendant on the reception of native gentlemen of position, and which are deemed by the latter of so much importance. Norman had, however, on one occasion visited a friend of his, a resident, or *chargé d'affaires*, at one of the native courts, and had there acquired some slight insight into the mysteries of the etiquette usual on such an occasion as the present.

With some assistance from Sheik Hussein he was able therefore to instruct Mackenzie in the duties of his responsible position as senior of the party.

Mackenzie would willingly have waived his seniority for the occasion, and delegated to Norman the duties attached to it; but the latter would not hear of such a thing, expecting, indeed, to derive some amusement from the rough Scotchman's manner of conducting the formal and punctilious proceedings.

They had ascertained from the herald how many of the expected visitors were entitled to the recognition of chairs; it being found that three were "eligibles"—the chief himself, a brother, and a son. As but three light chairs could be mustered, it became necessary to improvise seats, so that all the party could be accommodated. A table was first proposed, but rejected in favour of a deal box, which, with a gay-coloured rug over it, formed a seat of inviting appearance. It was found, too, on inquiry, that the luxurious Sheik Hussein was in possession of a stool. This it was decided should receive the capacious form of Mackenzie, the converted box being detailed for the accommodation of Norman and Hawkes.

Everything being cleared out of Mackenzie's tent —the Bechoba—a small piece of carpet was spread, and the seats arranged; there being just room enough to contain them.

Soon after these matters were satisfactorily con-

cluded, an *avant courrier* arrived in hot haste to announce the approach of the *cortége*—somewhat unnecessarily, it must be admitted, for the dust and noise were pretty sure indications of its proximity.

First came a horse gaily caparisoned in red and yellow, bearing a pair of kettle-drums, and a rider who thumped them with an energy astonishing to witness. Next followed a small party of the retainers, several of them blowing horns and beating tom-toms; with these was a gaudily emblazoned standard. Immediately preceding the chiefs themselves, a footman ran shouting, at the very top of an unusually deep, powerful voice, all the names, titles, and dignities of his master. The chiefs themselves followed on horseback, well covered with the dust, which rose in great columns. Retainers, both horse and foot, brought up the rear and completed the cavalcade.

When they had arrived within about fifty yards of the little camp, the motley assemblage drew to either side and allowed the chiefs to pass to the front. The latter, after being assisted to dismount, and having some of the dust flicked off them by the officious body-servants, preceded by a man bearing a silver mace, advanced towards the tents with slow and solemn steps, and as much dignity as the

unwieldly proportions of the eldest one would permit.

Mackenzie and his friends met them at the tent-pegs, where hand-shaking took place, and moving inquiries after the health of each respectively were made on both sides. With an appearance of the deepest interest, the old chief learnt that the health of Mackenzie and his friends was in a generally satisfactory state.

Their anxiety on this head being relieved, and their polite inquiries duly acknowledged, Mackenzie took the hand of the senior, and thus conducting him, squeezed the portly old fellow through the door of the tent with some difficulty, and seated him in the biggest chair; a handkerchief-holder, or private adviser, or some other functionary taking his place behind it. In similar fashion, Norman having seized the paw of the brother, and Hawkes that of the son, conducted them to their seats on the other side, and then took possession of their own.

This ceremony concluded, a solemn silence ensued, shortly broken, however, by an inquiry from the visitors if the Sahibs had been successful in sport. Hearing that they had been so, they expressed their deep gratification at the circumstance. Another pause then ensued. This was terminated by Mac-

kenzie's observing that it was very hot; a self-evident fact there was no gainsaying, and which was politely assented to by the strangers. The heat of the weather naturally led Norman to remark that it caused great thirst, another fact which met with no contradiction. On this, Mackenzie thought the occasion might be improved by ordering in a little brandy-and-water, but before doing so, asked Norman in English "if these sort of coves drank brandy?"

"Well, I fancy so," was the reply. "They have awfully potent liquids of their own, I know. Fiery spirits combined with essence of quails and other strength-giving meat, and they take them freely."

The natives, of course, did not understand this brief aside, but catching the word "brandy"—a term with which they were perfectly familiar—they pricked up their ears, looked at each other meaningly, and smiled.

"Sahib," said the leader, "I will on my return send to you a bottle of liquor which we drink; it is doubtless not so good as what the Sahibs are accustomed to, but I hope it will be approved of."

"Much kindness on your part," replied Mackenzie. "Would you like to see some of ours? It is called 'brandy.' We all drink it."

"Berandy! I have heard of it," the old fellow observed. "It is dark-coloured, is it not?"

"Yes, you shall see. This is very thirsty weather. Who is waiting there? Boy!"

The servants, who were outside the tent taking a deep interest in the proceedings within, quickly replied; and Sheik Hussein making his appearance at the door, was directed to bring in a bottle of brandy and some glasses.

The bottle was brought, and its gorgeous label much admired as it was handed from one to the other of the guests, each of whom took a sniff at the contents *en passant*, evidently finding it anything but disagreeable.

"Better have a glass," said Norman. "It will do you good after your ride."

Those addressed shook their heads and smiled.

"They will suck it in like fishes, I see," observed Mackenzie; and without any more beating about the bush, he poured out some into the tumblers, which he was about to fill up with water, when he was arrested by the objections of his guests. It was soon ascertained that it was not the spirit in its natural state, but its dilution, to which they objected. Mackenzie accordingly handed to them the tumblers containing the raw spirit undiluted, and each tossed down the contents of his glass, and smacked his lips afterwards with much satisfaction.

"Well done! Shabash," cried Mackenzie. "By

Jove! Norman, we needn't have been so delicate in our advances; they were evidently on the look-out for a swizzle. I shall help myself." And so saying, he mixed himself a tumbler.

The others followed his example; but, having exhausted their stock of tumblers, were obliged to be contented with the large pewter pint-mugs, without which an Indian sportsman rarely travels.

The ice of formality being thus broken, the party got on much better; and the guests, without any great amount of urging, were prevailed on to have several more drams before they left. At their request, too, the guns were brought in and exhibited. These were examined with much interest, and a revolver belonging to Mackenzie excited especial attention. So well, indeed, were the strangers amused, that it was only after an unusually long visit that they hinted it was time to take leave.

On this, Mackenzie prepared himself for the formalities attending departure.

The chiefs had themselves taken the precaution to bring with them the requisite articles, without which the ceremony of leave-taking among people of consequence is not considered complete; for they were aware that the Sahibs were not likely to have them. An understrapper, therefore, had handed over to Sheik Hussein, a little salver, and cup con-

taining the attar and other things; and that individual now appeared, clad in his best, and bearing this tray over which was thrown a small piece of damask. Mackenzie sprinkled each guest with a little rose-water, then placed on the wristband, or some piece of cloth which represented a handkerchief, a small portion of the contents of the little cup. This was followed by distribution of little packets of spices, beetul-nut, and other ingredients folded in leaves.

When this, the ceremony of "attarpaun," was completed, the strangers rose, and were escorted, in the same manner as before, as far as the tent-pegs.

The two elders of the party were hardly so steady as they might have been, and laughed wildly when they shook hands at parting; and then, suddenly remembering their dignity, assumed a demeanour of unnatural gravity.

Expressing hopes that the gentlemen would pay their poor dwelling a visit at an early date, they mounted their horses; or rather, with the assistance of several servants, were hoisted and hustled into their gorgeously covered saddles, and rode away, as they had come, mid much discordant noise and volumes of dust.

"How particular they seem to be regarding the

performance of the ceremonious portion of the visit," said Hawkes, after they had left. "Is it always usual, that sort of thing?"

"Yes," replied Norman; "the princes of some of the petty independent states are exacting to a degree in the due performance of all the recognised formalities. When they are receiving a visit from any of the big-wig political officers, or themselves paying one, they are extremely particular in not advancing a single step further than etiquette requires; and rules on the subject are strictly laid down. As they attach so much importance to this, our political officers are also obliged to be very careful that the proper amount of respect is paid to them, and that there is no diminution in the authorised distance. I remember hearing once that a newly appointed political agent had, on one occasion, to go a certain distance to meet the Rajah of the country, and thence escort him to the residency, as the chief had announced his intention of paying the officer a visit. A certain corner of a street was the place assigned as the usual point of meeting; but the officer somehow took it into his head that he was being imposed upon, and induced to go further than the authorised distance. However that may be, when he came near the corner he resolutely refused to go even partly round it, asserting that the chief should come right

round and then be met. Each was accompanied by a large escort, and the officer by several other gentlemen also. Just round the corner the Rajah waited and waited, expecting the British functionary to make his appearance, and quite prepared to dash forward on his elephant, with smiling face and full of complimentary expressions; but he would not budge an inch till he saw the officer. Thus they waited, each of course perfectly cognisant of the close neighbourhood of the other—indeed, portions of the escorts had mingled. The best of it was, too, that one of the agency assistants—an officer of the army—had been despatched according to etiquette to escort the Rajah all the way from his palace; and there he was also waiting and waiting for the appearance round the corner of his own superior. At last, after a considerable lapse of time, and after several messages had passed between the native functionaries on both sides, each advanced a little, and the Rajah catching sight of the Englishman, smoothed his ruffled countenance, and came gleefully forward as if nothing unusual had occurred to interfere with his oily gladness at meeting. No verbal reference to the circumstance was made just then; but the precise point of meeting afterwards formed the subject of considerable official correspondence.

"The same chief was said, also, to have gone to

great expense in altering a portion of his palace, in order that the passage by which he descended to the door where it was usual to receive the political officers, should be a few feet shorter, or a step or two less."

"A fool and his money are soon parted," observed Mackenzie. "I believe it is customary at some of the native courts for officers to take off their shoes, is it not, Norman? You have seen something of them."

"Yes; and it is a custom which, in my opinion, should be done away with. The uncovering of the head among Europeans answers the same purpose of respect, as denuding the feet among Orientals, and it should be accepted as conveying such. But some of these old long-descended Rajpoot families, with their traditions from remote ages, are proud as Lucifer, and cannot bear the idea of such a change."

"Are they of such ancient lineage then?" demanded Hawkes.

"Yes, many can trace back their pedigree so far, that the oldest of European families is comparatively one of quite modern date. They take especial pride in it; and there are tribes whose peculiar duty it is to keep the genealogical records and traditions and legends of the race—I mean the 'Charuns' and 'Bhats' (genealogists and minstrels). But it's time to bathe, so come along."

While they were enjoying the evening dabble, a man came running to them to say that a cow had been killed by a tiger about a couple of miles off. However, it was then too late to think of going after it; and though the hunters discussed the propriety of sitting up over the carcase, the nights being now nearly moonless, Mackenzie, without much difficulty, carried a resolution to the effect that it would be better to wait for the day.

Just as they were about to sit down to dinner, a dead panther was brought in. It had been slain by a matchlockman, who detected it in a bush close to the path on which he was walking, and fortunately killed it with a single shot.

This circumstance brought to the recollection of Norman an incident which once befell him, when a panther was killed pretty close to him without his at the time knowing anything about it.

He related that he was once travelling through a very wild part of the country with a small escort, consisting of a couple of native horsemen, as the district was infested by robbers. It was in the morning, and he had arrived within a mile or so of the village where he expected to find his tent, when his attention was attracted by the barking of some dogs on one side of the road. He then saw a small party of men, who were just in front, run towards

the barking dogs, and dodge about among the bushes. Presently, as he rode past the spot a couple of shots were fired in quick succession, close by. He thought nothing of it, imagining that the men and dogs had gone in chase of a hare, but rode on to his tent. While he was yet at breakfast, however, a panther was brought in; and on inquiry it proved that the shots he had heard fired, were at the animal itself, which had perhaps been waiting in ambush near the road for any stray cow or other animal that might come that way.

"You might have had a chance of spearing it," said Hawkes, "if you had known of its vicinity."

"I certainly might have had the chance," replied Norman, "but it is one of which I should have been rather slow to avail myself. If it had been a mere 'cheetur' (a smaller animal of the leopard tribe) I might have gone in for it. But a panther is a deuced awkward customer to tackle single-handed, with only a spear to depend upon; and few men would be fool-hardy enough to venture on it."

"No," said Mackenzie, "certainly not. I have known of men seriously mauled when riding them, even with a large party. But some fellows will do anything. I remember hearing of a lion being ridden with spears; and very severely the imprudent

riders came to grief. Bears I believe have been frequently speared."

"Your way of expressing yourself, Mackenzie," said Norman, "as, *a lion being ridden with spears*, reminds me of a story I heard once. A simple-minded clergyman, soon after his arrival in India, was proceeding to an up-country station to which he had been appointed chaplain. On his way, he was entertained with the usual Anglo-Indian hospitality, by an officer to whom he had brought a letter of introduction from a common acquaintance. The gentleman apologised for being obliged to put him into a little side room, instead of one more large and airy, in consequence of the better apartment being then occupied by a friend with a broken arm.

The clergyman, of course, expressed his regret to hear of the accident to his host's friend, and inquired how it had occurred.

"Oh!" said the host, "nothing very uncommon in this country, where the ground is so hard and stony. He broke his arm *while riding a pig*."

"Riding a pig!" repeated the clergyman with some amazement.

"Yes," was the reply. "While riding a pig, he got an ugly fall on some sheet rock."

"Am I right, Captain Jones, in understanding you to say that your friend really received so severe

an injury while riding a pig?" inquired the Padre, now thoroughly astonished.

"Certainly," the officer answered, himself wondering considerably at the clergyman's surprise at so simple a circumstance. "Certainly, I repeat, my friend got his fall in riding a fine boar."

"A fine boar!" ejaculated the parson. "Really, Captain Jones, you must excuse my astonishment, —being only so short a time in the country; but I was, till now, quite unaware that officers amused themselves by riding pigs. It seems so very odd a sport, and I should also think one very difficult of acquirement. Is it not very hard to sit them?"

Captain Jones had been opening his eyes wider and wider, as his guest thus expressed himself regarding so well-known and famed a sport as "boar-hunting;" and it was only as the parson concluded, that it occurred to him that his words had been taken literally, to mean that his injured friend had actually met with the accident while riding on a pig.

He lost no time, however, in undeceiving the innocent chaplain, who joined in the laugh which his ignorance gave rise to.

Mackenzie, on this day at dinner, produced a tin of "Highland mutton," as there was no game, and nothing but a couple of half-starved fowls to be had.

The village near which they were encamped was quite in the plain, at a considerable distance from the hills; and the country in the immediate vicinity was singularly deficient in small game,—at least Mr. Manuel so averred. He had been entrusted by Mackenzie with a gun for the purpose of bagging whatever he came across, which might be fit for the table, but returned in the evening empty-handed. He had promised Sheik Hussein a peafowl for his own private delectation, and, to render it lawful food, had taken with him a Mussulman servant to do the needful when it was shot. Disappointed in his hopes of a hearty supper, Sheik Hussein expressed himself as having no confidence in the sporting abilities of his fellow-bootlair, and broadly hinted that his ill success was attributable, more to the inexpertness of the sportsman than to any lack of game. This nearly led to a row between the worthy pair. But the old Mussulman was so impenetrably stolid, and so firmly persuaded that *he* must be in the right, that all the energetic bile and voluble protestations of the excitable Portuguese were quite lost on him. The latter was obliged at last to calm himself, without having elicited any more convincing argument than was contained in a recommendation to try bows and arrows the next time he essayed to kill game.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Scene of the Kill—Signs of the Enemy—A walking Shot—Escape after Proceedings—Again met—Singular behaviour of a Tiger—A sitting Shot—Finale—Temptation—Resistance and Non-resistance—Discussion about it—Matter amicably settled—A Dish of Pork.

An early inspection on the following morning of the scene of the kill proved that the tiger had made an excellent meal during the night, but had not lingered long in the neighbourhood after dawn. The hunters had accompanied the Shikarees in their examination of the place, and were now advised by the latter to send to the camp for their breakfast at once, and then proceed to the trees by the dried-up pond, there to await khubber; for the tiger's pugs led in that direction.

This was done, and it was yet early when, the cold meal being consumed, the sportsmen were *en route* to the jungle rendezvous. The Shikarees had gone on the track of the tiger, who was evidently in a suspicious frame of mind, and not likely to rest till he had attained some favourite thicket; for the neighbourhood of the kill was but scantily grown

over, and furnished no cover for an abiding resting-place.

The hunters had advanced some distance on their way along the village cart track—which passed near the place dedicated to the jungle deities—and were quietly jogging along with the beaters, when the whirr of a black partridge from the bed of the river, along the bank of which the road lay, attracted the attention of the two seniors. They watched the bird, thinking what a pretty shot it was, as it came flying past; but it had hardly flown by, when a peacock also rose hurriedly a short distance further on, and with evident symptoms of having been suddenly disturbed. This was succeeded by a great noise from several other birds of the same species. Mackenzie and Norman looked at the peacock, then at each other, and pulled up their ponies, as the cries of those most unmusical birds sounded harsh and shrill in the jow-grown river bed.

Hawkes was riding a short distance a-head; but a quiet whistle of warning from Mackenzie caused him to turn in his saddle, and, seeing his companions hurriedly dismounting, he quickly joined them.

In reply to his inquiries, they told him there was evidently something moving in the river; and, from the noise made by the pea-fowl (who have, like the monkeys, for some reason or other a strange

antipathy to the feline race), they judged it to be a tiger.

The horse-keepers and gun-men moved quickly forward on being beckoned, and seizing their rifles, the hunters, by the advice of their guide, ran along to a bend of the river some distance a-head, and squatted down behind a few bushes ; the beaters and horses remaining where they were.

They anxiously waited, with their rifles on full cock, for several minutes, keeping a wary general look-out over the open parts of the jungle in front, and especially on the road which there crossed the river. Suddenly again a partridge rose, but dropped after flying a few yards. Another performed a similar manœuvre, and our sportsmen now felt convinced that something must be on the move.

"By the powers, there he is!" whispered Norman ; "but I can't quite make him out."

"Where ?—where ?" the others rapidly inquired, in a cautious tone of voice.

"There, near the road, on the other side. I saw him move. He must be looking to see if all is clear."

Even as Norman spoke, a fine tiger stalked quietly and majestically from the jungle on to the open road, and in another second would have been across, when the concealed battery opened upon him.

There was short time for aiming, but prepared for the place of his appearance, the sportsmen were able to get each a hurried snap shot; and the beast acknowledged the salute with a roar and a tremendous bound, which instantly carried him out of sight, in the jungle on the other side of the road.

"A hit!" exclaimed Mackenzie.

"Decidedly; I caught the thud," responded Norman. "But one bullet at least was wide; it kicked up the dust well behind him."

"I wonder if he would have taken a fancy to either of our tattoos," said Hawkes. "If we had continued along the road, we should just about have given him a favourable opportunity of taking his choice."

"There is no answering for his tastes and appetites," replied Mackenzie. "Though he had such a good dinner last night—if it is our friend of the kill—he might still have a corner left for a bit of pony. But come along, if you fellows have loaded; we ought to try and intercept him again."

While these observations were being made, reloading had been in full operation; and when completed, the three, with an equal number of natives, crossed the river by the road and then continued along the bank on that side.

By keeping on the chord of the arc, formed by

another bend of the river, they hoped to reach a favourable spot to command its bed lower down, before the tiger should have time to pass it. Arrived at the place in question, they waited in concealment for some time, but without seeing anything more of the animal. Shortly their attention was attracted to a small knot of men up the stream, and these they made out to be Rugonauth and the other Shikarees on the old track of the tiger. They were soon, however, seen to leave the trail, and go towards the place where the beaters and ponies had been left, probably having been warned of what had occurred. They were next seen to cross the road, and pull up dead at the spot where the tiger had passed. A very brief examination seemed to satisfy them. They then continued on the track of the sportsmen, whom they soon joined in their place of ambush.

They were quickly in possession of the facts of the case; and on learning that the tiger was undoubtedly wounded, and was believed not to have passed the place at present occupied, Rugonauth's measures were promptly taken.

He knew that the beast had not left the river on the side on which they now were, between them and the road, or he should have found the pug when following the trail of the hunters. Dividing his

party, therefore, he directed Manajee to go back by the road to the other side, and thence move down the river bank, while he himself crossed directly over a little lower down. He would thus be able to ascertain for certain whether the tiger had stolen away before the hunters reached their present position, or unobserved since they had done so. The two Shikarees would then work on towards each other, till the ring was completed of that section of the river.

No time was lost in executing this movement, and Rugonauth shortly re-appeared on the other side without having discovered any sign of the tiger's escape below. He then continued working up towards Manajee, carefully examining the ground at each step. A shrill whistle from the latter arrested him, however, before he had proceeded far; and both he and the hunters shortly responded to the signal by joining the cautious Shikaree.

It was then found that the tiger had sneaked away up a dry watercourse filled with jungle, and which there joined the river at right angles.

After a brief investigation, and the exchange of a few words with Manajee and one or two of the other local Shikarees, Rugonauth informed his masters that the tiger had in all probability made for an isolated

hill, or rather series of small knolls, which, in parts thickly covered with jungle, rose abruptly from the plain about half a mile off, and of which the water-course was a drainer. There was no thick jungle between the river and the hill; at least, not of sufficient extent to tempt the beast to remain, with so favourite a cover within reach. So, after directing the beaters to go to one end, the party moved towards the hill in question.

The ground consisted of a main back-bone, or ridge, with a series of stony knolls on both sides; the whole apparently tossed abruptly out of the plain by some wild convulsive freak of nature, and quite isolated from any range of hills. It extended for about a mile in length, with a width at the greatest part of some three or four hundred yards.

About mid-way between the two ends, the slopes were bare of undergrowth, but with numerous small trees scattered over them. This was the part selected to be held by the gunners, the half to their rear being but thinly wooded, while that to which the beaters had gone was thickly covered. Hawkes was stationed near the top of the ridge, the other two being lower down, one on either slope. Mackenzie was persuaded to follow the example of his wo friends, and get into a tree.

Almost immediately succeeding the first distant burst of beater-music, Norman, on his side, saw a yellow tawny mass top a slope a long way off, and descend it at a canter straight in his direction. It was, however, soon lost to view. Anxiously he kept his gaze wandering over the intervening ground, carefully scanning each knoll and slope, but without discovering the object of his interest, till suddenly—and in that place quite unexpectedly—a tiger deliberately walked into the plain at the foot of the hills, and began to stare about him.

The distance was about two hundred yards; and, thinking the animal was deliberating about breaking right away across the plain, or that he would shortly be hidden by the next knoll, Norman changed the double rifle which he held in his hand for his pet single, and determined to risk a long shot. But before he had covered it, the tiger—perhaps dreading to expose himself on the plain, or for some other feline reason—suddenly changed his course, and, to Norman's astonishment, came quietly on, straight towards its lurking enemy.

Seeing this, the hunter reserved his fire for closer quarters; but as, when within about a hundred yards, it showed an inclination to resume the former direction of its flight, he hesitated no longer, but delivered his shot.

With a low roar, the tiger broke from a walk into a gallop, and tried to charge up the hill. It was evident to the sportsman that it was suffering great distress from its continued exertion during the heat of the day, and, very likely, from its wounds also. Before it reached the tree, gasping for breath, its pace had again subsided into a walk, but it pertinaciously continued still to advance towards Norman. The double gun had replaced the single rifle in his hands, and, as the tiger approached, he fired his right barrel, expecting to see the beast roll over. But it neither acknowledged the civility by a roar, by turning from its line, accelerating its pace, or in any other way. Without taking the slightest notice of the occupants of the tree, directly under whom it passed, it continued a little further on, and then sat on its hams like a cat, as if completely unaware of their vicinity.

Possibly it might have been merely waiting to catch some sound by which to ascertain the exact situation of its adversaries, but more likely it was so exhausted as to be unable to proceed any further without resting, and, in its flurried state, incapable of detecting where its danger lay. Norman had been unable to fire at it as it passed underneath, owing to the thickness of some foliage which concealed it from him; but he now screwed himself

round, and deliberately aiming at the spot where the elbow touches the side, fired, and the beast, without a groan, dropped perfectly motionless to the shot.

The other hunters had not been aware of the tiger's being on foot till Norman's shots warned them to be on the alert; and as his position was undiscernible from theirs, his death-whoop was the first intimation they had of the termination of the brief encounter, and it soon brought them to the spot.

"That is about the queerest tiger I ever saw," said Norman, as he reloaded, after descending from his tree. And then he detailed the circumstances of the beast charging up the hill straight towards his tree; then, without appearing to take the least notice of him, pass on, and utterly regardless of his vicinity, deliberately squat down in the very front of danger.

"He must have got the staggers, I should think," said Mackenzie. "He has been rattled about enough after his hearty meal last night, to interfere considerably with his digestion. Don't you think he saw you?"

"Hardly, I should say," was the reply. "He certainly charged straight for the tree, and of course I expected some sign of recognition; but he quietly

walked underneath, and then pulled up, as I have told you."

"Queer beast, certainly! He must have been utterly exhausted. By all tiger right, he ought to have been as savage as—as—as—a tiger," Mackenzie added, at a loss for a word more fitted to convey the idea of pugnacious irritability.

While thus speaking, they had been engaged in examining the body.

"This must be the wound he got in the river," said Norman, pointing to one in the ribs. "He has been licking it. But there is only one."

"There are only two others," said Mackenzie; "so you must have missed just now with one of your shots."

"Then it must have been with my second, when the beast was within ten yards; for I'm certain my first told."

"No," remarked Hawkes. "Here is a regular bit cut clean out of his tail. You took a good line, Norman, but shot high. It must be yours, for it has evidently been fired from the front."

"A muffish shot, and no mistake," Norman said. "But——"

"Dookur! dookur!" (pig! pig!) here cried out several of the beaters, who, having heard of the death, were making the best of their way to the

spot. "There, Sahibs, there they are, just below you!"

Abruptly breaking off, each hunter had instinctively seized his weapon, and brought it to the "ready;" and now, as they all looked in the direction indicated, saw a nice sounder of half-grown pig getting very creditably over the ground, about fifty yards below the place on which they stood. They were rattling along close together, and presented certainly an exceedingly tempting shot.

"There's no riding them here!" muttered Mackenzie, hurriedly. "Yes, hanged if I don't!" he added, as the sight proved irresistible. And suiting the action to the word, he let drive right and left, and was immediately followed by Hawkes doing the same.

Norman clutched his rifle with a firmer grip, as he looked wistfully at the pig defiling so temptingly before him. But, no! For the Secretary of the Jehangeer Hunt to *shoot* a pig!—to take so dirty an advantage of what was only born to be speared! —Never! Though food were still more wanting in camp, never should it be said that the Secretary of that renowned Hunt had committed so unjust a deed! Pig-murder—Never! *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum!* Strengthened by this appropriate quota-

tion, he resolutely resisted his not unnatural inclination to fire, and "ordered" his weapon with stern determination.

"Hoora! one's down!" shouted Hawkes; "and there is another hard hit. Come along!" And getting hold of a second gun, he ran after one which showed symptoms of distress, as it lagged behind its fellows, now disappearing over a slope. "Come along! it can't go far!"

Mackenzie ran off with his young companion. Norman hesitated for one moment. "The beast is wounded; it should be put out of its pain!" he ejaculated, and then started after his comrades. Fleet of foot, he soon outstripped them; and on gaining the top of the acclivity over which the wounded pig had disappeared, he detected it standing in a hollow below. Pulling up, and rapidly aiming, he fired; and the porker was in the next moment on his back, kicking.

"His porcine spirit has fled from its frail tenement, as the newspapers say," observed Hawkes, who was not long in joining his friend over the now motionless pig.

"Hoora!" shouted Mackenzie, as he came up, blowing like a grampus. "There will be something like food now."

"Ah, Mac! how could you?" said Norman,

eyeing the last comer reproachfully. "An old pig-sticker like you!"

"How could I?" repeated the Scotchman, with some faint show of embarrassment. "How could I, said you? Why, hang it, man! meat is meat!"

This was indisputable; so Norman made no effort to attack that proposition, but he said, "And couldn't you resist killing a poor little pig, because you have had less than a week's course of tough goat and stringy fowls? To shoot a pig! As bad, every bit, as vulpicide in England!"

"Ay! ay! but we shoot them in the Highlands, where they can't be ridden; and this is just the same case. We couldn't ride them here in this jungle," observed the porcicide, apologetically. "Besides, we want meat for the camp."

"The brand of pig-slayer will cleave unto you," said Norman. "And only fancy your setting Hawkes so bad an example! Really, Mac, I am quite ashamed of you."

"And who, I should like to know, polished off this fat little chap?" responded the Scotchman, as he cunningly shifted his tactics. "Come, it's all very fine your pitching into me; but you went off with far more alacrity than myself to get the finishing shot."

"Yes," chimed in Hawkes, who felt himself bound

to support his partner in guilt; "you gave us both the go-by in your anxiety to administer the *coup-de-grace*."

"Yes; that is just it," was the reply. "I felt obliged to finish it. If you fellows had only killed it outright, I wouldn't have touched a trigger at them. I wanted to put it out of its misery, as it was wounded."

"Oh! ay! of course," Mackenzie retorted; "pure tender-heartedness on your part. However, you can't deny that you did drive a bullet into it. There is no getting over that fact."

And with this triumphant remark, the Scotchman chuckled at the idea of the crack hog-hunter of the district being concerned in the *shooting* of a pig—a sporting crime, in a country feasible for hunting, it is unnecessary to remark, of no little magnitude.

Norman shuddered at the idea.

"Why, hang it!" he said, "did I fire when they passed so temptingly before me? I only just finished what you fellows had so muffishly begun."

"No valid reason. Hawkes or I would have finished it. No, the fact is, you couldn't resist your bloodthirsty nature. Your murderous propensities overcame you."

"Why, what a calumny!" Norman exclaimed.

"I not only checked all desire to fire when they passed, but did not even aim at them."

"Ay! but then you wished to," said Hawkes. "You say you 'checked all desire to fire,' so you must have had some desire. It's all the same thing; for if evil wishes damn equally with evil acts, you are in the same boat as ourselves—whichever way you put it—so you had better not pitch into us any more."

Norman laughed at the casuistical reasoning of his young companion; and though he would not admit any culpability on his part in the affair, was obliged to sign a truce.

"Well, I won't impeach you this time," he said, "I will for once overlook the grave offence; but, remember, only on this occasion. I won't have the hunt rules broken, even out here."

"You'll be precious glad at dinner-time that we have been less strict than yourself," Mackenzie said. "I declare the idea of the chops makes me feel quite hungry. Just see in what capital condition this little beast is, considering the season."

A compromise being thus established, no great amount of remorse was afterwards expressed by any one of the party at the deed which had so seasonably supplied the camp larder. As for old Rugonauth, when he arrived on the scene

of action, his congratulations were unmistakably sincere.

"Very good, Sahibs,—very good!" he said, chuckling gleefully. "There will be good meat for the gentlemen's dinner to-day. There is plenty of good flesh on these pig," and he gloated over the animal he was already engaged in disemboweling, and otherwise rendering fit for transit to the tents. Manajee was in the meantime similarly employed on the other. When prepared, they were hung on boughs, and, with the tiger, conveyed to camp.

To Manuel was assigned the duty of choosing and preparing the most delicate portions for the table; and one or two jokes passed between that person and his young friend Baloo, at the expense of old Sheik Hussein.

Imbued with the orthodox Mussulman aversion, he had expressed his disgust by spitting on the ground when the unclean animals were first brought in. Disdaining to appear to take the slightest interest in the cutting up—which appeared to afford unlimited gratification to his pork-eating fellows, and the many loquacious on-lookers,—he removed himself to a distance, and pondered on the depraved and heterodox tastes of the misguided lovers of the forbidden meat. He was not so far away, however, as to be entirely ignorant of the nature of the jokes

which were freely indulged in. A dignified contempt kept him silent; but not on that account was he wrathless. It required but a touch to arouse the smouldering embers of his anger and make them break forth in flame. He passively bore, for some time, all the hard things he heard said of his creed and its restrictive laws on the subject of pork, but he was at last excited to active demonstration by Mr. Baloo.

That person, who was of no caste or religion in particular, had been among those most interested in the dismemberment of the pigs; and he now had occasion to pass near Sheik Hussein with a dish of the raw meat. He took this opportunity of remarking to another servant, in a tone of voice which he knew must reach the Mussulman, that it was a great pity the Koran prohibited pork, as he felt certain Sheik Hussein would like it.

This was too much for that worthy man. He jumped up and ran—or, to speak more correctly, trotted, for he was corpulent and not much given to running—towards the delinquent, with the object of inflicting summary personal chastisement.

"You heretic!—you ill-begotten!—you base-born!" he shouted, brandishing a frying-pan he had seized on as the first available weapon. "I'll teach you to speak so disrespectfully."

He snorted with rage, and his thin moustache stuck out like the hair on the back of an angry cat, as he aimed a blow at Baloo ; but that agile youth was perfectly prepared. He put down the plate of meat on a box, avoided the blow, and then dodging round the box, ran off laughing.

Sheik Hussein, however, unable at once to check both the violence of his onset, and the impetus given by the missing of his blow, struck his shin against the edge of the box, fell sprawling over it, and on to the dish of meat which Baloo had just deposited there.

He recovered himself with some difficulty, and when he saw with what he had been in contact, and the pollution his person had undergone, started off in a frenzy of rage. He commenced tearing off his long frock-like apparel ; but suddenly calming himself, as he saw the impossibility of taking present vengeance on his active enemy, walked away with as much stateliness as he could on the moment assume, to cleanse himself from the pollution he had undergone.

Baloo, however, for some time took especial care not to come within reach of the enraged old fellow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A native Letter—Its Contents—The Reply—Black Partridges—A Visit to the Chiefs—Description of the Dwelling—Native Liquor—Nautching—Manajee's Farewell.

On the Monday, the shikarees were unable to find the fresh tracks of any tiger, so the sportsmen determined again to move their camp, and by night, for on the last occasion all had suffered severely from the day march. Among other circumstances, one of the terriers had been brought in on a man's head, more dead than alive; and one or two of the fowls had died on the road in their basket.

During the day, a messenger came in from the chiefs, and, after application to the servants, was introduced to the presence of the hunters. Carrying in his hand a long iron-shod staff—an emblem of his position as an Hurkara—gaily trimmed with a woollen tuft of variegated colours, he advanced salaaming, and unfolding a piece of cloth he carried, produced, with every appearance of reverence and respect, a small flat muslin bag. This he presented

to Mackenzie, and then retired to a little distance, and was shortly dismissed to refresh himself. The muslin cover was about the size of the usual official envelope; and through its flimsy texture could be discerned the flowered silk of the covering containing the "khureeta," or letter. This was tied at the mouth with several twists of red silk thread, the ends of which were passed through a waxen seal. And such a seal! Round, and having a diameter of about three inches, with a uniform thickness of perhaps a third of an inch, it may have contained, say, three or four sticks of ordinary sealing-wax. On its face was impressed a number of native characters with many flourishes, all firm and well defined. The silk being cut, the usual native letter from one person of consequence to another of similar rank, was extracted. Folded with great precision, it was written in a flourishing Persian character, in the Hindustanee language, on soft glazed paper, which glittered with the particles of gold-leaf used in its manufacture.

Norman—who had passed as an interpreter—with some assistance from Sheik Hussein, managed after several trials to make out the general purport of the document; and in this he was somewhat aided also by the fact of its contents having been communicated by the Hurkara to Sheik Hussein.

It commenced by stating, in high-flown terms of great praise and politeness, that it was addressed to a Sahib whose name it was for some time exceedingly difficult to ascertain. However, as it began with something which looked like "Mug," and the remainder might be fairly taken to represent "unjee," both being preceded by "Kuptun," it was assumed that "Mugunjee" stood in lieu of Mackenzie's name. Some queer liberties were taken with the names of the others also, but being simpler, they escaped with less alteration; "Noman" and "Hok" being sufficiently approximate to be readily understood.

After the preliminary string of complimentary expressions was exhausted, it made particular and earnest inquiries after the health of those to whom it was addressed. It then set forth that, knowing the gentlemen were great hunters, the writer had sent men out to look for tigers in his neighbourhood; that the information was favourable, and that the best shikaree of the place had been sent to report to the Sahibs. It went on to state that it was earnestly hoped the gentlemen would fill the hearts of their friends with delight by appointing a day for a meeting, and that so auspiciously commenced a friendship might last between them for ever. Invoking all manner of blessings, it concluded

with an intimation that to write more would be beyond the limits of respect.

Sheik Hussein, though evidently longing to try his hand, confessed that he was hardly equal to the important duty of answering this missive in the complimentary strain necessary. He was, moreover, unacquainted with the titles, style, and formula of address appertaining to the rank of the person written to—a most important matter. After a brief discussion, therefore, it was decided to send a reply in English, as the best and easiest way of overcoming native epistolary difficulties.

As there was not a creature within seventy or eighty miles but themselves and Manuel who could read it when written, it may at first sight appear to have been a somewhat useless expenditure of time and trouble. But as a full verbal explanation of the principal items of its contents was to be given to the bearer, it was hoped they would be sufficiently understood for all necessary purposes. Mackenzie undertook to write the letter, his friends sitting in committee with him as counsellors and assistants.

There was a little difficulty at first as to the most pleasing form of address; but this was quickly overcome by Norman suggesting the adoption of the commencement of Othello's famous speech.

"Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors," was, therefore, the form employed. Then followed a string of the most elaborate compliments which occurred to either member of the committee, free use being made of bulbuls, roses, streams of delight, &c. The body of the letter came next, stating that the writer proposed visiting his heart-delight-giving and most illustrious friends on the morrow. It concluded in a style presenting an agreeable contrast to the commencement, an approximation to the diplomatic form being here considered the most natural and expressive. "Accept, most illustrious and world-famous chief, the assurances of the very summit of my respect and the extremest altitude of my most distinguished consideration." The missive was signed "Donald Mackenzie, of that ilk."

"That's a pretty and effective little piece of composition, I think," said Mackenzie, as he eyed their joint work with much satisfaction. "If ever the chief shows it to any passing English traveller, I flatter myself it will be appreciated."

"I hope it will be preserved among the family archives," observed Norman. "It would be a highly satisfactory document to be perused by some descendant yet unborn of cultivated mind and English linguistic attainments."

"It would be a nice little study, too, for translation into Hindustanee," Hawkes said.

When placed in an envelope, on which a bold flourishing superscription was written, it looked, the senders thought, worthy of its destination. It was entrusted to the care of the "Hurkara," who received it with much respect, carefully wrapped it in the cloth he had brought, and then backed out of the tent with his face to the hunters. As the safest place in which to bestow so important a document, he tied it into a fold of his puggree, and then started off at a long trot, deeming no time should be lost in placing in his master's hands a missive of such interest.

By dawn the next day, the hunters were on the move, having arranged to accompany the shikarees in their examination of the country towards the new camping-ground. A small body of beaters also accompanied them on the chance of being employed, having, in fact, remained with the camp ever since it had been in the neighbourhood of their homes.

The country was carefully examined, but no fresh trail was found. But numerous black partridges had been calling during the early morning in and about the jow in the river's bed. The "chuck-chuck, chuck-a-chuck," of that very handsome bird

is a crow both shrill and clear, and audible at a considerable distance. As there appeared to be no chance of finding a tiger, the hunters spent an hour or so in a beat for them, and succeeded in bagging several brace. They were then guided to the cart track, which led to the village near which their new camp was pitched, and cantered off, leaving the men to follow more leisurely.

About four o'clock they were again astir, with the object of fulfilling their promise of visiting the chiefs, who lived about two miles off. Arraying themselves in the least stained of their shooting-jackets, and, in the cases of Mackenzie and Norman, discarding their leggings and assuming the more conventional trowser of civilisation, they started under the guidance of a messenger who had been deputed by the chiefs to attend them. Another functionary or two of greater importance met them at the entrance to the village, and escorted them to the gateway of the small fort, which, situated on high ground at one end, had a fair command of the village itself and of the surrounding country. It was a rectangular pile of buildings, with an open quadrangle in the centre. Flanked by rounded bastions at the corners, the connecting curtains presented a bare uninteresting appearance, except where a line of gaping slits broke its dull monotony.

These were openings through which the defenders could pour their matchlocks' fire, and which commanded the ditch at the base of the wall. The latter had, however, in many parts now become filled up.

Within the walls, in many parts, the interior buildings had, by successive additions, risen high above the original face, and gave freedom of air and vision to the inhabitants.

Built at a time when every man's hand was against his neighbour's, and when an attack from rivals or robbers might at any hour be apprehended, the means of defence were more studied in its construction than any principle of æsthetics.

Near the only entrance was assembled the principal portion of the village population, who for the most part civilly salaamed as the Englishmen rode past. At the gate itself they were met by a functionary of greater rank, and by him conducted through the gateway and across the quadrangle to a door in the principal pile of buildings at the further end. The other sides were occupied by ranges of low sheds reared against the fort walls, and opening into the quadrangle, many of them being used as stables.

At the door they were met by the chiefs in person, who, after the usual polite inquiries, led them by the hand up flights of steps, and through

narrow passages until they gained an upper room above the fort walls, and commanding an extensive prospect of the adjacent country. The new comers were not sorry to exchange the stifling atmosphere and unpleasant odours through which they had passed for the comparative freshness of this upper region. Chairs were here arranged, and they took their seats in the same order as on the former occasion; that is to say, the hosts were on one side and the guests on the other, several of the household standing behind and around.

The health inquiries exhausted, the chief explained how rejoiced was his heart at the meeting. Mackenzie then thanked his host for making inquiries about the game in the neighbourhood. The chief assured him that he and all his people were much at the service of the Sahibs; and proposed, or rather hinted, that he himself should accompany them in their beat on the morrow.

The hunters, however, had no idea of being hampered in any such way. They well knew that sport was not likely to be enjoyed, or any order kept, with a lot of tag-rag and bobtail, such as would certainly accompany their masters. Little encouragement was therefore given to these hints, which were made out of mere politeness, as no doubt the proposers themselves would have been

greatly embarrassed by the acceptance of their courteous offer of joining their friends in the field.

Some observations on the subject of the view from the window were interrupted by the entrance of attendants with a bottle and glasses.

"I have not, Sahibs, got any spirit like your 'berandy,'" said the senior of the party. "All I have to offer is this. It is very strengthening though, and it gladdens our hearts here in this jungle country. I hope the Sahibs will find it good."

"Without doubt," said Norman, politely, as he observed Mackenzie sniffing doubtfully and suspiciously at the glass which had been poured out for him.

"I say, Norman," he inquired, "is it right to taste it before they do? It smells uncommonly queer."

"Don't know a bit," was the reply. "If they hesitate about drinking, set the example and drink yours at once."

Mackenzie followed this advice; and when he saw the hosts supplied, took a gentle sip. Norman did likewise, and both had some difficulty in swallowing what little they took. Hawkes, more confiding or less experienced, boldly swallowed a full gulp, and immediately began to cough and sputter.

"It is fire," he exclaimed, as soon as he could speak. "Oh! how it burns. I never tasted anything so hot and utterly damnable in my life. Brandy and cayenne-pepper is a joke to it."

"The young Sahib finds it strong?" said the old chief interrogatively, after tossing down his glassful without much apparent inconvenience.

"Yes, it is rather strong," said Norman. "I think it is too much for me after riding in the sun." Saying thus, he put down his glass—an example quickly followed by Mackenzie.

"Their throats and stomachs must be made of cast-iron," the latter said. "They never even winked as they took it."

The chiefs were profuse in their regrets that the liquor was not to the taste of their guests, and urged them to try it again; but this they declined to do, and the entrance of a couple of nautch girls enabled them to change the subject.

Attended by three musicians behind them, the girls took up a position at the end of the room opposite the party seated. Again, however, the chief entreated Mackenzie to imbibe of the potent spirit.

"There was doubt in my heart," he said, "that you would not find it so pleasant as your 'berandy.' But my hope is that you will take a little more.

It is most nourishing. See, I will have yet another glass in honour of the Sahibs. Very warm and heart-rejoicing it is," he added, after finishing a second glass. "Give joy to my heart by taking some more."

Thus entreated, poor Mac, with a wry face, again applied himself to the unpalatable liquor, and took another sip; but by a dexterous manœuvre managed to upset the greater part on to his pocket-handkerchief.

The preliminary tuning up of the instruments and the trial notes of the girls having been now satisfactorily completed, the host asked his guests if it was their pleasure to witness the performance. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he gave a sign, and the nautch commenced.

One girl first led off and advanced to the front; then having retreated, the other came forward and in like manner resumed her place. This was done to the strains of music issuing from a small one-sided drum—which was fixed in the waistcloth and beaten with the fingers—and two string instruments, something between a fiddle and a banjo, of the nature of both of which they in a measure partook.

To western ideas, conversant with waltz and galop, the nautch appears very tame. The performers glided along in a monotonous way, jingling

the little silver bells attached to their anklets, as they kept time to the music, by bringing their ankles together or by a pat of toe or heel causing them to tinkle. Their voluminous dresses, white, with coloured borders, fell in numberless plaited folds to within a few inches of the feet, completely eclipsing in amplitude of skirt, when expanded, the most extensive dress that was ever mounted on crinoline; gathered in a little under the bosom the lower folds of the dress were so arranged that they could be taken in the hand and waved about, the weight and extent of the drapery below permitting this without exposing any more of the coloured trousers, which fitted in wrinkles tight to the ankle. A scarf of red and gold depending from the head was wound loosely over the dress, and the adornment was completed by huge golden rings, some inserted through the cartilage of the nose and ears, and others fixed on the fingers and toes.

After dancing for awhile singly, the two girls joined company. Occasionally by rapid twirls the skirts of the dress were expanded, and taking an end between the fingers they would weave them about with undulating movements of the arms.

The evolutions, though not ungraceful, were stiff, constrained, and monotonous, and mostly performed with the body rigidly erect. There is no spright-

liness in the movement of the feet either, it being considered a great point to glide along without the faintest symptom of springiness.

The singing was not more to the taste of the English auditors than the dancing. Pitched at the very highest key, it appeared that the principal object of the performers was to make their voices shriek and quiver with all their force of lung; and in this they were remarkably successful. Some of the native airs, when set to English music, are pretty enough, but, heard in the original, convey but little idea of melody. Moreover, it requires one to be practised, as well as thoroughly conversant with the language, to enable the listener to catch the burden of the song. But as this is frequently immoral, sometimes indecent, the interest attaching to the words, even when understood, makes no amends for the lack of melody. In fact, a little of it is generally found to go a long way among men whose tastes have not become assimilated to those of the natives.

On this occasion, Norman managed to make out that a great deal of the singing was a sort of chaunt in honour of the visitors; but this did not prove sufficiently attractive to induce them to prolong their visit. Mackenzie, therefore, took an early opportunity of intimating that, as the sun was

sinking, it was time for them to be moving homewards.

On this hint the nautch was stopped, and, after salaaming, the performers left. As they retired, the light from the door-way fell on a perforated screen at the side of the room, and Norman caught sight of what Hawkes had for some time been in close observation.

Behind this screen—a piece of carved stone-work let into the wall—Hawkes had fancied he could dimly discern the outlines of several female figures flitting to-and-fro; and on one occasion a suppressed giggle—such as is only producible by the fairer half of humanity—had confirmed him in his conjecture.

Examining the spot with a deeper interest and a more curious gaze, he felt persuaded that he detected the flashing glance of a dark eye and the shape of a female head; and he smiled as he bowed towards it. Again he thought he detected a low laugh; but, if this were the case, he found no opportunity of satisfying himself as to the personal appearance of its possessor.

The uttur-pan was brought in, and, the usual ceremonies concluded, the guests were conducted as before, and, after taking leave of their hosts at the foot of the building, rode away.

Hawkes had, it is true, looked narrowly at the

grating as he left the room, and, I am sorry to say, on the supposition that some one was there, violently winked his eye. Possibly it may have reached some old harridan—the zenanah attendant; possibly some blooming, fair Rajpoot girl, longing for freedom and an intrigue; possibly it fell dead on the unimpressionable stone: but which, it was not destined he should ever learn.

After being escorted as before through the village, the hunters galloped off to their tents.

The village at which their camp was pitched also belonged to the chief, who possessed a "Jagheer," or estate, of considerable extent. Sheik Hussein informed them, with much importance, that a sheep, some bottles of liquor, and several trays of sweetmeats, had been sent for their acceptance; and that orders had been issued that grass, wood, and milk should be furnished free during their stay at any villages acknowledging the chief as their lord.

The sheep, liquor, and sweetmeats were, as etiquette required, accepted; but the sportsmen issued strict injunctions that everything received from the villagers should be paid for, being well aware that, too often, a good portion of the loss falls on the villager who brings the supplies.

However, a polite message was returned; and, what, perhaps, was more acceptable—a couple of

bottles of brandy sent by the domestic who had brought the gifts.

They had now advanced into a portion of the country beyond the limits of that known to Manajee and his friends; and being far from their homes, they requested permission to take leave and return.

This was announced to the hunters as they sat outside, smoking after dinner.

"Let them come," said Mackenzie to Sheik Hussein, "and bring some native matchlock powder and a bottle of the liquor just sent us."

Hereupon, Manajee—who, with ten or a dozen of his fellow-villagers, was waiting at a short distance—advanced, clad, as were his companions, in complete light-marching order.

"Well, Manajee," Mackenzie began, "so you wish to go back to your home, do you?"

"Yes, Sahib," was the reply. "This country is unknown to me. I have not seen these jungles."

"The tigers would laugh at your beard here, eh?" inquired Norman.

"The striped ones are deceitful, Sahib; I am not a guide in these jungles, therefore my service here would be of no use."

Another individual also here made a remark. "We have been long absent, Sahib people," he said. "The wife and little ones are looking along

our road daily. There will be no food in the house if we remain away longer."

"You could buy food and send it," said Hawkes, who desired to retain the men, as they had proved good and useful allies. Had he been so well versed in sporting matters as his companions, however, he would have known that such men are like fishes out of water, and of but little use away from their own well-known jungles, far from which they have a great dislike to go. "Why do you really wish to go, now?" he added. "We have paid you well."

"The Sahibs are great cherishers of the poor," Manajee replied. "Without doubt the gentlemen have treated us with great kindness. Our pay has been regularly paid. But it is the fit time to return to the village."

"You are getting fat and lazy, like a lot of Buneeahs," said Mackenzie, laughingly. "We have fed you so well that you can't work any longer."

"No, no, Sahib. The Sahib knows we are ready to beat the jungles near our village. These are too distant. It is a true word; we have had some very good dinners, but we are not fat," and he drew in his pinched-up stomach till there was a regular cavity.

In truth, the spare, thin, wiry frames of the dusky group showed few symptoms of obesity as

they stood there ready for their night march, and merely girt about the head, waist, and middle.

"Well, well, Manajee," said Mackenzie, "I suppose you must have your 'rooksut' (leave to depart). You have done good service, and your men have worked well. If we come again to this country next year, you must be ready for our service."

"Without doubt—certainly—we are ready whenever the Sahibs come"—the party murmured, generally. "Our houses—everything—are the Sahibs'. The faces of such shikarees will bring gladness to the village."

"Ay, ay, of course you say so. There is no difficulty in speaking. But I shall expect a messenger to come to me in Jehangeerpore if many tigers come about."

"Sahib, what word I say is true," replied Manajee. "I will myself bring khubber. Where the Sahibs are, there is no lack of food in the houses of the village. We hope the gentlemen will come to us next year. What can I say more?"

"Very good; remember your promise," Mackenzie answered. "Now I shall give each of you an extra day's pay, and a drink before you start."

Uttering murmurs of approval, the men ranged themselves round, received each his small donation

of money, which was transferred to a knotted corner of his puggree, drank his allowance of spirit at a gulp, and then, salaaming, moved off.

Manajee was the last to make his exit; and as he salaamed, exclaimed, "May good fortune be with the Sahibs. Their slave Manajee is always ready for their service in sport, and I am," he concluded, "a tree to tree guide, and I know every bush and stone in my country." So saying, he vanished in the gloom.

CHAPTER XIX.

Roopur—Marking down—The Black Gap—Beat in the Black Gap—A plucky Deed—Roopur's Triumph—Killed Dead—Reverence for a good Shot.

THE shikaree, who had been deputed by the chief to look for game, proved a more useful ally than was expected; and though unacquainted with the manner in which the English hunters usually followed the sport, was of great assistance, from his knowledge of tracking and of the haunts of the game.

Though an exceedingly wild specimen of the *genus homo*, and at first rather doubtful of the exact nature of the white faces, he soon came to understand that they were liberal paymasters, and just in their dealings with the poor villagers. This secured his goodwill and aroused the desire, seldom dormant, for the acquisition of a few of those rupees which he had learnt the Feringees were ready to give in exchange for good and successful service.

There was in the neighbourhood a basin in the hills, almost rock-rimmed, with but a narrow neck, which, opening into the plain, gave exit in the monsoon to the abundance of water which poured into it from the heights around. This spot, he asserted, was frequently sought by tigers, even during the hottest weather, in preference to the cool river beds. Its attractions consisted in its secluded position, and the many dark, sheltered retreats which existed among its huge boulders, and under its overhanging cliffs.

While Rugonauth, therefore, with some of the local trackers, sought for pugs in the river which flowed in the vicinity and was a portion of that which watered Mungaum, Roopur, the new assistant, proceeded before dawn direct to the spot I have mentioned. Having posted one or two men in positions overlooking the basin itself and such inlets as a tiger could enter by, he established himself in a tree commanding the narrow opening to the plain, and there patiently waited.

Shortly before sunrise he saw a tiger approach at a walk from the direction of the river, enter by the opening on that side, and disappear among the jungle and rocks. More than once he again caught sight of it clambering over some obstructing boulder, or dimly moving among the bushes, until it finally

became lost to view near an overhanging cliff. For another half-hour he remained still and motionless; then quietly descending from his perch, he cautiously glided through the jungle to the trees in which were posted his fellow look-outs.

He found that two of them had also seen the animal; so leaving them with strict injunctions to keep a wary watch on the place, he started to inform the sportsmen of his successful reconnaissance, at the same time despatching one of his comrades to apprise Rugonauth.

Our friends were not prepared for such early news; but while the beaters were being assembled, they expeditiously breakfasted and arranged themselves in their shooting toggery.

Old Rugonauth had got on the track of the same tiger, which he was carefully following up when met by Roopur's messenger. Accordingly he gave up the scent and stopped at some little distance from the "Black Gap"—the name by which the place was known in the neighbourhood—and there awaited the arrival of the hunters.

This took place before long; and on consulting Roopur as to the nature of the ground, they had little difficulty in arranging the manner in which it should be beaten.

A strong party under Roopur himself was de-

tailed to advance directly above the place where the tiger was last seen, and near which, the shikaree was aware, existed several favourite dens, much affected by the feline race. The rest of the beaters were directed to go round to the further part of the basin, and then, in extended order, shout from the top of the cliffs and rocks. Hawkes went with them a part of the distance, and was posted in a tree on the side opposite to that where the tiger was expected to be found, and which, being less rugged, it was necessary to render secure. The other two were placed in trees commanding the gap itself. A dry watercourse, which came down the gorge, wound between them, and then passed into the plain.

When all were in their places, at a signal from Rugonauth, the howling simultaneously commenced, and was continued uninterruptedly for some time without anything showing. As it relaxed in vigour, various directions and many questions and answers were shouted across by the more prominent actors on either side. Fireworks were next produced, and, together with volleys of stones, were hurled from the cliff on which Roopur stood in command of his detachment. The shouts were renewed, but still no sign of any tiger.

As a lull again took place, Rugonauth could be

heard giving vent to his displeasure, in no measured terms of abuse, to the original look-outs, who, he declared, had deceived them all. He requested Roopur also to inform him if he considered himself a shikaree. If he had seen a tiger at all, it had slipped away. What manner of "bundobust" was that?

Perhaps he was a little irate at having been anticipated in his efforts to track the beast. Perhaps he really believed that the look-outs had allowed it to steal away unperceived. However that might be, he appeared by his taunts to consider that in some way Roopur and his comrades were very much to blame. The hunters, too, were beginning to think their new assistant was probably untrustworthy or inefficient.

As for Roopur, he said nothing in reply to all the chaff so freely lavished by the irascible Rugonauth. But he deemed that his credit was at stake—that his honour was involved in the question. He knew that his own eyes had not deceived him; he believed that his comrades had remained alert during his absence; and, further, he was well-acquainted with the spot, and was aware that, sheltered by the overhanging cliff, were several dark cavities, whose recesses were impenetrable by anything thrown from above. He conjectured that in some one of these

the animal had sought retreat, and now lay unharassed by the missiles so freely expended.

Moved by the sarcasm of the professional shikaree, whose word was so much depended on by the hunters, he, as he himself would have expressed it, "bound on his courage."

Taking a couple of flower-pots, without making an observation to anyone or demanding any assistance, he descended the hill by a circuitous path, which led him to the foot of the cliff on which he had been lately standing. Stationing himself behind a boulder, he lighted one of his fireworks, and threw it into a recess which gaped black and dim a few yards from him. It fizzed and spluttered, then died out. He approached somewhat nearer, and lighting the other, threw it beyond a ledge which his closer position enabled him to discern. It had barely touched the ground when a roar came from the recess, and a tiger sprang out, passed within a few yards of him, and, after bounding over the boulders of rock in front, went galloping down the steep hillside.

When Roopur saw the success of his operation, and that the tiger was well clear of him, he jumped on to a rock in the sight of all the beaters, except those immediately above. Pointing with one hand triumphantly to the descending tiger, and with the

other gesticulating wildly towards Rugonauth, he shouted, in tones of exultation, "I knew well! I knew well! There he goes! Who said that he wasn't here, and that Roopur was a deceiver? Ha! ha!" And he laughed a laugh, disdainful yet triumphant.

His pæan was echoed from some threescore dusky throats, as the tiger broke in view of those assembled above. It did not require old Rugonauth's yell of warning to announce to the hunters the fact of the animal being on foot.

Hawkes, from his position opposite, at once caught sight of it, and had only time to fire one ineffectual shot before the beast became lost to view. It made no attempt to ascend in his direction, but turned down the gorge, and made direct for the positions of the two lower sportsmen. From out of some bushes it emerged, like a flash, in front of Norman, and bounded into the nullah at full speed. Catching a glimpse, between the stems of two trees, of the meteor-like mass of stripes and yellow shooting by, he fired, but without checking the beast; and in another moment it had passed.

He had just time to shout, "Look out, Mac!" when that individual, seated on a stump, not more than six feet above the ground, viewed the tiger dash out of the nullah, and take a path which led

right up to and past his position. The trigger of his trusty heavy rifle was touched, and a bullet crashed into the advancing body, which, turning a complete somersault, rolled over like a stricken hare. The left barrel was discharged at the doubled-up lump of quivering flesh; but it was unnecessary, for the first had proved fatal.

Norman, who had turned in his tree, now managed to bring his gun to bear, and inquired if he should fire.

"No, no," was the reply. "It's all right. He is as dead as a door-nail."

Hit within a distance of seven or eight yards, the first bullet had struck the tiger in the head, passed through, and, after traversing half the length of the body, lodged just within the skin of the belly.

The whole affair was seen by the beaters from their commanding position on the cliffs and upper ground, and the fall was welcomed with a chorus of approving and congratulatory howls.

Roopur was still standing prominently forward on his rock; and he now again turned his gaze upwards towards Rugonauth, as, pointing with his lean, scraggy arm down to the gap below, he asked him, with a derisive shout, if he was satisfied.

Leaping from his perch, however, he soon scrambled down the rugged hill-side, and shortly stood

in front of Mackenzie as he leant over the dead tiger.

Accustomed only to the use of the matchlock, and the slow and pottering character of the firing its make necessitates, the rapid yet successful aim at an animal—and that so fierce a one as a tiger—at full speed, appeared to him a prodigy of nerve, quickness, and dexterity. For a brief space he looked at Mackenzie with an aspect of profound admiration. He viewed him at the moment as something more than human—of an order of created things far superior to any he had hitherto met; and, under the influence of the sentiments of reverential awe thus inspired, he prostrated himself at Mackenzie's feet.

"Hulloo! what the deuce!—Get up, man! what are you at?" ejaculated Mackenzie, rather astonished at the excessive respect with which he was being treated. "Get up!" he repeated; and as the man arose, and disclosed the features of Roopur, he continued, "What! Roopur, is it you? Did you never see a tiger killed before? You marked down the beast very well. He broke famously. Your work is good."

"I have seen tigers killed before, Sahib. With this matchlock my father killed seven before me, and since then, his son, I—even I, Roopur—have slain five. But never saw I such a shot as to-day.'

"Why, he was close enough. There was no difficulty in the shot," said Mackenzie, a good deal amused at the man's wonder.

"Ay, Sahib, easy if it had been standing. But a charging tiger! Such a death-dealing gun was never before seen. Crack! and in one breath a savage tiger found death! It was wonderful. The Sahib is assisted by spirits. I saw it all, and was amazed. May I be permitted to look at the gun?"

Mackenzie laughed as he good-naturedly handed his rifle for inspection, and asked if it was not a good gun.

"It is a gun beyond price, Sahib," replied Roopur, as he examined the weapon with a tender, deferential care. "It is a regular death-giver, and very heavy. But the Sahib is strong; and in his hands a cannon would be nothing."

"Why, you see, it requires weight to throw a bullet like this." And Mackenzie showed a conical "twelve." "And yet you see it only takes this charge of powder: not like the handful you people use in your matchlocks."

"Is this really all the powder required to fire this great bullet?" inquired Roopur, in astonishment. "The European people are very wonderful. They must make guns by witchcraft. It must hit hard, or the tiger would not have fallen!"

"Look at the tiger," said Mackenzie. "You may see it hit hard. The bullet entered at the head, and here it is." Drawing his hunting-knife, he made a small incision in the skin of the belly, where the bullet lay underneath, and extracted it, crushed and jagged by its passage through the body.

Roopur eyed it with great respect, and, stooping down, measured the distance it had passed, using his arm from tip of finger to elbow for that purpose.

"You thought to deceive me, did you?" he said, apostrophising the brindled beauty, as Mackenzie moved away. "Didn't you know Roopur had seen you? And you thought I had spoken a false word," he continued, turning to Rugonauth, who then joined him with a large portion of the men. "Here he is! Look at him! I knew his cunning, but it couldn't save him. The flower-pot reached him. *I* threw it!"

Even Rugonauth was obliged to admit that the tiger had certainly eventually proved to be at home. It was with but an ill grace, however, that he confessed his aspersions were unmerited.

As the day was young, the hunters proclaimed their intention of beating any favourable places on the chance of turning up something else; full liberty being allowed to fire at whatever might present itself.

Several places were accordingly tried, but without another tiger or even a bear being found. A samber, however, broke near Hawkes, and was accounted for by him.

CHAPTER XX.

Morning employment interrupted—A chance Tiger—A quiet Shot in the early morning—Anecdote: an affair on an Elephant—Extract from a Journal—Tigers right and left—The Tiger provider.

It was yet grey dawn on the following morning, when Norman, calling to his less wakeful friends to get up, kicked off his light blanket, and sat up on the side of the bed. After a stretch and yawn, and a look round, he again intimated to the occupiers of the neighbouring beds—which, like his own, were placed outside the tents under a mangoe tree—that it was time to turn out. He next shouted to the servant to bring the morning cup of tea, which was accordingly soon placed before him.

While engaged in sipping it, he amused himself by picking up one or two mangoes which had fallen close to his bed during the night, and throwing them at the still recumbent forms of his comrades.

He was in the very act of taking a deliberate shot at Mackenzie, whose bulky figure, lying with its back towards him, presented a large and tempting

mark, when his aim was suspended, as the waving of a cloth at a little distance attracted his attention and a cautious shout reached his ears.

He saw that it was some sort of signal, intended to be seen by the occupants of the camp; and accordingly jumped up and shouted to the signaller. This was replied to by the usual native movement of the hand which represents beckoning. Norman's answering shout had aroused the two sleepers, who now sat up rubbing their eyes, and demanding to know what he was making such a noise about.

"Here, Baloo," he called, before replying to his companions, "run and see what that man wants; he is calling to somebody. Go, quick!" Baloo, thus exhorted, went off at a great pace, and soon reached the man.

In the meantime, Norman explained that there was evidently something interesting taking place, and that he should be prepared. While saying this, he had been exchanging his paijamas for a pair of trowsers and putting on his shooting-coat and shoes with praiseworthy despatch, and before Baloo returned was ready to meet any call.

Baloo came back even faster than he had gone; and, almost breathless with excitement and the celerity of his movements, gasped out that the man had just seen a tiger.

"A tiger! where?" Mackenzie ejaculated, as, now completely aroused, he and Hawkes jumped up and got hold of their rifles.

"He saw him cross the river, Sahib, and go into the jungle on the other bank," Baloo answered.

Waiting only to put on shoes, and thrust their arms into their short shooting-coats, which with the baggy paijamas below formed anything but a pleasing or graceful sporting costume, the two followed Norman towards the man in a very brief space of time.

The fellow said that he was on his way to go and cut grass, when he had seen the tiger as described by Baloo. Under his guidance, the three hunters descended to the river; and there, sure enough, in the sand was the animal's recent foot-print. The jungle on the bank was thick and extensive; and should he not remain in it, the man said, would most likely leave by one of two paths in the direction of the hills.

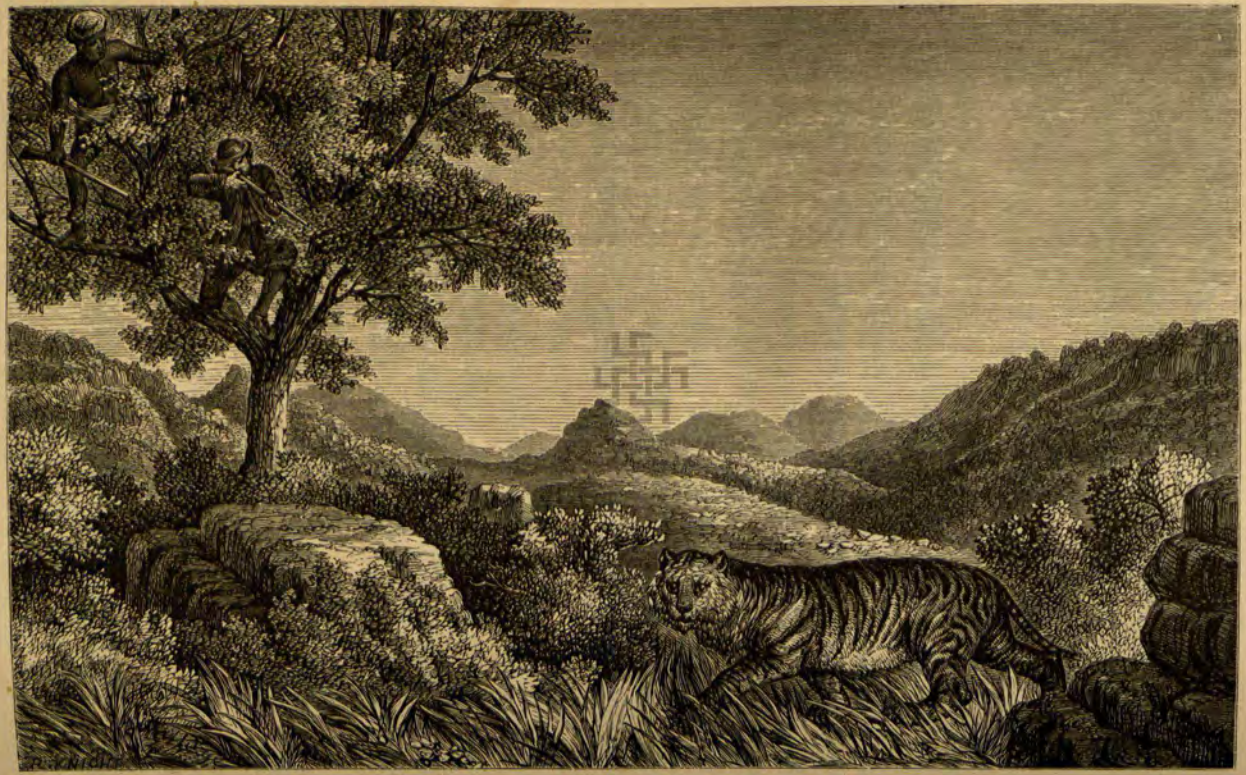
Thinking the chance of intercepting him worth trying, the hunters determined to take up these positions. Several men of the village, who had been lounging about the camp, or in some way employed there, were dispatched by the servants with spare guns after their masters, and now reached the little party. Under the guidance of one of these, Mackenzie and Hawkes started off to occupy

one post, Norman and the grass-cutter proceeding in the direction of the other. The remaining men were directed to enter the jungle and strike the trunks of the trees with sticks or axes, so that, without being alarmed by shouting, the tiger might be induced quietly to sneak away when aware that men were at work in the cover.

The sportsmen felt the more inclined to try their luck at once, as they were aware the shikarees had gone to examine some covers at a considerable distance in the opposite direction; and before they could be summoned, the tiger might be far away. So, as I have said, they started for the two points recommended by the villager, in hopes of intercepting it.

The loose habiliments of Mackenzie and Hawkes were by no means adapted to climbing trees; so the two scrambled on to a high rock, which enabled them to see a little over the jungle, and there patiently waited.

Norman, who had much further to go, was longer in reaching the place selected by his guide; and when he had arrived there, debated whether he should also sit on a rock—of which there were several rising above the surrounding low jungle—or climb into a small tree which grew near. The man recommended the latter course; for from the



A QUIET MORNING SHOT. [P. 375.

tree, he stated, could be covered several open places not discernible from the rocks. Norman accordingly took his station in the tree.

He had not been there very long before he saw a jackal trot underneath. From this the native argued that the tiger would be very likely to follow, if he had any intention of leaving the jungle.

This he communicated in a whisper to Norman; and himself had probably a real belief that the jackal was in truth no other than an advanced attendant or satellite of the nobler beast. If he really entertained such a belief—as many do—his views of the subject were probably irrefutably confirmed by the appearance shortly afterwards of the tiger itself.

He was sneaking quietly along with his head low; the upper line of his whole body, from nose to setting on of tail, forming one long undulating line. The latter appendage was now carried drooping as he brushed through the jungle. It was evident he was in no great hurry, but stalking slowly through the thicket, either not finding the present cover to his taste, or deeming it desirable to avoid the near neighbourhood of the men who were busily employed in the other direction with their sticks and axes.

He passed behind one of the rocks I have referred to, and was for a few seconds lost to sight; but he

quickly re-appeared, and gave a fair clear shot as he crossed an opening in the bushes. Norman carefully covered him, fired, and the beast dropped dead without a groan.

Highly delighted with this most satisfactory result,—the more gratifying because so little expected at that early hour, for the sun had barely risen,—Norman awoke the jungle echoes with an exulting whoop, which ere long brought his brother sportsmen to his side; and soon afterwards they returned in triumph to camp.

"How lucky we have been with these two last tigers!" observed Hawkes, as they sat after breakfast. "Each polished off with a single shot. I suppose that does not often happen, does it?"

"Not very often," answered Mackenzie. "I think I have only once before managed it myself."

"When was that?" asked the young fellow, who was never tired of listening to the sporting anecdotes of his more experienced friends.

"Strange to say," was the reply, "it was on the only occasion on which I ever shot tigers from the back of an elephant. I was by myself, having borrowed an old tusker—a splendid shikaree elephant—from a native Rajah. I was on leave at the time, on the top of Mount Aboo, in Rajpootana, and

my shikaree had reported that three or four tigers held possession of some caves near the top of a small stony hill in the plain, about ten miles from the foot of the mountain. He told me they sometimes lay in the sandy waterless bed of a river not far from their usual stronghold, but that this was always uncertain.

"Well, having sent out a tent and guns, I rode one early morning down the mountain, and out to a village a couple of miles from the tigers' hill, having previously requested that the elephant might be sent to meet me. On my arrival there I found it all right, but rather 'must' and inclined to be cantankerous.

"The reports concerning the tigers were less favourable than I expected. They had not condescended to lie in the river for several days, but always retired to their caves before daylight. These were, it was said, quite unassailable, as they went deep into the interior of the hill itself. So how to get them out was a puzzle I did not attempt to solve. The year previously some men had failed in drawing them, though lavish in expenditure of fireworks.

"The only plan likely to succeed appeared to me to endeavour to keep them out when they had once left. Accordingly I made arrangements that a large

body of beaters should go to the top of the hill during the night, while the animals were away seeking their prey, and howl and shout till morning. This I hoped would prevent them from returning, and induce them, for one day at least, to remain contented with a resting-place in the bed of the river. I also directed that they should tie strips of white cloth about the bushes near the caves, so that even should the beasts not be scared by the noise on the hill above, they might, as they probably would, refuse to face such suspicious and unusual looking articles.

"My plan succeeded to admiration. On the following morning, my shikaree came in to say that the tigers—three in number—had been kept out of their usual retreat, and were then moving about suspiciously, and evidently in an undecided frame of mind, in the river. I mounted my pony and rode off to the scene of my intended operations, directing the elephant to follow as quickly as possible.

"Somehow or other my shikaree had either neglected to mark properly the spot where he had left a large body of beaters between the tigers and their hill, or else they had moved. However that was, he led me by a cart-road across the river, unaware at the time that two tigers were lying close by, and that the third had just passed. Indeed, a

partridge or two which flew up not far from me must have been disturbed by the latter.

"Luckily the beaters saw us, and soon let us know that the two tigers were between us and themselves. As it was, in threading our way through the bushes to reach the men, we should have come almost on the top of them had we not been warned in time. Circling a little round, however, we reached the men without disturbing or being disturbed by either.

"The elephant soon made its appearance, and I mounted into the howdah, leaving the beaters in a body on the bank of the river, and between myself and the caves. Both tigers were declared to be lying in some thick jow and grass; and one fellow in a tree declared he could see them.

"Well, I advanced all right directly up to the spot, and very soon made out, in the shade of the bushes, one tiger, lying with his fore-paws stretched in front, and with head erect, looking apparently directly at me. A word to the mahout, and he stopped the elephant; and, taking a deliberate pot, at a distance of not more than eight or ten yards, I fired. Somewhat to my astonishment, I must confess, not a groan or a growl answered the shot; the only difference seemed to be that the beast had placed its head between its paws. I had been ex-

pecting a charge, and was therefore a little staggered at such a silent, inactive way of receiving my salutation. Could the bullet have dropped out? I thought. But, no! the crack and feel of the gun made me feel convinced the bullet had been there. However, I didn't take much time to think, but fired again, and again, without any response on the part of the tiger.

"'He must be dead, Sahib!' said the shikaree, as he handed me another gun. And dead he was; as we found on approaching close up.

"The first bullet had cut through the side of the head, destroying a portion of the brain; and the only movement the beast made had been to drop its head."

"Well, but how about the others?" asked Hawkes, as Mackenzie ceased. "Did you bag them?"

"What an insatiable fellow you are for shikar stories!" laughed Mackenzie. "But as it is a fine trait in your character, and deserving of encouragement, I don't mind indulging you." And he thus continued:—

"For some time I could make out nothing of the other tiger, who was said to be but a few yards from his companion. He had not stirred at the shots; and, if indeed there, I knew must be close

by. The elephant was driven round the patch of cover, but I did not manage to detect my friend till I had returned nearly to the place from which I had shot the first.

"Here, all of a sudden, I twigged number two, looking at me from a position exactly similar to that of the other. Of course I at once ordered the mahout to stop, and the elephant did so, but with one foot down a sloping bank. I aimed, and fired; but in the very act of pulling the trigger, the elephant slightly moved from the awkward position in which it was, and my bullet flew harmless into the bushes. It was sufficiently close, though, to arouse my feline friend, who turned and made away among the jow. I lost sight of him, till he emerged on the other side of the thicker portion of the cover, and gave me a galloping shot as he made off. I fired twice, and I thought unsuccessfully; but some declared he was tickled up behind."

"What a pity," said Hawkes, "that you did not see them at the same time! You might have got tigers right and left. Did you see anything more of number two?"

"No," was Mackenzie's answer; "but number three afforded me some good sport.

"As soon as I had examined the dead tiger—which was a male of full length and height, but

very narrow in girth—I re-ascended the elephant, and commenced working down the jungle in the bed of the river, on the look-out for the tiger which had previously slipped away. Some of the favourite lairs were known to my man; so, pushing quickly through the jungle where it was thin and open, we examined carefully each denser bit, till we reached a thickish patch, which I was assured would very likely prove to contain number three.

"I stopped at the edge to reconnoitre, and soon saw the beast I was in search of. But the bushes were very thick, and I could not make out very clearly the outline of his form. He appeared to me, however, to be sitting down, with his back towards me, and listening. As I had only the single elephant, he probably did not consider the noise we made sufficiently alarming to induce him to move off. His want of caution eventually cost him dear. Whether he was meditating a bolt, or not, I don't know; but I soon settled the question by firing a couple of barrels at him, one or both taking effect. This, naturally, was very persuasive. With one short roar, he quickly disappeared among the bushes. I pushed on, but next saw him, far ahead, emerge from the thick cover among some scattered shrubs and rocks, in which he disappeared. I continued on, and beat the place, but without seeing him.

Some men, however, who, contrary to my orders, had followed me closely, now went along the bank of the river, and found him lying under a tree. Luckily, he did not charge, but sneaked away. Blood was there discovered, so we were assured he was wounded, and, owing to his want of either inclination or power to make straight away, probably severely. This we afterwards found to be the case; but for all that, I was the whole day engaged in following him, to the great disgust of the elephant, which he expressed by repeatedly refusing to go any further—roaring and waving his trunk about in a manner highly suggestive of the discomfort of being picked out of the howdah, and hurled to earth. In fact, the mahout's control of him was only very partial. I heard that soon afterwards he had become quite 'must' and unruly, was chained up, and no one dared approach him.

"After the men had seen the tiger, as I have said, we decided on 'pugging' him, and then, when tracked to any thick cover, again make use of the elephant. This we did; but the men after awhile asked me to remount, as I could then push on after the beast if we sighted it; and also, from my elevated position, be better able to discern it among the bushes. I did so, and the men continued tracking just in front. Once I saw the beast, but

as it was a most unfavourable shot, I did not fire.

"We pugged and pugged, with little intermission, for the best part of the day; but the beast was often evidently only just disturbed by our approach, and made off to some other place not far distant; so that, as the scent was warm, and any moment might give me a chance, the men, though wearied, held on.

"At last, we so pushed him, that we made him desert the prickly jungle on the banks of the river, and again take to the river-bed; and before following, we refreshed ourselves at a well where there was a trough for watering cattle. It was the shikaree's impression that the wretched, wounded beast was hovering about this place—the only water near—in the hope of getting a drink; but as all the beaters were collected there, and as we kept the unhappy animal constantly moving, he found no opportunity of satisfying his thirst.

"It was now approaching sundown, as I pushed through the thick tract of jow into which the tiger had been traced. All the beaters were collected on the bank, as, getting the old elephant along with some difficulty, I advanced alone, with the shikaree beside me. We beat carefully along, but the cover was very thick. I remember we came across the

nearly finished carcase of a young wild boar, which had, I presume, been caught napping, and surprised by one of the tigers a night or two before. Suddenly, when I had beaten nearly to the end of the patch of jow, I heard a roar far in my rear, and turning round, I saw a couple of men flying for their lives through the bushes, and the tiger, fortunately for them, galloping in an opposite direction. The men, I afterwards learnt, had again disobeyed my strict injunctions, and entered the cover. How they escaped, I don't know; the tiger must have been a very cowardly one, though he did afterwards show fight.

"Well, he galloped across an open bit of sand in the centre of the river's bed, and once more lay up in some thick jow. I turned back and made towards the place; and, directed by some men on the bank, advanced straight on the spot where he was. He started up, and galloped across my front, and I sent him heels over head—a complete somersault—with a bullet through the shoulder, and drove a second one into him before he recovered himself. This, however, he did, and came down straight at the elephant, tail on end. I just managed to cock a barrel of my second gun, and turned him, when within two or three yards, with another shot in the shoulder. He passed close to the foot of the ele-

phant, who, though a staunch, experienced old fellow, gave a sort of squeak, and turned half round. After galloping a few yards, the tiger again faced me—as we brought the elephant round—and lay down, clawing at the earth and bushes in his pain. I gave him another shot, and he turned and slunk into a deep narrow nullah. It was some time before I could make him out after I advanced to it, but at length the mahout discerned his tail; so, circling round, I soon got a better view of him, and saw that he was very nearly expended. I administered one pill more, by way of *coup de grâce;* and as the sun was sinking, we pulled out of the nullah the dead body of a huge male tiger of enormous girth.

"We found that one of my first bullets had gone through a paw, and another had entered at the loins, and—as with the tiger yesterday—had lodged just within the skin of the belly. No wonder the poor beast was averse to travelling far!"

"A very nice day's sport," remarked Norman, when Mackenzie had concluded. "But rather a pity, certainly, as Hawkes says, that you did not get a right-and-left shot at the two first."

"Have tigers ever been shot right and left?' inquired Hawkes. "I don't mean only wounded, but effectually polished off."

"I should suppose they have, occasionally," Nor-

man replied. "At any rate, I know for certain of one instance of a successful right-and-left shot; for it happened to a dear friend of my own—now gone, poor fellow!—whose journal is in my possession."

"How was it?" asked the ever-ready Hawkes.

"I will tell you. I should premise, though, by saying that only one of them was full grown—that was a tigress; the other was her cub, about half or three parts grown. By-the-bye, I believe I have the journal with me, so I may as well read the brief humorous description, only written, of course, as a private record."

Norman went into the tent, and soon returned with an old note-book, nearly full of manuscript. He sighed as he opened it, thinking of the cheery smile and the laughing, deep, brilliant blue eye of the friend of his youthful manhood. He thought of the warm-hearted lad, the determined and daring man, who had shared with him many of the sports of his earlier days in India. He remembered him as he was—cool, resolute, and dauntless; of a nerve which quailed at nothing, and therefore a man well calculated to distinguish himself in those sports where pluck and resolution are requisite. As he glanced over the pages of the book, there rose before him the vision of the merry, clever writer—the free,

frank young fellow who was gifted with a strange power of attracting attachment in others. Pointing to the page containing the description he had referred to, he gave the book to Hawkes, and left his friends.

Mackenzie explained to Hawkes, in reply to his inquiries, that the writer of the journal had been much attached to Norman; a regard fully reciprocated by the latter.

Hawkes now read what I should say is a *bonâ fide* transcript from a rough journal now lying before me:—

"'11*th*.—Khubber again of the tigress and cub in the same place as the day before yesterday. We were posted rather higher up the hill this time. After waiting for some time, I heard a rustling, and saw the tigress sneaking along a path that led directly under my tree. I did not move a muscle, but just brought my rifle a little more to the front. The sun shone on it at that moment, and the beast twigged.

"'I have seen many amiable expressions of countenances in my life, and heard many pretty sounds; but I never saw or heard such a face and roar as the brute indulged in as she pulled up. I thought she was going to charge, so determined to let her come as near as she liked; but after taking a good

*dekh** at me, she wheeled about, and was making off, when I took a quick shot, and floored her. I could just see her tail move, and that was all. I was just looking out, to see if I could not get another shot at her, when I saw one of the cubs sneaking up the hill, about forty yards off, and immediately sent a bullet through him, thus making a right-and-left shot at tigers. I could hear him breathing heavily in the jungle, some distance off, but could not see him. I reloaded my rifle, and then tried to make out where the tigress was; but not a bit of her could either I or the shikaree see, though we both of us climbed right up to the top of the tree, and I began to be afraid she had sneaked away while I was cooning her infant. After waiting about half-an-hour, I got out of my tree, and sneaked up the hill, coming down over the place where I had fired at the tigress, and there, to my great delight, she lay behind a stone, that prevented my seeing her from my "mandwa." She must have fallen dead on the spot, as she never even growled. I then went in pursuit of the young 'un, and found him also dead under a tree. L——† says I have grown two inches, but I don't believe

* Hind. for look.

† The writer's companion, who was posted in another part of the jungle.

him. The bullet that killed the tigress took effect high in the left shoulder, and after passing through her neck, lodged under her right ear. She was in the act of turning at the time.'"

"How capital!" exclaimed Hawkes. "It would be worth a year of life to perform such a sporting feat—and done so cleverly, too."

"Yes, it is not everybody who has the luck to get the chance, or make the most of the luck when he does get it."

Norman now rejoined them, and the conversation turned on the subject of the jackal-attendant of the tiger—or the "lion-provider," as it is termed, in performing a similar duty for that beast of prey.

"Some suppose," said Mackenzie, "that it leads the tiger up to game; its superior sense of smell enabling it to act as guide. Others fancy that it merely accompanies the tiger, so as to come in for a share of the feast, when the nobler animal has satisfied itself."

"But then, in the latter case," said Hawkes, "they would follow, and not precede the tiger. I wonder if there is really anything in the tradition?

"The natives believe in it," observed Norman. "But, apparently, it is not every jackal who is eligible for the situation. The cry of the regularly appointed one is quite different to the usual howl."

What!" asked Hawkes, "does he not give the regular cry, which sounds like 'Here's the body of a dead Hindoo—ooo—where—where—here—here?'"

"No," was the reply. "His cry is even less euphonious than the one you so agreeably describe. It is, I believe, that of the old jackal which has been turned out of the pack. I do not mean that whenever it is heard, a tiger is invariably supposed to be near; but it is considered that those alone who so howl have the honour of accompanying the tiger on his nightly rambles. It is probably a merely accidental matter altogether."

"I remember reading of a case somewhere," Mackenzie said, "regarding a man—an officer—who was a sceptic on the subject. He was in ambush for deer at night, in the middle of a field, heard the peculiar cry of the jackal, and soon after, to his astonishment—for it was quite unexpected in that part—a tiger made its appearance. Of course, he drew the conclusion that there was something more than fiction in the belief of the natives."

Rugonauth now came in to say that he was unable to mark anything down, and had not even come on the pug of the tiger which had been killed in the early morning, having, with Roopur, gone to examine some covers miles away in the opposite

direction. As it was quite late in the day, there was nothing to be done till evening.

They were averse to fire about the place for fear of frightening any possible visitor; and as it was determined to send a party to look for bears in the hills on the morrow, they were also unwilling to disturb that part of the country. A short stroll, therefore, and a little bow-and-arrow shooting with some of the native weapons, were the only amusements that evening.

Strange to say, when shooting at a considerable distance at a piece of paper stuck up as a mark, Mackenzie made a better shot than any of the natives. It was probably beyond their usual range, for they occasionally kill samber and other game when close, and otherwise make capital practice in the jungle.

Perhaps, as Mackenzie told Hawkes, the strangest mode of archery in use among the natives of India, is that practised by the Beloochees in Scinde.

Parties of that wild race are in the habit of going out, ten or a dozen strong. They go quietly along in line till some partridge or other bird—and they are not very particular—is observed. It is then marked into a bush, and the bush surrounded. When the bird flies up, ten or a dozen arrows are

simultaneously discharged at close quarters, and usually with effect. In fact the bird rarely escapes. The bows are very small; and the arrows are not weighted, feathered, or pointed, but consist simply of pieces of rounded sticks, the object being to strike with the side of the arrow and not with the head. But they hit remarkably hard, and a bird is sometimes cut clean in two.

They have frequently been known to kill the oubara (a bird of the bustard species) in this way.

CHAPTER XXI.

The last Bear—An engagement without Beaters—A well-known Pug—Roopur's story—On the trail of the Man-killer—The Bivouac.

AGAIN was Mr. Roopur's star in the ascendant. He had gone out into the hills with a party of men before dawn, leaving Rugonauth to examine the country about the river for tigers.

A bear was seen soon after daylight, and marked to a shelving rock on the side of a hill, where he finally took up his quarters for the day. The place being open, was easily kept in view, and the beast could not leave it without being seen by the men stationed on the opposite hill. Taking up his position there with four or five others, Roopur dispatched a messenger to apprise the hunters of his success, and to tell them beaters were not required.

After the lapse of a sufficient time, they were discerned making their way through the jungle at the foot of the range of hills, and Roopur joined them under a tree which he had fixed on as the resting-place for the horses.

Roopur himself then officiated as conductor, and led the way up the steep hill-side. He had selected the place of ascent round a shoulder of the hill, so that there should be no chance of disturbing the sleeping bear prematurely. On reaching the top, the hunters stopped awhile to recover breath, and then continued on till they arrived above the place where bruin was enjoying his mid-day nap.

The hill-side was very stony, with one or two large rocks standing out boldly; but jungle was very scantily scattered about it. Under one of these rocks the bear was known to be, but owing to the difference in their appearance when seen from above, and when from opposite, Roopur was unable to decide exactly which.

Hitting on one which he thought the most likely, he guided the party down towards it. Some signals, however, from the men stationed on the opposite slope in observation, induced him to change his direction towards another rock; but unfortunately, instead of being able to approach it directly from above, this divergence now obliged them to do so laterally. The consequence was that the bear was aroused, and a yell from the men on the other side proclaimed that it had left its shelter.

Mackenzie, who, under Roopur's directions, was leading, the others following in Indian file, jumped

on to a small boulder, and caught a glimpse of the bear. At the same moment, the beast viewed him. It had been going partly away, but now without the slightest hesitation turned at once, and made at him.

It received the contents of the first barrel with a growl, and commenced a series of the most ungainly dancing movements imaginable; jumping about as if indeed, as Roopur observed, it was nautching. The second barrel served, however, to recall its wandering faculties, and it turned and went lumbering best pace down the steep hill-side. In this it was assisted by Norman, who came up, made a fair running shot, and knocked the retreating beast over. Down it went, bumping about and rolling over and over, till it reached the bottom, where it recovered itself, and crept into a ravine which there intersected the hills.

The party followed as quickly as they could, half running, half scrambling among the rocks and rolling stones which were plentifully strewn about, and rendered progression both uncertain and unpleasant. In hopes, however, of overtaking the wounded animal, and bringing it to bay in the nullah, they gave little heed to these difficulties, or the chance of a sprained ancle. But when they reached the bottom, they found that, though blood was

plentifully sprinkled about, the bear had made good use of the start he had gained, and was out of sight.

Roopur now took up the trail, which, from the quantity of blood, was for some time a very easy matter. But when this failed, and it became difficult to trace the foot-print among the stones, not only did he make some very scientific casts, but he displayed no little generalship in another way. Summoning a couple of the men, he directed them to ascend the hill on the right of the nullah down which he was tracking, and make across to a ravine which he was aware lay on the other side, and which joined that he was now in round the shoulder of the hill. He mentioned a certain spot to which they should go, and there watch; for, from his knowledge of the ground, he believed it likely the bear would make in that direction. In the mean time, he himself continued with the hunters on the trail.

Another half-hour passed, and the tracking was becoming very uncertain, for great slabs of sheet rock and other obstacles to pugging were of frequent occurrence, when a shout from the hill above arrested them. Very few words were necessary to make them understand that the bear had been seen; indeed a few signals were all that

passed, but they were quite sufficient for the purpose.

Mackenzie looked at the stiff climb before him with a rueful face, but girded his loins for the effort, and the ascent was eventually accomplished. Once on the top, he declared he could not continue without some water, and though Norman was impatient to be moving on, he was obliged to wait till his thirsty friend had taken a long pull at the chogul.

The man who had called them, stated, that very soon after arriving at the place indicated by Roopur, and which commanded the ravine, the bear had passed at a slow pace, and that his companion was still watching it. Accordingly when Mackenzie was satisfied, they made the best of their way there, and found that the beast had turned into a thickly wooded nullah.

They now separated; Mackenzie making with Roopur for the head of the nullah, the other two for a point which it was thought likely the bear had not yet passed. Cautiously approaching, about twenty yards apart, the latter pair peered over a ledge of rock from which a good view was obtained of the wooded depths below.

They could see nothing, but were still engaged in scanning the tangled undergrowth, when a grunting "ough, ough," startled them to a knowledge of the

proximity of bruin in an unexpected quarter. He had passed the place before their arrival, and now emerged from some bushes, and was bearing down on Norman, who was nearest, evidently in a most vicious frame of mind, and then not more than ten yards off. Turning rapidly to meet it, he aimed quickly and fired, and the bear fell. Norman had not yet found time during the hurried pursuit to reload his right barrel, and he now turned to exchange his empty rifle for another gun, but found that the bearer thereof—a new and untried villager—had retreated. It was fortunately a matter of little importance, for even before Hawkes could deliver his shot, the bear had rolled over the ledge and shut up in a bush. When Norman had obtained a fresh gun, the two went down into the nullah and soon put an end to what yet remained of the dying beast's life.

They now adjourned to a muddy pool of water, the only one in the neighbourhood, and gave the few men with them an opportunity of quenching their thirst.

The day was intensely hot, and no wonder the men crowded down to get first drink of the not very pure water. But even as they did so, with Roopur at the head, the latter stopped so suddenly, that one or two of the others ran against him.

"Stop," he said. "Don't go in front," and he stooped down and carefully inspected the ground.

"What have you got there?" asked Mackenzie, who had thrown himself down under a tree, and with hat off, was engaged in passing a small pocket-comb through his hair—a most refreshing and restoring process, by the way, especially when perspiring profusely—"What is it?"

"The pug of a tiger, Sahib," was the reply. "He was here this morning."

"And may be a dozen miles away by this. You should have visited the water early."

"Your worship, I would have done so, but we saw the bear, and I could not leave him."

"Ah! well, take no thought of it. We may perhaps get a chance to-morrow."

"Sahib," said the man, "I think this tiger is not far off. He was here late in the morning. But we have no beaters," and he looked sorrowfully on the small knot of men collected round. "I know this tiger—my curses be on him—but I have not seen his pug for a long time. He killed my father." This was said in the calmest manner possible, and as if a mere ordinary circumstance was referred to.

"Killed your father!" exclaimed the hunters, in a breath. "Gad! the man speaks of it," added

Hawkes to his companions, "as if it was an every-day occurrence."

"Yes, Sahib," replied Roopur. "I speak a true word. He killed my father, and another man before him."

"How do you know it is the same?" asked Norman, who approached the place.

"Look here, Sahib; see, his foot has a twist. My father's bullet caused that. I thought this tiger of the devil had left the country, or been killed without my help. But now I hope it may yet be my destiny to see his death agony. It is in the hands of God." The man had spoken in a voice of the utmost unconcern, but the grind of the teeth which accompanied his last observations, conveyed to the hearer an idea that his calmness was but assumed, and that a deep thirsty longing for revenge was really stirring strong in the man's heart.

"True. It has a twist," said Norman, as he attentively examined the pug. "This near fore-leg you mean."

"That is the leg, your honour."

"Well, when you have drunk water, we should like to hear how it came to kill your father. We will rest awhile, and then afterwards see what we can make of the trail."

"It is the Sahib's order," and the man went down

to drink at the pool, while Norman returned to his friends under the tree, and joined them in consuming some biscuits and potted meat, washed down with a little brandy-and-water, and followed by a handful of korinda berries from the neighbouring bushes.

"I have followed that pug for days at a time," commenced the shikaree, after drinking with much evident relish, the small glass of brandy offered him by the hunters. "For many, many times have I been on his trail, and never yet seen him but once since the day my father found death by his means. He knew that the son of his victim was on his track, and he feared. But he is as deceitful as a woman. His cunning is greater than a fox's. Once, and once only, I saw him; but the matchlock is not as the guns of the Sahibs, neither is the hand of Roopur as their hands. Enough. He escaped, and I ate my heart with grief. Still I followed day after day; but he is so cunning that he seldom remains more than a day in one place, and travels many coss during the night. By the good fortune of the Sahibs, I hope his time has now come, and that the old man will be avenged. If your honours give permission, Roopur will not leave the trail till he has taken an answer from this devil-born tiger."

'Well, Roopur, you must be quick about it, if we

are to join in the affair," said Mackenzie. "Our camp goes off to-morrow night."

"I know it, Sahib. I well wish it had been my luck to come across this pug before. But there is till to-morrow night. If it be destined to die, it will die. The Sahibs' good fortune is great."

"Now tell us how your father met his death," said Mackenzie.

"My father," resumed the man, "was the greatest shikaree in these jungles. Seven times has the village rejoiced over the death of bullock-slayers. But his time came. Who can change that? On the day he went out to try and kill this tiger—who had once killed a man, and done much harm to the village people—the women and children smiled to think that there would be no more fear when they went to cut grass or wood, and the men spoke in praise. But who could tell that the rejoicing would be changed into the death lament? Enough. It was destined.

"The tiger had killed a bullock in a field of grain not far from the village, and my father sat up over it at night with three other men. The tiger came, but the bullet was turned aside, and the beast escaped. Morning came, and my father returned silent and crest-fallen to the village. He was met by anxious inquiries, but he only shook his head,

and went to his hut. There, for half-an-hour he sat alone. But after that he came out, and went to the tree beneath which many were listening to the tale of his companions. 'The tiger must die,' he said, 'who will help me to kill him?' Many of the young men stood up and said they were ready. My father selected five, all armed with swords and matchlocks, and again they went to the field. They walked round it, and found that the tiger was still in the high grain. Then they got on his trail and followed him to his lair. My father was leading, and was the first to see him. He fired, and this time no spirit changed the course of the bullet. It struck the tiger; but in the next moment my father lay dead, with his skull crushed, and the tiger dashed away. It has since been a little lame, and has become very cunning. But now I know that it is still alive I shall not rest till it dies."

"But take care, Roopur," said Mackenzie, as the man concluded his brief narrative, "or your fate may be the same as your father's."

"If it will be so, Sahib, it will be."

"Well, what is to be done now?" Norman asked. "We have not enough men to beat. It will be as much as they can do to carry the bear into camp. But we might inspect any favourite places in the neighbourhood."

"It might only disturb him," replied Roopur, "and he would slip away and travel far during the night. But to-morrow I hope he will be found. Something in my heart tells me he has not long to live."

The hunters took Roopur's advice, and left it to him alone to hunt the trail. The shikaree remained behind when they left for the camp, having arranged with one or two of his companions to return with food when the bear had been carried to the tents; for he had determined to pass the night in the jungles, and reserve all his strength for the further prosecution of his purpose.

Rugonauth was a little jealous of the success achieved by Roopur; "his nose," as Hawkes observed, "having been quite put out of joint" since their arrival at their present hunting-ground. But still he determined to aid him as much as possible in his endeavours to compass the destruction of the man-killer.

Should the tiger remain in the hills, he knew there was little hope of tracking it, unless chance should greatly favour them. He therefore determined to examine the neighbourhood of the river in the early morning, in case of its seeking refuge there.

Only when evening fell did Roopur desist from his occupation of following the trail. He could not

do so uninterruptedly,—the ground was too stony for that,—but working with his assistants on a plan of mutual aid, they managed to carry the trail to some thick jungle in a ravine among the hills, and which opened towards the river and the plain.

As darkness came on, they left the hills and selected, as their place of repose, a tree on an open space near the river's bank. A very short time sufficed for them to cut down some bushes, which were arranged as a sort of barrier. Behind this they ate their frugal meal of chupatties, and after a few whiffs at the common pipe, wrapped themselves in their cumbleys and were soon asleep.

CHAPTER XXII.

Still on the Trail—The Man-killer traced—Difficulty to make him show—Bold Tactics rewarded—Roopur's Address—Heavy Joke—Effects of a Jungle Life.

BEFORE the earliest jungle-cock saluted the first faint streak of dawn, and the feathered race woke to recognise the advent of another day, the men had risen from their recumbent posture, and were now squatted on their hams. Still, however, they retained their cumbleys well wrapped about them, for the first fresh hour before sunrise strikes chill to the native frame, even in the hot season. Again, the hubble-bubble made its refreshing rounds, and Roopur girded about his waistcloth a belt and pouches containing ammunition for his cherished matchlock.

Soon after dawn they were on the move, and approaching the entrance to the ravine where the trail had been left on the preceding evening. Here they waited a brief space, till there should be sufficient daylight to enable them to ascertain if any

recent footprint left it on that side. This was, ere long, found to be the case, and Roopur saw at once that the trail was that of his hated enemy. Had it been that of another tiger, he would have left his companions to pursue it, or call Rugonauth for that purpose, for he himself had vowed to let nothing divert his attention from the pug of the twisted foot.

The ground was favourable for tracking; and the trail being but a few hours old, the pugges ran on the scent breast-high. They carried it towards the river, which it entered, and the marks plainly indicated to these acute woodsmen where the animal had stopped to drink. From this it had turned, and followed the course of the river.

Where the jungle became thick, they left the immediate trail, and cast round to hit on the place of exit. They did not expect that it had yet taken up its position for the day, but this was a quicker method than following on the trail through thick cover. In this way several thick patches of jungle were passed, the animal having apparently gone straight through them, with little or no delay. But Roopur was prepared to be led a long stern-chase by the cunning animal, whose habits he had learnt to know so well. As they got further on, he certainly found it had turned here and there, probably

in search of prey, but its general course was directly away.

"He will be making for the 'Ban Peeplee,'" Roopur at length observed to his companions; an almost complete silence having hitherto reigned.

A brief grunt of assent was the only reply to this remark, as they continued perseveringly to carry on the track.

A shrill whistle in their rear now caused the little party to halt, and turn round. This was caused by Rugonauth, who, with a few men, had come across the track of Roopur where he had stopped to examine the marks at the drinking-place. The former saw, of course, that they were on the pug of the tiger, and so open a trail as was left by the advanced party was easily and rapidly followed. In this way he had caught up the leaders, and now they set to work in company.

Roopur, however, ere long felt almost satisfied that the tiger was making for the cover which was known by the name of the "Ban Peeplee"; and this fact, derived from his local knowledge, he communicated to Rugonauth.

It was soon arranged that the latter with his party should proceed at once to the jungle in question; and, if successful in finding the trail there,

send back at once for the others, who in the meantime were to continue pugging.

This was done; and Rugonauth, on reaching the "Ban Peeplee," distant about a couple of miles, had the satisfaction of finding the peculiar pug, and, after making his cast, ascertaining that the tiger was at home.

Roopur received the news with a grim smile of satisfaction as he muttered, "I dreamt it! I was not mistaken yesterday! His day has come!"

Unusual care was taken in placing the markers, so that all the approaches to the cover should be well watched; and some men were collected from a village about a mile distant. They had run the trail to a place at least six miles from the camp; so arrangements were made for obtaining as many beaters as could be collected in the neighbourhood.

Acting on the strict injunctions of the shikarees, the markers preserved a death-like stillness. Under the fierce rays of the mid-day sun, animated creation, too, had slunk to the shelter of the trees and thickets, so that unbroken silence seemed to pervade the hot haze which rested on the entire scene, and to be its most obvious attribute. The crisp dried grass bent and crackled, and the leaves of the trees rustled in the parching wind, but hardly a living

sound was heard to show that any moving thing inhabited the sun-stricken thicket.

Two or three hours had elapsed before the hunters reached the shelter of the tree to which they had been guided. They were more anxious even than usual to bag this tiger, both on Roopur's account and that of his defunct father, and also because the animal was likely to become a confirmed man-eater. Though he had caused the death of two men, that was in a measure in self-defence; he had not done so for the sake of food.

Not yet had he been known to become—what may be called—a professional man-eater; that is to say, he did not as yet entirely devote himself to obtaining human flesh for food. But there were grave fears that he would shortly do so. The beast was getting very old, which, combined with his slight lameness, would soon render him unable to cope with the activity of jungle game, and reduce him to the alternative of preying on man.

Regular man-eaters are usually described as being mangy and hairless, the effect, it is supposed, of their peculiar diet. But as this effect is not observed among cannibals, it may be but the natural consequence of old age, and to that, probably, should be attributed the state described.

Natives, at any rate, in some parts of the country,

consider that it is usually the aged animals who become confirmed man-eaters; though, possibly, circumstances may develop a taste for human blood in younger beasts. The exceeding wariness and cunning of the man-eater is another symptom indicative of the experience attained by age only.

However, the hunters were of opinion that it was more than commonly desirable that this beast should be destroyed, and determined to devote one more day to the attempt, should they be unsuccessful on the present occasion.

After the arrangements for the beat had been discussed under the tree where the shikarees had met the sportsmen, at some distance from the cover, they all proceeded to their allotted positions.

A ridge of hills here ran out into the plain, the upper part being rocky and precipitous, but the lower an easy slope, covered with jungle.

The beaters were sent to one end, so as to drive the cover along the face of the hill. The upper rocks, it was not considered the tiger would attempt. It remained, therefore, only to guard the bottom of the hill and the other end. The latter station was occupied by Hawkes, the others remaining at different situations below.

The place was altogether very extensive and with many outlets, and for upwards of an hour the

beaters perseveringly worked through the jungle without anything being discovered. At last some of them came upon his lair, now vacated, but showing undoubted signs of having been very recently tenanted; so that there could be no doubt the beast was sneaking somewhere in the vicinity. This fact was soon proclaimed, and raised the drooping spirits of the hunters.

Another quarter of an hour passed, and still the cunning animal had not as yet rendered himself visible to any one. Hawkes was the first to get a view. Roopur had been very earnest in impressing on the sportsmen the necessity of remaining perfectly quiet and silent, or the tiger would never show. Hawkes had acted religiously on this advice, and now reaped the benefit of it. Though his throat was husky, and one leg cramped from being so long in an uncomfortable position, he had braced himself to endure all, so long as there was a chance of a visit from the wily enemy.

Turning from glancing towards Norman, who was nearest to him, he let his gaze fall on a nullah, one of the ways of exit over which he was stationed to keep guard. Looking in the direction of his tree, there was the tiger, or rather its face, for that was all he could see of it. It was evidently endeavouring to make out if all was clear in front, at

the same time listening to the noise of the beaters. If Hawkes had taken time for consideration, he would probably have reserved his fire till he got a clearer view and a closer range; but he was too anxious to secure any chance. Accordingly he fired, and, as he believed with effect, and the animal immediately disappeared.

A warning shout to Norman indicating the direction taken, enabled the latter just to catch one brief glimpse of the bright black-striped jacket as he watched the line pointed out. He immediately saw that he had no chance of getting a shot from where he then was, so he resolved to endeavour to get in front of the animal and intercept its retreat. Hastily descending from his tree, he ran up to the top of a knoll which formed a detached portion of the hill, and just as he reached the top, detected the tiger in the act of rounding the little hill itself below. The animal evidently saw his adversary, and paused for a moment as if doubtful what to do. It was about a hundred yards off, and in the position in which it then stood, presented only its chest. Norman was a little blown, and somewhat unsteady from his run, and doubtful of hitting at the distance; he dropped on one knee, however, took rapid aim and fired. The bullet struck fair in the chest; and acknowledging the civility

with a savage grunt, the tiger turned and made off.

Nothing was now seen of him for some short time, till Hawkes viewed him in the jungle, but out of all reasonable range. Suddenly, to his horror, he saw the tiger drop on its belly and creep rapidly towards a clump of beaters. A few frantic shouts warned the unsuspicious men of their danger. Running, they knew would have been useless, and only drawn on themselves the tiger's last furious rush. Fortunately the party was pretty strong in numbers, and stuck well together, whacking the bushes before them, and shouting vigorously. Seeing the determined, unyielding front presented by its enemies, the tiger thought better of his intention, and desisted from the threatened attack. But not entirely scatheless did the party emerge from the peril. The tim-tim wallah—a little fellow who had played a very conspicuous as well as noisy part in the performance—was so overcome with his own strenuous exertions and fright at the magnitude and proximity of the danger, that he rolled head over heels into the bed of a nullah, with some injury to his person.

Rugonauth had now collected the beaters into one body, and Roopur leaving them, came round to the knoll on which he saw Norman standing.

"I told you it was a deceitful one, this tiger, Sahib," he said. "I much fear that after all he will slip away. He is cowardly, and will not face your lordships to eat of bullets. I know not where to seek him." This was said dejectedly, as if the speaker was mourning bitterly the chances of escape.

"Nor I," replied Norman. "This seems as good a place as any, till we hear something of his whereabouts. None of the markers seem to have discovered him."

But while Norman was yet speaking, a man came running round to say that he had just seen the beast, and could show where it was retreating, if they made haste. Norman at once started off, and was just in time to get a snap shot as the tiger disappeared in a nullah, the result of which was a stern wound, but not of a nature to stop it.

The animal had now got among very broken ground, intersected by various nullahs, but a little more open in respect of jungle. After loading, Norman gave his spare gun to Roopur, with strict injunctions that the latter was on no account to fire until he had himself done so. Cocking both barrels of his own rifle, he led the way to a place from which he thought he might intercept the tiger. They had just reached it, when a rustling and

crackling in the bottom of the nullah announced the presence of some heavy animal, and almost immediately afterwards a transient glimpse of the striped jacket in thick jungle showed that they were in presence of the enemy.

Roopur, without a moment's hesitation, brought up his gun to his shoulder; but Norman placed his hand on the lock and motioned that he was not to fire. He saw, by the direction in which the animal was moving, that he must, within a few yards, cross an open space and give a clear uninterrupted view. For a brief minute's space he stood silent and motionless; and then, as anticipated, the tiger's form emerged from the jungle, and gave the opportunity for which Norman had so patiently, and with such judgment waited.

Quickly, but with precision, the bead was drawn on the skulking animal's shoulder, and it fell to the shot which reverberated among the nullahs. A wild cheer broke from the throats of some thirty of the beaters, who from a distance saw the beast fall, and shouted his death knell. This was followed by a shot from Roopur, who had been all this time aiming. In its expiring agony the tiger was still giving one or two convulsive kicks, so that the shikaree might fairly claim to have assisted personally in closing its career. It is true, his shot was

unnecessary, except to "make assurance doubly sure," for Norman's had cured it of man or bullock-slaying for ever; but the last ebbing throbs of life still lingered when Roopur's bullet struck, and his father was avenged.

The final catastrophe was too much for his equanimity. Regardless of Norman's proximity, he almost screamed as he ran down into the nullah before the hunter, and cursed the dead creature and all its kith and kin for many generations. Nor was he sparing of the most voluble abuse seriously reflecting on the female members of its race. At the same time he bestowed a series of kicks on the body, and ended by apostrophising it.

"Ah! devil! Unlawfully begotten devil; may your grave be defiled! What, did you not know that Roopur was on your track? Ha, ha! Did no tiger spirit whisper that Roopur had sworn to see you die? This is his bullet. Did nothing tell you last night that Roopur was near? Your cunning was great. You thought again to deceive him. But not this time. Your time was come; and no longer will the old man be troubled that his son has not avenged his death. It is accomplished. What else? Justice has been done. You have died by my means."

Thus concluding his address, Roopur gave one

last disdainful kick as Norman descended into the bed of the nullah, and turning hastily, salaamed to him.

Gratitude is certainly not a predominating feature of the native character; but at that moment, Roopur felt something very like it for the man by whose instrumentality the accomplishment of his revenge had been effected.

He touched Norman's feet with his hands, and then his own forehead—typical of placing the dust from beneath them on his head—and then stood erect, as his coal-black eye gleamed with excitement and gratified rage.

Norman took no notice of what might have been considered the want of the usual respect, shown by the shikaree's precipitate rush past him, and his forgetfulness of his presence. He simply said, "Your father will be all right now. We have taken an answer from the tiger for his death. He will never kill anyone else. I am much pleased that we have at last destroyed the beast."

"Sahib," the man replied, "my father's son is your slave. All he has is yours. He will do whatever service he is told to do. The Sahib's name will be great for ever in the villages of this country, and remain in the mouths of the people."

Hawkes now joined, and was soon after followed

by Mackenzie, who, being posted at a considerable distance, had seen nothing of the fray. He now, as usual, lamented greatly his ill-luck. But he was much pleased at the success, and heartily congratulated Norman on the judgment and skill by means of which that success had been mainly achieved. And certainly, considering the extent of the jungle, the many outlets, and the cautious nature of the pursued, it might fairly be deemed to be as fortunate and well executed a piece of sport as had yet befallen them; perhaps, indeed, the most so.

Rugonauth was loud in his praises; and although it could not be considered as *his* tiger, professional jealousy for once gave way before an ardent desire for success, however accomplished.

After his first ungovernable outburst of triumph at the overthrow of his enemy, Roopur had become quite quiet, and now related to an interested audience the circumstances attending the affair, and his great admiration at the coolness and decision with which Norman had conducted it to so happy a conclusion.

Whether Roopur had, immediately after the death, sent off a messenger to apprise the village of the success, or whether some one had taken it upon himself to be the bearer of the glad tidings, the hunters knew not; but on their reaching their camp,

they found gathered there a number of women, who broke into a chant of welcome as they rode up. Roopur's father had been a person of consequence in the village, and it was matter of congratulation to all that his death had at last been avenged.

There was indeed much rejoicing that evening. On the skin of the tiger being removed, an old bullet wound was traced, and the lead found flattened against the bone of the shoulder, on the same side as the twisted foot. This was, in all probability, the veritable bullet which Roopur's father had driven home into the long barrel of his matchlock in full hopes of its causing the tiger's death, but which, alas! had but led to his own.

The month's leave was now fast drawing to a close; and as the hunters' efforts had been that day successful in destroying the man-killer—and possible man-eater—there remained no sufficiently strong reason to induce them to defer their proposed march on the morrow.

Orders were accordingly issued for a pack-up and start after dinner, it being decided to make a twenty mile march in the direction of cantonments, from which they were now distant some eighty or ninety miles.

It was with no little satisfaction that old Sheik Hussein received the orders to this effect. He by

no means appreciated the merits of a jungle life, and the absence of those comforts and luxuries which the cantonment or city bazaar afforded. No profound admiration of the jungle scenery, or any poetical congeniality with the wildness of nature compensated for the loss of bazaar society, the gossip of his mess-fellows, or the cheering companionship of his beloved Fatma.

Marching indeed was not to his taste, but he preferred a long plodding night-walk, so long as it led towards home, to a further stay in the jungles.

For some days past he had been nervously anxious on the subject of "extension of leave." He greatly feared the hunters might at the last be induced to apply for it; and when he heard of their resolve to wait yet another day with the object of compassing the destruction of the lame tiger, his heart sank within him. There was in reality little to be feared in this respect, the funds of the hunters being well-nigh exhausted, but of this he was not aware.

But now that the order for a move had actually been issued, he rejoiced greatly, and so much were his feelings roused, or his usual impregnable stolidity sharpened, that he actually gave birth to his first and last-born joke; though there is strong ground for believing that the delivery was effected unknown to himself.

Mr. Manuel de Souza was the individual who had the honour of being present on this occasion.

"Are you not glad, Manuel, that we are at last going back?" the Mussulman asked of his fellow "bootlair" (the native term in the Bombay Presidency by which the head functionary in an establishment is known). "I shall be very pleased to get home and out of these wild jungles. There will then be ease and comfort. I prefer a town 'bhag' (garden) to a jungle 'bagh' (tiger)."

There was some doubt if the play on the words was really intended; for certainly the dignified Mussulman's greatest enemy could never have accused him of being habitually given to such light trifling. Still there may have existed under the outward stolidity of demeanour, and unperceived by ordinary mortals, a vein of subtle wit which, as being but rarely indulged in, was on that account the more remarkable.

Manuel looked for some time at his companion as if hardly crediting the evidence of his senses, and repeated the expression made use of. Then, as it fully dawned on him that, whether designedly or not, Sheik Hussein had positively there and then, before him, been guilty of an attempt at wit, he laughed loudly, and complimented him on the light and playful nature of his character.

The following day would carry the hunters out of the wild regions where tigers and bears were to be found; and on this, the last evening of their stay in the little-cultivated tract of country where Nature predominated untrammelled and unadorned, they compared, and not to its disadvantage, their wild, free life in the woods with that of habitual dwellers in towns.

They knew that life has other duties besides those of exterminating the beasts of the forest; but they felt that they should return to such duties as fell to their lot, the better for the month of freedom, and the exercise of those manly qualities which the invigorating pursuit of sport calls into action.

Courage, nerve, presence of mind, activity, resolution, and decision had been all, more or less, exercised and fostered by the prosecution of their campaign. Moreover, the natural energy and craving for action — inherent qualities in most Englishmen of healthy organisation — had found full scope for their employment, without the deteriorating effect too often produced by their devotion to other and less healthy town pursuits.

Again the young moon looked smilingly down on the little camp, now in all the bustle of preparation for departure, as the hunters sat outside after

dinner, and enjoyed their chat over the events of the day, of the campaign generally, and remarked on the advantages of such pleasant jungle trips.

How many a happy association is connected with those joyous hours, and how many a sincere friendship can be traced to the unreserved and genial interchange of thought engendered by the prosecution in common of a manly occupation, and the facing of a common risk. No insincerity and dissimulation mark such intercourse. Men learn to know each other with something more than the superficial knowledge by which man so frequently rules his estimation of his fellows. Many a latent quality is developed or discovered, and regard and affection contracted for the acquaintance you have learnt to understand after penetrating the outer crust of his nature. Those, whose adventures I have been describing, were no heroes; they were, on the whole, good-natured fellows enough, but cast in no uncommon mould. And being such, I have not endeavoured to wrap their adventures in any veil of mock heroism. They were keen sportsmen, and practically conversant with the habits of the game they pursued; but, I regret to add, were theoretically and scientifically but poor naturalists.

Some such considerations as I have above detailed

formed the subject of their conversation as they enjoyed the quiet after-dinner Manillas. They were unanimous in agreeing that they had enjoyed a very pleasurable month and a fair amount of good sport.

It is often customary to award the skin of the animal shot to the hunter who is fortunate enough to give the first wound. But our party had determined to make an equal division of the spoils, as being the fairest and most just to all, and less provocative of disputed shots. The peltries now amounted to a considerable number, and Hawkes counted with satisfaction a goodly array of bottles full of grease, the careful packing of which in an old beer-box he himself superintended. The consumption of the liquids and other stores gave room on the camels for the bestowal of these proceeds of the chase, to the compact and proper arrangement of which all had paid much attention.

One last inspection was given as the camels filed past after being loaded; and the little troop, receiving the order to march, soon vanished on the road into the plains, leaving the hunters, as usual, with the mere necessaries for their night's rest.

The hills were standing strongly defined against the waning moon, with every rock and tree on their

tops set black in the pale light, as the baggage moved off; and the hunters soon afterwards sought their beds; and the sighing night wind, and the wild jungle sounds of beast, bird, and insect formed their lullaby.

CHAPTER XXIII.

En route to the Plains—Wolves Hunting—Fastidiousness in Sport of Indian Hunters—A Bag on the Rear-Guard—A Wolf's Tail and a Neilghye's Tongue—Riding post in India.

As the march was a good twenty miles, the travellers had ordered their second horses to be placed half-way, so that they might, without over-exerting their animals, ride the distance at a fair pace throughout.

Roopur, who had been well rewarded, with many of the villagers, came to see them off. Mackenzie had taken good care to ascertain that all just and legitimate demands had been settled in full; and the people, though probably demanding more than they were entitled to—after the manner of natives generally—knew that justice had been done.

As the hunters mounted in the early dawn, and rode by the village mid much salaaming, the women again struck up their chant, and offered to the passing travellers some jungle flowers. A small

present was distributed amongst them, and the horsemen cantered off.

Their ride was unmarked by any circumstance deserving of note, save one. They had eased their horses in crossing over a stony range of low hills, dotted with clumps and separate bushes of the prickly pear; and the rearmost riders had closed up from the long distances at which respectively they rode behind the leader, when a couple of gazelles bounded across the road just in front. They were evidently wearied and panting, and so startled as to take no notice of the hunters, who looked around to discover the cause. Soon a wolf appeared shuffling along at that long lobbing gallop which seems to the spectator so slow, but which in reality covers the ground at a wonderful rate. He crossed directly in the track of the deer, and just turned his head towards the horsemen as he swept past, without the slightest apparent change in his plodding monotonous gallop.

Another followed, but not so directly on the line of the deer. Another and another also appeared, until nine were counted, not galloping in a pack, but widely separate from the leader, both in line of running and distance.

Some of the hindmost appeared so little in a hurry, that they almost pulled up, and made a

détour to avoid the riders; but when once past, again set off in the general direction of those nearest in front.

The hunters watched them till concealed by a dip in the hills; and it appeared to them that the wolves were hunting, not like a pack of hounds all striving to carry the scent, but acting on a combined and settled plan of assistance one to the other. There was no racing to be first, but a determined prosecution of the pursuit, without any contentious jealousy. Each seemed ready for his share of the work when, from fatigue or a change of direction in the flight of the gazelles, the leading wolf should give up the running, or be thrown out. This was probably the reason of their keeping separate, so that advantage might at once be taken of any bending of the game to either flank. Perhaps those in the rear, also, were recruiting their strength after having surrendered to others the leading place.

The wolves were making no desperate efforts to close at once with the chase. It was evidently their intention to wear out the strength of the deer by long-continued exertion—the only way in which so fleet a creature could be outrun. Apparently, they were hunting from view, and not from scent; or perhaps rather, a combination of both.

The horsemen again viewed them as they re-

appeared and went over another hill, still at the same unwearied, relentless pace; no babbling, no contention, but acting on the dogged intention of eventually running into their prey.

"How they lob away!" remarked Mackenzie, as he turned to continue the journey. "One would hardly imagine they could ever catch the chinkara (gazelles). Yet I would back their steady, determined gallop in the long run."

"I never saw so many together before," Norman said.

"Are they not gregarious, then, in India?" asked Hawkes.

"We have seen just now that to some extent they are," was the reply. "But, commonly speaking, not more than a couple are seen together, though I have heard that they do collect in a wonderful manner for any common object. I daresay only one or two began the chase we have been looking at, and the others joined in as it went on."

"But wolves are not common in India, are they?" was Hawkes' next inquiry.

"One does not come across many, certainly. You may be years before you will see as many as we have seen to-day. But they must be very numerous in some districts. The number of deaths of children

attributed to them alone, in the Punjaub, is enormous."

"You see," observed Mackenzie, "we don't look upon wolves as much in the way of 'shikar,' and so we don't hunt for them—perhaps, indeed, hardly observe them sometimes, when, if they were more in esteem as sport, we should note the circumstance. But I remember once before seeing wolves hunting. It was on the dead level of the Runn of Cutch, in a large tract of grass-land called the 'Bunnee;' but there were only two in chase."

"It seems rather strange that wolves, and even hyænas, should be usually considered as beneath an Indian sportsman's attention. No one ever thinks, somehow, of securing their skins."

"Why, the fact is, I suppose," said Norman, "that there is so much game in this country yielding handsomer trophies, and of better fighting qualities. But, if not engaged in the pursuit of other and more attractive sport, I always bag a wolf or hyæna when I get a chance. The skin of the latter is not to be despised. There are two sorts, though—the striped and spotted. I am not certain if I ever came across the latter."

"One of the neatest shots I ever made, was at a wolf," Mackenzie said. "It was on the line of march—not on service, but moving from one station

to another. I was the officer in command of the rear-guard, which, you know, has to see that all the baggage is safe; consequently, as the march was a long one, we did not get into camp till very late. On that occasion, I had a syce beside me with my rifle. He was a sharp-sighted fellow, and declared he saw a wolf enter a patch of bushes near the road. I dismounted, and walked towards it, when out rushed the wolf at full gallop, at about eighty yards' distance. I fired, and killed him as dead as a stone, with a bullet behind the shoulder. As a trophy, I sawed off his tail with my regulation sword—a piece of old iron that was as blunt as the back of a razor. I remember that, on the same occasion, I killed a bull neilghye, and wounded a gazelle."

"Pleasant way of performing the duties of officer of the rear-guard," laughed Norman.

"The only duties were to see that everything was in front. The carts are frightfully slow, and leave lots of time for a little shikar. The neilghye took me a good hour to kill. I was following up the wounded deer, making a very cautious stalk, when I observed a bull neilghye, with several cows, approaching. I broke the fore leg of the bull, being rather low in my aim. He went away with it dangling, so I followed up, got a close running shot, and killed him dead. As it was too far to be sent

for after I reached camp, I cut out the tongue, which is the tit-bit, with the same instrument with which I had previously cut off the wolf's tail; and a precious difficult job I had of it."

"Improved its flavour, I should think! Fancy the officer in command of the rear-guard marching into camp with a neilghye's tongue on one side, and a wolf's tail on the other! Rather a remarkable apparition, and a little startling for the C. O., if he happened to be on the look-out!"

Mackenzie laughed as young Hawkes thus pictured his friend's arrival at the head of his men; and having now crossed the hill, again set off at a brisk canter. Before another hour had passed, they safely reached their camp, which had only arrived a short time previous.

They had now left the high hills and thick jungle, and entered the open plain. They proposed making one more regular march, and then, as their leave expired on the following day, riding post the remaining distance into cantonments.

For this purpose they had already written to friends to lay out horses for them. Such is the common practice in those parts of India where there are no regular made roads, mail-carts, or other dâk (post) advantages. A man can in this way, with previous arrangements, ride his hundred miles in a

day, or as far as his physical strength or convenience dictates. Numbers of tattoos are kept for hire in some of the bazaars attached to the larger stations, and these—with such assistance in private horse-flesh as friends are willing to give—easily enable an active man to cross the country rapidly. The tattoos are for the most part, it must be confessed, terrible screws, and a fall or two in the course of a day's journey is as much the rule as the exception; but, considering their life and the state of their pins, they get over their stages, of from ten to fifteen miles, in a wonderful manner—not unfrequently without the rein being drawn.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A night Storm—Singular effect on the Fish—Antelope shooting —Shooting from horseback—In ambush—A pretty Stalk— Conclusion.

ONE tent was struck and the baggage dispatched as usual that evening. But the weather looked threatening, and the other—the bechoba—was retained in case of the visit of one of those wild fitful hot-weather storms such as I have before described.

Nor was this precaution taken in vain. About midnight a servant came running up to awake the gentlemen, who were as usual sleeping in the open air, and inform them that a storm was coming up, and on the point of breaking upon them. Hawkes was the first aroused. As the moon had gone down he could not see much, but he heard enough to be fully alive to the fact that the hurricane was indeed close at hand. Securing his bed, he tried to get it into the tent, but before he could do so, the blast had caught him, and knocked him right over on to the flat of his back with his bed on the top of him. A chair and a table were blown quite out of the

tent door; but the tent itself, owing to the precautions taken of securing it firmly on the previous evening, gallantly withstood the shock.

The servant had not found time to arouse Mackenzie and Norman, on whom in consequence the storm burst while they were still lying on their beds, and they had actually to exert force to retain their positions. The first fierce gust past, however, all three dragged their beds into the little bechoba, which was just large enough to contain them when carefully arranged.

For a couple of hours the rain continued to pour down in torrents; and all being wet, the remaining portion of the night was passed in decided discomfort.

Directly the sun rose everything was spread out in its rays to be dried. The tent was taken to pieces also, and subjected to the same genial influence; for in its present saturated state its weight was too greatly increased to be easily portable. The worst effect of the storm, however, was the condition to which it had brought the guns, which, only after much time and trouble, were rendered fit for use.

As the hunters intended shooting their way along the march—it being reported that antelope were plentiful—it was the more necessary to get the guns into working order, though the necessary

detention for that purpose rendered it late before they started. This they managed to do about an hour after sunrise.

The river, on which the neighbouring village stood, had come down heavily during the night, but had already commenced to run out, and, by the time the sportsmen found it was necessary to cross it by a ford a mile or two lower down, had greatly receded.

The hunters discovered, *en route*, that a rather remarkable circumstance had taken place, not only on the first river, but on another over which the road led them some distance further on. Over the shingle, and sand, and mud banks, which the water had temporarily covered, were scattered vast numbers of dead fish. They were not all small. Many were of a fair average size, none, however, being very large. This was not the case only in one particular spot, but as far as the hunters could see, all along the river's course. They were puzzled to account for it, as the water could hardly have receded with such rapidity as to leave so great a number of good-sized fish high and dry, many being now far from the water's edge. The surface supply of water from the hills being derived from mere watercourses running out almost as soon as the rain ceased, and not from springs, had, it is true, so quickly failed, as

to cause the reduction of the channel to something near its ordinary limits within the space of a few hours. It is possible this may have accounted for the circumstance. But the hunters conjectured rather that the sudden fresh, fraught with the impurities of the surface soil, or holding in solution some extraneous substance noxious to the fish, had so far affected many of those below a certain size as to cause either death or stupor. Or the sudden change in the water from a state of comparative clearness to one of singular density—laden as it was with the easily-removed scouring of the surface of the country—might have affected the respiratory organs.

However, whatever the cause, the circumstance as related is a fact, and the hunters felt by no means satisfied that it was attributable alone to the sudden fall of the full channel to its usual dimensions.

They had now entered on large alluvial plains, in many parts covered with a short dry grass and prickly scrub, the former affording pasturage to numerous herds of antelope.

As they intended to try their chance by stalking, and not by any less legitimate means,—such as approaching them behind a common cart of the country, to the sight of which they are accustomed,—

the little party separated, each taking a line of his own, so as to interfere as little as possible with his neighbour. Each had brought with him his syce, a spear, and two or three men from the last village, and these of course now accompanied their respective masters.

Mackenzie, who was in the centre with Norman on his right, was the first to detect a nice herd of antelope, with several good bucks among them.

The appearance of the buck and doe antelope is widely dissimilar. The former has spiral annulated horns, extending in the very finest specimens to, I believe, six-and-twenty inches in length. I have never seen a pair so long, having myself only succeeded in obtaining them about twenty-four; but I have been informed such have been met with.

The buck when in maturity is very dark, almost black—indeed, the species goes by the name of "Black buck" both among English sportsmen and native shikarees—with a white belly; the head, neck, and legs being also partially black, relieved with white. Altogether he is a very handsome animal. The doe is for the most part of a rufous fawn colour, light about the belly, along which is a longitudinal stripe. She is much smaller than the buck, has no horns, and her skin is not nearly so handsome a trophy.

When Mackenzie first saw the antelope, they may have been half a mile distant, and he carefully scanned the ground to see what irregularities it presented for a stalk. His inspection did not prove by any means satisfactory, as the ground was, with the exception of a few trees and bushes, quite open. He determined, therefore, to endeavour to get near them with the assistance of his horse, which was a quiet and steady animal.

Taking his rifle in hand, and leaving the men behind, he rode towards the herd; but, when he had approached within about four hundred yards, turned his horse as if to pass them at about half that distance, or more. By these means he got to their flank, and guided his horse so as to circle round them. The deer retreated from him slowly as he moved round, but did not cease feeding. One or two, who were lying down, however, jumped up, and joined the others as they moved away from the object of their suspicion. In this way, Mackenzie made one complete circuit of the deer, gradually sidling nearer and nearer towards them; but he was not yet within fair range. They were, however, getting gradually accustomed to the sight of the horse. Again he commenced to circle round, but when about half-way, one skittish doe gave two or three preparatory jumps, all four feet striking and

leaving the ground at the same time. Mackenzie observed this sign, and knowing that it very likely foreboded an immediate departure, pulled up his old mare, who stood quite still, and singled out a fine buck, which stood broadside on, about one hundred and twenty yards distant. It was looking at the suspicious doe, as he brought his rifle to his shoulder. Raising the end sight gradually up its fore leg, till it dwelt for a moment steady when it reached the shoulder, he pulled the trigger, and the report was instantaneously followed by the "thud." The gallant buck sprang into the air, gave one long bound, and rolled over, kicking all four legs in the air as it lay prostrate and helpless.

The herd galloped away in a panic, and Mackenzie immediately cantered up to the dying buck, dismounted, tied the bridle of his well-accustomed mare to a bush, and drawing his hunting-knife, soon dispatched the beautiful creature.

Norman had, from a distance, observed Mackenzie's movements, and prepared himself to take advantage of the flight of the deer, should they fortunately make it in his direction. He had directed his attendants to squat down on the ground, behind some low bushes; and leaving them in charge of his pony, he sought the cover afforded by the stem of a solitary tree which grew at some distance, and

behind which he was able to conceal his body in an upright position.

He had seen Mackenzie fire, and, by his subsequent movements, felt assured he had done so successfully, though he was too distant to discern the actual fall of the buck.

The leading doe selected a line pretty nearly in the direction of Norman, which was observed with much delight by that gentleman, as he carefully and cautiously peered with one eye round the trunk of his tree. Long before they reached his neighbourhood, however, their bounding gallop had subsided into an easy canter.

But antelope, like other graceful creatures, are gifted with no small share of curiosity, and, not unfrequently, equally suffer for its gratification. This peculiarity is not confined to the does; for the bucks—four-legged ones—are as strongly swayed by that feminine impulse as their frailer companions.

One or two of the herd—quickly followed by the rest—suddenly wheeled round, and stood at gaze, looking earnestly in the direction of Mackenzie, endeavouring to make out his movements, and assure themselves if danger was still to be apprehended from that quarter.

Some motion of the sportsman, or glancing of

his rifle, or other cause, again startled the herd, and they resumed their flight as before, but at a greatly reduced pace. As they neared Norman's position, this had subsided into a walk, and already several had stopped here and there to nibble at the grass or the tender shoots of some bush.

Quite unaware of the proximity of a new danger, they soon steadily settled down to feed, continuing in a line which brought them on Norman's flank, at a distance of about a hundred yards. He selected a good-looking buck, with a fair pair of horns, which it every now and then tossed back with a jerk, to drive off, with its points, some fly which had settled on its black glossy coat. It was walking steadily on, with that graceful and undulatory, but sharp, decided motion, which suggests to the observer how unpleasantly rough it would be to a rider.

Though several of the does had passed his place of ambush, none had as yet discovered the lurking enemy—not easily to be discerned in the deep shade of the tree. The movement of bringing up his rifle, however, attracted their attention, and they turned quickly to look. But it was too late. In the instant of their first bound off, and before those in the rear were aware of any fresh cause of danger, the rapid aim had been taken, and the bullet sped on its way.

It took effect; but too far back to bring down the buck, which galloped off with the herd.

Norman debated with himself for a moment whether he should call for his horse and spear, and attempt to ride down the wounded animal, or mark it, and then endeavour to obtain another shot. He determined on the latter course, in order to save his horse, who had a long journey before him on the following day; for a buck, though wounded, will often give a gallop of many miles.

On a slow horse, I have, more than once, been led by a buck on three legs—with one fore leg broken below the knee—a distance which would appear wonderful to those not acquainted with the desperate exertions an antelope can make to escape.

Norman—who had often speared wounded antelopes—decided, therefore, to trust to another shot, which he hoped soon to secure, for the wounded buck was already falling to the rear. Through his binocular, he watched the herd as they shot into the air with those tremendous bounds for which they are distinguished.

The wavy heat-haze and mirage played over the surface of the plain, now stricken with the full glare and fervour of the ascending sun. The antelope became dim and indistinct in this hot mist as they continued their course towards the horizon. Their

jumps, made by striking the ground with all four feet at once, propelled them far and high; and in the dim distance, they had the appearance of being tossed one over the other as much by mere volition as by any perceptible movement. Their forms seemed weird-like and spectral as each, one after the other, was thus projected into the air, clear of the rest of the herd.

But Norman had seen, too often, the curious spectacle now presented to his gaze to let it linger on it. His attention was more particularly directed to the wounded buck, which soon showed undoubted symptoms of distress. It fell far behind the herd, and presently dropped into an uneasy canter. This was exchanged for a walk as it became aware that there was nothing in immediate pursuit. It stopped several times, hanging its head low, and finally lay down behind a thick bunch of the wild bheer—a low, prickly, berry-bearing scrub common in those plains.

Norman carefully scanned the country to leeward, and noticed a slight mound surmounted by a bush which rose from the plain at a distance of from eighty to one hundred yards from the deer. This he thought was sufficiently high to conceal the approach of the stalker, provided he kept his body very low.

After loading his rifle, he motioned to his men to remain where they were, and then went off with his weapon at the trail, with the object of endeavouring to work round till he got the mound between the buck and himself.

Making a considerable circuit, he managed to bring a tree nearly in a line with the mound and the deer beyond. For this he then made direct.

Once, before he attained this position, the buck—who had been lying with its head and neck stretched out in front and resting on the ground—raised its head, and eyed the distant figure. Norman, on perceiving this, kept on walking, but partly away from the suspicious creature. After a brief inspection, apparently satisfied, it resumed its former position, and Norman reached the tree without again exciting its distrust.

All this had been simple and easy work; but now came the difficult task of approaching the deer by a stalk behind the mound.

The first fifty yards he saw would have to be gone over in snake fashion, and he prepared himself for the exertion.

Stopping the muzzle of his rifle with a piece of cloth, to prevent the dirt getting into the barrel, he lay down behind the tree.

To a very stout man, or one deficient in wind, the

task would have been impossible ; but Norman was naturally lean, sound in wind and limb, and from the training he had undergone during the past month, was in very good condition.

Lying on his side he worked out from behind the stem of the tree. Clear of this, he pushed his rifle in front, and then drawing up his legs sideways thrust his body forward. Rarely raising his head more than a few inches from the ground, and then only to bring his eyes on a level with the top of the mound, he advanced by successive efforts of this nature, till he thought he could without danger assume a less trying position.

Once while moving in this snake-like manner he had seen the tips of the deer's horns rise above the bush, and by their position, knew that it was looking in his direction. It evidently had some suspicion of the vicinity of danger, though it was unable to detect it. Norman lay quite flat and motionless till the horns disappeared, and then recommenced his trying, tedious course.

As he approached the mound, he found that he was able to change his posture to a crawling one, and still keep his body concealed. But all his trouble and caution appeared likely to be of no avail. Again the horns rose over the bush, and Norman, once more extending himself at full length,

looked from beneath the long rim of his light grass-made cap. He saw that the buck had risen, and was gazing steadfastly towards him. Seeing no movement, yet apparently still but half satisfied, it walked away,—fortunately in a direction almost exactly away from the mound,—then turned again to look. But this time its gaze was very brief. It soon hung its head, then once more, with evident pain, sank on its knees and lay down.

Norman waited a full minute and then recommenced his stalk. By crawling, and waddling with his knees bent double and his body carried low, he at last managed to reach the mound without again exciting the distrust of the antelope. But his chest was heaving, and he was shaking all over from the effect of his exertions. He therefore lay at length behind the mound, without making any attempt to peer through the bush, till he felt satisfied that he had acquired sufficient steadiness.

Many a head of game had he lost in his novitiate from over eagerness, when with every fibre of his body trembling, he had fired in the excitement of finding himself so near, without pausing to recover the calmness lost during the stalk. But experience and practice had brought judgment, and power to restrain the natural eagerness. When he felt that his steadiness had returned, he unstopped the rifle,

and raised himself slowly and gradually till he was able to look through the small bush. Inch by inch the rifle was then brought up, and presented through an opening in the foliage till the object was covered. Just as he was about to fire, the buck quickly raised its head, and turned it towards him ; but before it could spring up, a bullet passed through its shoulder, and it lay struggling on the ground.

Norman jumped up and ran forward. Seizing the deer's horns,—though nearly shaken off in the attempt,—he managed to put an end to the poor beast with his hunting-knife.

This was the only shot Norman obtained. By twelve o'clock all had reached the camp, Mackenzie having killed another black buck, and Hawkes a gazelle, but without any particulars attending their deaths worth recording here.

On the following day their leave expired; so bidding adieu to jungle pleasures, they rode towards cantonments, which they reached without mishap or adventure, well satisfied with the success attending the month's campaign of the Eastern Hunters.

REMARKS ON ANIMALS MENTIONED IN THE WORK.

LION (*Leo gujratensis*). — The Lion of India is, I believe, confined exclusively to the province of Kattiawar and the borders of Guzerat and Rajpootana. The "Bengal Lion" is referred to in some works on natural history, but I am not aware that it is found anywhere in Bengal.

The male is nearly maneless, and generally inferior in size and appearance to its African brother. Tigers are, however, said to avoid them, and desert those jungles in which any roving lion may make his appearance. In Kattiawar, the district they most affect, tigers are unknown, though panthers are common.

TIGER (*Felis tigris*).—Found throughout the hills and jungles of India. Full-grown specimens vary considerably in size, colour, and markings, but are considered to be of one species.

LEOPARD, PANTHER, CHEETUR (*Felis leopardus, Leopardus varius*).— There is considerable confusion in the use of these names among sportsmen in India. Cheetur is sometimes applied to all.

There would seem to be at least four varieties of spotted cats, besides such rare animals as the snow leopard of the Himalayas, and the black panther. The latter is probably only a very dark specimen of the common kind.

The two large animals which are indiscriminately

called panther and leopard, differ so much in marking and appearance as to make them, to the unscientific eye, distinct species. May not the lighter coloured of the two, —the ground of which is of a light tawny yellow, shaded into white at the belly, inside of legs, neck, and chest— be the ounce (*Leopardus uncia*), said to be an inhabitant of Persia and other Asiatic countries; and the darker, the true panther? I merely make this as a suggestion to my sporting readers.

Besides these, there appears to be the small spotted cat called "cheetur," which preys on dogs and small animals, but is quite unequal to cope with a bullock. The spots on its body are nearly complete spots, and not rings as in the panther.

The hunting leopard (*Felis jubata, Gueparda jubata*) the fourth on the list, is of course quite distinct. It seems to be a sort of connecting link between the dog and cat. Its claws are only partially retractile. Many of the native princes keep these animals and train them for the purpose of hunting antelopes. I make these observations for the consideration of my brother sportsmen, some of whom have, perhaps long ago, correctly defined the different varieties.

BEAR (*Ursus labiatus*).—The black, or, as it is sometimes called, the horse-shoe bear, is found throughout India, and in Cashmere, and the Himalayan mountains. Its chest is marked by a semicircular band of white or pale buff, somewhat in the shape of a horse-shoe.

The adventures with, and anecdotes of this animal, recorded in these pages, illustrate its nature and habits.

WILD BOAR (*Sus scrofa, Sus aper*) is found throughout India. It is, I believe, somewhat smaller than the wild

boar of Europe. Its tusks,—greatly prized by the hog-hunter as the trophy of the hard won tussle for first spear,—vary, in the full grown animal, from six or seven to ten inches. Of this, however, only from a third to one half appears beyond the gum.

The term "sounder," properly speaking applied only to a single animal of a certain age, is used by the Indian sportsman to describe a whole herd.

HYÆNA (*Hyœna striata*).—The striped hyæna is that usually met with in India. It is a cowardly beast, and affords no sport to the gunner; and, consequently, is but little sought for. It is occasionally ridden down and speared, and gives a good run.

WOLF (*Canis lupus*).—The wolf of India is not so fierce or strong an animal as that of Northern Europe, and rarely attacks man, though very young children are sometimes carried off. They do not habitually hunt in packs, but the circumstance of their doing so, as related, I myself saw.

SAMBER (*Cervus aristotelis*).—The largest of the deer tribe, which is common to all parts of India. In Cashmere, the noble Barasingha, and some other allied species in Assam, and the South Eastern parts of Bengal, can compete with this fine animal in size and appearance; but they are not distributed generally as is the samber. The horn of the stag is three-tyned, and when mature very massive.

Its skin, when dressed as leather, is in great esteem for the manufacture of shoes, belts, saddle covers, and numerous other things. It is far softer, yet tougher, than common cow leather; and in consequence articles made of it fetch a higher price.

NEILGHYE—I find this animal described in an old book on Natural History, as "*Antilope picta.*" This appears to be a misnomer.

The bull, properly Neilghau—"Blue bull"—is of a grey slaty blue, and has short black horns, not unlike those of the short-horn breeds of oxen, only smaller. The cow is smaller than the bull, and of a dun colour. Its appearance is essentially that of wild cattle, though approaching the deer in the fineness of its head and limbs. They have a slight hump at the withers.

It is not only an inhabitant of the jungles, but roams over some of the open plains and fields, and is occasionally ridden down and speared by English sportsmen. They rove in small herds of half-a-dozen, or thereabouts, and sometimes the bull is found alone.

The skin of the bull is very thick and tough, and in demand as furnishing, from the neck and chest, an excellent material for the manufacture of native shields.

There would appear to be three kinds of wild cattle in India—the Bison, the Wild Buffalo, and the Neilghye. The latter is far the inferior in size and ferocity.

CHEETUL (*Cervus axis*), the Spotted Deer of India, is a beautiful creature, not unlike the Fallow Deer, but, I think, rather smaller, and with some difference in the form of the horns. They do not appear to be quite so generally distributed as the Samber, but in many districts are far more plentiful. They go in herds of from six to sixty. I have heard of as many as six being killed by one gun during the brief cool stalking-hours of the morning and evening.

ANTELOPE (Kala Hurun of the natives, Black Buck of the English Sportsman).—I have described this animal in

the body of the work. It roams in vast herds over the open plains of India, and if much disturbed, collects to the number of many hundreds. It is a beautiful creature, and being for the most part only found in the open flat country, affords good opportunities of testing the sportsman's skill and woodcraft when stalking them. This is the most legitimate manner of approaching them; but, owing to the open character of the ground they seek, other means are frequently employed. Carts, camels, horses, and bullocks, trained for the purpose, are used. The Black Buck has occasionally been run down, and speared from horseback, but this is a feat not often accomplished.

Many years ago, the sportsmen of the large station of Poona, in the Bombay Presidency, were in the habit of assembling to ride down and spear half-grown antelopes; but even these often escaped, or gave such runs that but one or two were up at the finish. It was rather cruel work, and, as a sport, never came into much favour.

Antelope, both male and female, completely white, have been seen, and shot. But these albinoes, I need hardly say, are of very rare occurrence.

GAZELLE.—The Chinkara of the English and native sportsman, is, I presume, the "*Gazella dorcas.*" It is met generally on the plains and low open hills of India. In many parts it especially affects the nullahs and stony eminences which diversify the plain. The horns of the male are annulated, and twist back with a slight but graceful curve. They are ten or twelve inches in length. The doe has horns also, but much smaller in every way than those of the buck. They are not annulated, and are sometimes strangely distorted, without any approach to

regularity of appearance. They roam in herds of six or eight.

I have found them more abundant in the province of Cutch than elsewhere, and, strange to say, the antelope is not seen there; though across the gulf, on the coast of Kattiawar, they abound.

HARE.—The Indian hare is similar to that of England but far inferior in size.

PEA-FOWL — JUNGLE-FOWL — SPUR-FOWL. — In many parts of India the first named live in a semi-domestic state in and about the villages. Being deemed sacred they are unmolested. The wild pea-fowl of the jungles is a better bird for the table, and when young is no despicable food.

The jungle-fowl is about the size of a bantam, and is probably the original stock, though said to be incapable of being domesticated.

The spur-fowl is much smaller, and not nearly so handsome a bird, of the order *Rasores*.

PARTRIDGES.—There are three kinds indigenous to the plains of India. Black, painted, and grey they are called by the Indian sportsmen. The last-mentioned, the least handsome of the three, and far inferior to the English bird, the most nearly approaches it in appearance. The black excels all for splendour of plumage. The call of the black and painted partridge is very similar; both, as well as that of the grey, differing from that of the English bird.

In the Bombay Presidency I have never met the black partridge south of Cutch—that is, of about the tropical line. It is abundant north of it, in Scinde, but would appear to be replaced by the painted further south. The flesh of all the partridges in India is white, and far

inferior to that of either the common English, or red-legged bird.

The female of the black partridge—quite different in appearance to the male—is not unlike the painted partridge of both sexes, and is sometimes mistaken for it. The difference, however, is easily discerned by the experienced sportsman.

THE END.

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