

## Literature, &amp;c.

From the Bengal Sporting Magazine.  
PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF AN  
EAST INDIAN SPORTSMAN.

It was about two o'clock in the morning of a bright and sunny March day, that our party, consisting of a dozen elephants, with three howdahs, entered a long and narrow strip of partially burnt grass jungle, bounded on the left by a deep, and almost perpendicular bank of dry nullah, thickly overgrown with stunted trees, brushwood, and reeds and rendered still more difficult by certain dry watercourses that intercepted it, and on the right by an extensive and bare plain. The heat which would otherwise have been unpleasant perhaps, for none of the party used chattaks, was relieved by a gentle breeze which just ruffled the top of the grass, but not sufficiently to cause any difficulty to the sportsmen in making the track of any game that might start, a few hog, deer, and hares were strapped upon the pads of two or three of the beating elephants, and these with some black partridges and chicore, and a brace of flarican, constituted the morning sport of the party, who were apparently bent at present upon the pursuit of noble game, for the occasional intelligence of the Mahouts, that a deer or a partridge had started, was listened to by their masters in apathetic silence; at last when they had beaten more than half way through, the gentleman who occupied the back seat of the howdah, on the extreme right of the line, broke the silence by addressing the party in front of him as follows:—

'I say, Baynes, this is all very well, and according to rule, I know, but I really think you are destroying your own sport by allowing such quantities of game to pass by unfired at; for after all it is very doubtful whether you may find what you are looking for, as you have no 'pucka theekana,' and then where are you?'

'Confound you, and your *pucka theekana* both,' replied the party addressed, who was no other than the author of this retrospection. 'Will you never learn to leave off interlarding your dialogue with those vile vernacular phrases which are as much out of place as a bear would be in a ball room? Would not 'exact intelligence,' serve your turn, and express your meaning as well as 'pucka theekana?' But no, you are as vain of your proficiency as a young Pleb, just returned from the grand tour, and as incorrigible as a fashionable novelist.'

'Well, well, I'll amend all that some of these days, but only just look at that beautiful buck! by Jove I'll have a rap at him.'

'You'll just have the goodness to put that rifle down again, unless you intend to singe off the only whisker that you've left me,' said I laying my hand upon the barrel, which he had poked in a very ominous manner over my left shoulder.

'Now, I declare it's very unkind of you to persist in wearing that one whisker, and to be always thrusting it in my teeth in this way. Suppose I did singe off the other with the priming of my gun, you know I promised to be more careful in future, and you said that you would shave it off.'

'Ay, truly, but I did not say when, and promises, like piecrusts, are made to be broken, as you exemplified just now, when you so thoughtlessly wanted to fire over my shoulder at the buck; and now listen to my refutation of your theory as to the destruction of our own sport by the course we are adopting. The great portion of the game we are now starting will not quit this cover, for the simple reason that the jungle all round being burnt, there is no other near at hand for them to escape to; and if we are unsuccessful in the grand object of our quest, at which I should be surprised, for I look upon this beat as an almost certain find, we will revenge ourselves on them on our way home; so keep your eyes open, and your mouth; and on our return I may be tempted to yield you the front seat, and the use of my artillery, when, if you acquit yourself well, that is to say, without hitting any of your friends or their elephants, I'll shave off the whisker which I have hitherto worn, as a memento of your prowess, and consign that little mistake to oblivion.'

Having thus delivered myself of my sentiments to my young friend Wallis, who, as the reader will perceive, was a complete greenhorn, but whom, I had been induced, by virtue of many promises of care and caution, to allow to accompany me in the capacity of acting

sickligur for the day, I proceeded to puff my cheroot in silence, till I was raised by an exclamation from Staunton, who was in the centre of the line, and who never smoked—

'Faugh! what a smell! May I never sniff 'extrait de jasmin' again if it is not worse than being to leeward of three denizens of Cockaigne, on their way to their dancing master's ball and supper—Tickets three and sixpence!'

'Ah!' said I, throwing away the end of my cheroot, 'that's the disadvantage of not smoking; now these sort of scents never affect—eh! by Jingo!' and here I snuffed up the morning air, which, though coming from the sweet south, had certainly not been wafted o'er a bed of violets. Yes, I rather think, nay, I am almost certain, I smell tigers. Look at the elephants, too!

'Tigers! ah, tigers! male and female, and here or hereabouts have they made their love bower; so look out, for they are skeary brutes, and don't like to be disturbed in their soft deliance any more than we do.'

'Whe—w!' whistled Moses Perch, long and shrilly from his station on the bank of the nullah, and his whistle was accompanied, rather than followed, by the report of his gun. The next moment a magnificent tigress broke cover, about fifty yards in front of him. Crack! went my gun; it was a miss, but a good enough shot, for the bullet fell the least in the world ahead of her (in a direct line), dashing the earth and dust up into her face. She swerved, and Staunton's ball catching her at that instant in the hind quarters, she paused and eyed us for a moment; it was but for one moment, and the next she charged right down at him, in all the pride of her strength and fury; but she had one to deal with who was too used to such sort of work to be discomposed for a second at what would have shaken the nerves of many less experienced persons. Quietly raising his gun, he allowed her to come within a few yards of his elephant, and then, when her next spring would have brought her almost upon him, he touched the fatal trigger, and she rolled over with a broken back, roaring dreadfully.

'Well done,' exclaimed I, 'very neatly done indeed, and you calculated the distance to a single turn. Now, Master Wallis, put a finishing bullet through her head, and then you will be able to say that you have killed your first tiger.'

'Stay!' said Staunton, who was quietly re-loading his gun, 'don't kill the varmint yet—she can do no harm, and I should like to watch her impotent fury for a little, and it will be a new sight to Wallis.'

'Yes, yes, don't kill her yet,' said the latter. 'What a rage she is in. Let's tease her,' and he commenced pelting her with some wild plums that he had plucked. Oh! you devil! he went on, 'I must get down, and have a look at you closer,' and he was proceeding to do so, when I caught him by the arm. 'Are you mad?' said I.

'Why,' replied he, 'what harm can she do with a broken back? besides, I'll take a gun.'

'If you are not tired of your life,' said Staunton, very composedly, hammering at a tight bullet that had stuck near the muzzle of his gun, 'you will just stay where you are, and take it once for all as a rule, and one of primary importance, too, in sporting, never to dismount yourself, nor to allow any of the natives to do so, while one spark of life remains in the carcase of a tiger.'

'But where on earth is Perch?' 'There he is; but he has either got into an impracticable place, or his division of the elephants have got frightened at the noise this beast is making, and have clubbed. Or,' said Staunton, taking a rapid and keen glance at our friend, who was evidently in a dilemma, 'or they have started the male, and that joined to this has been too mach for them.'

'If so, we shall have him here in a trice, to see what his deary is making all this hubbub about. We had better settle her at once, any how.' I was proceeding to do so, when a 'look out!' from Wallis, followed instantly by a thundering roar, which made my elephant swerve right round, threw me completely off my balance, and by the time we got round again, the tiger was fairly ensconced, spread eagle fashion, on Staunton's elephant's head. Now followed a scene of confusion such as those only, who have borne a part in one similar, can appreciate, and which baffles description. My elephant had become too unsteady for me to fire under

any circumstances; many of the pad elephants fairly took to their heels, screaming with fear. Staunton's elephant went down on its knees, trying to crush its assailant, and rolling so heavily from side to side, that one of the doors of the howdah was dashed open, the guns flying about from side to side, and Staunton was only able to retain his position by dint of great muscular exertion. Mr Perch was coming up as fast as his unwilling elephant would allow him to do, when one of Staunton's guns was dashed from the howdah, and was discharged, by the violence of the shock, in his direction.

'Belay firing there!' shouted Perch, ignorant of its being an accident.

'Hold on like grim death,' I exclaimed; 'this cannot last much longer!'

Poor Wallis was in a sad way, and what with the growling and roaring of tigers and elephants, Staunton's danger, and the inability of Perch (who had got tolerably near by this time) and me to render him any assistance, small wonder at it. At last both tiger and elephant ceased hostilities, apparently by mutual consent, the latter rising and bolting off to the right, and the former picking himself up with undiminished ferocity, glaring from his eye balls, though it was quite evident that the fight was completely taken out of him, for he gasped for breath and absolutely staggered. It may readily be supposed that Perch and I did not give him leisure to recover, and he was dead ere Staunton had time to return to the field of battle.

'Rather warm work, eh?' said Perch, addressing the latter.

'Yes, I calculate, as brother Jonathan would say, this beats Shadrach, Me-sach, and Abednego to immortal smash, but it's all over now, thank God.'

But Staunton arrived at this conclusion a little too soon, for Perch, and his mahout, who did not know that the tigress was not yet dead, got their elephant's stern close to her head, a slight which she revenged by laying hold of the hind leg of the animal on which they rode. Another pretty holla balloo would have ensued, but Perch was furious as soon as he discovered the state of affairs, and with a brief 'Your sowl to the devil,' addressed either to his mahout, the tigress, or to both, he shot her through the neck, and killed her on the spot.

The shades of evening had closed over us, the dinner things had been removed, and the glass circulated gaily, while, for the twentieth time, we fought the battle of the morning over again, as we sat round the little round table in our tent. As two of the best howdah elephants had been put 'hors de combat' in the late skirmish, it had been finally arranged that we were to break up our camp, and return to our respective homes next morning. Perch had been very particularly facetious, Wallis in the highest spirits, and Staunton, at all times the life and soul of the society in which chance threw him, had been unusually witty and entertaining. Suddenly he relapsed into silence, and appeared lost in reverie; the example was contagious and by degrees a profound quiet reigned, where but a few minutes before, all had been noisy mirth and glee. To account for this might be difficult in the absence of any apparent reason for it except perhaps the satiety of enjoyment; be that as it may, the contrast was far from pleasing, and I believe the relief was very general when Perch rallied, filled his glass and called on Staunton for a song.

'A song,' said the latter quietly and impressively. 'Alas, my singing days are nearly over. But be it as you will.'

As he concluded he rose abruptly, replaced the guitar on the chair whence he had taken it, and quitted the tent, while our thanks were yet upon our lips.

'Something is wrong with Staunton to night,' said Perch; 'the dark fit is coming on him again.'

'The dark fit!' exclaimed Wallis. 'Nay, nay,' I replied, 'it is nothing, leave him to himself, and he will be bright again in the morning,' and the conversation changed.

Fast and furious grew the mirth, as the northern wizard has it; song succeeded song in rapid succession, and it was late ere we rose to retire for the night, I on board my boat, while the other two had camp beds prepared for them in the tent. I felt hot and feverish, a natural consequence of our protracted revels, and on emerging into the bright moonlight paused for a moment as I bared my breast to the night airs, when to my surprise, I perceived Staunton standing some little distance from the boats, with folded arms, gazing intently on the heavens. I advanced

towards him, but so completely were his faculties absorbed in contemplation, that it was not till I laid my hand upon his shoulder that he noticed my approach and turned.

'In the name of wonder,' I exclaimed, 'what are you doing here I thought you were in bed hours ago.'

'Ay,' he replied bitterly, 'you are common with the rest, judge as you see, without troubling yourself to look deeper than the surface. Look boy, gaze steadfastly upon yon river; it is smooth, placid and delightful, but can you guess the secrets and mysteries buried in its bosom, or even how soon the present calm that reigns upon its waters may be succeeded by a tempest. No, you cannot, and yet you presume to think you can read the character of mankind as though it were stamped on their brow; ha! ha! ha! and he laughed scornfully. 'You would know what I am doing here. Even what you see. Gazing upon the clear sky and the bright stars, for fain would I learn from them (if I could) how long is to be my thread of life, and when this weary pilgrimage will have an end.'

'Are you then a believer in astrology,' I asked.

'No,' he replied, but when the heart, nay, the very soul is sickened with reality, it may at least be allowed to fly for relief to shadows and to phantasies. And now that I have answered your questions, leave me.'

'Not in your present state,' said I kindly; you are excited, feverish, come with me to the boats—'

'How! excited! not in my present state!' exclaimed he, starting back and gazing intently in my countenance as though he would read my heart. 'What mean you! Speak plainly, and don't wrap your thoughts up in the common place phrases of worldly consolation. You would imply that I am—but no, no, though I have often thought so myself it cannot be, it has not come to that yet.'

There was something so utterly despairing in the tone in which he said these words accompanied, or rather succeeded by the action of burying his face in his hands, contrasted with his stern but violent manner, that reply made me think the implication conveyed in his last sentence had more of reality in it than he was disposed to admit, and therefore, addressing him in a soothing and tender tone, I denied any intention of hinting to what he alluded to, and again besought him to accompany me to the boat, adding that, in justice to his friends, if not for his own sake, he ought to struggle against, instead of giving way to, such feelings, for the world was all before him.

'Friends!' said he in a hollow tone. 'friends I have none, not one. No I am alone. All who ever loved me, are in the quiet grave, where I shall soon seek them.' After a slight pause he resumed in a quieter tone, 'it is well for you, who are young and gay, who knew care and trouble but by name, and have never felt the agony of blighted affections, and hope deferred, vain dreams of ambition, and fond anticipations faded away; it is well for you to talk of living for the future, but when like me you have known all these sorrows: when you have found friendship but a name, and plighted vows but a portion of the air in which they died away; when you have awoke from sickness, sorrow and distress to the consciousness that hope was dead for you; that with the talents and abilities to carve renown and a fair name for yourself no road lay open to you, for the want of a little worldly lure barred it;—when you have been compelled to bear 'the proud man's contumely' because you were not of his privileged order, albeit you knew him in his boyhood in your native county; but too happy to receive your nod of recognition; when you have felt yourself 'in the solitude of kings

'Without the power that makes them bear a crown.'

then you will think as I do, ay, and you will sell them all too, an' you be not more lucky than nineteen out of twenty of your compeers. Did parents, ay, and their children, but think, when dazzled by the splendor of some one or two acquaintances' return from India to their native land fortunes, who commenced life with nothing; did they but calculate on the numbers of whom they never hear, who lay their bones in this distant land, solitary and broken hearted, with none or at the most but strangers to smooth their dying pillows, they would pause long ere they doomed themselves to such a fate. They know it though when it's too late. But come, you are right, let us to the boats!']