SAMUEL WHITE BAKER

THE RIFLE AND THE HOUND IN CEYLON

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Baker S.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Upwards of twenty years have passed since the 'Rifle and Hound in Ceylon' was published, and I have been requested to write a preface for a new edition. Although this long interval of time has been spent in a more profitable manner than simple sport, nevertheless I have added considerably to my former experience of wild animals by nine years passed in African explorations. The great improvements that have been made in rifles have, to a certain extent, modified the opinions that I expressed in the 'Rifle and Hound in Ceylon.' Breech-loaders have so entirely superseded the antiquated muzzle-loader, that the hunter of dangerous animals is possessed of an additional safeguard. At the same time I look back with satisfaction to the heavy charges of powder that were used by me thirty years ago and were then regarded as absurd, but which are now generally acknowledged by scientific gunners as the only means of insuring the desiderata of the rifle, i.e., high velocity, low trajectory, long range, penetration, and precision.

When I first began rifle-shooting thirty-seven years ago, not one man in a thousand had ever handled such a weapon. Our soldiers were then armed*(*With the exception of the Rifle Brigade) with the common old musket, and I distinctly remember a snubbing that I received as a youngster for suggesting, in the presence of military men, 'that the army should throughout be supplied with rifles.' This absurd idea proposed by a boy of seventeen who was a good shot with a weapon that was not in general use, produced such a smile of contempt upon my hearers, that the rebuke left a deep impression, and was never forgotten. A life's experience in the pursuit of heavy game has confirmed my opinion expressed in the 'Rifle and Hound' in 1854—that the best weapon for a hunter of average strength is a double rifle weighing fifteen pounds, of No. 10 calibre. This should carry a charge of ten drachms of No. 6 powder (coarse grain). In former days I used six or seven drachms of the finest grained powder with the old muzzle-loader, but it is well known that the rim of the breech-loading cartridge is liable to burst with a heavy charge of the fine grain, therefore No. 6 is best adapted for the rifle.

Although a diversity of calibres is a serious drawback to the comfort of a hunter in wild countries, it is quite impossible to avoid the difficulty, as there is no rifle that will combine the requirements for a great variety of game. As the wild goose demands B B shot and the snipe No. 8, in like manner the elephant requires the heavy bullet, and the deer is contented with the small-bore.

I have found great convenience in the following equipment for hunting every species of game in wild tropical countries.

One single-barrel rifle to carry a half-pound projectile, or a four ounce, according to strength of hunter.

Three double-barrelled No. 10 rifles, to carry ten drachms No. 6 powder.

One double-barrelled small-bore rifle, sighted most accurately for deer-shooting. Express to carry five or six drachms, but with hardened solid bullet.

Two double-barrelled No. 10 smooth-bores to carry shot or ball; the latter to be the exact size for the No. 10 rifles.

According to my experience, such a battery is irresistible.

The breech-loader has manifold advantages over the muzzle-loader in a wild country. Cartridges should always be loaded in England, and they should be packed in hermetically sealed tin cases within wooden boxes, to contain each fifty, if large bores, or one hundred of the smaller calibre.

These will be quite impervious to damp, or to the attacks of insects. The economy of ammunition will be great, as the cartridge can be drawn every evening after the day's work, instead of being fired off as with the muzzle-loader, in order that the rifle may be cleaned.

The best cartridges will never miss fire. This is an invaluable quality in the pursuit of dangerous game.

Although I advocate the express small-bore with the immense advantage of low trajectory, I am decidedly opposed to the hollow expanding bullet for heavy, thick-skinned game. I have so frequently experienced disappointment by the use of the hollow bullet that I should always adhere to the slightly hardened and solid projectile that will preserve its original shape after striking the thick hide of a large animal.

A hollow bullet fired from an express rifle will double up a deer, but it will be certain to expand upon the hard skin of elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotami, buffaloes, &c.; in which case it will lose all power of penetration. When a hollow bullet strikes a large bone, it absolutely disappears into minute particles of lead,—and of course it becomes worthless.

For many years I have been supplied with firstrate No. 10 rifles by Messrs. Reilly & Co. of Oxford Street, London, which have never become in the slightest degree deranged during the rough work of wild hunting. Mr. Reilly was most successful in the manufacture of explosive shells from my design; these were cast-iron coated with lead, and their effect was terrific.

Mr. Holland of Bond Street produced a double-barrelled rifle that carried the Snider Boxer cartridge. This was the most accurate weapon up to 300 yards, and was altogether the best rifle that I ever used; but although it possessed extraordinary precision, the hollow bullet caused the frequent loss of a wounded animal. Mr. Holland is now experimenting in the conversion of a Whitworth-barrel to a breech-loader. If this should prove successful, I should prefer the Whitworth projectile to any other for a sporting rifle in wild countries, as it would combine accuracy at both long and short ranges with extreme penetration.

The long interval that has elapsed since I was in Ceylon, has caused a great diminution in the wild animals.

The elephants are now protected by game laws, although twenty years ago a reward was offered by the Government for their destruction. The 'Rifle and Hound' can no longer be accepted as a guidebook to the sports in Ceylon; the country is changed, and in many districts the forests have been cleared, and civilization has advanced into the domains of wild beasts. The colony has been blessed with prosperity, and the gradual decrease of game is a natural consequence of extended cultivation and increased population.

In the pages of this book it will be seen that I foretold the destruction of the wild deer and other animals twenty years ago. At that time the energetic Tamby's or Moormen were possessed of guns, and had commenced a deadly warfare in the jungles, killing the wild animals as a matter of business, and making a livelihood by the sale of dried flesh, hides, and buffalo-horns. This unremitting slaughter of the game during all seasons has been most disastrous, and at length necessitated the establishment of laws for its protection.

As the elephants have decreased in Ceylon, so in like manner their number must be reduced in Africa by the continual demand for ivory. Since the 'Rifle and Hound' was written, I have had considerable experience with the African elephant.

This is a distinct species, as may be seen by a comparison with the Indian elephant in the Zoological Gardens of the Regent's Park.

In Africa, all elephants are provided with tusks; those of the females are small, averaging about twenty pounds the pair. The bull's are sometimes enormous. I have seen a pair of tusks that weighed 300 lbs., and I have met with single tusks of 160 lbs. During this year (1874) a tusk was sold in London that weighed 188 lbs. As the horns of deer vary in different localities, so the ivory is also

larger and of superior quality in certain districts. This is the result of food and climate. The average of bull elephant's tusks in equatorial Africa is about 90 lbs. or 100 lbs. the pair.

It is not my intention to write a treatise upon the African elephant; this has been already described in the 'Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia,'*(* Published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co.) but it will be sufficient to explain that it is by no means an easy beast to kill when in the act of charging. From the peculiar formation of the head, it is almost impossible to kill a bull elephant by the forehead shot; thus the danger of hunting the African variety is enhanced tenfold.

The habits of the African elephant are very different from those of his Indian cousins. Instead of retiring to dense jungles at sunrise, the African will be met with in the mid-day glare far away from forests, basking in the hot prairie grass of ten feet high, which scarcely reaches to his withers.

Success in elephant shooting depends materially upon the character of the ground. In good forests, where a close approach is easy, the African species can be killed like the Indian, by one shot either behind the ear or in the temple; but in open ground, or in high grass, it is both uncertain and extremely dangerous to attempt a close approach on foot. Should the animal turn upon the hunter, it is next to impossible to take the forehead-shot with effect. It is therefore customary in Africa, to fire at the shoulder with a very heavy rifle at a distance of fifty or sixty yards. In Ceylon it was generally believed that the shoulder-shot was useless; thus we have distinct methods of shooting the two species of elephants: this is caused, not only by the difference between the animals, but chiefly by the contrast in the countries they inhabit. Ceylon is a jungle; thus an elephant can be approached within a few paces, which admit of accurate aim at the brain. In Africa the elephant is frequently upon open ground; therefore he is shot in the larger mark (the shoulder) at a greater distance. I have shot them successfully both in the brain and in the shoulder, and where the character of the country admits an approach to within ten paces, I prefer the Ceylon method of aiming either at the temple or behind the ear.

Although the African elephant with his magnificent tusks is a higher type than that of Ceylon, I look back to the hunting of my younger days with unmixed pleasure. Friends with whom I enjoyed those sports are still alive, and are true friends always, thus exemplifying that peculiar freemasonry which unites the hearts of sportsmen.

After a life of rough experience in wild countries, I have found some pleasure in referring to the events of my early years, and recalling the recollection of many scenes that would have passed away had they not been chronicled. I therefore trust that although the brightest days of Ceylon sports may have somewhat faded by the diminution of the game, there may be Nimrods (be they young or old) who will still discover some interest in the 'Rifle and Hound in Ceylon.'

S. W. BAKER.

INTRODUCTION

THE LOVE OF SPORT is a feeling inherent in most Englishmen, and whether in the chase, or with the rod or gun, they far excel all other nations. In fact, the definition of this feeling cannot be understood by many foreigners. We are frequently ridiculed for fox-hunting: 'What for all dis people, dis horses, dis many dog? dis leetle (how you call him?) dis "fox" for to catch? ha! you eat dis creature; he vary fat and fine?'

This is a foreigner's notion of the chase; he hunts for the pot; and by Englishmen alone is the glorious feeling shared of true, fair, and manly sport. The character of the nation is beautifully displayed in all our rules for hunting, shooting, fishing, fighting, etc.; a feeling of fair play pervades every amusement. Who would shoot a hare in form? who would net a trout stream? who would hit a man when down? A Frenchman would do all these things, and might be no bad fellow after all. It would be HIS way of doing it. His notion would be to make use of an advantage when an opportunity offered. He would think it folly to give the hare a chance of running when he could shoot her sitting; he would make an excellent dish of all the trout he could snare; and as to hitting his man when down, he would think it madness to allow him to get up again until he had put him hors de combat by jumping on him. Their notions of sporting and ours, then, widely differ; they take every advantage, while we give every advantage; they delight in the certainty of killing, while our pleasure consists in the chance of the animal escaping.

I would always encourage the love of sport in a lad; guided by its true spirit of fair play, it is a feeling that will make him above doing a mean thing in every station of life, and will give him real feelings of humanity. I have had great experience in the characters of thorough sportsmen, who are generally straightforward, honourable men, who would scorn to take a dirty advantage of man or animal. In fact, all real sportsmen that I have met have been tender-hearted men—who shun cruelty to an animal, and are easily moved by a tale of distress.

With these feelings, sport is an amusement worthy of a man, and this noble taste has been extensively developed since the opportunities of travelling have of late years been so wonderfully improved. The facility with which the most remote regions are now reached, renders a tour over some portion of the globe a necessary adjunct to a man's education; a sportsman naturally directs his path to some land where civilisation has not yet banished the wild beast from the soil.

Ceylon is a delightful country for the sporting tourist. In the high road to India and China, any length of time may be spent en passant, and the voyage by the Overland route is nothing but a trip of a few weeks of pleasure.

This island has been always celebrated for its elephants, but the other branches of sport are comparatively unknown to strangers. No account has ever been written which embraces all Ceylon sports: anecdotes of elephant-shooting fill the pages of nearly every work on Ceylon; but the real character of the wild sports of this island has never been described, because the writers have never been acquainted with each separate branch of the Ceylon chase.

A residence of many years in this lovely country, where the wild sports of the island have formed a never-failing and constant amusement, alone confers sufficient experience to enable a person to give a faithful picture of both shooting and hunting in Ceylon jungles.

In describing these sports I shall give no anecdotes of others, but I shall simply recall scenes in which I myself have shared, preferring even a character for egotism rather than relate the statements of hearsay, for the truth of which I could not vouch. This must be accepted as an excuse for the unpleasant use of the first person.

There are many first-rate sportsmen in Ceylon who could furnish anecdotes of individual risks and hairbreadth escapes (the certain accompaniments to elephant-shooting) that would fill volumes;

but enough will be found, in the few scenes which I have selected from whole hecatombs of slaughter, to satisfy and perhaps fatigue the most patient reader.

One fact I wish to impress upon all—that the colouring of every description is diminished and not exaggerated, the real scene being in all cases a picture, of which the narration is but a feeble copy.

CHAPTER I

Wild Country-Dealings in the Marvellous-Enchanting Moments The Wild Elephant of Ceylon —'Rogues'-Elephant Slaughter-Thick Jungles-Character of the Country-Varieties of Game in Ceylon —'Battery for Ceylon Sport'-The Elk or 'Samber Deer'-Deer-coursing.

It is a difficult task to describe a wild country so exactly, that a stranger's eye shall at once be made acquainted with its scenery and character by the description. And yet this is absolutely necessary, if the narration of sports in foreign countries is supposed to interest those who have never had the opportunity of enjoying them. The want of graphic description of localities in which the events have occurred, is the principal cause of that tediousness which generally accompanies the steady perusal of a sporting work. You can read twenty pages with interest, but a monotony soon pervades it, and sport then assumes an appearance of mere slaughter.

Now, the actual killing of an animal, the death itself, is not sport, unless the circumstances connected with it are such as to create that peculiar feeling which can only be expressed by the word 'sport.' This feeling cannot exist in the heart of a butcher; he would as soon slaughter a fine buck by tying him to a post and knocking him down, as he would shoot him in his wild native haunts—the actual moment of death, the fact of killing, is his enjoyment. To a true sportsman the enjoyment of a sport increases in proportion to the wildness of the country. Catch a six-pound trout in a quiet mill-pond in a populous manufacturing neighbourhood, with well-cultivated meadows on either side of the stream, fat cattle grazing on the rich pasturage, and, perhaps, actually watching you as you land your fish: it may be sport. But catch a similar fish far from the haunts of men, in a boiling rocky torrent surrounded by heathery mountains, where the shadow of a rod has seldom been reflected in the stream, and you cease to think the former fish worth catching; still he is the same size, showed the same courage, had the same perfection of condition, and yet you cannot allow that it was sport compared with this wild stream. If you see no difference in the excitement, you are not a sportsman; you would as soon catch him in a washing tub, and you should buy your fish when you require him; but never use a rod, or you would disgrace the hickory.

This feeling of a combination of wild country with the presence of the game itself, to form a real sport, is most keenly manifested when we turn our attention to the rifle. This noble weapon is thrown away in an enclosed country. The smooth-bore may and does afford delightful sport upon our cultivated fields; but even that pleasure is doubled when those enclosures no longer intervene, and the wide-spreading moors and morasses of Scotland give an idea of freedom and undisturbed nature. Who can compare grouse with partridge shooting? Still the difference exists, not so much in the character of the bird as in the features of the country. It is the wild aspect of the heathery moor without a bound, except the rugged outline of the mountains upon the sky, that gives such a charm to the grouse-shooting in Scotland, and renders the deer-stalking such a favourite sport among the happy few who can enjoy it.

All this proves that the simple act of killing is not sport; if it were, the Zoological Gardens would form as fine a field to an elephant shot as the wildest Indian jungle.

Man is a bloodthirsty animal, a beast of prey, instinctively; but let us hope that a true sportsman is not savage, delighting in nothing but death, but that his pursuits are qualified by a love of nature, of noble scenery, of all the wonderful productions which the earth gives forth in different latitudes. He should thoroughly understand the nature and habits of every beast or bird that he looks upon as game. This last attribute is indispensable; without it he may kill, but he is not a sportsman.

We have, therefore, come to the conclusion that the character of a country influences the character of the sport. The first question, therefore, that an experienced man would ask at the recital of a sporting anecdote would be, 'What kind of country is it?' That being clearly described to him,

he follows you through every word of your tale with a true interest, and in fact joins in imagination in the chase.

There is one great drawback to the publication of sporting adventures—they always appear to deal not a little in the marvellous; and this effect is generally heightened by the use of the first person in writing, which at all events may give an egotistical character to a work. This, however, cannot easily be avoided, if a person is describing his own adventures, and he labours under the disadvantage of being criticised by readers who do not know him personally, and may, therefore, give him credit for gross exaggeration.

It is this feeling that deters many men who have passed through years of wild sports from publishing an account of them. The fact of being able to laugh in your sleeve at the ignorance of a reader who does not credit you, is but a poor compensation for being considered a better shot with a long bow than with a rifle. Often have I pitied Gordon Cumming when I have heard him talked of as a palpable Munchausen, by men who never fired a rifle, or saw a wild beast, except in a cage; and still these men form the greater proportion of the 'readers' of these works.

Men who have not seen, cannot understand the grandeur of wild sports in a wild country. There is an indescribable feeling of supremacy in a man who understands his game thoroughly, when he stands upon some elevated point and gazes over the wild territory of savage beasts. He feels himself an invader upon the solitudes of nature. The very stillness of the scene is his delight. There is a mournful silence in the calmness of the evening, when the tropical sun sinks upon the horizon—a conviction that man has left this region undisturbed to its wild tenants. No hum of distant voices, no rumbling of busy wheels, no cries of domestic animals meet the ear. He stands upon a wilderness, pathless and untrodden by the foot of civilisation, where no sound is ever heard but that of the elements, when the thunder rolls among the towering forests or the wind howls along the plains. He gazes far, far into the distance, where the blue mountains melt into an indefinite haze; he looks above him to the rocky pinnacles which spring from the level plain, their swarthy cliffs glistening from the recent shower, and patches of rich verdure clinging to precipices a thousand feet above him. His eye stretches along the grassy plains, taking at one full glance a survey of woods, and rocks, and streams; and imperceptibly his mind wanders to thoughts of home, and in one moment scenes long left behind are conjured up by memory, and incidents are recalled which banish for a time the scene before him. Lost for a moment in the enchanting power of solitude, where fancy and reality combine in their most bewitching forms, he is suddenly roused by a distant sound made doubly loud by the surrounding silence—the shrill trumpet of an elephant. He wakes from his reverie; the reality of the present scene is at once manifested. He stands within a wilderness where the monster of the forest holds dominion; he knows not what a day, not even what a moment, may bring forth; he trusts in a protecting Power, and in the heavy rifle, and he is shortly upon the track of the king of beasts.

The king of beasts is generally acknowledged to be the 'lion'; but no one who has seen a wild elephant can doubt for a moment that the title belongs to him in his own right. Lord of all created animals in might and sagacity, the elephant roams through his native forests. He browses upon the lofty branches, upturns young trees from sheer malice, and from plain to forest he stalks majestically at break of day 'monarch of all he surveys.'

A person who has never seen a wild elephant can form no idea of his real character, either mentally or physically. The unwieldy and sleepy-looking beast, who, penned up in his cage at a menagerie, receives a sixpence in his trunk, and turns round with difficulty to deposit it in a box; whose mental powers seem to be concentrated in the idea of receiving buns tossed into a gaping mouth by children's hands,—this very beast may have come from a warlike stock. His sire may have been the terror of a district, a pitiless highwayman, whose soul thirsted for blood; who, lying in wait in some thick bush, would rush upon the unwary passer-by, and know no pleasure greater than the act of crushing his victim to a shapeless mass beneath his feet. How little does his tame sleepy son resemble him! Instead of browsing on the rank vegetation of wild pasturage, he devours plum-buns;

instead of bathing his giant form in the deep rivers and lakes of his native land, he steps into a stone-lined basin to bathe before the eyes of a pleased multitude, the whole of whom form their opinion of elephants in general from the broken-spirited monster which they see before them.

I have even heard people exclaim, upon hearing anecdotes of elephant-hunting, 'Poor things!'

Poor things, indeed! I should like to see the very person who thus expresses his pity, going at his best pace, with a savage elephant after him: give him a lawn to run upon if he likes, and see the elephant gaining a foot in every yard of the chase, fire in his eye, fury in his headlong charge; and would not the flying gentleman who lately exclaimed 'Poor thing!' be thankful to the lucky bullet that would save him from destruction?

There are no animals more misunderstood than elephants; they are naturally savage, wary, and revengeful; displaying as great courage when in their wild state as any animal known. The fact of their great natural sagacity renders them the more dangerous as foes. Even when tamed, there are many that are not safe for a stranger to approach, and they are then only kept in awe by the sharp driving hook of the mohout.

In their domesticated state I have seen them perform wonders of sagacity and strength; but I have nothing to do with tame elephants; there are whole books written upon the subject, although the habits of an elephant can be described in a few words.

All wild animals in a tropical country avoid the sun. They wander forth to feed upon the plains in the evening and during the night, and they return to the jungle shortly after sunrise.

Elephants have the same habits. In those parts of the country where such pasturage abounds as bamboo, lemon grass, sedges on the banks of rivers, lakes, and swamps, elephants are sure to be found at such seasons as are most propitious for the growth of these plants. When the dry weather destroys this supply of food in one district, they migrate to another part of the country.

They come forth to feed about 4 P.M., and they invariably, retire to the thickest and most thorny jungle in the neighbourhood of their feeding-place by 7 A.M. In these impenetrable haunts they consider themselves secure from aggression.

The period of gestation with an elephant is supposed to be two years, and the time occupied in attaining full growth is about sixteen years. The whole period of life is supposed to be a hundred years, but my own opinion would increase that period by fifty.

The height of elephants varies to a great degree, and in all cases is very deceiving. In Ceylon, an elephant is measured at the shoulder, and nine feet at this point is a very large animal. There is no doubt that many elephants far exceed this, as I have shot them so large that two tall men could lie at full length from the point of the forefoot to the shoulder; but this is not a common size: the average height at the shoulder would be about seven feet.*(*The males 7 ft.6 in., the females 7 ft., at the shoulder.)

Not more than one in three hundred has tusks; they are merely provided with short grubbers, projecting generally about three inches from the upper jaw, and about two inches in diameter; these are called 'tushes' in Ceylon, and are of so little value that they are not worth extracting from the head. They are useful to the elephants in hooking on to a branch and tearing it down.

Elephants are gregarious, and the average number in a herd is about eight, although they frequently form bodies of fifty and even eighty in one troop. Each herd consists of a very large proportion of females, and they are constantly met without a single bull in their number. I have seen some small herds formed exclusively of bulls, but this is very rare. The bull is much larger than the female, and is generally more savage. His habits frequently induce him to prefer solitude to a gregarious life. He then becomes doubly vicious. He seldom strays many miles from one locality, which he haunts for many years. He becomes what is termed a 'rogue.' He then waylays the natives, and in fact becomes a scourge to the neighbourhood, attacking the inoffensive without the slightest provocation, carrying destruction into the natives' paddy-fields, and perfectly regardless of night fires or the usual precautions for scaring wild beasts.

The daring pluck of these 'rogues' is only equalled by their extreme cunning. Endowed with that wonderful power of scent peculiar to elephants, he travels in the day-time DOWN the wind; thus nothing can follow upon his track without his knowledge. He winds his enemy as the cautious hunter advances noiselessly upon his track, and he stands with ears thrown forward, tail erect, trunk thrown high in the air, with its distended tip pointed to the spot from which he winds the silent but approaching danger. Perfectly motionless does he stand, like a statue in ebony, the very essence of attention, every nerve of scent and hearing stretched to its cracking point; not a muscle moves, not a sound of a rustling branch against his rough sides; he is a mute figure of wild and fierce eagerness. Meanwhile, the wary tracker stoops to the ground, and with a practised eye pierces the tangled brushwood in search of his colossal feet. Still farther and farther he silently creeps forward, when suddenly a crash bursts through the jungle; the moment has arrived for the ambushed charge, and the elephant is upon him.

What increases the danger is the uncertainty prevailing in all the movements of a 'rogue'. You may perhaps see him upon a plain or in a forest. As you advance, he retreats, or he may at once charge. Should he retreat, you follow him; but you may shortly discover that he is leading you to some favourite haunt of thick jungle or high grass, from which, when you least expect it, he will suddenly burst out in full charge upon you.

Next to a 'rogue' in ferocity, and even more persevering in the pursuit of her victim, is a female elephant when her young one has been killed. In such a case she will generally follow up her man until either he or she is killed. If any young elephants are in the herd, the mothers frequently prove awkward customers.

Elephant-shooting is doubtless the most dangerous of all sports if the game is invariably followed up; but there is a great difference between elephant-killing and elephant-hunting; the latter is sport, the former is slaughter.

Many persons who have killed elephants know literally nothing about the sport, and they may ever leave Ceylon with the idea that an elephant is not a dangerous animal. Their elephants are killed in this way, viz.:

The party of sportsmen, say two or three, arrive at a certain district. The headman is sent for from the village; he arrives. The enquiry respecting the vicinity of elephants is made; a herd is reported to be in the neighbourhood, and trackers and watchers are sent out to find them.

In the meantime the tent is pitched, our friends are employed in unpacking the guns, and, after some hours have elapsed, the trackers return: they have found the herd, and the watchers are left to observe them.

The guns are loaded and the party starts. The trackers run quickly on the track until they meet one of the watchers who has been sent back upon the track by the other watchers to give the requisite information of the movements of the herd since the trackers left. One tracker now leads the way, and they cautiously proceed. The boughs are heard slightly rustling as the unconscious elephants are fanning the flies from their bodies within a hundred yards of the guns.

The jungle is open and good, interspersed with plots of rank grass; and quietly following the head tracker, into whose hands our friends have committed themselves, they follow like hounds under the control of a huntsman. The tracker is a famous fellow, and he brings up his employers in a masterly manner within ten paces of the still unconscious elephants. He now retreats quietly behind the guns, and the sport begins. A cloud of smoke from a regular volley, a crash through the splintering branches as the panic-stricken herd rush from the scene of conflict, and it is all over. X. has killed two, Y. has killed one, and Z. knocked down one, but he got up again and got away; total, three bagged. Our friends now return to the tent, and, after perhaps a month of this kind of shooting, they arrive at their original headquarters, having bagged perhaps twenty elephants. They give their opinion upon elephant-shooting, and declare it to be capital sport, but there is no danger in it, as the elephants INVARIABLY RUN AWAY.

Let us imagine ourselves in the position of the half-asleep and unsuspecting herd. We are lying down in a doze during the heat of the day, and our senses are half benumbed by a sense of sleep. We are beneath the shade of a large tree, and we do not dream that danger is near us.

A frightful scream suddenly scatters our wandering senses. It is a rogue elephant upon us! It was the scream of his trumpet that we heard! and he is right among us. How we should bolt! How we should run at the first start until we could get a gun! But let him continue this pursuit, and how long would he be without a ball in his head?

It is precisely the same in attacking a herd of elephants or any other animals unawares; they are taken by surprise, and are for the moment panic-stricken. But let our friends X., Y., Z., who have just bagged three elephants so easily, continue the pursuit, hunt the remaining portion of the herd down till one by one they have nearly all fallen to the bullet—X., Y., Z. will have had enough of it; they will be blinded by perspiration, torn by countless thorns, as they have rushed through the jungles determined not to lose sight of their game, soaked to the skin as they have waded through intervening streams, and will entirely have altered their opinion as to elephants invariably running away, as they will very probably have seen one turn sharp round from the retreating herd, and charge straight into them when they least expected it. At any rate, after a hunt of this kind they can form some opinion of the excitement of the true sport.

The first attack upon a herd by a couple of first-rate elephant-shots frequently ends the contest in a few seconds by the death of every elephant. I have frequently seen a small herd of five or six elephants annihilated almost in as many seconds after a well-planned approach in thick jungle, when they have been discovered standing in a crowd and presenting favourable shots. In such an instance the sport is so soon concluded that the only excitement consists in the cautious advance to the attack through bad jungle.

As a rule, the pursuit of elephants through bad, thorny jungles should if possible be avoided: the danger is in many cases extreme, although the greater portion of the herd may at other times be perhaps easily killed. There is no certainty in a shot. An elephant may be discerned by the eye looming in an apparent mist formed by the countless intervening twigs and branches which veil him like a screen of network. To reach the fatal spot the ball must pass through perhaps fifty little twigs, one of which, if struck obliquely, turns the bullet, and there is no answering for the consequence. There are no rules, however, without exceptions, and in some instances the following of the game through the thickest jungle can hardly be avoided.

The character of the country in Ceylon is generally very unfavourable to sport of all kinds. The length of the island is about two hundred and eighty miles, by one hundred and fifty in width; the greater portion of this surface is covered with impenetrable jungles, which form secure coverts for countless animals.

The centre of the island is mountainous, torrents from which, form the sources of the numerous rivers by which Ceylon is so well watered. The low country is flat. The soil throughout the island is generally poor and sandy.

This being the character of the country, and vast forests rendered impenetrable by tangled underwood forming the principal features of the landscape, a person arriving at Ceylon for the purpose of enjoying its wild sports would feel an inexpressible disappointment.

Instead of mounting a good horse, as he might have fondly anticipated, and at once speeding over trackless plains till so far from human habitations that the territories of beasts commence, he finds himself walled in by jungle on either side of the highway. In vain he asks for information. He finds the neighbourhood of Galle, his first landing place, densely populated; he gets into the coach for Colombo. Seventy miles of close population and groves of cocoa-nut trees are passed, and he reaches the capital. This is worse and worse—he has seen no signs of wild country during his long journey, and Colombo appears to be the height of civilisation. He books his place for Kandy; he knows that is in the very centre of Ceylon—there surely must be sport there, he thinks.

The morning gun fires from the Colombo fort at 5 A.M. and the coach starts. Miles are passed, and still the country is thickly populated—paddy cultivation in all the flats and hollows, and even the sides of the hills are carefully terraced out in a laborious system of agriculture. There can be no shooting here!

Sixty miles are passed; the top of the Kaduganava Pass is reached, eighteen hundred feet above the sea level, the road walled with jungle on either side. From the summit of this pass our newly arrived sportsman gazes with despair. Far as the eye can reach over a vast extent of country, mountain and valley, hill and dale, without one open spot, are clothed alike in one dark screen of impervious forest.

He reaches Kandy, a civilised town surrounded by hills of jungle—that interminable jungle!—and at Kandy he may remain, or, better still, return again to England, unless he can get some well-known Ceylon sportsman to pilot him through the apparently pathless forests, and in fact to 'show him sport.' This is not easily effected. Men who understand the sport are not over fond of acting 'chaperon' to a young hand, as a novice must always detract from the sport in some degree. In addition to this, many persons do not exactly know themselves; and, although the idea of shooting elephants appears very attractive at a distance, the pleasure somewhat abates when the sportsman is forced to seek for safety in a swift pair of heels.

I shall now proceed to give a description of the various sports in Ceylon—a task for which the constant practice of many years has afforded ample incident.

The game of Ceylon consists of elephants, buffaloes, elk, spotted deer, red or the paddy-field deer*(*A small species of deer found in the island), mouse deer, hogs, bears, leopards, hares, black partridge, red-legged partridge, pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, quail, snipe, ducks, widgeon, teal, golden and several kinds of plover, a great variety of pigeons, and among the class of reptiles are innumerable snakes, etc., and the crocodile.

The acknowledged sports of Ceylon are elephant-shooting, buffalo-shooting, deer-shooting, elk-hunting, and deer-coursing: the two latter can only be enjoyed by a resident in the island, as of course the sport is dependent upon a pack of fine hounds. Although the wild boar is constantly killed, I do not reckon him among the sports of the country, as he is never sought for; death and destruction to the hounds generally being attendant upon his capture. The bear and leopard also do not form separate sports; they are merely killed when met with.

In giving an account of each kind of sport I shall explain the habits of the animal and the features of the country wherein every incident occurs, Ceylon scenery being so diversified that no general description could give a correct idea of Ceylon sports.

The guns are the first consideration. After the first year of my experience I had four rifles made to order, which have proved themselves perfect weapons in all respects, and exactly adapted for heavy game. They are double-barrelled, No. 10 bores, and of such power in metal that they weigh fifteen pounds each. I consider them perfection; but should others consider them too heavy, a pound taken from the weight of the barrels would make a perceptible difference. I would in all cases strongly deprecate the two grooved rifle for wild sports, on account of the difficulty in loading quickly. A No. 10 twelve-grooved rifle will carry a conical ball of two ounces and a half, and can be loaded as quickly as a smooth-bore. Some persons prefer the latter to rifles for elephant-shooting, but I cannot myself understand why a decidedly imperfect weapon should be used when the rifle offers such superior advantages. At twenty and even thirty paces a good smooth-bore will carry a ball with nearly the same precision as a rifle; but in a country full of various large game there is no certainty, when the ball is rammed down, at what object it is to be aimed. A buffalo or deer may cross the path at a hundred yards, and the smooth-bore is useless; on the other hand, the rifle is always ready for whatever may appear.

My battery consists of one four-ounce rifle (a single barrel) weighing twenty-one pounds, one long two-ounce rifle (single barrel) weighing sixteen pounds, and four double-barrelled rifles, No.

10 weighing each fifteen pounds. Smooth-bores I count for nothing, although I have frequently used them.

So much for guns. It may therefore be summed up that the proper battery for Ceylon shooting would be four large-bored double-barrelled rifles, say from No. 10 to No. 12 in size, but all to be the same bore, so as to prevent confusion in loading. Persons may suit their own fancy as to the weight of their guns, bearing in mind that single barrels are very useless things.

Next to the 'Rifle' in the order of description comes the 'Hound.'

The 'elk' is his acknowledged game, and an account of this animal's size and strength will prove the necessity of a superior breed of hound.

The 'elk' is a Ceylon blunder and a misnomer. The animal thus called is a 'samber deer,' well known in India as the largest of all Asiatic deer.

A buck in his prime will stand fourteen hands high at the shoulder, and will weigh 600 pounds, live weight. He is in colour dark brown, with a fine mane of coarse bristly hair of six inches in length; the rest of his body is covered with the same coarse hair of about two inches in length. I have a pair of antlers in my possession that are thirteen inches round the burr, and the same size beneath the first branch, and three feet four inches in length; this, however, is a very unusual size.

The elk has seldom more than six points to his antlers. The low-country elk are much larger than those on the highlands; the latter are seldom more than from twelve to thirteen hands high; and of course their weight is proportionate, that of a buck in condition being about 400 pounds when gralloched. I have killed them much heavier than this on the mountains, but I have given about the average weight.

The habits of this animal are purely nocturnal. He commences his wanderings at sunset, and retires to the forest at break of day. He is seldom found in greater numbers than two or three together, and is generally alone. When brought to bay he fights to the last, and charges man and hound indiscriminately, a choice hound killed being often the price of victory.

The country in which he is hunted is in the mountainous districts of Ceylon. Situated at an elevation of 6,200 feet above the sea is Newera Ellia, the sanatorium of the island. Here I have kept a pack and hunted elk for some years, the delightful coolness of the temperature (seldom above 66 degrees Fahr.) rendering the sport doubly enjoyable. The principal features of this country being a series of wild marsh, plains, forests, torrents, mountains and precipices, a peculiar hound is required for the sport.

A pack of thoroughbred fox-hounds would never answer. They would pick up a cold scent and open upon it before they were within a mile of their game. Roused from his morning nap, the buck would snuff the breeze, and to the distant music give an attentive ear, then shake the dew from his rough hide, and away over rocks and torrents, down the steep mountain sides, through pathless forests; and woe then to the pack of thoroughbreds, whose persevering notes would soon be echoed by the rocky steeps, far, far away from any chance of return, lost in the trackless jungles and ravines many miles from kennel, a prey to leopards and starvation! I have proved this by experience, having brought a pack of splendid hounds from England, only one of which survived a few months' hunting.

The hound required for elk-hunting is a cross between the fox-hound and blood-hound, of great size and courage, with as powerful a voice as possible. He should be trained to this sport from a puppy, and his natural sagacity soon teaches him not to open unless upon a hot scent, or about two hundred yards from his game; thus the elk is not disturbed until the hound is at full speed upon his scent, and he seldom gets a long start. Fifteen couple of such hounds in full cry put him at his best pace, which is always tried to the uttermost by a couple or two of fast and pitiless lurchers who run ahead of the pack, the object being to press him at first starting, so as to blow him at the very commencement: this is easily effected, as he is full of food, and it is his nature always to take off straight UP the hill when first disturbed. When blown he strikes down hill, and makes at great speed for the largest and deepest stream; in this he turns to bay, and tries the mettle of the finest hounds.

The great enemy to a pack is the leopard. He pounces from the branch of a tree upon a stray hound, and soon finishes him, unless of great size and courage, in which case the cowardly brute is soon beaten off. This forms another reason for the choice of large hounds.

The next sport is 'deer-coursing.' This is one of the most delightful kinds of sport in Ceylon. The game is the axis or spotted deer, and the open plains in many parts of the low country afford splendid ground for both greyhound and horse.

The buck is about 250 pounds live weight, of wonderful speed and great courage, armed with long and graceful antlers as sharp as needles. He will suddenly turn to bay upon the hard ground, and charge his pursuers, and is more dangerous to the greyhounds than the elk, from his wonderful activity, and from the fact that he is coursed by only a pair of greyhounds, instead of being hunted by a pack.

Pure greyhounds of great size and courage are best adapted for this sport. They cannot afford to lose speed by a cross with slower hounds.

CHAPTER II

Newera Ellia—The Turn-out for Elk-Hunting—Elk-Hunting—Elk turned to Bay—The Boar.

Where shall I begin? This is a momentous question, when, upon glancing back upon past years, a thousand incidents jostle each other for precedence. How shall I describe them? This, again, is easier asked than answered. A journal is a dry description, mingling the uninteresting with the brightest moments of sport. No, I will not write a journal; it would be endless and boring. I shall begin with the present as it is, and call up the past as I think proper.

Here, then, I am in my private sanctum, my rifles all arranged in their respective stands above the chimney-piece, the stags' horns round walls hung with horn-cases, powder-flasks and the various weapons of the chase. Even as I write the hounds are yelling in the kennel.

The thermometer is at 62 degrees Fahr., and it is mid-day. It never exceeds 72 degrees in the hottest weather, and sometimes falls below freezing point at night. The sky is spotless and the air calm. The fragrance of mignonettes, and a hundred flowers that recall England, fills the air. Green fields of grass and clover, neatly fenced, surround a comfortable house and grounds. Well-fed cattle of the choicest breeds, and English sheep, are grazing in the paddocks. Well-made roads and gravel walks run through the estate. But a few years past, and this was all wilderness.

Dense forest reigned where now not even the stump of a tree is standing; the wind howled over hill and valley, the dank moss hung from the scathed branches, the deep morass filled the hollows; but all is changed by the hand of civilisation and industry. The dense forests and rough plains, which still form the boundaries of the cultivated land, only add to the beauty. The monkeys and parrots are even now chattering among the branches, and occasionally the elephant in his nightly wanderings trespasses upon the fields, unconscious of the oasis within his territory of savage nature.

The still, starlight night is awakened by the harsh bark of the elk; the lofty mountains, grey with the silvery moonlight, echo back the sound; and the wakeful hounds answer the well-known cry by a prolonged and savage yell.

This is 'Newera Ellia,' the sanatorium of Ceylon, the most perfect climate of the world. It now boasts of a handsome church, a public reading-room, a large hotel, the barracks, and about twenty private residences.

The adjacent country, of comparatively table land, occupies an extent of some thirty miles in length, varying in altitude from 6,200 to 7,000 feet, forming a base for the highest peaks in Ceylon, which rise to nearly 9,000 feet.

Alternate large plains, separated by belts of forest, rapid rivers, waterfalls, precipices, and panoramic views of boundless extent, form the features of this country, which, combined with the sports of the place, render a residence at Newera Ellia a life of health, luxury, and independence.

The high road from Colombo passes over the mountains through Newera Ellia to Badulla, from which latter place there is a bridle road, through the best shooting districts in Ceylon, to the seaport town of Batticaloa, and from thence to Trincomalee. The relative distances of Newera Ellia are, from Galle, 185 miles; from Colombo, 115 miles; from Kandy, 47 miles; from Badulla, 36 miles; from Batticaloa, 148 miles. Were it not for the poverty of the soil, Newera Ellia would long ago have become a place of great importance, as the climate is favourable to the cultivation of all English produce; but an absence of lime in the soil, and the cost of applying it artificially, prohibit the cultivation of all grain, and restrict the produce of the land to potatoes and other vegetables. Nevertheless, many small settlers earn a good subsistence, although this has latterly been rendered precarious by the appearance of the well-known potato disease.

Newera Ellia has always been a favourite place of resort during the fashionable months, from the commencement of January to the middle of May. At that time the rainy season commences, and visitors rapidly disappear.

All strangers remark the scanty accommodation afforded to the numerous visitors. To see the number of people riding and walking round the Newera Ellia plain, it appears a marvel how they can be housed in the few dwellings that exist. There is an endless supply of fine timber in the forests, and powerful sawmills are already erected; but the island is, like its soil, 'poor.' Its main staple, 'coffee,' does not pay sufficiently to enable the proprietors of estates to indulge in the luxury of a house at Newera Ellia. Like many watering-places in England, it is overcrowded at one season and deserted at another, the only permanent residents being comprised in the commandant, the officer in command of the detachment of troops, the government agent, the doctor, the clergyman, and our own family.

Dull enough! some persons may exclaim; and so it would be to any but a sportsman; but the jungles teem with large game, and Newera Ellia is in a central position, as the best sporting country is only three days' journey, or one hundred miles, distant. Thus, at any time, the guns may be packed up, and, with tents and baggage sent on some days in advance, a fortnight's or a month's war may be carried on against the elephants without much trouble.

The turn-out for elk-hunting during the fashionable season at Newera Ellia is sometimes peculiarly exciting. The air is keen and frosty, the plains snow-white with the crisp hoar frost, and even at the early hour of 6 A.M. parties of ladies may be seen urging their horses round the plain on their way to the appointed meet. Here we are waiting with the anxious pack, perhaps blessing some of our more sleepy friends for not turning out a little earlier. Party after party arrives, including many of the fair sex, and the rosy tips to all countenances attest the quality of the cold even in Ceylon.

There is something peculiarly inspiriting in the early hour of sunrise upon these mountains—an indescribable lightness in the atmosphere, owing to the great elevation, which takes a wonderful effect upon the spirits. The horses and the hounds feel its influence in an equal degree; the former, who are perhaps of sober character in the hot climate, now champ the bit and paw the ground: their owners hardly know them by the change.

We have frequently mustered as many as thirty horses at a meet; but on these occasions a picked spot is chosen where the sport may be easily witnessed by those who are unaccustomed to it. The horses may, in these instances, be available, but as a rule they are perfectly useless in elk-hunting, as the plains are so boggy that they would be hock-deep every quarter of a mile. Thus no person can thoroughly enjoy elk-hunting who is not well accustomed to it, as it is a sport conducted entirely on foot, and the thinness of the air in this elevated region is very trying to the lungs in hard exercise. Thoroughly sound in wind and limb, with no superfluous flesh, must be the man who would follow the hounds in this wild country—through jungles, rivers, plains and deep ravines, sometimes from sunrise to sunset without tasting food since the previous evening, with the exception of a cup of coffee and a piece of toast before starting. It is trying work, but it is a noble sport: no weapon but the hunting-knife; no certainty as to the character of the game that may be found; it may be either an elk, or a boar, or a leopard, and yet the knife and the good hounds are all that can be trusted in.

It is a glorious sport certainly to a man who thoroughly understands it; the voice of every hound familiar to his ear; the particular kind of game that is found is at once known to him, long before he is in view, by the style of the hunting. If an elk is found, the hounds follow with a burst straight as a line, and at a killing pace, directly up the hill, till he at length turns and bends his headlong course for some stronghold in a deep river to bay. Listening to the hounds till certain of their course, a thorough knowledge of the country at once tells the huntsman of their destination, and away he goes.

He tightens his belt by a hole, and steadily he starts at a long, swinging trot, having made up his mind for a day of it. Over hills and valleys, through tangled and pathless forests, but all well known to him, steady he goes at the same pace on the level, easy through the bogs and up the hills, extra steam down hill, and stopping for a moment to listen for the hounds on every elevated spot. At length he hears them! No, it was a bird. Again he fancies that he hears a distant sound—was it the wind? No; there it is—it is old Smut's voice—he is at bay! Yoick to him! he shouts till his lungs are well-nigh cracked, and through thorns and jungles, bogs and ravines, he rushes towards the welcome sound.

Thick-tangled bushes armed with a thousand hooked thorns suddenly arrest his course; it is the dense fringe of underwood that borders every forest; the open plain is within a few yards of him. The hounds in a mad chorus are at bay, and the woods ring again with the cheering sound. Nothing can stop him now—thorns, or clothes, or flesh must go—something must give way as he bursts through them and stands upon the plain.

There they are in that deep pool formed by the river as it sweeps round the rock. A buck! a noble fellow! Now he charges at the hounds, and strikes the foremost beneath the water with his fore-feet; up they come again to the surface—they hear their master's well-known shout—they look round and see his welcome figure on the steep bank. Another moment, a tremendous splash, and he is among his hounds, and all are swimming towards their noble game. At them he comes with a fierce rush. Avoid him as you best can, ye hunters, man and hounds!

Down the river the buck now swims, sometimes galloping over the shallows, sometimes wading shoulder-deep, sometimes swimming through the deep pools. Now he dashes down the fierce rapids and leaps the opposing rocks, between which, the torrent rushes at a frightful pace. The hounds are after him; the roaring of the water joins in their wild chorus; the loud holloa of the huntsman is heard above every sound as he cheers the pack on. He runs along the bank of the river, and again the enraged buck turns to bay. He has this time taken a strong position: he stands in a swift rapid about two feet deep; his thin legs cleave the stream as it rushes past, and every hound is swept away as he attempts to stem the current. He is a perfect picture: his nostrils are distended, his mane is bristled up, his eyes flash, and he adds his loud bark of defiance to the din around him. The hounds cannot touch him. Now for the huntsman's part; he calls the stanchest seizers to his side, gives them a cheer on, and steps into the torrent, knife in hand. Quick as lightning the buck springs to the attack; but he has exposed himself, and at that moment the tall lurchers are upon his ears; the huntsman leaps upon one side and plunges the knife behind his shoulder. A tremendous struggle takes place—the whole pack is upon him; still his dying efforts almost free him from their hold: a mass of spray envelopes the whole scene. Suddenly he falls—he dies—it is all over. The hounds are called off, and are carefully examined for wounds.

The huntsman is now perhaps some miles from home, he, therefore, cuts a long pole, and tying a large bunch of grass to one end, he sticks the other end into the ground close to the river's edge where the elk is lying. This marks the spot. He calls his hounds together and returns homeward, and afterwards sends men to cut the buck up and bring the flesh. Elk venison is very good, but is at all times more like beef than English venison.

The foregoing may be considered a general description of elk-hunting, although the incidents of the sport necessarily vary considerably.

The boar is our dangerous adversary, and he is easily known by the character of the run. The hounds seldom open with such a burst upon the scent as they do with an elk. The run is much slower; he runs down this ravine and up that, never going straight away, and he generally comes to bay after a run of ten minutes' duration.

A boar always chooses the very thickest part of the jungle as his position for a bay, and from this he makes continual rushes at the hounds.

The huntsman approaches the scene of the combat, breaking his way with difficulty through the tangled jungle, until within about twenty yards of the bay. He now cheers the hounds on to the attack, and if they are worthy of their name, they instantly rush in to the boar regardless of wounds. The huntsman is aware of the seizure by the grunting of the boar and the tremendous confusion in the thick jungle; he immediately rushes to the assistance of the pack, knife in hand.

A scene of real warfare meets his view—gaping wounds upon his best hounds, the boar rushing through the jungle covered with dogs, and he himself becomes the immediate object of his fury when observed.

No time is to be lost. Keeping behind the boar if possible, he rushes to the bloody conflict, and drives the hunting-knife between the shoulders in the endeavour to divide the spine. Should he happily effect this, the boar falls stone dead; but if not, he repeats the thrust, keeping a good look-out for the animal's tusks.

If the dogs were of not sufficient courage to rush in and seize the boar when halloaed on, no man could approach him in a thick jungle with only a hunting-knife, as he would in all probability have his inside ripped out at the first charge. The animal is wonderfully active and ferocious, and of immense power, constantly weighing 4 cwt.

The end of nearly every good seizer is being killed by a boar. The better the dog the more likely he is to be killed, as he will be the first to lead the attack, and in thick jungle he has no chance of escaping from a wound.

CHAPTER III

Minneria Lake—Brush with a Bull—An Awkward Vis-a-vis—A Bright Thought—Bull Buffalo Receives his Small Change—What is Man?—Long Shot with the Four-ounce—Charged by a Herd of Buffaloes—the Four-ounce does Service—The 'Lola'—A Woman Killed by a Crocodile—Crocodile at Bolgodde Lake—A Monster Crocodile—Death of a Crocodile.

THE foregoing description may serve as an introduction to the hill sports of Ceylon. One animal, however, yet remains to be described, who surpasses all others in dogged ferocity when once aroused. This is the 'buffalo.'

The haunts of this animal are in the hottest parts of Ceylon. In the neighbourhood of lakes, swamps, and extensive plains, the buffalo exists in large herds; wallowing in the soft mire, and passing two-thirds of his time in the water itself, he may be almost termed amphibious.

He is about the size of a large ox, of immense bone and strength, very active, and his hide is almost free from hair, giving a disgusting appearance to his India-rubber-like skin. He carries his head in a peculiar manner, the horns thrown back, and his nose projecting on a level with his forehead, thus securing himself from a front shot in a fatal part. This renders him a dangerous enemy, as he will receive any number of balls from a small gun in the throat and chest without evincing the least symptom of distress. The shoulder is the acknowledged point to aim at, but from his disposition to face the guns this is a difficult shot to obtain. Should he succeed in catching his antagonist, his fury knows no bounds, and he gores his victim to death, trampling and kneeling upon him till he is satisfied that life is extinct.

This sport would not be very dangerous in the forests, where the buffalo could be easily stalked, and where escape would also be rendered less difficult in case of accident; but as he is generally met with upon the open plains, free from a single tree, he must be killed when once brought to bay, or he will soon exhibit his qualifications for mischief. There is a degree of uncertainty in their character which much increases the danger of the pursuit. A buffalo may retreat at first sight with every symptom of cowardice, and thus induce a too eager pursuit, when he will suddenly become the assailant. I cannot explain their character better than by describing the first wild buffaloes that I ever saw.

I had not been long in Ceylon, but having arrived in the island for the sake of its wild sports, I had not been idle, and I had already made a considerable bag of large game. Like most novices, however, I was guilty of one great fault. I despised the game, and gave no heed to the many tales of danger and hair-breadth escapes which attended the pursuit of wild animals. This carelessness on my part arose from my first debut having been extremely lucky; most shots had told well, and the animal had been killed with such apparent ease that I had learnt to place an implicit reliance in the rifle. The real fact was that I was like many others; I had slaughtered a number of animals without understanding their habits, and I was perfectly ignorant of the sport. This is now many years ago, and it was then my first visit to the island. Some places that were good spots for shooting in those days have since that time been much disturbed, and are now no longer attractive to my eyes. One of these places is Minneria Lake.

I was on a shooting trip accompanied by my brother, whom I will designate as B. We had passed a toilsome day in pushing and dragging our ponies for twenty miles along a narrow path through thick jungle, which half-a-dozen natives in advance were opening before us with bill-hooks. This had at one time been a good path, but was then overgrown. It is now an acknowledged bridle road.

At 4 P.M., and eighty miles from Kandy, we emerged from the jungle, and the view of Minneria Lake burst upon us, fully repaying us for our day's march. It was a lovely afternoon. The waters of the lake; which is twenty miles in circumference, were burnished by the setting sun. The surrounding plains were as green as an English meadow, and beautiful forest trees bordered the extreme boundaries

of the plains like giant warders of the adjoining jungle. Long promontories densely wooded stretched far into the waters of the lake, forming sheltered nooks and bays teeming with wild fowl. The deer browsed in herds on the wide extent of plain, or lay beneath the shade of the spreading branches. Every feature of lovely scenery was here presented. In some spots groves of trees grew to the very water's edge; in others the wide plains, free from a single stem or bush, stretched for miles along the edge of the lake; thickly wooded hills bordered the extreme end of its waters, and distant blue mountains mingled their dim summits with the clouds.

It was a lovely scene which we enjoyed in silence, while our ponies feasted upon the rich grass.

The village of Minneria was three miles farther on, and our coolies, servants, and baggage were all far behind us. We had, therefore, no rifles or guns at hand, except a couple of shot-guns, which were carried by our horsekeepers: for these we had a few balls.

For about half an hour we waited in the impatient expectation of the arrival of our servants with the rifles. The afternoon was wearing away, and they did not appear. We could wait no longer, but determined to take a stroll and examine the country. We therefore left our horses and proceeded.

The grass was most verdant, about the height of a field fit for the scythe in England, but not so thick. From this the snipe arose at every twenty or thirty paces, although, the ground was perfectly dry. Crossing a large meadow, and skirting the banks of the lake, from which the ducks and teal rose in large flocks, we entered a long neck of jungle which stretched far into the lake. This was not above two hundred paces in width, and we soon emerged upon an extensive plain bordered by fine forest, the waters of the lake stretching far away upon our left, like a sheet of gold. A few large rocks rose above the surface near the shore; these were covered with various kinds of wild fowl. The principal tenants of the plain were wild buffaloes.

A herd of about a hundred were lying in a swampy hollow about a quarter of a mile from us: Several single bulls were dotted about the green surface of the level plain, and on the opposite shores of the lake were many dark patches undistinguishable in the distance; these were in reality herds of buffaloes. There was not a sound in the wide expanse before us, except the harsh cry of the water-fowl that our presence had already disturbed—not a breath of air moved the leaves of the trees which shaded us—and the whole scene was that of undisturbed nature. The sun had now sunk low upon the horizon, and the air was comparatively cool. The multitude of buffaloes enchanted us, and with our two light double-barrels, we advanced to the attack of the herd before us.

We had not left the obscurity of the forest many seconds before we were observed. The herd started up from their muddy bed and gazed at us with astonishment. It was a fair open plain of some thousand acres, bounded by the forest which we had just quitted on the one side, and by the lake on the other; thus there was no cover for our advance, and all we could do was to push on.

As we approached the herd they ranged up in a compact body, presenting a very regular line in front. From this line seven large bulls stepped forth, and from their vicious appearance seemed disposed to show fight. In the meantime we were running up, and were soon within thirty paces of them. At this distance the main body of the herd suddenly wheeled round and thundered across the plain in full retreat. One of the bulls at the same moment charged straight at us, but when within twenty paces of the guns he turned to one side, and instantly received two balls in the shoulder, B. and I having fired at the same moment. As luck would have it, his blade-bone was thus broken, and he fell upon his knees, but recovering himself in an instant, he retreated on three legs to the water.

We now received assistance from an unexpected quarter. One of the large bulls, his companions, charged after him with great fury, and soon overtaking the wounded beast, he struck him full in the side, throwing him over with a great shock on the muddy border of the lake. Here the wounded animal lay unable to rise, and his conqueror commenced a slow retreat across the plain.

Leaving B. to extinguish the wounded buffalo, I gave chase to the retreating bull. At an easy canter he would gain a hundred paces and then, turning, he would face me; throwing his nose up,

and turning his head to one side with a short grunt, he would advance quickly for a few paces, and then again retreat as I continued to approach.

In this manner he led me a chase of about a mile along the banks of the lake, but he appeared determined not to bring the fight to an issue at close quarters. Cursing his cowardice, I fired a long shot at him, and reloading my last spare ball I continued the chase, led on by ignorance and excitement.

The lake in one part stretched in a narrow creek into the plain, and the bull now directed his course into the angle formed by this turn. I thought that I lead him in a corner, and, redoubling my exertions, I gained upon him considerably. He retreated slowly to the very edge of the creek, and I had gained so fast upon him that I was not thirty paces distant, when he plunged into the water and commenced swimming across the creek. This was not more than sixty yards in breadth, and I knew that I could now bring him to action.

Running round the borders of the creek as fast as I could, I arrived at the opposite side on his intended landing-place just as his black form reared from the deep water and gained the shallows, into which I had waded knee-deep to meet him. I now experienced that pleasure as he stood sullenly eyeing me within fifteen paces. Poor stupid fellow! I would willingly, in my ignorance, have betted ten to one upon the shot, so certain was I of his death in another instant.

I took a quick but steady aim at his chest, at the point of connection with the throat. The smoke of the barrel passed to one side;—there he stood—he had not flinched; he literally had not moved a muscle. The only change that had taken place was in his eye; this, which had hitherto been merely sullen, was now beaming with fury; but his form was as motionless as a statue. A stream of blood poured from a wound within an inch of the spot at which I had aimed; had it not been for this fact, I should not have believed him struck.

Annoyed at the failure of the shot, I tried him with the left-hand barrel at the same hole. The report of the gun echoed over the lake, but there he stood as though he bore a charmed life;—an increased flow of blood from the wound and additional lustre in his eye were the only signs of his being struck.

I was unloaded, and had not a single ball remaining. It was now his turn. I dared not turn to retreat, as I knew he would immediately charge, and we stared each other out of countenance.

With a short grunt he suddenly sprang forward, but fortunately, as I did not move, he halted; he had, however, decreased his distance, and we now gazed at each other within ten paces. I began to think buffalo-shooting somewhat dangerous, and I would have given something to have been a mile away, but ten times as much to have had my four-ounce rifle in my hand. Oh, how I longed for that rifle in this moment of suspense! Unloaded, without the power of defence, with the absolute certainty of a charge from an overpowering brute, my hand instinctively found the handle of my hunting-knife, a useless weapon against such a foe.

Knowing that B. was not aware of my situation at the distance which separated us (about a mile), without taking my eyes from the figure before me, I raised my hand to my mouth and gave a long and loud whistle; this was a signal that I knew would be soon answered if heard.

With a stealthy step and another short grunt, the bull again advanced a couple of paces towards me. He seemed aware of my helplessness, and he was the picture of rage and fury, pawing the water and stamping violently with his forefeet.

This was very pleasant! I gave myself up for lost, but putting as fierce an expression into my features as I could possibly assume, I stared hopelessly at my maddened antagonist.

Suddenly a bright thought flashed through my mind. Without taking my eyes off the animal before me, I put a double charge of powder down the right-hand barrel, and tearing off a piece of my shirt, I took all the money from my pouch, three shillings in sixpenny pieces, and two anna pieces, which I luckily had with me in this small coin for paying coolies. Quickly making them into a rouleau with the piece of rag, I rammed them down the barrel, and they were hardly well home before the bull again sprang forward. So quick was it that I had no time to replace the ramrod, and I threw it

in the water, bringing my gun on full cock in the same instant. However, he again halted, being now within about seven paces from me, and we again gazed fixedly at each other, but with altered feelings on my part. I had faced him hopelessly with an empty gun for more than a quarter of an hour, which seemed a century. I now had a charge in my gun, which I knew if reserved till he was within a foot of the muzzle would certainly floor him, and I awaited his onset with comparative carelessness, still keeping my eyes opposed to his gaze.

At this time I heard a splashing in the water behind me, accompanied by the hard breathing of something evidently distressed. The next moment I heard B.'s voice. He could hardly speak for want of breath, having run the whole way to my rescue, but I could understand that he had only one barrel loaded, and no bullets left. I dared not turn my face from the buffalo, but I cautioned B. to reserve his fire till the bull should be close into me, and then to aim at the head.

The words were hardly uttered, when, with the concentrated rage of the last twenty minutes, he rushed straight at me! It was the work of an instant. B. fired without effect. The horns were lowered, their points were on either side of me, and the muzzle of the gun barely touched his forehead when I pulled the trigger, and three shillings' worth of small change rattled into his hard head. Down he went, and rolled over with the suddenly checked momentum of his charge. Away went B. and I as fast as our heels would carry us, through the water and over the plain, knowing that he was not dead but only stunned. There was a large fallen tree about half a mile from us, whose whitened branches, rising high above the ground, offered a tempting asylum. To this we directed our flying steps, and, after a run of a hundred yards, we turned and looked behind us. He had regained his feet and was following us slowly. We now experienced the difference of feeling between hunting and being hunted, and fine sport we must have afforded him.

On he came, but fortunately so stunned by the collision with her Majesty's features upon the coin which he had dared to oppose that he could only reel forward at a slow canter. By degrees even this pace slackened, and he fell. We were only too glad to be able to reduce our speed likewise, but we had no sooner stopped to breathe, than he was again up and after us. At length, however, we gained the tree, and we beheld him with satisfaction stretched powerless upon the ground, but not dead, within two hundred yards of us.

We retreated under cover of the forest to the spot at which we had left the horses, fortunately meeting no opposition from wild animals, and we shortly arrived at the village at which we took up our quarters, vowing vengeance on the following morning for the defeat that we had sustained.

A man is a poor defenceless wretch if left to defend himself against wild animals with the simple natural weapons of arms, legs, and teeth. A tom-cat would almost be a match for him. He has legs which will neither serve him for pursuit or escape if he is forced to trust only in his speed. He has strength of limb which is useless without some artificial weapon. He is an animal who, without the power of reason, could not even exist in a wild state; his brain alone gives him the strength to support his title of lord of the creation.

Nevertheless, a lord of the creation does not appear in much majesty when running for his life from an infuriated buffalo;—the assumed title sits uneasily upon him when, with scarcely a breath left in his body, he struggles along till he is ready to drop with fatigue, expecting to be overtaken at every step. We must certainly have exhibited poor specimens of the boasted sway of man over the brute creation could a stranger have witnessed our flight on this occasion.

The next morning we were up at daybreak, and we returned to the battlefield of the previous evening in the full expectation of seeing our wounded antagonist lying dead where we had left him. In this we were disappointed—he was gone, and we never saw him again.

I now had my long two-ounce and my four-ounce rifles with me, and I was fully prepared for a deep revenge for the disgrace of yesterday.

The morning was clear but cloudy; a heavy thunderstorm during the night had cooled the air, and the whole plain was glistening with bright drops; the peacocks were shrieking from the tree-tops

and spreading their gaudy plumage to the cool breeze; and the whole face of nature seemed refreshed. We felt the same invigorating spirit, and we took a long survey of the many herds of buffaloes upon the plain before we could determine which we should first attack.

A large single bull, who had been lying in a swampy hollow unobserved by us, suddenly sprang up at about three hundred yards' distance, and slowly cantered off. I tried the long two-ounce rifle at him, but, taking too great an elevation, I fired over him. The report, however, had the effect of turning him, and, instead of retreating, he wheeled round and attempted to pass between the guns and the banks of the lake. We were about three hundred yards from the water's edge, and he was soon passing us at full gallop at right angles, about midway or a hundred and fifty yards distant.

I had twelve drachms of powder in the four-ounce rifle, and I took a flying shot at his shoulder. No visible effect was produced, and the ball ricochetted completely across the broad surface of the lake (which was no more than a mile wide at this part) in continuous splashes. The gun-bearers said I had fired behind him, but I had distinctly heard the peculiar 'fut' which a ball makes upon striking an animal, and although the passage of the ball across the lake appeared remarkable, nevertheless I felt positive that it had first passed through some portion of the animal.

Away the bull sped over the plain at unabated speed for about two hundred paces, when he suddenly turned and charged toward the guns. On he came for about a hundred yards, but evidently slackening his speed at every stride. At length he stopped altogether. His mouth was wide open, and I could now distinguish a mass of bloody foam upon his lips and nostrils—the ball had in reality passed through his lungs, and, making its exit from the opposite shoulder, it had even then flown across the lake. This was the proof of the effect of the twelve drachms of powder.

Having reloaded, I now advanced towards him, and soon arrived within fifty paces. He was the facsimile of the bull that had chased us on the previous day—the same picture of fury and determination; and, crouching low, he advanced a few paces, keeping his eyes fixed upon us as though we were already his own.

A short cough, accompanied by a rush of blood from his mouth, seemed to cause him great uneasiness, and he halted.

Again we advanced till within twenty paces of him. I would not fire, as I saw that he already had enough, and I wished to see how long he could support a wound through the lungs, as my safety in buffalo-shooting might in future depend upon this knowledge.

The fury of his spirit seemed to war with death, and, although reeling with weakness and suffocation, he again attempted to come on. It was his last effort; his eyes rolled convulsively, he gave a short grunt of impotent rage, and the next moment he fell upon his back with his heels in the air; he was stone dead, and game to the last moment.

I had thus commenced a revenge for the insult of yesterday; I had proved the wonderful power of the four-ounce rifle—a weapon destined to make great havoc amongst the heavy game of Ceylon.

Upon turning from the carcass before us, we observed to our surprise that a large herd of buffaloes, that were at a great distance when we had commenced the attack upon the bull, had now approached to within a few hundred yards, and were standing in a dense mass, attentively watching us. Without any delay we advanced towards them, and, upon arriving within about a hundred paces, we observed that the herd was headed by two large bulls, one of which was the largest that I had ever seen. The whole herd was bellowing and pawing the ground. They had winded the blood of the dead bull and appeared perfectly maddened.

We continued to advance, and we were within about ninety paces of them when suddenly the whole herd of about two hundred buffaloes, headed by the two bulls before noticed, dashed straight towards us at full gallop. So simultaneous was the onset that it resembled a sudden charge of cavalry, and the ground vibrated beneath their heavy hoofs. Their tails were thrown high above their backs, and the mad and overpowering phalanx of heads and horns came rushing forward as though to sweep us at once from the face of the earth.

There was not an instant to be lost; already but a short space intervened between us and apparently certain destruction. Our gun-bearers were almost in the act of flight; but catching hold of the man who carried the long two-ounce rifle, and keeping him by my side, I awaited the irresistible onset with the four-ounce.

The largest of the bulls was some yards in advance, closely followed by his companion, and the herd in a compact mass came thundering down at their heels. Only fifty yards separated us; we literally felt among them, and already experienced a sense of being over-run. I did not look at the herd, but I kept my eye upon the big bull leader. On they flew, and were within thirty paces of us, when I took a steady shot with the four-ounce, and the leading bull plunged head-foremost in the turf, turning a complete summersault. Snatching the two-ounce from the petrified gun-bearer, I had just time for a shot as the second bull was within fifteen paces, and at the flash of the rifle his horns ploughed up the turf, and he lay almost at our feet. That lucky shot turned the whole herd. When certain destruction threatened us, they suddenly wheeled to their left when within twenty paces of the guns, and left us astonished victors of the field. We poured an ineffectual volley into the retreating herd from the light guns as they galloped off in full retreat, and reloaded as quickly as possible, as the two bulls, although floored, were still alive. They were, however, completely powerless, and a double-barrelled gun gave each the "coup-de-grace" by a ball in the forehead. Both rifle shots had struck at the point of junction of the throat and chest, and the four-ounce ball had passed out of the hind-quarter. Our friend of yesterday, although hit in precisely the same spot, had laughed at the light guns.

Although I have since killed about two hundred wild buffaloes I have never witnessed another charge by a herd. This was an extraordinary occurrence, and fortunately stands alone in buffalo-shooting. Were it not for the two heavy rifles our career might have terminated in an unpleasant manner. As I before mentioned, this part of the country was seldom or never disturbed at the time of which I write, and the buffaloes were immensely numerous and particularly savage, nearly always turning to bay and showing good sport when attacked.

Having cut out the tongues from the two bulls, we turned homeward to breakfast. Skirting along the edge of the lake, which abounded with small creeks, occasioning us many circuits, we came suddenly upon a single bull, who, springing from his lair of mud and high grass, plunged into a creek, and, swimming across, exposed himself to a dead shot as he landed on the opposite bank about a hundred paces from us. The four-ounce struck him in the hind-quarters and broke the hip joint, and, continuing its course along his body, it pierced his lungs and lodged in the skin of the throat. The bull immediately fell, but regaining his feet he took to the water, and swam to a small island of high grass about thirty yards from the shore. Upon gaining this he turned and faced us, but in a few seconds he fell unable to rise, and received a merciful shot in the head, which despatched him.

We were just leaving the border of the lake on our way to the village, when two cow buffaloes sprang up from one of the numerous inlets and retreated at full gallop towards the jungle, offering a splendid side shot at about a hundred paces. The leading cow plunged head-foremost into the grass as the four-ounce struck her through both shoulders. She was a fine young cow, and we cut some steaks from her in case we should find a scarcity of provisions at Minneria and, quitting the shores of the lake, we started for breakfast.

It was only 8 A.M. when we arrived. I had bagged five buffaloes, four of which were fine bulls. Our revenge was complete, and I had proved that the four-ounce was perfectly irresistible if held straight with the heavy charge of twelve drachms of powder. Since that time I have frequently used sixteen drachms (one ounce) of powder to the charge, but the recoil is then very severe, although the effect upon an animal with a four-ounce steel-tipped conical ball is tremendous.

On our return to the village of Minneria we found a famous breakfast, for which a bath in the neighbouring brook increased an appetite already sharpened by the morning exercise. The buffalo steaks were coarse and bad, as tough as leather, and certainly should never be eaten if better food can be obtained. The tongues are very rich, but require salting.

In those days Minneria was not spoiled by visitors, and supplies were accordingly at a cheap rate—large fowls at one penny each, milk at any price that you chose to give for it. This is now much changed, and the only thing that is still ridiculously cheap is fish.

Give a man sixpence to catch you as many as he can in the morning, and he forthwith starts on his piscatorial errand with a large basket, cone shaped, of two feet diameter at the bottom and about eight inches at the top. This basket is open at both ends, and is about two feet in length.

The fish that is most sought after is the 'lola.' He is a ravenous fellow, in appearance between a trout and a carp, having the habits of the former, but the clumsy shoulders of the latter. He averages about three pounds, although he is often caught of nine or ten pounds weight. Delighting in the shallows, he lies among the weeds at the bottom, to which he always retreats when disturbed. Aware of his habits, the fisherman walks knee-deep in the water, and at every step he plunges the broad end of the basket quickly to the bottom. He immediately feels the fish strike against the sides, and putting his hand down through the aperture in the top of the basket he captures him, and deposits him in a basket slung on his back.

These 'lola' are delicious eating, being very like an eel in flavour, and I have known one man catch forty in a morning with no other apparatus than this basket.

Minneria Lake, like all others in Ceylon, swarms with crocodiles of a very large size. Early in the morning and late in the evening they may be seen lying upon the banks like logs of trees. I have frequently remarked that a buffalo, shot within a few yards of the lake, has invariably disappeared during the night, leaving an undoubted track where he has been dragged to the water by the crocodiles. These brutes frequently attack the natives when fishing or bathing, but I have never heard of their pursuing any person upon dry land.

I remember an accident having occurred at Madampi, on the west coast of Ceylon, about seven years ago, the day before I passed through the village. A number of women were employed in cutting rushes for mat-making, and were about mid-deep in the water. The horny tail of a large crocodile was suddenly seen above the water among the group of women, and in another instant one of them was seized by the thigh and dragged towards the deeper part of the stream. In vain the terrified creature shrieked for assistance; the horror-stricken group had rushed to the shore, and a crowd of spectators on the bank offered no aid beyond their cries. It was some distance before the water deepened, and the unfortunate woman was dragged for many yards, sometimes beneath the water, sometimes above the surface, rending the air with her screams, until at length the deep water hid her from their view. She was never again seen.

Some of these reptiles grow to a very large size, attaining the length of twenty feet, and eight feet in girth, but the common size is fourteen feet. They move slowly upon land, but are wonderfully fast and active in the water. They usually lie in wait for their prey under some hollow bank in a deep pool, and when the unsuspecting deer or even buffalo stoops his head to drink, he is suddenly seized by the nose and dragged beneath the water. Here he is speedily drowned and consumed at leisure.

The two lower and front teeth of a crocodile project through the upper jaw, and their white points attract immediate notice as they protrude through the brown scales on the upper lip. When the mouth is closed, the jaws are thus absolutely locked together.

It is a common opinion that the scales on the back of a crocodile will turn a ball; this is a vulgar error. The scales are very tough and hard, but a ball from a common fowling-piece will pass right through the body. I have even seen a hunting-knife driven at one blow deep into the hardest part of the back; and this was a crocodile of a large size, about fourteen feet long, that I shot at a place called Bolgodde, twenty-two miles from Colombo.

A man had been setting nets for fish, and was in the act of swimming to the shore, when he was seized and drowned by a crocodile. The next morning two buffaloes were dragged into the water close to the spot, and it was supposed that these murders were committed by the same crocodile.

I was at Colombo at the time, and, hearing of the accident, I rode off to Bolgodde to try my hand at catching him.

Bolgodde is a very large lake of many miles in circumference, abounding with crocodiles, widgeon, teal, and ducks.

On arrival that evening, the moodeliar (headman) pointed out the spot where the man had been destroyed, and where the buffaloes had been dragged in by the crocodile. One buffalo had been entirely devoured, but the other had merely lost his head, and his carcass was floating in a horrible state of decomposition near the bank. It was nearly dark, so I engaged a small canoe to be in readiness by break of day.

Just as the light streaked the horizon I stepped into the canoe. This required some caution, as it was the smallest thing that can be conceived to support two persons. It consisted of the hollow trunk of a tree, six feet in length and about one foot in diameter. A small outrigger prevented it from upsetting, but it was not an inch from the surface of the water when I took my narrow seat, and the native in the stern paddled carefully towards the carcass of the buffalo.

Upon approaching within a hundred yards of the floating carcass, I counted five forms within a few yards of the flesh. These objects were not above nine inches square, and appeared like detached pieces of rough bark. I knew them to be the foreheads of different crocodiles, and presently one moved towards the half-consumed buffalo. His long head and shoulders projected from the water as he attempted to fix his fore-claws into the putrid flesh; this, however, rolled over towards him, and prevented him from getting a hold; but the gaping jaws nevertheless made a wide breach in the buffalo's flank. I was now within thirty yards of them, and, being observed, they all dived immediately to the bottom.

The carcass was lying within a few yards of the bank, where the water was extremely deep and clear. Several large trees grew close to the edge and formed a good hiding-place; I therefore landed, and, sending the canoe to a distance, I watched the water.

I had not been five minutes in this position before I saw in the water at my feet, in a deep hole close to the bank, the immense form of a crocodile as he was slowly rising from his hiding-place to the surface. He appeared to be about eighteen feet long, and he projected his horny head from the surface, bubbled, and then floated with only his forehead and large eyes above the water. He was a horrible-looking monster, and from his size I hoped he was the villain that had committed the late depredations. He was within three yards of me; and, although I stood upon the bank, his great round eyes gazed at me without a symptom of fear. The next moment I put a two-ounce ball exactly between them, and killed him stone dead. He gave a convulsive slap with his tail, which made the water foam, and, turning upon his back, he gradually sank, till at length I could only distinguish the long line of his white belly twenty feet below me.

Not having any apparatus for bringing him to the surface, I again took to the canoe, as a light breeze that had sprung up was gradually moving the carcass of the buffalo away. This I slowly followed, until it at length rested in a wide belt of rushes which grew upon the shallows near the shore. I pushed the canoe into the rushes within four yards of the carcass, keeping to windward to avoid the sickening smell.

I had not been long in this position before the body suddenly rolled over as though attacked by something underneath the water, and the next moment the tall reeds brushed against the sides of the canoe, being violently agitated in a long line, evidently by a crocodile at the bottom.

The native in the stern grew as pale as a black can turn with fright, and instantly began to paddle the canoe away. This, however, I soon replaced in its former position, and then took his paddle away to prevent further accidents. There sat the captain of the fragile vessel in the most abject state of terror. We were close to the shore, and the water was not more than three feet deep, and yet he dared not jump out of the canoe, as the rushes were again brushing against its sides, being moved by the

hidden beast at the bottom. There was no help for him, so, after vainly imploring me to shove the canoe into deep water, he at length sat still.

In a few minutes the body of the buffalo again moved, and the head and shoulders of a crocodile appeared above water and took a bite of some pounds of flesh. I could not get a shot at the head from his peculiar position, but I put a ball through his shoulders, and immediately shoved the canoe astern. Had I not done this, we should most likely have been upset, as the wounded brute began to lash out with his tail in all directions, till he at length retired to the bottom among the rushes. Here I could easily track him, as he slowly moved along, by the movement of the reeds. Giving the native the paddle, I now by threats induced him to keep the canoe over the very spot where the rushes were moving, and we slowly followed on the track, while I kept watch in the bow of the canoe with a rifle.

Suddenly the movement in the rushes ceased, and the canoe stopped accordingly. I leaned slightly over the side to look into the water, when up came a large air-bubble, and directly afterwards an apparition in the shape of some fifteen pounds of putrid flesh. The stench was frightful, but I knew my friend must be very bad down below to disgorge so sweet a morsel. I therefore took the paddle and poked for him; the water being shallow, I felt him immediately. Again the rushes moved; I felt the paddle twist as his scaly back glided under it, and a pair of gaping jaws appeared above the water, wide open and within two feet of the canoe. The next moment his head appeared, and the two-ounce ball shattered his brain. He sank to the bottom, the rushes moved slightly and were then still.

I now put the canoe ashore, and cutting a strong stick, with a crook at one end, I again put out to the spot and dragged for him. He was quite dead; and catching him under the fore-leg, I soon brought him gently to the surface of the water. I now made fast a line to his fore-leg, and we towed him slowly to the village, the canoe being level with the water's edge.

His weight in the water was a mere trifle, but on arrival at the village on the banks of the lake, the villagers turned out with great glee, and fastened ropes to different parts of his body to drag him out. This operation employed about twenty men. The beast was about fourteen feet long; and he was no sooner on shore than the natives cut him to pieces with axes, and threw the sections into the lake to be devoured by his own species. This was a savage kind of revenge, which appeared to afford them great satisfaction.

Taking a large canoe, I paddled along the shores of the lake with a shot-gun, and made a good bag of ducks and teal, and returned to breakfast. The fatness and flavour of the wild ducks in Ceylon are quite equal to the best in England.

CHAPTER IV

Equipment for a Hunting Trip—In Chase of a Herd of Buffaloes—Hard Work—Close Quarters—Six Feet from the Muzzle—A Black with a Devil.

There is one thing necessary to the enjoyment of sport in Ceylon, and without which no amount of game can afford thorough pleasure; this is personal comfort. Unlike a temperate climate, where mere attendance becomes a luxury, the pursuit of game in a tropical country is attended with immense fatigue and exhaustion. The intense heat of the sun, the dense and suffocating exhalations from swampy districts, the constant and irritating attacks from insects, all form drawbacks to sport that can only be lessened by excellent servants and by the most perfect arrangements for shelter and supplies. I have tried all methods of travelling, and I generally manage to combine good sport with every comfort and convenience.

A good tent, perfectly waterproof, and of so light a construction as to travel with only two bearers, is absolutely indispensable. My tent is on the principle of an umbrella, fifteen feet in diameter, and will house three persons comfortably. A circular table fits in two halves round the tent-pole; three folding chairs have ample space; three beds can be arranged round the tent walls; the boxes of clothes, etc., stow under the beds; and a dressing-table and gun-rack complete the furniture.

Next in importance to the tent is a good canteen. Mine is made of japanned block tin, and contains in close-fitting compartments an entire dinner and breakfast service for three persons, including everything that can be required in an ordinary establishment. This is slung upon a bamboo, carried by two coolies.

Clothes must always be packed in tin boxes, or the whole case will most likely be devoured by white ants.

Cooking utensils must be carried in abundance, together with a lantern, axe, bill-hook, tinder-box, matches, candles, oil, tea, coffee, sugar, biscuits, wine, brandy, sauces, etc., a few hams, some tins of preserved meats and soups, and a few bottles of curacea, a glass of which, in the early dawn, after a cup of hot coffee and a biscuit, is a fine preparation for a day's work.

I once tried the rough system of travelling, and started off with nothing but my guns, clothes, a box of biscuits, and a few bottles of brandy—no bed, no pillow, no tent nor chairs or table, but, as my distressed servant said, 'no nothing.' This was many years ago, when the excitement of wild sports was sufficient to laugh at discomfort. I literally depended upon my gun for food, and my cooking utensils consisted of one saucepan and a gridiron, a 'stew' and a 'fry' being all that I looked forward to in the way of gourmandism. Sleeping on the bare ground in native huts, dining cross-legged upon mother earth, with a large leaf as a substitute for a plate, a cocoa-nut shell for a glass, my hunting-knife comprising all my cutlery, I thus passed through a large district of wild country, accompanied by B., and I never had more exciting sport.

It was on this occasion that I had a memorable hunt in the neighbourhood of Narlande, within thirty miles of Kandy. It was our first day's stage, and, upon our arrival, at about 2 P.M., we left our guns at the post-holder's hut, while we proceeded to the river to bathe.

We were hardly dressed before a native came running to tell us that several elephants were devouring his crop of korrakan—a grain something like clover-seed, upon which the people in this part almost entirely subsist.

Without a moment's delay we sent for the guns. The post-holder was a good tracker, and a few minutes of sharp walking through a path bordered on either side by dense thorny bush brought us to a chena jungle ground, or cultivated field. The different watch-houses erected in the large trees were full of people, who were shrieking and yelling at the top of their voices, having just succeeded in scaring the elephants into the jungle.

The whole of the country in this neighbourhood has, in successive ages, been cleared and cultivated: the forest has been felled. The poverty of the soil yields only one crop, and the lately cleared field is again restored to nature. Dense thorny jungle immediately springs up, which a man cannot penetrate without being torn to pieces by the briars. This is called chena jungle, and is always the favourite resort of elephants and all wild animals, the impervious character of the bush forming a secure retreat.

From these haunts the elephants commit nocturnal descents upon the crops of the natives. The korrakan is a sweet grass, growing about two feet high, and so partial are the elephants to this food that they will invade the isolated field even during the daytime. Driven out by shouts and by shots fired by the natives from their secure watch-houses, they will retreat to their cover, but in a few minutes they reappear from another part of the jungle and again commence their depredations.

The havoc committed by a large herd of elephants can well be imagined.

In this instance there were only three elephants—a large bull, with a mother and her young one, or what we call a 'poonchy.' On entering the korrakan field we distinctly heard them breaking the boughs at no great distance. We waited for some time to see if they would return to the field; but they apparently were aware of some impending danger, as they did not move from their strong position. This was a cunning family of elephants, as they had retreated 'down wind,' and the jungle being so thick that we could with difficulty follow even upon their track, made it very doubtful whether we should kill them.

We cautiously entered. It was one mass of thorns, and we were shortly compelled to crawl upon our hands and knees. This was arduous work, as we had great difficulty in carrying the guns so as to avoid the slightest noise. I was leading the way, and could distinctly hear the rustling of the leaves as the elephants moved their ears. We were now within a few feet of them, but not an inch of their bodies could be seen, so effectually were they hidden by the thick jungle. Suddenly we heard the prolonged wh-r-r, wh-r-r-r-r-r, as one of the elephants winded us: the shrill trumpet sounded in another direction, and the crash through the jungle took place which nothing but an elephant can produce. In such dense jungle, where the elephants are invisible, this crash is most exciting if close at hand, as in the present instance.

It is at the first burst impossible to tell whether the elephant is coming at you or rushing away. In either case it is extremely dangerous, as these chena jungles are almost devoid of trees; thus there is no cover of sufficient strength to protect a man should he attempt to jump on one side, and he may even be run over by accident.

A few moments assured us of their retreat, and we instantly followed upon their track, running at full speed along the lane which they had crushed in their headlong flight. This was no easy matter; the jungle itself was certainly broken down, but innumerable hooked thorns, hanging from rope-like creepers, which had been torn down by the rush of the elephants, caught us upon every side. In a few minutes our clothes were in rags, and we were bleeding from countless scratches, but we continued the chase as fast as we could run upon the track. The prickly cactus which abounds in these jungles, and grows to the height of twenty feet, in some places checked us for a few moments, being crushed into a heap by the horny-footed beasts before us. These obstacles overcome, we again pushed on at a rapid pace, occasionally listening for a sound of the retreating game.

We now observed that the herd had separated; the bull had gone off in one direction, and the female with her half-grown poonchy in another. Following the latter, we again pushed on at a quick run, as the elephants had evidently gone off at a great pace and were far in advance. For about half an hour we had continued the pursuit at the same speed, when we suddenly heard the warning wh-r-r-r-r as the elephants winded us at a distance of 200 yards, and the crash instantly following this sound told us too plainly that the game was fearfully on the alert, and gave us little hopes of overtaking them, as they were travelling directly down wind.

Speed was our only chance, and again we rushed forward in hot pursuit through the tangled briars, which yielded to our weight, although we were almost stripped of clothes. Another half hour passed, and we had heard no further signs of the game. We stopped to breathe, and we listened attentively for the slightest sound. A sudden crash in the jungle at a great distance assured us that we were once more discovered. The chase seemed hopeless; the heat was most oppressive; and we had been running for the last hour at a killing pace through a most distressing country. Once more, however, we started off, determined to keep up the pursuit as long as daylight would permit. It was now 5 P.M., and we had one hour left before darkness would set in. The wind had entirely ceased, leaving a perfect calm; the air was thick and heavy, and the heat was thus rendered doubly fatiguing. We noticed, however, that the track of the elephants had doubled back instead of continuing in the direct line that we had followed so long. This gave us hope, as the elephants no longer had the advantage of the wind, and we pushed on as fast as we could go.

It was about half an hour before dusk, and our patience and hopes were alike exhausted, when we suddenly once more heard the wh-r-r-r of the elephants winding us within a hundred yards. It was our last chance, and with redoubled speed we rushed after them.

Suddenly we broke from the high jungle in which we had been for the last two hours, and found ourselves in a chena jungle of two years' growth, about five feet high, but so thick and thorny that it resembled one vast blackthorn hedge, through which no man could move except in the track of the retreating elephants.

To my delight, on entering this low jungle, I saw the female at about forty yards' distance, making off at a great pace. I had a light double-barrelled gun in my hand, and, in the hopes of checking her pace, I fired a flying shot at her ear. She had been hunted so long that she was well inclined to fight, and she immediately slackened her speed so much that in a few instants I was at her tail, so close that I could have slapped her. Still she ploughed her way through the thick thorns, and not being able to pass her owing to the barrier of jungle, I could only follow close at her heels and take my chance of a shot. At length, losing all patience, I fired my remaining barrel under her tail, giving it an upward direction in the hope of disabling her spine.

A cloud of smoke hung over me for a second, and, throwing my empty gun on one side, I put my hand behind me for a spare rifle. I felt the welcome barrel pushed into my hand at the same moment that I saw the infuriated head of the elephant with ears cocked charging through the smoke! It was the work of an instant. I had just time to cock the two-ounce rifle and take a steady aim. The next moment we were in a cloud of smoke, but as I fired, I felt certain of her. The smoke cleared from the thick bushes, and she lay dead at SIX FEET from the spot where I stood. The ball was in the centre of her forehead, and B., who had fired over my shoulder so instantaneously with me that I was not aware of it, had placed his ball within three inches of mine. Had she been missed, I should have fired my last shot.

This had been a glorious hunt; many miles had been gone over, but by great luck, when the wind dropped and the elephant altered her course, she had been making a circuit for the very field of korrakan at which we had first found her. We were thus not more than three miles from our resting-place, and the trackers who know every inch of the country, soon brought us to the main road.

The poonchy and the bull elephant, having both separated from the female, escaped.

One great cause of danger in shooting in thick jungles is the obscurity occasioned by the smoke of the first barrel; this cannot escape from the surrounding bushes for some time, and effectually prevents a certain aim with the remaining barrel. In wet weather this is much increased.

For my own part I dislike shooting in thick jungles, and I very seldom do so. It is extremely dangerous, and is like shooting in the dark; you never see the game until you can almost touch it, and the labour and pain of following up elephants through thorny jungle is beyond description.

On our return to the post-holder's hut we dined and prepared for sleep. It was a calm night, and not a sound disturbed the stillness of the air. The tired coolies and servants were fast asleep, the

lamp burnt dimly, being scantily fed with oil, and we were in the act of lying down to rest when a frightful scream made us spring to our feet. There was something so unearthly in the yell that we could hardly believe it human. The next moment a figure bounded into the little room that we occupied. It was a black, stark naked. His tongue, half bitten through, protruded from his mouth; his bloodshot eyes, with a ghastly stare, were straining from their sockets, and he stood gazing at us with his arms extended wide apart. Another horrible scream burst from him, and he fell flat upon his back.

The post-holder and a whole crowd of awakened coolies now assembled, and they all at once declared that the man had a devil. The fact is, he had a fit of epilepsy, and his convulsions were terrible. Without moving a limb he flapped here and there like a salmon when just landed. I had nothing with me that would relieve him, and I therefore left him to the hands of the post-holder, who prided himself upon his skill in exorcising devils. All his incantations produced no effect, and the unfortunate patient suddenly sprang to his feet and rushed madly into the thorny jungle. In this we heard him crashing through like a wild beast, and I do not know to this day whether he was ever heard of afterwards.

The Cingalese have a thorough belief in the presence of devils; one sect are actually 'devil-WORSHIPPERS,' but the greater portion of the natives are Bhuddists. Among this nation the missionaries make very slow progress. There is no character to work upon in the Cingalese: they are faithless, cunning, treacherous, and abject cowards; superstitious in the extreme, and yet unbelieving in any one God. A converted Bhuddist will address his prayers to our God if he thinks he can obtain any temporal benefit by so doing, but, if not, he would be just as likely to pray to Bhudda or to the devil.

I once saw a sample of heathen conversion in Ceylon that was enough to dishearten a missionary.

A Roman Catholic chapel had been erected in a wild part of the country by some zealous missionary, who prided himself upon the number of his converts. He left his chapel during a few weeks' absence in some other district, during which time his converts paid their devotion to the Christian altar. They had made a few little additions to the ornaments of the altar, which must have astonished the priest on his return.

There was an image of our Saviour and the **Virgin:** that was all according to custom. But there were also 'three images of Bhudda,' a coloured plaster-of-Paris image of the Queen and Prince Albert upon the altar, and a very questionable penny print in vivid colours hanging over the altar, entitled the 'Stolen Kiss.' So much for the conversion of the heathen in Ceylon. The attempt should only be made in the schools, where the children may be brought up as Christians, but the idea of converting the grown-up heathen is a fallacy.

CHAPTER V

The Four-ounce again—Tidings of a Rogue—Approaching a Tank Rogue—An Exciting Moment—Ruins of Pollanarua—Ancient Ruins—Rogues at Doolana—B. Charged by a Rogue—Planning an Attack—A Check—Narrow Escape—Rogue-stalking—A Bad Rogue—Dangers of Elephant-shooting—The Rhatamahatmeya's Tale.

A broken nipple in my long two-ounce rifle took me to Trincomalee, about seventy miles out of my proposed route. Here I had it punched out and replaced with a new one, which I fortunately had with me. No one who has not experienced the loss can imagine the disgust occasioned by an accident to a favourite rifle in a wild country. A spare nipple and mainspring for each barrel and lock should always be taken on a shooting trip.

In passing by Kandelly, on my return from Trincomalee, I paid a second visit to the lake. This is very similar to that of Minneria; but the shooting at that time was destroyed from the same cause which has since ruined Minneria—'too many guns.' The buffaloes were not worthy of the name; I could not make one show fight, nor could I even get within three hundred yards of them. I returned from the plain with disgust; but just as I was quitting the shores of the lake I noticed three buffaloes in the shallows about knee-deep in the water, nearly half a mile from me. They did not look bigger than dogs, the distance was so great.

There is nothing like a sheet of water for trying a rifle; the splash of the ball shows with such distinctness the accuracy or the defect in the shooting. It was necessary that I should fire my guns off in order to clean them that evening: I therefore tried their power at this immense distance.

The long two-ounce fell short, but in a good line. I took a rest upon a man's shoulder with the four-ounce rifle, and, putting up the last sight, I aimed at the leading buffalo, who was walking through the water parallel with us. I aimed at the outline of the throat, to allow for his pace at this great distance. The recoil of the rifle cut the man's ear open, as there were sixteen drachms of powder in this charge.

We watched the smooth surface of the water as the invisible messenger whistled over the lake. Certainly three seconds elapsed before we saw the slightest effect. At the expiration of that time the buffalo fell suddenly in a sitting position, and there he remained fixed, many seconds after, a dull sound returned to our ears; it was the 'fut' of the ball, which had positively struck him at this immense range. What the distance was I cannot say; it may have been 600 yards, or 800, or more. It was shallow water the whole way: we therefore mounted our horses and rode up to him. Upon reaching him, I gave him a settling ball in the head, and we examined him. The heavy ball had passed completely through his hips, crushing both joints, and, of course, rendering him powerless at once.

The shore appeared full half a mile from us on our return, and I could hardly credit my own eyes, the distance was so immense, and yet the ball had passed clean through the animal's body.

It was of course a chance shot, and, even with this acknowledgment, it must appear rather like the 'marvellous' to a stranger;—this is my misfortune, not my fault. I certainly never made such a shot before or since; it was a sheer lucky hit, say at 600 yards; and the wonderful power of the rifle was thus displayed in the ball perforating the large body of the buffalo at this range. This shot was made with a round ball, not a cone. The round belted ball for this heavy two-grooved rifle weighs three ounces. The conical ball weighs a little more than four ounces.

While describing the long shots performed by this particular rifle, I cannot help recounting a curious chance with a large rogue elephant in Topari tank. This tank or lake is, like most others in Ceylon, the result of vast labour in past ages. Valleys were closed in by immense dams of solid masonry, which, checking the course of the rivers, formed lakes of many miles in extent. These were used as reservoirs for the water required for the irrigation of rice lands. The population who effected these extensive works have long since passed away; their fate is involved in mystery. The records of

their ancient cities still exist, but we have no account of their destruction. The ruins of one of these cities, Pollanarua, are within half a mile of the village of Topari, and the waters of the adjacent lake are still confined by a dam of two miles in length, composed of solid masonry. When the lake is full, it is about eight miles in circumference.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.