ESCAPE FROM AN ELEPHANT.

THE following graphic account of his escape from a wounded elephant is given by G. P. Sanderson, of Mysore:—

"Having made all the inquiries I desired, I commenced my return march to the plains of Bengal. This was in October, 1875. During the first day's march I passed two large herds of elephants; one probably contained eighty individuals. Next morning I was walking in advance of the baggage-elephants when we heard elephants feeding in a valley to our right. The jungle was tolerably feasible here, so I determined to have a look at them, to form an idea of their general stamp, and what fodder they were most intent upon, and other particulars.

My gun-bearer, Jaffer, who had accompanied me to Bengal from Mysore, and an experienced mahout to examine the elephants, accompanied me, with a heavy rifle in case of accidents. The herd consisted of about fifty individuals, and after examining them for about an hour at close quarters, merely keeping the wind, we turned to rejoin the pad-elephant on the path.

Just then a shrill trumpeting and crashing of bamboos, about two hundred yards to our left, broke the stillness, and from the noise we knew it was a tusker-fight. We ran towards the place where the sounds of combat were increasing every moment; a deep ravine at last only separated us from the combatants, and we could see the tops of the bamboos bowing as the monsters bore each other backwards and forwards with a crashing noise in their tremendous struggles. As we ran along the bank of the nullah to find a crossing, one elephant uttered a deep roar of pain, and crossed the nullah, some forty yards in advance of us, to our side. Here he commenced to destroy a bamboo-clump (the bamboos in these hills have a very large hollow, and are weak and comparatively worthless) in sheer fury, grumbling deeply the while with rage and pain. Blood was streaming from a deep stab in his left side, high up. He was a very large elephant, with long and fairly thick tusks, and with much white about the forehead; the left tusk was some inches shorter than the right.

The opponent of this Goliath must have been a monster indeed, to have worsted him. An elephant-fight, if the combatants are well matched, frequently lasts for a day or more, a round being fought every now and then. The beaten elephant retreats temporarily, followed leisurely by the other, until, by mutual consent, they meet again. The more powerful elephant occasionally keeps his foe in view till he perhaps kills him; otherwise, the beaten elephant betakes himself off for good on finding he has the worst of it. Tails are frequently bitten off in these encounters. This mutilation is common amongst rogue-elephants, and amongst the females in a herd; in the latter case it is generally the result of rivalry amongst themselves.

The wounded tusker was evidently the temporarily-beaten combatant of the occasion, and I have seldom seen such a picture of power and rage as he presented, mowing the bamboos down with trunk and tusks, and bearing the thickest part over with his fore-feet. Suddenly his whole demeanour changed. He backed from the clump and stood like a statue. Not a sound broke the sudden stillness for an instant. His antagonist was silent, wherever he was.

Now the tip of his trunk came slowly round in our direction, and I saw that we were discovered to his fine sense of smell. We had been standing silently behind a thin bamboo-clump, watching him, and when I first saw that he had winded us, I imagined he might take himself off. But his frenzy quite overcame all fear for the moment; forward went his ears, and up went his tail, in a way which no one who has once seen the signal in a wild elephant can mistake the significance of, and in the same instant he wheeled round with astonishing quickness, getting at once into full speed, and bore straight down upon us. The bamboos by which we were partly hidden were useless as cover, and would have prevented a clear shot, so I stepped out into open ground the instant the elephant commenced his charge. I gave a shout in the hope of stopping him, which failed. I had my No. 4 double smooth-bore loaded with ten drachms in hand.

I fired when the elephant was about nine paces distant, aiming into his curled trunk about one foot below the fatal bump between the eyes, as his head was held very high, and this allowance had to be made for its elevation. I felt confident of the shot, but made a grand mistake in not giving him both barrels; it was useless to reserve the left as I did at such close quarters, and I deserved more than what followed for doing so.

The smoke from the ten drachms obscured the elephant, and I stooped quickly to see where he lay. Good heavens! he had not been even checked, and was upon me! There was no time to step right or left. His tusks came through the smoke (his head being now held low) like the cow-catchers of a locomotive, and I had just time to fall flat to avoid being hurled along in front of him. I fell a little to the right; the next instant down came his ponderous fore-foot within a few inches of my left thigh, and I should have been trodden on had I not been quick enough, when I saw the fore-foot coming, to draw my leg from the sprawling position in which I fell. As the elephant rushed over me he shrieked shrilly, which showed his trunk was uncoiled; and his head also being held low, instead of in charging position, I inferred rightly that he was in full flight. Had he stopped I should have been caught, but the heavy bullet had taken all the fighting out of him.

Jaffer had been disposed of by a recoiling bamboo, and was now lying almost in the elephant's line; fortunately, however, the brute held on. I was covered with blood from the wound inflicted by his late antagonist in his left side; even my hair was matted together when the blood became dry. The mahout had jumped into the deep and precipitous nullah to our left at the commencement of hostilities.

How it was that I did not bag the elephant, I cannot tell. Probably I went a trifle high, but even then the shock should have stopped him. He was, I believe, unable to pull up, being on a gentle incline and at full speed, though doubtless all hostile intentions were knocked out of him by the severe visitation upon his knowledge-box. Had I done anything but what I did at the critical moment, there is no doubt I should have been caught. I felt as collected through it all as possible. The deadly coolness which sportsmen often experience is in proportion to its intensity to the increase of danger and necessity for nerve.

Jaffer and I picked ourselves up and pursued the retreating tusker. He was now going slowly and wearily, and we were up with him in two hundred yards from the scene of our discomfiture, but in such thick cover that it would have been folly to have closed with him there; so, as we had the wind, we kept about thirty yards behind him. Unfortunately, the bamboo cover was extensive, and in about a quarter of a mile he joined the

herd without once emerging into the open, as we had hoped he would, and afford us another chance. The herd had only gone about two hundred yards at the shot, and were feeding again, and as I feared that following the tusker would only bring us into collision with other elephants, we abandoned the chase and returned to the pad-elephant. Had I only had my Mysore Sholago or Kurraba trackers with me, we should no doubt have recovered the elephant."

Wild elephants are sometimes captured by pursuing solitary individuals, and binding them with ropes to the forest trees, and sometimes by driving a herd, numbering twenty or thirty, or more, into a previously prepared pound. The inclosure into which the elephants are driven is termed a "keddah," and is ingeniously constructed of stout logs and posts, which are supported by strong buttresses, and are so arranged that a man can pass through the interstices between the logs. When the keddah is set in good order, a number of hunters form themselves into a huge circle, inclosing one or more herds of elephants, and moving gradually towards the inclosure of the keddah, and arranging themselves in such a manner as to leave the entrance towards the keddah always open. When they have thus brought the herd to the proper spot—a business which will often consume several weeks—the elephants are excited by shouts, the waving of hands and spears, etc., to move towards the inclosure, which is cunningly concealed by the trees among which it is built. If the operation should take place at night, the surrounding hunters are supplied with burning torches, while the keddah is carefully kept in darkness. Being alarmed by the noise and the flames, the elephants rush instinctively to the only open space, and are thus fairly brought within the precincts of the keddah, from which they never emerge again save as captives.

The natives also employ the pitfall in capturing elephants. Even this insidious snare is often rendered useless by the sagacity of the crafty old leaders of the herds, who precede their little troops to the water, as they advance by night to drink, and carefully beating the ground with their trunks as they proceed, unmask the pitfalls that have been dug in their course. They then tear away the coverings of the pits, and render them harmless. These pitfalls are terrible affairs when an animal gets into them, for a sharp stake is set perpendicularly at the bottom, so that the poor elephant is transfixed by its own weight, and dies miserably.

Whenever the elephants approach the water at night, their advent may be at once known by the commotion that arises among the various animals which have also congregated around the pool for the purpose of slaking their thirst. "If the spring or pool," says Mr. Anderson, "be of small extent, all the animals present will immediately retire from the water as soon as they are aware of the presence of the elephants, of whom they appear to have an instinctive dread, and will remain at a respectful distance until the giants have quenched their thirst. Long before I have seen or even heard the elephants I have been warned of their approach by the symptoms of uneasiness displayed by such animals as happened to be drinking at the time. The giraffe, for instance, begins to sway his long neck to and fro, the zebra utters sudden and plaintive cries; the gnu glides away with a noiseless step; and even the ponderous and quarrelsome rhinoceros, when he has time for reflection, will pull up short in his walk to listen: then turning round, he listens again, and if he feels satisfied that his suspicions are correct, he invariably makes off, giving vent to his fear or ire by one of his vicious and peculiar snorts.