

THE DREADED MAN-EATER.



WHEN driven by hunger, the tiger will boldly enter the villages, and seize the unsuspecting man, woman, or child that may cross his path. Once having acquired a taste for human flesh the tiger will rashly risk his skin in endeavouring to gratify his appetite. Like a skilful general, he rapidly changes his scene of operations, and swoops down where least expected. In his journal, Major Sanderson records the devastation caused by a tigress, and the efforts for its capture, which at length were successful:—

“When I pitched camp at Morlay, in September, 1873, to commence the elephant kheddahs, the country-side was in a state of considerable alarm from the attacks of a man-eating tigress. This tigress's fits of man-eating seemed to be intermittent, as, after killing three or four persons some months before, she had not been heard of till about the time of my arrival at Morlay, when she killed two boys attending goats. I anticipated some trouble from her in our kheddah work, as it would be unsafe for one or two men to go alone through the jungles; but whether it was from the disturbance caused by seven or eight hundred work-people, or other reasons, we heard nothing of her for some time.

During the next three months, this savage creature carried off and devoured several human beings, amongst them being a woman who was crossing the street of the village late in the evening, and a priest when quietly jogging along on his bullock, to the little temple in the jungle. The death of the poor woman, so close to her home, caused great consternation; the villagers concluded that

they would not now be safe in their houses at night, and some of the outlying hamlets would have been temporarily abandoned had the tigress lived much longer. But this was to be her last victim: though our chances of killing her seemed still as remote as ever, a few more hours were to end her bloody career.

Next day, on the 15th of January, I determined upon a more organised plan of hunting her. I arranged that Bommay Gouda and three trackers should go to Iyenpoor, at one end of her usual beat, whilst I remained at Morlay. In case of any one being killed near Iyenpoor the men were to let me know immediately; and I supplied them with strychnine, and a gun charged with powder, as a safeguard in their jungle wanderings. The four men started early in the afternoon. About an hour afterwards one of them came running back, pouring with perspiration and covered with dust. I feared some accident had happened until he found breath to say that the party had met the tigress, and that she was then on Karraypoor Guddah, a small hill two miles from camp. This hill rose to a height of about 200 ft. out of a level cultivated plain; on three sides it was almost bare granite, a few bushes and boulders being the only cover, and the country was open all round it. On the east face there was a little more cover, and the main jungle was distant 500 yards, but between it and the hill was open ground, so that the tigress was in an isolated position.

I ordered a pad-elephant at once, whilst I thought over the best plan for hunting her. Such a chance as getting her into a detached hill could hardly be hoped for again, and the present situation offered a fine opportunity of extin-

guishing her. The only plans were to drive her out, or to watch for her return to the carcass. The first I saw would not do, as all the Morlay men—the only ones amongst the villagers who would have been useful for this service, the others were too terrified—were at their fields, and time would be lost in collecting them; and though this might possibly have been effected, and the tigress have been driven out, as there

were going across open fields and saw an object moving over the bare ground, which they could not at first make out, but presently discovered to be a tiger on the far side of, and partly hidden by, a bullock, which it was half dragging, half carrying towards the hill. They immediately divined it to be the man-eater, and ran shouting towards her, obliging her to drop the bullock at the foot of the hill, up which she sullenly



THE TIGER ALARMED.

was no doubt she would flee readily from a hunting-party, it would be impossible for one rifle to command the entire east side of the hill, at any point of which she might break. I therefore decided to watch for her return to the carcass, and hastily securing a bottle of water and some bread, and an overcoat in case of night-watching, I started.

On the way the tracker told me how the party had met the tigress. They

trotted. One tracker then hastened to camp; the others remained to prevent her returning to the bullock before I arrived.

I need here hardly say, except for the information of those who have had no experience of man-eating tigers, that they never refuse a bullock or other prey, if such offers, and that when opposed by man they give way at once. Their tactics in attacking man may be

described in one word—surprise; and if discovered in their attempt, they generally abandon it. The most confirmed man-eaters never lose the innate fear with which all inferior animals regard human beings, and unless they can stalk and catch an unwary cow-herd or wood-cutter in their own fashion, they are not to be dreaded. When the tables are turned on them they flee as readily as other tigers.

When we got near the hill we left the elephant and joined the trackers. The only cover near the carcass was a large rock, but the wind was wrong for watching from that quarter. About seventy yards away in the plain was one solitary bush, not sufficiently large to hide a man; there was neither tree nor other cover within a couple of hundred yards. The situation certainly presented difficulties, and it was not easy to decide what to do. At last I hit upon a plan, and sent the men to bring leafy branches and creepers; when these came we walked past the bush in a body, and the branches were thrown on to make it larger; at the same time Bommay Gouda and I hid behind it, the others going on in full view from the hill. By this manœuvre, should the tigress be watching, she would not perceive that we had concealed ourselves.

We sat till evening. The sinking sun threw a strong light from behind us upon the granite hill, whilst in the distance the Billiga-rungun hills were bathed in purple light, deepening to blue in the gorges. The smoke of evening fires began to ascend from the small hamlet of Hebsoor away to our left, and a thick white cloud of dust moving slowly along the river bank towards the village marked the return homewards of the village herds. There would only be sufficient light to shoot at so long a range as seventy yards for half-an-hour or more, and I was beginning to fear the tigress might not return during daylight. The afternoon had been hot, and

I had drunk all the water in the bottle, whilst patient Bommay Gouda, who, being of good caste, could not drink from my bottle, had sat with his bare back exposed to the grilling sun, watching without a movement. At this time of the year—January—the change in temperature in Mysore, and, in fact, the whole of India, between day and night, is very considerable, sometimes upwards of thirty degrees, and as the sun neared the horizon, the evening quickly became chilly, but this disturbed Bommay Gouda no more than the heat in his imperturbable watch. A couple of hares appeared from somewhere and gambolled in the space between us and the hill, and a peacock perched himself upon a rock, and with his spreading fan of purple and gold opened to the full, turned slowly round and round, courting the admiration of a group of hens who pecked about, more intent upon their evening meal than the admiration of their vain swain. Satisfaction with himself, however, rendered him oblivious to the want of homage in his harem.

We had been whispering quietly, as we were out of earshot of the cover, and Bommay Gouda had just said, after a glance at the sinking sun, that it was the time, *par excellence*, for the tiger's return to its prey, when a peahen, which had been hidden amongst boulders on the hillside to our right, rose with a startling clamour. This signal, as well known as unmistakeable, made us glance through the leafy screen, and there we saw the man-eater, a handsome but small tigress, her colour doubly rich in the light of the sinking sun, walk from behind a rock across the side of the hill, here a bare sheet of blue granite, and come downwards towards the carcass. She halted now and again to look far out into the plain behind us. Was the beast, dreaded by thousands, hunted by us so long, and which we have never even seen before, the guilty midnight murderess, really before us?

I followed her with my rifle so eagerly that Bommay Gouda whispered to me to let her get to the carcase before I fired. When she reached the bullock she stopped, and at the same instant I fired at her shoulder, broadside on, with my express. Bommay Gouda could contain himself no longer, and jumped up before I could stop him; I did so also, but could see no tigress! It was extraordinary, certainly; we looked up the hillside, but she was not there. Was she really a devil, as all believed, and had vanished in air? Just then up went a tail on the far side of the bullock in a convulsive quiver—she had fallen exactly behind the carcass. I ran along the hillside to intercept her should she gain her feet; but it was all right, she was only opening her mouth in spasmodic

gasps, and I settled her. The trackers came up in great glee; they had seen the tigress come over the summit of the hill and enter the rocks on our side half an hour before we saw her; they were in a large tamarind tree away in the plain. On examining her we found that she was in milk, which was the first intimation we had that she had a cub; she was in the prime of life and condition, and had no lameness or apparent injury to account for her having taken to man-killing.

I may here say that we never killed her cub. It was heard calling to its mother for several nights around Iyen-poor, but we could not find it in the daytime, and it must have died of starvation, as had it lived we should have encountered it."

SEALS AND SALMON.



SEALS, which a few years ago abounded along the north-west coast of Scotland, are now comparatively rare, and before long will be entirely banished to the undisturbed and unfrequented rocks of the more northern islands. The salmon-fishers on the coast wage a constant war against them, in consequence of the great damage they do to their stake-nets, which are constantly torn and injured by these powerful animals. Nor is the loss they occasion to the salmon-fishers confined to the fish which they actually consume, or to the nets that they destroy, for a seal hunting along the coast in the neighbourhood of the stake-nets keeps the salmon in a constantly disturbed state, and drives the shoals of fish in the deep water, where they are secure from the nets. There is consequently a constant and deadly feud between the fisherman and the seals, which has

almost totally expelled the latter from this part of the coast. An old seal has been known to frequent a particular range of stake-nets for many years, escaping all attacks against him, and becoming so cunning and so impudent that he will actually take the salmon out of the nets (every turn of which he becomes thoroughly intimate with) before the face of the fisherman, and retiring with his ill-gotten booty, adds insult to injury by coolly devouring it on some adjoining point of rock or shoal, taking good care, however, to keep out of reach of rifle-ball or slug. Sometimes, however, he becomes entangled in the nets, and is drowned; but this seldom happens to a full-grown seal, who easily breaks through the strongest twine if he can find no outlet. From the shore opposite Cromarty I one day saw a large seal swim into the stake-nets and take out a salmon, with which he retired to a small rock above the water, and there devoured it entirely in a very short space of time.