

# THE MANEATER OF SEVEN STREAMS

## AN ADVENTURE WITH A TIGER

By CAPTAIN R. G. BURTON, INDIAN ARMY

THE seven streams flow down from the seven hills to the valley, where their combined waters merge into the main river at the foot of the mountains. That is—they flow at certain times of the year, when the moisture brought down by the monsoon rains has not yet all evaporated beneath the rays of the summer sun. But in the hot season they are mere dry nullahs, with here and there a pool of tepid water collected in umbrageous spots among the wild plum bushes and tall grass, which form a cool retreat for the shade-loving tiger. At the meeting of the waters a deep pool lies in a basin among the black basaltic rocks. This basin has been hollowed out by the action of the water, which, during many monsoons through countless ages, has worn a cavity deep in the living rock. All around lie huge boulders brought down from the mountain sides by the action of air and water. One stream drops from the rocks above and has worn a deep fissure in the face of the hill. From the crag above the basin hang huge stalactites, deposited by this stream, which must have taken aeons of time to form. All around, owing to perennial water, the grass is green and the rocks are covered with brown moss, where the little lizards lie basking in the heat of the sun.

The hills are clad with tall ebony and teak trees, whilst the pool itself is overshadowed by a mighty banyan (the giant fig tree), which has spread its arms over the face of the water, dropping columns here and there to form a shady nook where even the noonday sun does not penetrate. On the far side of the pool a great clump of bamboo stands in the soft earth beyond the rocks, and more clumps mingled with green tamarisk clothe the banks of the ravine. It is an ideal cover for a tiger, and formed the favorite haunt of the maneater of Seven Streams.

But he had other resorts where he could

rest in security during the heat of the day. Crowning the summit of the loftiest of the seven hills are the gray ruins of an ancient fort—such a stronghold as is frequently met on the outlying spurs of the mountain ranges of India. The turreted walls, now fast crumbling into dust, run straggling for many a furlong around the crest of the hill. Here and there a rusty gun lies dismounted upon the ruined battlements, or half hidden amid the rank undergrowth beneath the walls. In the fort itself no human being resides save the old Hindu priest who tends the temple standing inside the main gate with a four-headed cobra wrought in stone over the entrance. The jungle has been let in and torn asunder walls and dismantled dwelling places where once the hardy warriors, whose stronghold this was in days gone by, had found security during the intervals between their raids into the surrounding country.

Now the fortress is filled with trees and bushes, and many savage animals find a resting place in its recesses. The stealthy panther dwells here, and its harsh, grating cry can often be heard at night. Stags roam over the hillside beneath the wall, and frequently bison\* find their way to the courtyard of the fort. In this place, also, the maneater of Seven Streams sometimes took up his abode, and here he lived before he began killing human beings, in the days when the wild animals of the forest were his only prey. But he became fat and lazy. It was with an effort that he climbed the mountain side to seek his lofty den. The deer easily escaped his rush, and he could only seldom catch one as they came down to drink where he lay in wait among the bushes near the margin of the tank that gleamed white on moonlight nights. He was obliged even to slay

\*This is a species of wild cattle of which there are several varieties in India, Malay, Siam, Java, and called *gious*, *bantang*, *sladang*.



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while the monkeys chattered excitedly in the trees above."

two bears for food, they being too slow of foot to evade his onslaught, whilst he devoured many porcupines and became very lame from the quills which pierced his feet. Then he abandoned the fort, or visited it at rare intervals, being succeeded by a lithe and active tigress; and he descended to the pool at the meeting of the waters, where he fought and slew a tiger smaller than himself. Here he took up his abode, levying toll upon the cattle, and sometimes visiting the village, where fat herds were numerous, which lay on the edge of the jungle, some miles from the foot of the hills.

Thus he dwelt for many years, and his coat, once of a brilliant rufous tint, faded to a pale yellow, on which the stripes lay sparse and brown. And then one day Lungota, the herdsman, struck the tiger across the back with his iron-bound staff, in attempting to drive the beast from one of his fat heifers which had been seized close to him, whereupon he turned upon Lungota and slew him, and, finding his blood tasted sweet, carried him off to his lair under the great fig tree and there devoured him, leaving only a few bones with the top of his skull, the palms of his hands, and the soles of his feet. Lungota's cattle stampeded in terror to the village, and the assembled people following on the trail discovered certain evidence of the tragedy that had taken place; but it was not until next morning that they found the herdsman's remains, for until the tiger had finished his meal he kept them at a distance with fierce growls and snarlings.

For a week the people avoided the jungle. The herdboys took their cattle away to the plains, where the grass was less succulent and there was but little shade where man and beast could rest during the heat of the day. After a time they began to drive them to the grazing grounds at the foot of the Seven Hills. But the maneater was on the watch, and before long one of the boys was seized and borne shrieking into the bushes, whilst the monkeys chattered excitedly in the trees above, and the peafowl rose and flew off, uttering harsh cries of alarm. Thus three or four herdsmen and boys were killed, until at length the frightened villagers entirely avoided the dangerous jungles.

Then the maneater became bolder. First

he climbed the hill to the old fort, and slow the Hindu priest, devouring him in front of his idols, where the remains were found by one who went to worship there; and the four-headed serpent had fallen from above the gate and lay amid the bones—a dreadful omen. After this the tiger took to wandering far out into the plains, creeping up the hedgerows and through the groves of palms, and carrying off wayfarers from the roads and women returning from market, but being sometimes driven from his prey by a fierce onslaught of the buffaloes. At length one evening he killed a boy on the very edge of the village, as the cattle were returning at nightfall, and his reign of terror became more pronounced, for now none dared venture forth except in broad daylight, and only then in bands of half a dozen or more.

All this was related to me by Indru, the Good, when I pitched my camp near the village. That very evening the murderous beast carried off a woman who was returning from cutting wood in the jungle. In the morning I followed on the trail. A silver anklet was picked up; a tress of raven hair hung from a bush; and some pieces of cotton cloth, torn off by the thorns, fluttered in the breeze, indicating the path taken by the murderer. The tracks led direct toward the pool at the meeting of the waters. A maneater is popularly supposed to possess more cunning than the ordinary tiger, which, to the experienced sportsman, is a comparatively easy animal to bring to bag. But this creature had not hitherto been hunted. He had for months pursued his depredations without molestation, and his haunts lay far from the beat of sportsmen. Yet the villagers had little hope that I would be successful; for, said they, the maneater would be warned of danger by the spirits of his victims. However, they became more hopeful when they had offered up sacrifices to appease the souls of the departed.

While the people were assembling to drive the monster from his lair, I surveyed the ground below from a commanding position on one of the seven hills, and planned the beat that was to take place. There was little doubt that the tiger would be lying beneath the great banyan tree overhanging the basin in the rocks, and as if to make this certain a spotted deer at

that moment barked in alarm from the hillside above the pool. It was decided to drive him out in the direction of the fort, which he still sometimes visited, haunting the place formerly occupied by the murdered priest.

The beaters were placed in a semi-circle across the valley a quarter of a mile below the pool, and I posted myself on a rock above the bed of the stream that ran down from the fort. I felt that the tiger was in the hollow of my hand, and was even more certain when a peacock rose from the bushes below, giving utterance to that trumpet call which is a sure sign of alarm. There was no longer any doubt that the maneater was at home. And now the people began to advance, uttering fierce cries, and striking the trees with their sticks, as they swarmed up the valley. A startled stag dashed past me at a few yards' distance, halting for a moment and listening to the noise before pursuing his headlong flight. A great, black bear came shambling up the hill, and took the path toward the fort. And then the sound of heavy breathing fell upon my

car, and of the well-known footfall upon the dry leaves, and in another moment the maneater of Seven Streams stood before me. He stopped for an instant with one paw raised, his great tongue lolling from his open jaws, looking around and listening to the noise that pursued him, and then with a fierce roar sprang forward up the hill. My bullet caught him in the flank, and he turned fiercely and came toward me open-mouthed, but dropped dead to a second shot in the chest.

Of the rejoicings that followed there is scarcely need to speak. The torchlight procession to the hamlet, for the shades of night had fallen by the time the monster was carried to the plain below; the attendance with their children of the village matrons, who each laid a copper coin on the carcass as they bowed down and salaamed to it; and the feast provided for the shikaris and beaters. A maneater is a rare animal, and it was right and fitting that the destruction of such a scourge should be duly celebrated. His skin now forms the centrepiece of an interesting group of my trophies.

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## MINNESOTA'S SPORTING STATUS

By LEONIDAS HUBBARD, Jr.

**M**INNESOTA is the State in which East and West meet. It is here that the mighty forests of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ontario touch elbows with the maddening waste of treeless prairie. Here the ill-starred trees of Dakota's plains met the deer and beaver of the primeval forest. Here the icy trout streams of the Lake Superior region give place to waters a trifle warmer, which find outlet through the Father of Waters, or the Red River of the North.

Here, too, North meets South, and the giant forest trees of British America merge into the stunted timber along Iowa's rivers. There is no Lake Superior for a barrier to game migration, as above the neighboring States to eastward, so moose,

elk, and caribou come down from the icy regions about Hudson's Bay to roam among the giant pines and hemlocks. With them come wolves which, not content to hide in the forest, venture far beyond the land of deer to feast upon the sheep of blond-bearded Swedes and Danes who find in this northern clime a reminder of home.

The wilderness of Minnesota surpasses that of Michigan and Wisconsin as far as those surpass the settled slashings of Pennsylvania. There are very considerable stretches that have never been lumbered, where one sees the pine giants which promise soon to be as rare as bison. The extent of this wild region, too, is a delight to the soul of the nature lover. Above the northernmost railway of the