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BOOK ONLY

CALL OF THE TIGER

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by

COL. A. N. W. POWELL

London
ROBERT HALE LIMITED
63 Old Brompton Road, S.W.7

First published 1957

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FOREWORD

THIS IS a book of shikar stories, mainly about tigers and panthers, but also about some of the other big game animals to be found in the jungles of India to-day. The stories range over a wide field, extending from the Himalayas in the North to the Nilgiris in the far South of India, and should be of interest to sportsmen and others who inhabit the country between these two magnificent mountain ranges. They will also, I know, interest my contemporaries, who served in India and loved this land, but are now scattered all over the globe, or are members of the Chair-borne Division, now permanently stationed in Great Britain. To them, as well as to many others, the names of the places and the jungles they knew will recall many happy memories.

The first part of the book contains accounts of my own first adventures, full of instances of glaring mistakes. Most of the stories are told against myself. I can only hope that some enthusiastic novices will profit from the lesson to be learnt from my failures. The stories that follow describe further adventures that gradually led to my discovering more and more about the animals and jungles that I loved, and finally culminated in my mastering the art of calling up a tiger. This is something about which not much is generally known, and the stories, therefore, should be of special interest. Also, I hope that the grouping together of stories under appropriate headings will prove to be of value to novices, who wish to study tigers and the various ways in which they can be hunted. And finally, the book is rounded off with a chapter of "Thirty Questions", many of which will be recognized immediately by old hands as the old "Chestnuts" over which controversy raged in the Clubs and Messes of bygone days, not to mention the Press, and the shikar books of those good times. The answers given are my own carefully considered views, which I feel sure are far from being unassailable, and which, I hope, will start the ball rolling again. After all, we old dogs do like a good bone to chew on, and here is a bone of no ordinary size!

I do not profess to be an expert. The stories have been

selected from my experiences to show that big game shooting can be a grand sport particularly when it is confined to tackling animals that are to be reckoned with, and are fully equipped for retaliation and revenge. Sportsmen who have indulged in this sport do not need to be told about this. It is not for them that I am writing now, but for the many young fellows in India and all over the world, who are longing to see a tiger, and are hoping some day to shoot one.

I would hesitate to lay down the law about what methods should or should not be adopted by any particular hunter, as every sportsman is entitled to make this decision for himself. I would, however, say that tiger shooting can be just what the individual sportsman wishes it to be. It is something that is limited only by the size of the sportsman's purse, and also by the size of his heart. Subject to these two conditions, it can be difficult or easy, dangerous or safe, brave or even cowardly. Every novice will eventually, in his own heart of hearts, decide on his own limitations, and will fix his own limit to the risks he is prepared to take.

It is an established fact that anything which comes to one too easily is never fully appreciated. This certainly applies to the shooting of a tiger. The ones I have appreciated most are those that have led me a dance, or have, in some way or other, nearly frightened me to death! The actual shooting of a tiger may sometimes be a comparatively unthrilling and even a regrettable ending to the chase. It is the associations with the animal that either make or mar its memory. There is nothing very thrilling about shooting a tiger with a powerful rifle from the safety of a tree, though I must admit that even now, while sitting up over a kill, my pulse quickens and my heart thumps when I hear the tiger approaching, or catch the first glimpse of this magnificent animal coming towards his kill. Yes, one must admit there is that momentary thrill, but unless there has been more to it than just that, then there is not much to be proud of in the trophy, even if it happens to be the largest tiger in Asia. It is the trouble one has taken, the energy expended, the jungle-craft employed, and the risks that make a tiger skin a treasured trophy. The actual shooting of the animal does not matter a hoot. If he escapes, so much the better, so long as he leaves an unfading memory which can be cherished to the end of one's days. One does not need the skin or mounted head to

remind one of the incident. Even a photograph would serve as a poor reminder. It is the coloured moving picture left behind in the mind's eye that counts. Even the loss of one's eyesight cannot remove that picture. It lives on for ever. How could anyone possibly wish for anything better?

Many years ago when I was shooting in the Chacheri Block of the Balaghat District of the old Central Provinces, my shikaris, Darbari and Saktu, pointed out the place where a young officer had sat alone on the ground, all through the night, and had at dawn shot two tigers as they came together to the kill a few yards away. I do not know who it was, but was greatly impressed by what the shikaris told me, and as they told the story only because we chanced to be passing the actual spot I have no doubt it was true. The young hunter's hide-out had been made at the foot of a tree, and he had sat there, screened only by a few leafy branches, in the depths of a very dense forest. The ground was level, so he had no advantage of position. When I asked why he had chosen to sit on the ground instead of in the tree, which incidentally was a good tree for a machan, the shikaris simply said he had preferred to do it that way. This was undoubtedly a very foolhardy thing to do, but I could not help admiring him. Here I must explain that in Africa sitting on the ground in a thorn "Boma" for a lion is not considered anything out of the ordinary, but I can assure anyone who raises his eyebrows over this story that sitting on the ground for a tiger in dense jungle is quite a different cup of tea.

And now, for the sake of contrast, here is another story. Before I had ever shot a tiger myself, I was standing at the bar of a club talking to an elderly gentleman, who had shot over a hundred, and was therefore a terrific hero in my young eyes. He told me how, while stalking a herd of chital, he had come across a tiger stalking the same herd. The tiger was facing obliquely away from him, and was so intent on watching the deer, that it had not seen him, BUT as it was a large male tiger and only twenty yards away, he did not fire at it. My hero's stocks fell abruptly!

Sitting up over a kill is probably the most usual method adopted by sportsmen to shoot a tiger. It has one great advantage—it is far cheaper than having a beat, and is within the means of nearly every person possessing a gun. Amongst hunters who can afford either, opinion is very divided. Some

like the fun of working out a beat beforehand, and later enjoy the thrill of hearing the shouting men and seeing the tiger coming through the jungle in broad daylight. Others prefer sitting quietly in a machan, enjoying the peace and tranquillity of the undisturbed jungle, waiting patiently for the tiger to return to his kill. One always hopes, of course, that he will return in daylight. If he does so, the watcher is fully rewarded, for a tiger coming on to his kill is an incomparable sight. The hours of waiting, the cramp in one's legs, the tormenting mosquitoes, all are forgotten in that triumphal moment, when the King of the Jungle appears before the sportsman's eyes. His heart thumps and he becomes almost breathless with excitement. This is no exaggeration. The presence of a tiger only a few yards away does make the heart beat high. Even though I have seen so many, it still has that effect on me. Then again, if the tiger fails to appear, the jungle noises of animals and birds, and sometimes an unexpected visitor to the kill, the shimmer of the moonlight, and sometimes the roar of a tiger near at hand all delight the heart of the naturalist and true lover of the jungle. Sitting up may lack the lively action and thrilling noise of a beat, but I would venture to say that a sportsman who sits up all through the night in the heart of an Indian jungle learns more in one night about the animals of the jungle and their different calls than he would if he visited it a dozen times by day. It is at night that the jungle is awake and its denizens are on the move. In the day they lie up, and conceal themselves from their most dreaded enemy "Man", but at night the jungle belongs to them, and they move about at will. Anyone who knows the jungles only by day knows them but little, as much perhaps as the gentleman who goes sightseeing by day in Paris, and stays at home at night!

To see a tiger at night is difficult, unless it happens to be a bright moonlight night, and then too it is only possible if the tiger comes out into a moonlit patch, where he is not hidden in the dark shadow of the trees. The reddish brown shades of tigers, chital and barking deer, vanish at dusk from human vision. At that hour all that remains visible to the human eye is the white chest and ruff of the tiger, the white throat of the chital, and the white hindquarters of the barking deer, while the rest just disappears. If a herd of chital crosses in front of one at dusk, their white throat patches look like the white caps of

invisible men passing through the darkness. When the moon rises colours again become slightly visible, but the object stands out in relief or disappears, and, in fact seems to change colour with every change of background. Against a dark background a tiger looks greyish yellow, and against a light background he looks almost black. When one sees a tiger in daylight against a green background, one is struck at once by the vivid contrast, and one wonders why people talk so much hot air about Nature's wonderful scheme of animal coloration as a means of protective camouflage, but see a tiger in shadow, even in daylight, or see him at dusk or in moonlight, and your opinion will immediately be reversed. After all, a tiger is really a nocturnal animal. He lies hidden in dense jungle by day, but emerges at night in quest of his prey, and it is then that his tawny coat serves him really well. His stripes break up the outline of his massive body, and the crazy markings on his face cause a kind of blur, which even at a short distance leave one wondering whether it is a tiger or whether one is just seeing things!

The majority of old sportsmen in India advocate "Beating" as the best method of shooting tigers. It certainly has many advantages. It does away with the irksome and sometimes very tiring business of sitting still for hours in a machan, waiting for a tiger to return to his kill, which is something he quite often fails to do. Beating may also be a more certain way of bagging a tiger. Sportsmen who have kept a careful register of these things say the proportion of disappointments in beating is considerably less than in sitting up over kills. Furthermore, beating requires a more thorough knowledge of jungle-craft. For the sportsman who takes an interest in tiger-tactics, it provides problems which have to be very carefully considered, and which produce a feeling of intense satisfaction when they work out to a successful end. It is a fascinating game in which the sportsman pits his wits against the wits of a very cunning quarry, and it is natural he should feel delighted if he wins.

Against all this it must be remembered that times have changed. In the good old days beaters were dirt cheap, and it was the usual practice to employ a hundred or more men to do a beat. They were paid only a few annas apiece, and were delighted with an extra two annas if the sportsman succeeded in bagging the tiger. Men used to come long distances to take

part in such a grand tamasha. To-day it is very different. Except in a few favourable localities, beaters expect to be handsomely paid, and a beat might cost anything from one to three hundred Rupees. Very few sportsmen can afford to do a big tiger beat now, and fewer still could pay for beats every time there is a kill. Besides, it is now sometimes very difficult to find enough men. This may not be so in all parts of India, but it certainly is so in many parts of the country.

I said that a sportsman, sooner or later, fixes his own limit to the risks he is prepared to take. Before coming in contact with the realities of tiger shooting a novice may have a complete misconception of what these risks really are, and he may be carried into the jungle on the wings of a delusion, hoping to bring back with him a tiger skin that would brand him as something of a hero, and serve to impress his friends. A wounded tiger is one of the most dangerous animals in the world, and, before allowing any novice to proceed blindfolded into an awkward commitment, which, instead of making him a hero, might brand him for life as a coward, or might even qualify him for an obituary notice in the daily papers, I would warn him that even experienced hunters sometimes fail to kill a tiger outright, and it is therefore even more possible for a novice to wound instead of kill a tiger. Every sportsman who wounds a tiger is in honour bound to follow him up to try and kill him, simply because, if he survives, the tiger becomes a man-eater or man-killer, or otherwise becomes a danger to all men and cattle entering the jungle. It is hoped that some of the stories in this book will throw more light on this very important subject.

The name chosen for this book reflects its theme. When a tiger calls, putting full gusto into the expression of his feelings, the jungles echo and re-echo to the sound, which is, without question, the most dreaded and awe-inspiring noise to be heard in the jungle. Most animals and men put as much distance between themselves and this sound as they can, and as quickly as they can. Very few sportsmen have ventured to answer the call to try and attract the tiger to come towards them, and fewer still have succeeded in doing so, even if they have tried. I was absolutely thrilled when I succeeded in doing it for the first time, though I must admit that it took me a very long time and many failures before I had my first

success. It is, however, something which should not be tried by anyone who has not had considerable previous experience of tigers. Calling up a tiger in the jungle is a very dangerous game.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of three Indian shikaris—Darbari, Saktu and Abhu, without whose help and friendship my earlier efforts would surely have been in vain.

*

PART I

FIRST ADVENTURES

CHAPTER I

WHEN I WAS A GREENHORN

IN TELLING the stories of my first adventures I shudder to think what damage I may do to my reputation.

First of all let me take you to Mettupalaiyam, at the foot of the beautiful Nilgiris, where, in those days, wild elephants used to come down from the forests at night and raid the plantations to within a mile or two of the town. I had a few days Christmas leave, and was accompanied by my Madrassi bearer Baloo, who spoke four languages, and acted as my interpreter, gun-bearer, cook, and general factotum. At Mettupalaiyam I engaged a local shikari, and two coolie assistants. I was armed with a double barrelled, under-lever, ·450 hammer black powder Express rifle, lent me by a friend.

I had no means of conveyance except Shanks's Mare. The five of us set out bravely one morning, long before dawn, and, to the accompaniment of much trumpeting by the wild elephants returning "home" after raiding the plantations, we marched about seven miles down a lonely cart-track leading through a dark jungle. As the sun rose we found ourselves not far from the Moyar River. I am no good at describing scenery, but the beauty of that scene lingers in my memory. To my left grassy slopes led up to the foot of the mountains, which rose abruptly heavenwards, and looked magnificent clothed in their dense forests of magnificent trees, and topped at their summits by rocky cliffs, enshrouded here and there by the winter mists and lit up by the first rays of the morning sun. In front of me lay a densely wooded undulating forest, with another range of magnificent hills beyond. High up in those hills a sambur stag was "belling", and his voice carried for miles through the stillness of the morn. Standing as I was then on the very threshold of my shikar career, I had good reason to feel spellbound by the grandeur of my surroundings.

In silence we entered the deep dark jungle ahead. The shikari told us that we might meet bison, as the place was noted for them, and that we might meet a tiger. Young and

gullible as I was then, I believed him, and gripped my rifle tightly as we crept along the game trails, narrow alley-ways trampled down by elephants, through the dense tangle of tree trunks, lentana bushes, giant ferns, tall grass, thorny bushes and entwining creepers, which hemmed us in and made us feel like tiny little midgets. I prayed fervently that we might not meet an elephant, or worse—*elephants*! Escape would have been impossible. Besides, I had been warned that shooting at an elephant was strictly forbidden, and, if I wished to retain my game licence to shoot at an elephant would be the quickest way to lose it. In the light of experience I realize now that looking for a bison or tiger in that way was about equivalent to looking for a needle in a haystack, but the hours we spent toiling through that dense jungle felt very much like the real thing to me then. However, when at last, after about three hours, graceful bamboo clumps began taking the place of those horrible creepers and thorn bushes, and the pleasant sound of the rippling waters of the Moyar River seemed to be welcoming our approach, it was with a feeling of relief that I handed my heavy rifle to my servant Baloo. I had carried it for several hours, all for nothing, and I was feeling tired.

We now headed for the river, but, hardly had we gone fifty yards, when a magnificent bull elephant, with enormous tusks, suddenly appeared from behind a bamboo clump in front of us. The shikari, who was leading, whipped round like a polo pony, and gasping the one dreaded word "A-nay!" (elephant) nearly knocked me over in his desperate rush to escape. I turned for my rifle, but all I could see of Baloo was the back of his green and black striped coat, (which I remember to this day), moving at full speed in the direction of a monster tree. In his blind haste he tripped and fell, and I hurriedly regained possession of my rifle. I was now alone, with the monster elephant, standing looking at me not more than thirty yards away. I knelt down and took aim at the centre of his forehead, ready to fire in case he decided to charge. Very slowly he turned and silently walked away, disappearing into the jungle as suddenly and silently as he had appeared.

That big elephant was the first big game animal I ever saw in the Indian jungle. It was with real sorrow that I heard the news next day that he had been shot by a hunter, who had been on his trail for some days. Apparently he had been doing

considerable damage to life and property and had been declared a rogue, but to me he will always remain the kindly old gentleman, who gave me a very big thrill and could have killed me, but did not try to do so. Had that five tons of elephantine might borne down upon me like an Army Tank, a soft lead bullet from a ·450 black powder rifle could not have saved me.

A day or two later I had my next adventure. I had been joined by two of my friends from Wellington, who had suddenly decided to spend a day in the jungles with me. Our combined purses made it possible to engage about forty beaters, and we found ourselves at the first crossing of the Ootacamund road over the mountain railway, in the midst of the most graceful Palm tree groves I had ever seen in my life. From there we moved to the dense jungles at the foot of the hills.

While the beaters were moving into position, machans (platforms in trees) were hastily put up at vantage points for my friends, but I can well remember that the first shouts of the beaters fell upon our ears before anything could be done about a machan for myself. Realizing that the beat had begun, I hastily scrambled up a steep little ravine, followed by Baloo. There we settled ourselves into a convenient little niche in the bank, by the side of a pathway leading across the ravine. The ravine itself was hardly ten yards wide, and the jungle in front of us was so dense that it looked dark, and it was impossible to see into the undergrowth ahead. There was, however, no time now to start looking for a better position.

The beat was in full swing, and the shrill shrieks of the beaters were growing louder and louder as they drew steadily nearer. I know of no other part of India in which beaters pitch their voices quite so high. Their high-pitched screams are terrifyingly fiendish, and are most effective in the jungle.

The beaters had approached to within fifty yards of the guns, when both Baloo and I thought we heard something on the move up the hill to our right. We both turned in that direction, expecting to see some animal cross the ravine. Hardly had we done so when out of the corner of my left eye I saw something move. Next moment I realized that a large male leopard was coming across the ravine straight towards us. He was moving at a brisk walk, but was so bewildered by the

shrieking of the beaters that he had not seen us. His ears were pressed right back as far as they would go. He slipped past within a yard of my quivering servant, before I could swing round to fire at him. I practically jumped over Baloo to try and get in a shot, but he disappeared like a flash into the dense jungle beyond.

When the beat was over, and the beaters were stepping into the ravine, I called out to my companions to tell them what had happened. While I was doing so, the beaters suddenly raised another shriek, and to our amazement another leopard, smaller than the first, darted across the ravine, through our very midst.

The beaters now begged us to run down the hill to the Forest Line as quickly as we could, and then go ahead to a ravine about a mile further on. By doing this they said we could intercept the leopards, and they would then drive them on to us again. We lost no time in carrying out this plan.

When the second beat began, the shrill shrieks of the beaters were drowned by the most resounding roars I had ever heard in my life. The jungles vibrated and the echoes shook the hills. Baloo and I were sitting on the ground, crouched up against the side of a ravine. With his eyes popping out of his head he said "Sah" (Sir), this place no good to sit. Tiger eat up." As the same thought had already occurred to me, we lost no time in scrambling up to the top of a huge rock! As we did so, a leopard bounded across the ravine. The roaring, however, continued, and the tiger now seemed to be moving in the direction of my friends.

When the beat was over the cause of the roaring was explained. A big bull elephant had got caught up in the beat. Instead of going forward, he had rushed towards the beaters, roaring. I had heard elephants trumpeting, but never one roaring like this one. Apparently it is a roar of rage, not unlike the roar of a tiger or lion. Anyway, he had treed the beaters who had had an exciting time yelling at him while he rushed to and fro, roaring and knocking down trees. Eventually he had turned and, still roaring, had thundered past my friends.

As my friends had to get back to Wellington, we now had to call it a day. When I got back to camp, news had filtered through that the men keeping watch over the carcass of the

dead rogue elephant had been treed by several cow elephants, who had found their fallen lord, and, after making a terrible fuss over him, had tried to pull him up with their trunks and put him on his feet again. They were said to be near him still. This pathetic story filled me with the desire to see them with my own eyes, but as it was too late to go out that day, the trip had to be put off till the morrow. I had hurt my foot and did not feel like walking about twenty miles, so entrusted the guide to make what arrangements he could for some form of conveyance.

My guide hired a "Jhatka", a springless cart drawn by a pony. The word "Jhatka" in Hindustani means a jolt, and if you have ever ridden in one of these carts, over a rough road, you will not stop to argue about its meaning. You will, I guess, regard it as something of an understatement of fact! I wanted to start at dawn, but the owner of the cart absolutely refused to start before nine o'clock. The elephants, he said, would kill his horse, and smash his cart to smithereens!

About four of us piled into the cart. It had no seats, but just a boarded floor, with a semicircular hood made of bamboos, low enough to make anyone of my build crouch to save his head. I found myself being abominably bumped at both ends! But how the little pony dragged us up hill and down dale over that very rough road was a real eye-opener to me. Needless to say there were occasions when we all had to get out and push, but, taking it all by and large, the little pony did wonderfully well. We got out when we reached the Moyar River, and leaving the horse and cart with their owner in a clearing where there was plenty of green grass and the pony could be allowed to graze, we entered the jungle by a small pathway, which the guide said would lead us to the dead elephant.

After walking for about a couple of hours, it became quite obvious that the guide had lost his way. When I questioned him, he persuaded me to sit down with Baloo in a cool spot, while he and the two other men went off scouting to try and find the elephant. They were away about three hours, and returned only to say they had failed in their mission. I had a strong suspicion that the rascals had spent those three hours just round the corner, snoozing under a tree! Either fear or some local superstition seemed to be holding them back from visiting the dead elephant.

We now forded the river, and made for the little village of Ganda, with the object of picking up a guide. On arrival there, I was astonished at what I saw. The village huts were all situated at one end of a big clearing with neatly banked up paddy fields, but the dwellings were for use in the daytime only. Each family had a nest in a big stout tree, consisting of a rough platform of branches, for use as a bedroom at night. These were about thirty feet up and I was amazed at the way the women and children climbed up to them. There were no ladders. One woman I saw went up her tree with a child on her back and another one on her hip. The small platforms had no railings or other device to prevent children from rolling off at night, but none of them ever seemed to do so anyway. Children from about the age of four climbed up by themselves. They did not scramble up by scaling the trunk, but by their hands and feet. The women were very scantily clad and the children had nothing on at all, but, even so, it was an astounding feat for human beings. I asked why the platforms were so high up, and was told they had to be so, to be out of reach of wild elephants. As elephants cannot jump, the platforms could easily have been a good deal lower, but these people were taking no chances and perhaps were thinking too of man-eating tigers and leopards.

There was a good deal of discussion over finding a guide, and, to my mind, a good deal of unnecessary delay, but, apparently a tiger had killed a young elephant calf. Its mother, in revengeful mood, was rampaging about the forest between the village and the dead rogue. There was the risk of meeting her, and apparently no one was at all keen on doing so. The day was already well advanced, and, in desperation, I offered a temptir ʏ reward, which finally did the trick.

As we left the village to enter the jungle, I was amazed at the hundreds of fresh elephant tracks, less than a hundred yards from the huts, and I began to realize and understand the full meaning of those platforms in trees. As we entered the jungle I also realized why no one wanted to go there. It was terribly dense, wedged in between a hill and the river. Our little pathway led through almost impenetrable undergrowth.

We had gone only about half a mile, when a terrific roar ahead of us brought us to an immediate standstill. This time

I knew it was the roar of an angry elephant. We hurriedly got off the path, and scrambled through the terrible undergrowth towards the hill, to take refuge there behind a fallen tree-trunk. The mother elephant was giving full vent to her feelings, and kept us tied to the spot for about an hour. Then, just as we had decided to try and make good our escape, she also decided to go in the same direction and went past us roaring, but, fortunately, without discovering us. As the roars grew fainter in the distance, Baloo's face lit up in a grin. "Sah," he said, "elephant going to cart!" And so she was. When we got back to our conveyance, the driver and his pony were still trembling from head to foot. She had passed within a hundred yards of them, roaring furiously as she went by. The sun was setting, and the driver beseeched us to make haste, before further disaster should overtake us.

Baloo now explained what our guides were saying. The elephant, they said, had been keeping guard over her dead calf, and had started roaring to scare away the tiger, who had returned for a meal. She had obviously succeeded in driving him away, and was now in full pursuit. We could still hear her roaring in the distance.

We scrambled into our cart, and very soon were jolting our way homewards. The sun had set, and we had done only about a mile when darkness overtook us. There was no moon, and the cart boasted of no lights. We were passing the spot where only a few mornings earlier I had stood spellbound, admiring the grandeur of the scenery, when, suddenly, our little pony stopped with a jerk, and refused to move another inch. The driver said he had seen a tiger in the road ahead of us. I got out of the cart and went on tip-toe down the road. My electric torch was a bit run down, and when I turned the dull light on to the bushes at the roadside, I was greeted with a deep growl. The undergrowth was so thick that I could see nothing, but the growl was repeated, and immediately a sambur belled about fifty yards away. Then the alarm chorus was taken up by a whole herd of elephants, who started their shrill trumpeting about a quarter of a mile away. My men started beseeching me to return to the cart, and I must admit I did not hesitate to take this very good advice. Then, although feverishly exhorted to do so, our pony refused to budge. Eventually, however, when he did start, he went off at a gallop, and I

reckon we did a mile in record Derby time before the little steed paused again for want of breath.

Thus ended this hunting expedition—a comedy of errors and much ado about nothing!

A few months later I found myself on my way to attend a Musketry Course at Pachmarhi, that pretty little hill station, situated on a plateau, in the heart of the Central Provinces, now known as Madhya Pradesh.

The course was a strenuous one, but our evenings were usually free. I often used to wander off on my own, to sit on a knoll at the edge of the plateau, overlooking the jungles in the deep valleys below.

Near my favourite knoll, and overlooking the same scene, was a granite monument, with an inscription which I cannot fully remember, but which, I think, was "We'll weary nae mair for the land o' the leal", erected by a Scottish Regiment in memory of soldiers who would never see Scotland again. The spot for the monument had been well chosen. There was a sheer drop of about a thousand feet to the valley below, and it commanded a magnificent view of densely wooded hills and valleys, which seemed steeped in the peace and tranquillity of a wonderful sleep, undisturbed anywhere by human habitation, and ruled by the hand of Nature alone. I never tired of gazing at that peaceful scene, and can still see it quite distinctly in my mind's eye. It was beautiful.

At lunch time one Saturday, my personal servant Baloo greeted me excitedly with the news that a leopard had killed a goat, near the granite monument. I interviewed the owner, who confirmed that his goat had been killed, and explained how it had happened. Apparently, he had sent it out with other village goats to graze on the hillsides, as was the local custom. The small boy in charge had returned at top speed to say a leopard had suddenly attacked the goats and killed four of them.

Fortunately it was a half holiday. I swallowed my lunch, and set off immediately after, followed by Baloo, the bereaved owner, and a coolie carrying a charpoy (small string bed), which I hoped to tie in a tree as a machan. On arrival at the spot, I was shown where the killings had taken place, but, although there were definite signs of a scuffle with blood here

and there, there was no trace of a dead goat anywhere. We then sent a man to fetch the boy who had been in charge. When he arrived he said three dead goats had been removed by their owners, but one had been dragged by the leopard into a cave, behind a large rock, about 100 yards away.

Leading up to the rock was a deep narrow ravine, which seemed to provide our best means of approach. Very cautiously Baloo and I crept up the ravine until we reached what turned out to be a narrow crevice in the rock itself. This was about a yard wide, with sides about ten feet high. Standing outside we could see nothing, for a projection of rock on the inside interfered with our view, and I remember it took me about a minute or more to muster enough courage to enter the crevice itself. However, having at last gained mastery over my feelings, I advanced slowly, with my rifle at the ready. Peeping round the projecting rock, I discovered the partly eaten remains of the unfortunate goat. I also discovered that the crevice ended there and had no other exit.

My first reaction to the situation was to pull the remains into the ravine, but, on second thoughts, I decided this might make the leopard suspicious when returning to his kill, so I left the goat where it was. Then after studying the ground very carefully, I came to the conclusion that the leopard would return either up the ravine itself, or walk along a narrow ledge on the far side, there being no approach to the crevice by any other way. The main difficulty, however, was to find a suitable place for me to hide in. There were no trees near enough to tie up a machan, and the sides of the ravine were quite bare. Finally, I decided to sit on the steep side of the ravine, opposite the ledge, with the small bed slung into position with a rope, to act as a screen in front of me.

When this screen had been well camouflaged, with leafy branches stuck through the stringing of the bed, it looked exactly like a bush, and, with a few branches tucked in at the sides and behind, it made an excellent hide-out. Anyway, when Baloo and the others had tucked me in and departed, I must admit I began to feel a trifle nervous. I noticed then for the first time that whichever way the leopard came, he would have to pass within five yards or less of me, and, after all, even if he did not see me, he might mistake my hide-out for a bush, and rush there to take cover if I wounded him, or even spring

in the air when hit and fall right on top of me! Such thoughts were disconcerting, and as time wore slowly on my feelings did not improve. To add to my discomfiture, I was most persistently attacked by gnats and other biting insects, and the tree-croakers were making a most unholy ear-piercing din that nearly drove me bats. I was relieved when at last the sun began to set, and the activities of my tormentors gradually subsided. Then a hushed lull came over the jungle.

It is amazing how a leopard arrives without making the slightest sound. The light of day was beginning to fade, when I peeped through my leafy screen, and there, less than five yards away, sitting facing me on the ledge was the leopard. How long he had been there I do not know, but he was oblivious of my presence, and was looking from side to side to make quite sure no one was about. My heart literally jumped when I saw him, and I could hear it thumping so loudly, that I felt sure the leopard would hear it too. I shall never forget those moments of suspense that seemed like half an hour, before the leopard, having fully satisfied himself that the coast was clear, got up slowly, and turning to his left, moved cautiously towards the crevice. I allowed him to take a few paces, and then, slowly raising the muzzle of my rifle over the screen, I aligned the sights on his shoulder, and "*bang*"! The leopard leapt in the air, and rolled over backwards into the ravine. He then made frantic efforts to recover, and in doing so, rolled over and over past me down the ravine, making semi-roaring noises as he went by. I sprang to my feet, ready to fire again, if necessary, but the leopard had stopped rolling and was now lying on his side kicking and gurgling. I kept him covered with my rifle until all kicking and the gurgling ceased.

Meanw' le Baloo had heard the shot, and was now running down the opposite hill to join me. I, in my excitement, had jumped over my screen, and was standing over my first leopard, a fine male, with a rich dark coat. I had good reason to feel delighted with my trophy.

The news spread like wild fire, and in a few minutes lanterns and torches appeared everywhere. Wellington boots with spurs were not ideal for hill climbing, but, some, who had already changed for dinner, arrived in full Mess Kit, and, what was more, actually lent a hand in carrying the leopard back to the Mess.

I was sharing a room with a very tall Cavalry officer. He was dining out that night, and going on to a dance at the Club. He returned to roost at about 3 a.m., and stumbled on to the leopard in our bathroom, where there was no light. The remarks he made are unprintable!

CHAPTER II

A MONTH'S LEAVE

WHEN EVENTUALLY I was given a month's leave, I went, at the end of March, to spend the first week with my brother, who had invited me to do a bit of small game shooting with him in Dehra Dun. And so it was that he and I, with a dozen beaters, found ourselves before sunrise one morning on a large grassy plain, a few miles outside the town. This plain bordered on a privately owned forest, and is now a large colony of houses and Army hutments, known as Clement Town, but in those days it was just a sea of grass, interrupted only here and there by small patches of scrub jungle, which held countless peafowl, jungle fowl, pheasants, partridge, and occasionally deer and pig.

As it was a bit early for birds, we decided to cross the plain, and beat the scrub jungle on the fringe of the forest, where, perhaps, a chital stag, or a barking deer might oblige.

It was a bitterly cold morning, with a damp mist rising from the plain. The high grass was dripping wet after a heavy dew, and we stuck to a narrow footpath, to try and keep as dry as possible. Crossing the plain we noticed in the first morning light, that the gipsies had started their spring migration towards the Himalayas. Here and there the smoke of their camp fires was ascending vertically heavenwards, while the dark forms of their buffaloes could be seen huddled together where they had been herded for the night.

Our first beat drew a blank, so we moved on to our next positions. As we did not want to disturb the jungle ahead, the beaters had been ordered not to shout or yell but merely to clap their hands. I was standing at the junction of two pathways, and the beat had approached to within a hundred and fifty yards, when I heard "Woof! Woof!" I imagined the beaters had started up a big wild boar. The "woofing" was repeated a couple of times during the next minute, coming closer each time, until finally there was a resounding "Woof" in the tall grass about fifteen yards in front of me. By this time I was standing on tip-toe, trying to peer into the grass ahead of

me, when suddenly I realized that what I was staring at behind an ant-heap was the tail-end of a tiger. It was standing perfectly still, awaiting the approach of the on-coming beaters. I had in my hand a .351 Winchester rifle, which would have been ideal for deer, but was hardly the weapon to use on foot at close range on a tiger. Behind me, holding my shotgun, was my gun-bearer, who had been a coachman in Karachi, and had never before in all his life set foot in a jungle. Fortunately, he had not seen the tiger. And then, one of the beaters, who had quite unsuspectingly approached to within ten yards of the animal, suddenly saw it and uttered the most blood-curdling scream. It is a wonder the tiger did not pounce on him. Fortunately, both turned to bolt in opposite directions. I had never seen a tiger in the jungle, and here at last was my first chance of bagging one. There were many good reasons why I should not have fired in such circumstances, but the impulse was irresistible, and as it bounded across the little pathway on my left, I fired two shots in quick succession with my little automatic rifle. The result was truly terrifying. The tiger roared, tore up the ground, and after spinning round a couple of times, turned to rush towards the beaters, still tearing up the earth and roaring furiously. I fired three more shots at it before it disappeared into the grass and then shouted to the beaters to run for their lives. This fortunately was unnecessary, as the retreat had already begun! And there, only a few yards away stood my brother. He had sauntered along towards me, thinking the beat was over, and had had a miraculous escape from the wounded tiger, to say nothing of the bullets I had fired in his direction—a glaring example of the dangers of leaving one's position before a beat is really finished. To the credit of my ex-coachman gun-bearer be it said that he had stood his ground. But now we were all running, and did not stop till we had put at least a hundred yards between ourselves and the wounded tiger. The beaters collected a further furlong away. Midst much shouting and gesticulating, each man was describing how he had narrowly escaped with his life!

The excitement over, we held a council of war. There we were, a small rifle, two shotguns, a few very frightened people, and a wounded tiger, hiding in a sea of tall grass. It was not a pleasant prospect. The tiger would have to be followed up, and the odds looked like being on him. But suddenly someone had

a brainwave—why not fetch the elephant from the Farm about two miles away? Yes, at the Farm, there was a very old hunting elephant, so old that its eyesight was failing, and so feeble that it could move only at the slowest pace. Nevertheless it was an elephant, and the thought of having it to help us was encouraging. We all sank on to the grass in a little clearing, while my brother's chauffeur was sent post haste to try and borrow the old elephant.

It seemed a very long time before anything happened, but then, as I have already said, the elephant was old and feeble, and could hardly walk. Its Mahawat (elephant driver) too was a venerable old gentleman, with a scrubby beard, who, if not quite so old as his charge, was, at least equally decrepit. And so the elephant came slowly, but how glad we were to see it arrive, and with it came our friend from the Farm, armed with a double barrelled heavy rifle. The odds now were clearly in our favour.

I joined my friend on the pad of the elephant, and, taking a couple of men with us to put up trees to try and locate the tiger, we now headed for the scene of action. We hoped, of course, that the tiger would be lying dead, but from what I had last seen of it, lashing its tail and roaring furiously, I found it hard to convince myself it would be anything but very much alive. Anyway, when we got to where I had stood, we put one of the men up a tree. Hardly had he reached the upper branches, when he started gesticulating frantically, pointing towards the grass into which the tiger had disappeared. From the signs he was making, it seemed he could see a tiger's head, which he was trying to describe by holding his hands out in front of him to denote something large and round. It was then up to us to advance. The elephant moved slowly forward, but, after half a dozen paces, struck her trunk violently against the ground, or maybe against her foreleg, making a sharp metallic sound, which, as was explained to me later, meant that she had scented the tiger. This was immediately answered by a deep growl from the grass ahead, and our hitherto placid mount now became amazingly active. She turned quickly, first one way and then the other, and it was obvious that her venerable mahawat, who was using his ankus freely, was having difficulty in trying to persuade her to face the music. Advance she would not, so, after giving her a little time to

overcome her feelings, we decided that I should fire a shot with my small rifle into the grass while my friend waited ready with his big rifle to meet a charge, should it come.

I fired, and a tiger leapt straight up into the air, but disappeared again into the grass. Half a minute later I fired again, but this time nothing happened, so now we turned back and consulted the man in the tree. He said that what he had seen was a huge tiger, but that it was not wounded. When I fired, it had sprung in the air and then dashed away as fast as it could go.

After firing a few more shots, we advanced very slowly, till at last I saw the head of a tiger in the grass. The elephant was still behaving nervously and would not stand still, with the result that I missed three shots at the head! Eventually more by luck than judgment, I put a bullet right into the ear.

It turned out to be a tigress. My first shot had evidently hit her in the region of the thigh, and the second low in the other hind leg. Then, when she turned, I had hit her three times in the body, but all shots were a trifle too far back. Nevertheless they had crippled her, and she had not been able to go far.

Tigers very seldom leave the cover of dense jungle, but this pair must have been attracted into the grass outside by the buffaloes on the plain, and we had intercepted them by pure chance, before they had had time to get back into the dense forest at daybreak. Despite my good luck on this occasion, I would not hesitate to say it is not a good thing to use a small rifle on a tiger. This applies equally to whether you are on the ground, or safely up a tree, for in the latter case, if the tiger gets away wounded, it will have to be followed up, so the main danger is not removed. I had the greatest faith in my small rifle, but, in the excitement of the moment, I had hit the tiger five times without getting in one single well-placed shot. True, it was jumping about, and it was difficult to place a shot, but the fact remains, that, had it seen me when it turned after being hit by my first two shots, I should not have been here today to tell the tale.

It was fun bringing home a tiger, after setting out to shoot a partridge! The old elephant knelt down, and, with much heaving and pushing, the tiger was duly "padded" on her back. Four or five of us and the tiger must have made a tidy load

but the old girl stepped out like a young 'un, as though appreciating the honour of carrying yet another tiger. She had carried many in her day, but this time, so far as I know, she carried home my first and her last tiger.

After this little adventure I went up to Mussoorie, that gayest of gay hill stations in the Himalayas, notorious for its heart-breaking romances! It was not the place one would normally choose for hunting, but it was only twenty miles from Dehra Dun, and had the great advantage of being over 6,000 feet above sea level, and consequently of being beautifully cool. There was, however, a risk attached to going there. If a young officer went back to his Regiment with the yarn that he had been up there hunting, well, well, nobody believed him! Nevertheless, round about Mussoorie, and really quite close in, there was plenty of good hunting.

The milkmen, who supplied the town with milk, lived on the surrounding hills in little farms, sometimes many miles out, to avoid rates and taxes. They tramped in daily over the rough hill-tracks, carrying the milk containers slung over their shoulders. Their small thatched houses, with low stone walls, usually had doorways but no doors, and very seldom boasted of a window. Their cattle, a very diminutive breed, admirably suitable for the steep hills they lived in, grazed on the hillsides by day, and were tethered in long cattle-sheds at night. Each farm had its own small fields of potatoes and maize, cucumbers and pumpkins, and, of course, its own little spring or stream, which provided the drinking water for both men and animals. It was a hand to mouth existence. The cattle were often killed by leopards, and their fields were raided at night by bears, porcupines and wild pigs. And yet the people, though very poor, were cheery and contented. The women fetched the water from the springs, cut grass and leaves for the animals to feed on at night, collected firewood, did the cooking, tended the children, and worked in the fields. These were their ordinary every day duties, and the risk of being attacked by wild animals while cutting grass or collecting wood were taken as a matter of course. The work had to be done. There was no alternative, and, if there were bears and leopards about, well, it was just too bad if someone was unfortunate. It did not happen too often, anyway! That was the way of life for them all. But, if any sportsman wanted news of a bear or leopard, he could not

do better than make friends with the hill people and promise a reward.

I had been in Mussoorie only a few days when a milkman came and told me that a leopard had killed one of his cows. He lived on a hill called "Pari Tibba" (Fairy Hill), and his name, quite appropriately, was "Indru", (short for Indar Singh, King of the Fairies)! He said he had left a man to watch over the kill, to keep the leopard away till I got there. I must say I wondered how this would work. However, he seemed quite sure that it would, but asked me to hurry, as he said the sooner I get there, the sooner would I shoot the leopard. All this sounded so encouraging, that I seized my guns, called up a few coolies, and, in a few minutes, we were all under way. It was then two o'clock in the afternoon. Incidentally, Fateh Singh, a hillman from Tehri Garhwal who had pointed out the tiger in Dehra Dun, had followed me up to Mussoorie, and appointed himself my guide. He was now carrying my rifle.

Only those who have actually walked over the Himalayas, along the rough narrow tracks called "Roads" by the hillmen, can know what rough going really means. It was only three miles to the kill, but it took an hour and a half to get there. The last half mile was a scramble through dense thorny undergrowth to reach the kill, which was lying tightly wedged in between two big rocks in the dry watercourse of a deep ravine. The hindquarters of the cow had been partially eaten, but the milkmen had not allowed the leopard to have a full feed.

Both sides of the ravine were covered in heavy thorn scrub, so dense that it was not possible to see more than a few yards in any direction. There was, however, a small open patch a few yards wide, beyond the kill, and it was in that direction the men said the leopard had gone, crossing over a small ridge into the jungle beyond. I had been told by experts that leopards usually return by the same way as they go after leaving a kill, so I based my plan on this assumption. There was no tree anywhere near by, or even a rock behind which I could conceal myself. I had to make myself a hide-out of leaves and branches, and sit on the ground, about fifteen yards or less from the kill. Through a leafy loophole I commanded the approach I presumed the leopard would take. When my men had put the finishing touches to the leafy camouflage around me, they departed talking loudly as they went, hoping thereby to deceive

the leopard into thinking everyone had gone away. I had told them not to return till I blew my whistle. My shotgun, loaded with spherical ball, for use after dark, was beside me, while my little ·351 Winchester was in my lap, ready to deal with the leopard if he returned in daylight.

The first thing that happened after the departure of the men was that three or four very black hill ravens flew down from the hill above and settled on top of the bushes near the kill. They had been hovering round while the men were about, and now, believing everyone gone, were cawing joyfully, in anticipation of a good feed. This was excellent. Not only did it prove that I was well and truly hidden, but it would also reassure the leopard that his enemies had departed.

Presently the ravens flew down on to the kill and started their feasting. Every now and then, as if struck by a sudden fear, they whirled up in a bunch, and perched on the bushes round about, cawing, and looking round most carefully to make quite sure the leopard was not really on his way to punish them for interfering with his property. Then a black cock pheasant came scuttling over the ridge, and crossed the open patch in front of me. He was making the low clucking sounds they make when disturbed.

A few seconds later a truly enormous leopard came over the ridge, and stood right out in the open patch, about twenty-five yards from me. It was only about five o'clock, and the sun was shining on him. I had never imagined a leopard could be so huge. He was the size of a tigress, and I was so lost in admiration of this wonderful animal, that I literally forgot to shoot. He stood there for about ten seconds, and it was not until he began to move again that I came to my proper senses. But, instead of coming towards the kill, he turned right to go down the hill, and I realized immediately that unless I took my shot at once, I might never see him again in daylight. He might, of course, have entered the ravine lower down to come up to the kill that way, but I was not taking any chances. As he moved downwards, I aimed behind his shoulder, and took what I thought would be a good lung shot.

When I fired, he bounded straight down into the ravine below, and disappeared without uttering a sound. I had been told that leopards usually roar when hit. Surely, I could not have missed!

I was so excited that I literally fought my way out of my leafy hide-out, and, having climbed on to the ridge behind, blew my whistle for all I was worth. My men had heard the shot, and now raced down the hill to join me. When they arrived, I told them what had happened. They wanted to set off at once to find the leopard, which they said would surely be lying dead in the ravine below. I, however, insisted that it would be better to wait half an hour, and during this time we made our plans for following up, based on knowledge I had acquired from books I had read about shikar. While one man was to follow the blood trail, two men were to throw stones into the bushes ahead, with me in attendance to deal with any possible trouble, and one man would follow me carrying my spare gun. Never before had I followed up a big wounded feline on foot. I was thrilled at the thought of the adventure before me.

When the half hour was up, we put our little plan into action. On entering the ravine, we found blood had spurted out on both sides, and had literally sprayed both sides of the ravine. Obviously the bullet had gone right through the leopard, and judging by the terrific amount of blood, he must have been very badly hit. The blood trail led straight down the dry watercourse. The stone-throwers were doing a swell job, and for the first thirty yards the following up was plain sailing. After that, however, the ravine entered extremely dense undergrowth, composed mainly of thorn bushes interlaced with very thorny wild rose creepers. Unless one crawled on hands and knees, this now presented an impenetrable barrier, a most unpleasant prospect anyway, as, under such conditions, the advantage would definitely be with the wounded leopard.

We now bombarded the bushes with large stones, of which the hillsides provided an abundant supply. I joined in too and for five minutes we pounded every inch of the covert. Then I led the way in on all fours. A few yards further down there was a pool of blood. With so much blood about, it was amazing there was no leopard lying dead. A few yards still further down there was yet another pool of blood, and here I noticed that the undergrowth had receded from the sides and it was once again possible for us to stand on our feet. Our ravine then joined a larger ravine, and as we entered this, and were wondering what to do next, the man with my spare gun, Fateh Singh,

without asking permission, crept back up the ravine we had just come down. I suppose he felt it would be safe enough to go back the way we had just come. On reaching the last pool of blood he noticed that the grass on the hillside had been pressed down, and suspecting that the leopard had gone that way, decided to investigate on his own. Standing in the rocky bed of the watercourse he looked up the steep hillside, and, seeing nothing, concluded it would be safe enough to climb a little way, to look for further traces of blood. Hardly had he gone a yard, when, suddenly, he saw the leopard's face only a few feet from his own. With a roar of rage the leopard sprang at him. Instinctively Fateh Singh had turned to save his throat. The leopard landed on his back, and both went hurtling down the hillside into the ravine below. The roar of the leopard and the screams of the man left very little to the imagination. I immediately fired a shot in the air, and dashed to the rescue. Only a few yards separated us, but although I ran as fast as I could, I arrived to find the leopard gone. Fateh Singh was lying in the ravine, face downwards, covered with blood. He was unconscious.

I was closely followed by my men. When they saw Fateh Singh they jumped to the conclusion he was dead. We lifted him carefully, and carried him down into the big ravine. All thoughts of the leopard had vanished from our minds. Our main concern now was to save Fateh Singh's life.

I was greatly relieved to find that most of the blood on him was not his own, but the leopard's. Apart from four deep claw-marks between the nape of his neck, and point of his right shoulder, he was otherwise unharmed. The leopard had struck him there with his right paw. The shot I fired in the air had saved him from being mauled to death, though I doubt whether Fateh Singh would have got off quite so cheaply had the leopard not been so badly wounded. What he was suffering from now was not his injury, but just shock. He was deathly pale and his hands were as cold as ice. His eyes were closed—and his body limp. We did all we could in the way of first aid, but it was several minutes before he eventually regained his senses.

Leopard claws are noted for their poisonous effects. There is always a secretion of blood, from the animals they kill, in the cleft on the underside of each claw. This, in various stages of

decomposition, is, of course, highly dangerous. I washed the wounds as thoroughly as I could with water from my water-bottle, and having covered them over with a clean handkerchief, sent Fateh Singh, with two men to assist him, up the hill to the milkman's little farmhouse. There they were to prepare a kettle of boiling water, and send one of the men post haste into town, to fetch a dandy (a modified type of palanquin, carried by four men), to the nearest possible point, for Fateh Singh to go home in. Having done this I was once again free to think about the leopard.

There was very little I could do. I had only the one man left with me, and it would have been madness to enter the undergrowth again. The sun was about to disappear behind the hill, and there was no time to spare, either in looking for the leopard or in getting Fateh Singh back to hospital. I decided, therefore, to fire a few shots with my shotgun into the bushes, to try and discover the whereabouts of the leopard in that way. A dozen shots, however, failed to disclose anything.

When I got to the farmhouse, Fateh Singh was drinking a bowlful of fresh milk. There are no cups and saucers in the hills! I washed the claw wounds again with warm water, and presently we all set off on the homeward journey. Before leaving, however, I told the milkman to go out at dawn next morning to a hillock opposite the scene of disaster, and from there to use his eyes and ears to discover what he could about the wounded leopard.

At "Dhobi Ghat" (laundry) a mile away, we found a dandy waiting, and the hero of the evening was duly placed in it. Actually, he was not too badly hurt, and was now thoroughly enjoying the great fuss being made over him. The entire colony of dhobis (washermen) and their wives and children had turned out to see him, and hear the story, which was now being repeated with amazing embellishments. The hero had actually grappled with the leopard, swung it off its feet by its tail, and thrown it down the hill, where, undoubtedly it would die (presumably of shame)!

I escorted Fateh Singh to a hospital, where the doctor seemed more concerned about the technical advisability of reporting the accident to the Police, than about the patient's condition, which, he agreed, was not at all serious. Having assured him in writing, that I would hold myself personally

responsible for any consequences, I persuaded him to leave all formalities over till the next morning, and I sat there and watched him apply antiseptics and dress the wounds. I also persuaded him to admit Fateh Singh to the hospital for the night.

I did not return to Pari Tibba too early the next morning, as I felt it was my first duty to visit the hospital, and inquire after Fateh Singh. Fortunately, he was very much better, and begged me to allow him to accompany me to find the leopard, but this, of course, was quite out of the question. I had already engaged a dozen men for the trip, realizing they would be required to carry the leopard, or me, or both of us home!

It must have been about eleven in the morning when we reached the spot. The milkman met us and gave us the good news that he had seen the leopard in the early morning. His attention had been attracted by grunting noises, to a spot about two hundred yards away from where we had last seen it in the evening. He then saw something shaking a sapling, and thought at first that it was a monkey, but, when the grunting continued, he was astonished to see the leopard, gnawing the trunk and shaking the sapling.

It did not take me long to make a plan. Above the spot indicated by the milkman the hillside was open and precipitous. I ordered the men to go round to the crest above, and roll stones down into the bushes below. I myself moved round to a small hillock opposite, about 80 yards across a ravine, from where I could knock out the leopard if I saw him.

The bombardment of the bushes was most thoroughly carried out, but no leopard appeared. I then ordered the men to come down the hill very slowly, but to continue rolling stones. Not long after this one of the men called out he could see a part of the leopard hidden under a bush. I ordered the men to stone him from above, but when, in spite of all the stoning, he did not move, we realized he was dead.

I have now shot scores of leopards, but have never seen another to equal this one in size. He was eight feet four inches in length, and was the most massively built leopard I have ever seen. My bullet had hit him rather too far back behind the lung. Even so, with all that loss of blood, it was remarkable he had succeeded in crawling away such a distance.

News had spread all over the town, and crowds collected to

see the leopard that had mauled a man. The leopard was carried first to the hospital, where the much bandaged Fateh Singh, stepped forward, and with folded hands, stooped to touch the paws of the departed Raja of Pari Tibba. The crowd gave him a tremendous ovation.

As a general rule, poorer class Indians hate hospital! Fateh Singh was no exception, and a couple of days later he turned up to see me.

"Did you tell the doctor you were leaving?" I asked. "No," said he, "I escaped when no one was looking!" Well, that was that, and nothing would persuade him to return.

A few days later he was fit enough to walk over the hills with me again. The berries were ripening and the bear season had begun. Every hillman regards the Himalayan Black Bear as a personal enemy. The disfigured faces one sees from time to time are tangible proof of his savage temper. He does not go in search of human beings to attack them, but woe betide the man, woman, or child, who chances to meet him on a jungle road, or, while gathering wood or grass, comes upon him unawares. He is quite ruthless in his attacks. Standing up on his hind legs, he strikes with his forepaws at his victim's face, removing eyes, ears and flesh from off the cheekbones. The results are truly terrible to behold. He is a heavily built, jet black animal with a large white "V" across his huge chest. With his powerful arms he breaks big branches as if they were twigs. He is conscious of his strength, and a full-grown male will readily engage a leopard, or even a tiger, in mortal combat. Quite often such a fight ends in death to both combatants. The hillmen say that in thick scrub the bear defeats a leopard, but, in open jungle, the leopard generally wins. Much, of course, depends on the size of the individuals engaged.

These bears are mainly nocturnal in their habits, though in quiet, undisturbed localities, they usually start feeding before dark, and do not retire to their caves until shortly before sunrise. Very early in the mornings or late in the evenings are the times a sportsman is most likely to get a shot. They climb trees with ease, and habitually do so to eat berries and acorns, even resorting sometimes to making a temporary platform for themselves high up in the trees, by bending over the branches to make a sort of machan.

During the berry season one could always expect to find a bear or two on Pari Tibba. This year, as usual, a large bear had established himself on the hill, and had defeated me time and time again in my efforts to get a shot at him. Morning after morning Fateh Singh and I had gone out long before dawn, to pick our way through deep valleys and up and down steep hillsides, just to see our friend disappearing over the crest of the next spur. It had been an exasperating chase. True it is that to see the dawn breaking over the summits of the Himalayas is a sight never to be forgotten. As the sun rises from behind the endless range of mountains, its first rays strike the snow-capped peaks, many of which are above the 20,000 foot level, and which extend as far as the eye can see, turning the eternal snows into brilliant gems of ruby, pink and gold. Then one after another, the deep indigo blue of the lesser mountains, changes first to bright emerald green, and later to sun-lit yellow, and *then* it is day. But, quite honestly, I felt I had witnessed as many dawns as ever I could have wished to see. I had begun to ache for a morning in bed! Plucking up courage, at last, I told Fateh Singh that I thought the bear had won, and that I would spend the next morning — *not* on Pari Tibba! But the Alarm clock, which had wakened me so faithfully for a week or more was determined to do its stuff! Whether it had not managed fully to unwind itself, or whether my servant had absent-mindedly started to wind it up again before realizing it was no longer needed, I shall never know, but, two hours before dawn it gave off one more short sharp tinkle, and woke me up with a start. Realizing what had happened, I turned over and tried to go to sleep again, but could I? Eventually laughing at myself for doing so, I got out of bed, woke up the astonished Fateh Singh, and told him to get ready at once.

At first light, while climbing the last hillside to reach the crest we suddenly heard a slight noise in the deep ravine below. We stopped to listen and our ears confirmed that there was something on the move. Presently, to our joy, the big bear emerged from the dense undergrowth, and started climbing obliquely up the opposite hillside a hundred yards away. He evidently realized the danger of being abroad when it was getting light, and was hurrying to get home to his cave. I was amazed at his agility, and the ease with which he moved up the

very steep hillside. Partly screened as he was by the undergrowth, I could not get a clear shot at him, so waited for him to reach the open spur towards which he was heading. He crossed the spur so fast, however, that I was unable to draw a bead on him, and he disappeared from view before I could get a shot. It looked as though the bear had won again! A minute later, however, he appeared on the spur above and here at last he paused and looked round. He was now three hundred yards away across the valley, and I realized it was my last chance. I took the shot with my little ·351 Winchester, which I knew so well. The result was instantaneous. The bear swung right round with a roar, and raced at amazing speed straight down the steep hillside, emitting roaring noises as he did so. He was moving as if the very devil was after him, and it looked as though he would go hurtling over the precipice, towards which he was heading at full speed, but, with astounding skill, he pulled up at the very edge, and then, realizing that he could go no further, looked round for a way out of his difficulties. It was then that I sent another bullet after him, and, with a yell, he launched himself over the cliff. Crashing right through an oak tree about sixty feet below, he disappeared out of sight into the dense undergrowth deep down in the ravine. A minute later we heard a long drawn-out wail. Then Fateh Singh climbed round to the rock from which the bear had made his leap into space. He called out that there was lots of blood, and after peering over the precipice, discovered the bear lying dead away down in the ravine below.

CHAPTER III

DARBARI AND SAKTU

IN THE many railway journeys I did back and forth across the face of India, I once found myself travelling in the metre-gauge railway between Gondia and Jubbulpore. It was a very hot afternoon, and I was enjoying the solitude of a compartment all to myself. It was with mixed feelings, therefore, that I regarded the entry of an elderly Englishman, who, judging by the group of officials seeing him off, was undoubtedly a policeman. He greeted me with a "Good morning". All elderly Englishmen abroad always say "Good morning", quite regardless of the actual time of day! When the train started he bid his friends good-bye, settled himself comfortably into a corner, and sat gazing out of the window in silence. This was odd. An Englishman's taciturnity is proverbial, but on a railway journey it is usually accompanied by a newspaper or a book. He had neither. He just gazed at the big jungles we were passing through, and at the hills in the distance beyond.

When at last we reached a small railway junction, which boasted of a refreshment room, we both ordered tea, which was brought to us in our compartment by a waiter.

"Wonderful jungles we passed through this afternoon," said I.

"Ah," said he, "so you noticed them. My favourite jungles. Shan't ever be able to go there again. Am retiring shortly. Am just going round, saying good-bye to everybody."

He was an Inspector General of Police. I listened with both ears cocked to the delightful stories he told of the many tigers he had slain in those jungles, and I remember to this day one part of a thrilling adventure. He had wounded a huge tiger in a beat. By all rules of the game it should have dropped stone dead, but, quite unaccountably, it had not done so, and what was more, it had gone a considerable distance without collapsing. As the blood trail diminished, it had become more and more difficult to follow up, until, at last, feeling very hungry and thirsty, my friend called a halt, and sat down to rest. The men with him also sat down to smoke. Presently, one

man got up and was walking away, when suddenly the tiger, who was too badly wounded to charge, limped out of the jungle, and went straight for him. Everyone shouted to the man to run, but he was so petrified when he saw the tiger, that he became rooted to the ground, and the tiger just picked him up in his mouth and walked off with him like a cat does with a mouse. "Why didn't you shoot him?" I asked.—"I couldn't. I had unloaded my rifle, and left it standing against a tree."

The Inspector General gave me a few of his favourite jungle addresses, and, on arrival in Jubbulpore, I wrote for a shooting permit. As I knew I could not hope for more than a week-end leave, I chose the most accessible shooting block mentioned by him, and when, at last, I got the leave, I left by train for the little station of Lamta. A walk of seven miles then brought me to the small jungle village of Kanaheri, which was my destination.

On arrival I selected a large shady tree, about a hundred yards from the village, under which I hoped to bivouac for the night. I was travelling light, just my rifle, bedding-roll, and a few stores. I was accompanied by my faithful servant, Baloo, who was always my right hand man on such occasions. News of our arrival spread through the village like wild fire, and, presently, Jirroo, headman of Kanaheri, arrived, axe on shoulder, to see me. I did not like the looks of him. He was off-hand in his manner, and did not appear to welcome my arrival in his village. He did not volunteer to speak unless spoken to, and did not seem interested in tigers. The sum total of information I could get out of him was that two or three times a week a tigress walked through the village in the dead of night, but, so far, had not interfered with the inhabitants. I tried to conceal the nervous feeling that crept over me when I received this bit of information, and, after the departure of Jirroo, ordered Baloo to lay in a good stock of firewood to keep the camp fires burning during the night! After all, we were to spend the night under a tree in the open!! No tents, no nothing, and such a friendly tigress!!!

I tried all kinds of conversation with Jirroo, but he appeared unmoved. He was interested in a contract for bamboos, which were to be cut in the forest and sent God alone knows where, but, apart from that, the jungles he lived in did not seem to interest

him in the very least. After a few minutes of his company, I could very joyfully have kicked him in the pants. Finally, however, with the prospect of tigers fast fading from my mind, I asked Jirroo if he could arrange a few beaters to beat for a sambur stag or a pig. The words seemed to strike a hidden chord! A broad smile came over the face of the hitherto disagreeable headman, and he said, with quite unexpected feeling: "Why not? Yes, why not?" and then went on to explain that his men would be returning shortly with bamboos from the forest, and we could all repair to yonder hill, where doubtless a sambur or a pig or something would oblige.

To win the hearts of the jungle people is half the battle for anyone wishing to have an enjoyable and successful shoot. The best way to do this is to provide them with a jolly good feed of meat—pig or deer or anything. Meat is a highly prized delicacy, which does not come their way too often, and is the surest and quickest way to their hearts. And, besides, it very often gives the sportsman quite a bit of fun. There is no knowing what may turn out in one of these beats for meat, sometimes even a tiger.

When about thirty of Jirroo's men had collected, we set off towards the hill. Jirroo, now transformed and smiling, arranged everything. He told the beaters exactly what to do, and then led me through the jungle to the top of the hill, at least a thousand feet above the starting line of the beat. There we sat in silence, while the beaters moved into position, and then combed the hillside up towards us. Nothing at all appeared, and the beaters were within a hundred yards of us, when suddenly, I caught sight of a magnificent sambur stag, sneaking through the jungle behind us. How he had got there was a mystery. His head and neck were stuck straight out in front of him, with his massive antlers thrown right back and almost touching his spine. His bristles were standing up all along his back and his tail was in the air, giving him a most peculiar appearance, but never had I seen a sambur with such magnificent horns! By swinging right round, I just managed to get in my shot before he disappeared. I knew I had hit him and ran after him for all I was worth. But he was badly hit, and after going a few yards, stopped, and toppled over.

Everyone was hugely delighted, including myself, for it was a trophy well worth having. He was a big stag, weighing about

650 pounds, so there was meat enough and to spare for all the inhabitants of Kanaheri.

Having achieved our object, I decided to go straight back to camp. The stag, slung on poles, was hoisted on to the shoulders of about ten aborigines, who, fortunately, seemed to regard this very strenuous task as a great privilege, for were they not going to receive a large share of the greatly coveted meat?

On reaching camp, Baloo and Jirroo both helped me remove the "cape", or "mask", and sever the head from the carcass. When we had done this, Jirroo asked permission to carry the rest of the carcass away to his own home in the village, where, he said, he would distribute the meat to all the people. I was on the point of granting this simple request, when Baloo intervened. "Sah," he said, in his broken English, "peoples saying this man very bad man. Peoples say tell master no good give meat to him. He will take it plenty money from poor peoples. No give meat free." This was rather awkward! I thought quickly, and then told Jirroo that I wanted the skin and that the stag would have to be skinned where it was. That solved the difficulty. Later, I gave Jirroo a lion's share of the meat, but also saw that all others got their share free.

It was while the meat was being distributed that two men arrived. They were just aborigines, belonging to the aboriginal tribes of those parts. One was a Gond and the other a Baiga. Believing them to be just the usual hangers-on wanting meat, arriving in the hopes of getting something for nothing, I paid them no attention. It was not until the crowd had dispersed that I realized they were wanting to speak to me.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Sahib," came the simple answer. "We are shikaris (hunters)".

Now, although I had wandered through a good many jungles between the Nilgiris and the Himalayas, I had yet to meet the legendary shikari one reads about in books—the man who could lead one straight to the tiger's den, or track the mighty bison to his lair! Almost contemptuously I said, "And what kind of hunters are you?"

"Sahib," once again came the simple answer, "we are hunters of tiger and of bison."

"Where do you live?" I asked.

"We live at Bhondwa, a village eight miles from here."

"Then what brings you here to-day?"

"We came to see about bamboos from the forest."

Bamboos! Bamboos!! Bamboos!!! It seemed to me all men in this part of the world were bamboo-minded! Would it ever be possible to make them think of anything else? But my thoughts were interrupted. . . . "We have to-day seen a very big bull bison about a mile from here."

On hearing this, I asked the gentlemen to sit down! The sun was setting, and it was much too late to go after the bison that day, but they thought he would probably remain in the same locality overnight, and we could find him again in the morning. They informed me they were practised in the art of tracking, and had every hope of being able to show me the bison.

And so it was that I first met Darbari, the Baiga, and Saktu, the Gond. Little did I think that some day they would be counted amongst my best friends, and that I would remember them to the end of my days. There was nothing attractive about their looks. Both had the typical aboriginal features of their tribes, and both were of small stature. Saktu looked the older of the two, but, actually, it was the other way round. This gave Darbari precedence, and, although they always worked as a pair, Darbari was the leader.

I spent an unhappy night under my tree. It was the middle of December, and remarkably chilly at night in the open. Baloo covered up his head, got well down under his blankets and soon was snoring sonorously. How I wished I could have done the same! Lying in my valise, I watched the firelight flickering on the sambur mask, which had been removed from the skull, and was now hanging suspended by a string from a branch, out of the reach of jackals. A stick had been thrust through both earholes, so as to open out the mask to air, and now, in the firelight, it looked like the face of a horrible demon. I wondered, too, if the friendly tigress would pass through the village, and then come along to say, "How d'you do?" to me under my tree! The Central Provinces had a very bad reputation for man-eaters. I tried to console myself that man-eaters were somewhat rare in the Balaghat District, where I happened to be at that precise moment! Nevertheless, I had visions of myself being carried off like a mouse, and I just could not sleep. Occasionally a sambur "pooked", and later a

leopard started roaring on the hill about a mile away, repeating his "sawing" roar over and over again. I lay awake for hours listening to the jungle noises, and the snores of the care-free Baloo. And then, eventually I must have fallen asleep, for, instead of feeling the hot breath of the tigress on my cheek, I awoke to find Baloo gently shaking my shoulder, to wake me up for my early morning mug of tea.

At the first glow of the Eastern sky, I sallied forth with the two trackers, and, passing through the village, took the forest road heading eastwards towards the hills. Not far from the village, we came across the tracks of the tigress. She had not entered the village that night, but both Darbari and Saktu confirmed that she often did so, and that they had seen her pug-marks leading through the main alley. I had quite made up my mind that, if ever I came there again, I would at least bring a tent, if only for self protection, and peace of mind at night! It was cold and we walked briskly to try and warm ourselves. It was just beginning to get light enough to see. Our road led into a deep sal forest interspersed with bamboo clumps, the joy of any bison's heart. The trackers pointed out where they had seen the bison the evening before, but we did not stop there to pick up his tracks. Instead, we went straight to the nearest water, about half a mile further on, a series of small pools in an otherwise dried up watercourse.

At the first pool the trackers circled round the water's edge, but shook their heads. There were many tracks there but not the ones we wanted. We then went on to the next, and the next, until, at last, I saw Darbari nodding his head. The tracks of the big bull bison were there. I joined him immediately, but, to be quite honest, I had a shock of disappointment. The tracks looked most unimpressively small! They were hardly larger than those of a village bull. Having read in books that the Indian Bison, or Bos Gaurus (to use his Latin designation), was the biggest of all species of bovines still existing on our planet, I had quite expected to see enormous tracks to correspond with the size of this huge animal. For an animal reputed to stand over six feet at the shoulder, and with several on record measuring seven feet, the tracks seemed absurdly small. I mention this, because I feel sure the same thought would strike anyone seeing bison tracks for the first time. The bison is essentially an animal of the hills, and naturalists give this as

the explanation for his very small feet, which are very hard and therefore more suitable for the hilly country he lives in.

Both trackers were looking well pleased, and assured me that the tracks were very fresh. They led from the drinking pool to a Forest Line, which we followed for about half a mile. Here the tracks were clearly visible in the dew-covered grass. Further on, however, the bison had left the Forest Line, and turned into the dense jungle, skirting the foot of the hill, where the ground was as hard as a brick, and the dew had not penetrated through the foliage of the trees. To find any sign of the tracks was now very difficult, and was definitely a job for the experts. I was spellbound watching Darbari and Saktu pick out and read the signs which to me were quite imperceptible. A crushed leaf on the ground, a blade of grass nibbled, a twig snapped in two, a displaced stone, leaves nibbled from a bush in passing, all these were the signs which caught the expert eye and helped them unravel the trail. If they lost the trail temporarily, the two trackers separated, and turning in opposite directions, scouted round until one of them found a fresh clue. He then called us up with a click of his tongue, pointed to the clue with the handle of his small axe, and after receiving an approving nod from his partner, moved forward again on the trail. Needless to say we moved in dead silence. My bare-footed companions were as noiseless as cats moving through the dense undergrowth, while I did all I could to control my clumsy feet. At last we came across some droppings, a cow-pat of phenomenal size. Darbari immediately stuck his big toe right into the dung, and then looked at me and grinned. He was not trying to be funny. The warmth of the dung had disclosed that our quarry was near at hand. Darbari now whispered to me to keep my rifle ready.

We had been climbing uphill most of the way, and had now reached the edge of a small plateau. Here, while we were pausing to take stock of our surroundings, we suddenly heard the breaking of leaves ahead of us. The trackers pointed to a bush on the far side of a clearing, whence the noise had come. The wind was in our favour, and after a few seconds we moved forward again, advancing to within about twenty yards of the bush. Then there were more noises, and it became quite obvious that the bison was somewhere there. We could hear him browsing on the leaves of the bush, and could actually

hear him making the snuffling noises cattle make when feeding. My friends now slipped behind trees! I too was just considering getting behind one, when the bush was violently agitated, and an enormous bull bison stepped into the clearing in front of me. For the first time in my life I felt almost too frightened to shoot. Never had I imagined a bison could be so colossal. The biggest bull at a cattle show would have looked like a calf beside him. At that moment, which I shall always remember, I agreed instantly with the naturalists who had called him "The most magnificent of all the bovines".

And then I did one of the stupidest things I have ever done in my life. I raised my double barrelled black powder ·577 rifle, and aimed behind the bison's shoulder. There was nothing much wrong with that, but as the bison was only fifteen yards from me and was looking straight at me, I slipped a finger round each trigger. It may seem excusable in such circumstances to do this, especially as a bison has a reputation of being terribly dangerous when wounded, but the result was shattering! When I pressed the trigger, there was a thundering report and a cloud of smoke, followed immediately by a resounding snort from the bison, and I felt myself being hurled backwards to the ground. When the smoke lifted, I found myself sitting on the ground, with my trigger fingers tingling with pain, and the bison gone! When I opened the breech of my rifle to reload, I found both cartridges had been fired. My first reaction to this discovery was one of joy. Surely, after receiving this double dose of lead the bison could not have gone far to die!

After a few minutes, we picked up the trail, but to my utter shame and dismay, there was not a drop of blood to be found anywhere. It seemed unbelievable that I could have missed, but that was exactly what had happened. I can only imagine that having had fingers round both triggers, the recoil had caused me to press the second trigger just the minutest fraction of a second after the first cartridge had been fired, so that the second one went off before the first bullet had left the barrel and the jump of the rifle had sent both bullets flying up in the air. I can think of no other explanation.

The trackers assured me there was absolutely no hope of coming up with the bison again that day. They pointed out that he must have put at least three miles between himself and us, and, if he did stop to rest, he would do so with both eyes

open and both ears cocked, so that we could not possibly hope to take him by surprise again. But I was feeling mad with myself, and, out of sheer shame, begged the trackers to help me find the bison again. I think they must have realized how mortified I was feeling. After sitting down for a smoke and a chat between themselves, they said, "Chalo Sahib," (Come on, Sahib) "We'll see what we can do." It was a fool's errand, but, at that moment, it meant a lot to me.

For five or six hours we followed the trail, up hill and down dale for miles through dense undergrowth, over the densely wooded hills. Only in one place had the bison stopped to sit down, but had evidently soon thought better of it, and gone on again. I had not had a mouthful to eat and was beginning to feel hungry, and had also begun to realize how futile it was to go on. When we reached a cool, shady little dell, surrounded on all sides by hills, I called a halt. We sat down in silence to rest a while. Darbari and Saktu got out their tobacco pouches and were preparing to smoke again, when a slight sound came to our ears. We listened intently, and presently the sound was repeated. As we were literally sitting on the trail at the time, it seemed quite possible the bison had decided to lie up in the coolness of this little dell, specially as it contained a little water surrounded by tall reeds. The trackers got up very quietly, and beckoned me to follow. Undoubtedly there was something in the reeds about thirty yards ahead, but a small knoll screened the animal from view. We crept forward a few yards, until the trackers, quite obviously, did not like to venture any nearer, so I removed my shoes, and on hands and knees crept forward to the little knoll. When I peeped over the top, I saw a big black animal in the reeds, not more than six yards from me. I could clearly see the outline of the back, and even the hair, but the front part of the animal was hidden by the reeds. My heart began thumping loudly. I took steady aim at the spine, and using only one finger this time, fired both barrels in quick succession. The animal uttered a piercing shriek, but the smoke prevented me from seeing the rest.

I had shot an enormous black wild boar.

Darbari and Saktu were grinning with glee. "Didn't you hear us tell you it was a pig?" they asked. My answer was an angry "*no*!".

I had never seen a Central Provinces boar. The wild pigs I

had seen in other parts of India were grizzled, and looked more grey than black, but this one was as black as a bear. He was so large, that it would have taken about six men to carry him, and there were only three of us. We covered him over with grass and leaves to protect him from vultures, and returned to camp, from where a party of men was sent out to fetch him in.

It had been a day of the bitterest disappointments for me, but the trackers and inhabitants of the village were delighted with the result of our day's work. Aboriginals prefer pork to any other kind of meat. Quite unwittingly I had become immensely popular, and, before I left that afternoon, was given a most cordial invitation to return!

One afternoon early in February I was sitting on my veranda in Nagpur, when a telegraph peon arrived on a bicycle and presented me with the following telegram: "Today tiger killed buffalo Chacheri jungle—from Saktu shikari." The telegram had been sent from Charegaon, a small station on the metre-gauge railway to Jubbulpore.

Here I must explain that although about eighty miles separated my headquarters from the jungles of my newly-made aborigine friends, Darbari and Saktu, they had kept in touch with me, and had been making untiring efforts to bait a fine big tiger for me. This tiger had been striking terror into the hearts of the jungle people around Chacheri, by stopping bullock carts on jungle roads, and lifting a bullock from under the nose of the driver, just whenever he felt inclined to do so. Having removed a bullock from under the yoke, he then proceeded to drag it to the side of the road and devour it with angry growls, in full view of the terrified occupants of the cart, all unarmed men, women, and children. The activities of this tiger had brought practically all jungle traffic to a standstill. I was Adjutant of my Regiment in those days, but my Colonel very good-humouredly gave me two days leave. My servant Baloo got my kit and a few stores together, and we caught the nine o'clock evening train for Charegaon, arriving there at the ungodly hour of three o'clock in the morning.

I shall never forget that arrival. After throwing our kit out of the train, my bearer and I found ourselves standing alone on a deserted platform. We had hoped the shikaris and some coolies would be there to meet us, but there was no one in

sight. Chacheri, where the tiger had killed, was four or five miles away. The Railway Station, which boasted of two, or perhaps three, very dim oil lamps, presented a truly dismal and unhopeful outlook, but the station master who had tapped out the telegram proved to be a really good fellow. He aroused a servant from his slumbers, and ordered him to escort me to the village a short distance away, to try and find someone to accompany me to Chacheri. We went from house to house, but the inmates all refused to enter the jungles at that unearthly hour, until at last we found a man, braver or perhaps more mercenary than the others, who volunteered to accompany me, provided I would pay him five rupees, (equivalent to about a week's wages for a man of his type in those days). I had to leave Baloo and the kit at the Railway station, in charge of the stout-hearted station master, who promised to send it on to Chacheri by bullock cart as soon as it was daylight.

A thin moon was shining somewhat feebly, but thin and feeble though it was, it proved to be a boon. Without it I doubt whether we could have found our way through the intervening jungle, which though not very dense was dense enough to be discomfiting at that time of night, especially as it was well known to hold tigers and leopards. In answer to my inquiry, the guide assured me, however, that there had been no man-eaters for some time. This at least was comforting, and it relieved me immediately of the burden of carrying my rifle!

We got to Chacheri just before dawn. The hamlet consisted of about a score of grass huts, and the inmates were all sound asleep. The village dogs resented our entry into the village, and made enough noise barking to waken the dead. We too then began adding to the uproar by shouting out the names of the shikaris. Awakened from their slumbers, and rubbing their eyes apologetically, Darbari and Saktu now emerged from a broken-down abandoned hut, which had served them as shelter for the night. I pretended to be angry, and asked why they had not met me at the railway station. "But," said they, "how were we to know that you would come?"

They told me now how everything had come about. They had heard of this tiger at Chacheri, which was about fifteen miles from their own village, and knowing that I wanted a really big tiger, had decided to try and bait him for me. They had tied up a buffalo bait at the junction of a nullah with the

Weinganga River, where they had seen the tracks of the big tiger in the sand. The tiger had killed the bait and Saktu had gone to the Railway station to send me that telegram. Now the tiger had eaten half the carcass, and was lying up in the dense jungle near his kill. The kill, they said, was about a mile from the village, only a few yards from the river itself.

Darbari and Saktu dived back into the broken hut to collect their little axes, without which they never ventured into the jungle. A minute later we were racing along as fast as our legs would allow, to try and reach the river before first light. We followed the road which led to a ford in the river, and actually only just succeeded in winning our race against time. As we reached the river bank it was just beginning to get light.

The nullah containing the kill was about a furlong to our right, but instead of attempting to go through the dense jungle to get there, we decided to follow the bank of the river itself. Just as we left the road to do so, a troupe of grey monkeys started springing about in the trees, screaming their warning alarm: "Khok! Khok! . . . Khok-a-Khok-a-Khok!!"—Tiger! Tiger! Beware! Beware!! They were extremely agitated but presently started calming down and looking in our direction, from which the shikaris concluded they were alarmed at our approach. I was young and inexperienced in these matters, and accepted this view, but when we descended the river bank fifty yards further on we found the fresh tracks of the tiger leading up from the water's edge into the dense jungle from where the monkeys had uttered their alarm. It struck me the old tiger had been down to the river just ahead of us to have his morning drink.

A minute or two later we reached the junction of the river with the nullah where the kill had taken place. This nullah was at right angles to the river, with tall grass on both sides, and steep banks rising about fifteen feet up to the dense jungle above. The shikaris were in the act of pointing out the position of the dead buffalo, about thirty yards ahead, when a magnificent tiger stepped out of the jungle, right on top of the bank overlooking the kill. Whether the shikaris made some sudden movement which caught his eye I cannot say, but as I raised my rifle slowly, the tiger turned his head sharply and saw us, and immediately crouched. A look of astonishment came over his face, and with his ears laid well back, he stared at us. He

presented an easy target, so I took careful aim and fired. The tiger swung back on his haunches, and then disappeared into the jungle, without making a sound. I had taken very careful aim, but I had a strong feeling I had missed! Proof, however, could not be obtained immediately, for, to have gone up that bank then to look for a blood trail, would have been nothing short of lunacy.

The shikaris assured me the tiger was wounded. They pointed out, however, that the jungle was very dense, and that it would be advisable to drive a herd of buffaloes through the undergrowth to try and locate him. The buffaloes, they said, could be obtained only by going back to the village, which, after all, was not so far away, and perhaps my bearer would have arrived and I could have a cup of tea. All this sounded very reasonable, and, although the whole plan rather smacked of a desire on the part of the shikaris to put off the evil hour, I agreed to carry out their suggestion, so back to the village we went.

My bearer had not arrived, but, about half an hour later, the shouts of the children and the barking of the dogs, heralded his very welcome approach. I had selected a camp site under some large shady mango trees, not far from the village, and with the aid of the villagers had collected plenty of firewood and got a good fire going. When Baloo arrived it did not take long to prepare a pot of boiling hot tea, and soon my wonderful servant had cooked and produced a most enjoyable breakfast. I often wondered what I would have done without the willing and resourceful Baloo.

Meanwhile the shikaris had approached the village herdsmen about lending their buffaloes, but in vain. They flatly refused to have anything to do with the idea of driving their buffaloes through the jungle to look for a wounded tiger, and for this I could hardly blame them! Having eaten and drunk well, I now called up Darbari and Saktu, and, taking a couple of spare men with us, we set forth to tackle the tiger ourselves. Instead of taking the road we had followed that morning, we now tried a short cut through the forest, which the shikaris said would lead us to the same spot from the opposite direction. We waded across a small stream, and then, after passing through a lovely forest of big trees, eventually emerged into a sandy nullah, about a furlong short of the kill. There, having taken

my rifle from the shikaris, and made quite sure that it was loaded, we proceeded in dead silence down the sandy bed of the nullah, which led tortuously towards the river. Vultures were flying low, skimming over our heads, while others were flapping noisily in the trees above. We hurried our steps, thinking they were descending to demolish the kill, but on rounding the last bend a most wonderful sight greeted our eyes. Not more than thirty yards away, in full view, sitting on top of the bank was a huge tiger. *We gasped when we saw him.* He raised his head with a jerk, and his ears went back immediately. If he growled, I was too excited to hear him. Very quickly I took aim at his left shoulder and fired. He turned over sideways, and, without uttering a sound, rolled down the steep bank into the tall grass below, where, still in complete silence, he remained hidden from our view.

The silence led us to think the tiger must be dead. To make quite sure, however, I sent one of the spare men up the opposite bank to climb a tree and peer into the long grass. He had climbed only about fifteen feet when he started beckoning frantically to us to join him. We hurried over to him, only to be told the tiger was sitting up and was very much alive. I did my best to climb that tree to join him, but it was devoid of branches to lay hold of, and I could not climb with my toes like the others. With much pushing and shoving the shikaris eventually managed to get me up to the lowest branch, and from there I succeeded in pulling myself up a bit higher, and at last reached a position from which I could see the tiger. He was sitting up on his haunches like a dog, swaying from side to side. I felt so insecure without any foothold in the tree that I discarded my ·405 in favour of my little ·351 Winchester, and with this I hit the tiger in the neck. He collapsed immediately.

The tiger was a magnificent specimen, with a wonderful ruff which added splendour to his enormous head. That he was very old was borne out by the fact that his teeth were badly worn down, and he had the drooping side-locks like the "Dundreary whiskers" once so popular with our great grandsires (worn only by Tiger Patriarchs). His skin, with head mounted, still occupies a place of honour on the wall of a room dedicated to my earliest trophies, the snarling image of Kipling's immortal "Shere Khan", who, like him, had trodden the jungle paths by

the Weinganga River, but unlike him, had not indulged in lifting bullocks out of bullock carts, to eat them snarling savagely by the roadside, while their terrified owners shrieked in horror, and ran like squirrels up the nearest trees!

This old tiger won my admiration over one thing—even when mortally wounded, he never uttered a sound.

CHAPTER IV

A VERY DANGEROUS RIFLE

THERE IS always a thrill about the day of arrival in the jungles. Perhaps it is because the much-looked-forward-to day has arrived at last. It is refreshing to feel that the bonds of civilization have been cast off, if only for the time being, and the sight of the jungles stirs up many thoughts and new hopes of expected thrills and adventure.

I had decided to spend my Christmas leave in the jungles, and once again found myself with my aboriginal friends at Lamta.

I did not have to wait long for a thrill. A few hours after my arrival, I set out on foot, with my trackers Darbari and Saktu, for the hills three miles away, mainly with the object of looking for tiger tracks. We chatted as we went along, for there was little hope of meeting any game, but when we reached a small jungle village at the foot of the hills, our attention was attracted by the alarm cries of grey monkeys, on a small hill about three hundred yards away. There was no mistaking from the oft repeated cries that they were greatly perturbed. Quite obviously they were being upset by some carnivorous enemy. Grey monkeys, (langurs), are the most reliable informants of all jungle animals. They seldom make a mistake and never give a false alarm. My trackers ran into the village to borrow a goat, but the goats had all been sent out to graze, and, to my dismay, Darbari returned with a thin dun-coloured village dog. I am a dog-lover, and did not fancy the idea of using a dog as a bait, but the shikaris assured me it was the only animal available, and begged me to hurry, or the great chance would be gone. We ran to the foot of the hill with the dog. The monkeys were still cursing loudly, and we looked round hurriedly to find a spot for our ambush.

Just inside the forest, hidden from view of the village, was a small clearing, surrounded by dense jungle. It was just the very place we were looking for. Darbari and I hid ourselves behind a bamboo clump, while Saktu tied the dog to a tree

stump, about twenty-five yards from us, on the other side of the clearing. Having tied the dog, Saktu ran for the village.

Believing himself to be alone the dog started making frantic efforts to free himself, and while he was doing this the jungles resounded to the full-throated roar of a leopard. This was more than the dog could stand. He began uttering the most heart-rending yells, and redoubled his efforts to free himself. Poor devil! I did feel sorry for him, but he was playing his part extremely well.

The next few moments were intensely exciting. The leopard could not possibly have helped hearing the dog, and as dogs fall an easy prey while chasing monkeys in the jungle, the leopard would now leave the monkeys, and turn his attention to the dog. There was no knowing, of course, which way the leopard would come. When I looked round nervously, I was horrified to find a rather attractive little pathway about a yard behind us! I was just whispering to Darbari to keep a look out in that direction, when the dog suddenly stopped jumping about, and began staring fixedly at the jungle to our left. He had spotted something we could not see, but he was quite right. A second or two later, out trotted a large leopard, but, instead of making a dash for the dog, as I had expected, he seemed in no hurry, and what was more, actually stopped in the middle of the clearing to sum up the situation. He seemed astonished that the dog had not run away! That would have been the time to bowl him over, but the bamboos prevented me from swinging my rifle. Then he lolloped forward leisurely towards the dog. To make quite sure of getting in a good shot I should have waited till he had seized the dog, but who could possibly have resisted firing at such a desperate moment? The leopard, with tail held high, was about to make the fatal grab, when I fired quickly to save the dog's life. The leopard made two short quick jumps straight in the air, turning towards us as he did so, and then raced past us, roaring as he went by. It all happened so quickly that I did not have time to reload my single barrel ·405 Winchester. The leopard had failed to see us, or he could have, and would have, made a pretty good mess of us both.

Loud grunts and growling noises were now coming from the jungle behind us. It would have been dangerous to move, and

we sat like mice waiting for the noises to cease. When they did, we crept out of our hiding place, and crossed over to release the dog. Like ourselves, he too had maintained a discreet silence, but now he was overjoyed to see us, and it did not take him many seconds to cover that furlong back to the village. Darbari and I followed slowly, and presently were joined by Saktu. Then we all sat down to wait a while, before starting the dangerous job before us.

We had been greatly puzzled by the leisurely way the leopard had attacked the dog. Normally leopards rush in to seize their prey. Perhaps he had already killed and eaten a monkey, and was therefore in no immediate hurry to obtain food.

Half an hour later we returned to the clearing to pick up the trail. For about twenty yards there was no blood, but, after that, there were a few patches here and there, and finally a large patch and a piece of broken bone. This was where the leopard had sat down, and frightened us with his grunting and growling. Beyond this spot, however, there was no blood trail whatsoever. In the circumstances it was extremely difficult to make any headway, and, although we continued to search until it was nearly dark, we failed to come up with the leopard that day. Next morning not more than fifty yards from where we had left off the previous evening we found him lying dead. The bullet had hit rather low, but had smashed his right shoulder.

And now, behold the hand of Fate! A few evenings later, while returning with a party of men along a jungle road, the little dun-coloured dog was whipped off by a leopard, never to be seen again.

A day or two later I was standing on a little hillock near the Forest Bungalow, scanning the edge of the forest with my field-glasses, when I spied two figures emerging from the jungle, about a mile away. They were stepping out briskly. This was unusual, because the jungle folk seldom hurry, though I must say their normal swinging gait is very misleading. They cover the ground much faster than you would imagine, and to realize this you should try walking with them. You will find yourself having to step out.

When they came nearer and I was able to recognize my two trackers I instinctively guessed that something important must have happened. True enough, when they reached camp they

were smiling all over their faces, and announced that a tiger had killed a bait about five miles away.

It was then about ten o'clock. After collecting all the paraphernalia required for such an occasion, we started off with the least possible delay.

It was a hot walk out, in spite of the fact that it was nearly Christmas. Before getting to the kill we were met by the men who had tied out the buffalo bait, and they led us to a stream to show us the tracks of the tigress, who, after quenching her thirst there, had followed the jungle road for two miles, leading to the kill. Judging by the size of the tracks, she was a very large tigress.

On arrival at the kill, I was disappointed to find it lying by the side of the road, uneaten. Its neck had been broken in approved tiger fashion, and the fang marks in the neck muscles behind the ears left no doubt that the deed had been done by a tiger. It was strange, however, that the carcass had not been touched, and the only conclusion we could come to was that the tigress must have killed at dawn, and been disturbed by people using the road, before she had had time to feed.

The jungle on both sides of the road was very dense, and as there was no knowing where the tigress could have gone to lie up for the day, we decided it would be useless trying to catch her in a beat. Sitting up over the kill was the only alternative, but the fact that the kill had been abandoned did not make this too hopeful either. However, as there was a suitable tree only a few yards away, I ordered the shikaris to start putting up a machan.

It was now about one o'clock, and the whole jungle seemed asleep. While the men were putting up the machan, I selected a nice cool spot a few yards away, and settled down to some sandwiches. My presence there would ensure that the men worked in silence. I regret to say that even some of the best shikaris do not observe the golden rule of silence while tying up a machan. But machan-tying is an exasperating job which demands real skill in climbing trees, hanging on to branches like monkeys while doing the tying, and great patience to keep one's temper. The two or three helpers always have their own ideas about how it should be done. And it is difficult to refrain from ticking them off when they do everything the wrong way. Now I was being highly amused by the antics of the three or

four gentlemen struggling with the small string bed, poised precariously aloft in the branches of the tree. Scowls and angry gesticulations—but silence!

Suddenly the peaceful silence of the jungle was broken by the most piercing screams of a pig in distress. It is difficult to describe in words this particular kind of noise, but once heard it cannot be forgotten. It was so loud and so near that it caused consternation amongst my men, who apparently recognized the full meaning of what they were hearing. The men in the tree scrambled hastily down to the ground, and, to my astonishment, began running for their lives. Why they should have come down from the safety of the tree to do this I could not understand. The shikaris hurried towards me, crouching low as they peered into the jungle in the direction of the noise. In breathless gasps they told me the tiger was killing a wild pig, and that it would therefore not return to our dead buffalo. Much against the advice of the shikaris, I decided to stalk the tiger. Followed closely by Darbari, I set off in the direction of the screams.

For about half a minute the screams continued, and then ended as abruptly as they had begun. Darbari and I had slunk forward about a hundred yards, and must have been within forty yards of our quarry when the noises ceased. The grass was waist-high, and the jungle very dense. Without any noise to guide us we had to move very cautiously, with every nerve strained and eyes and ears wide open! Eventually, while creeping towards a small hillock, from which we hoped to get a better view, Darbari stopped to test the wind. He was trickling some powdered dust through his fingers to do this, when suddenly both of us caught sight of the tiger across a small shallow nullah, only about fifteen yards away. It was standing broadside on, with its flanks still heaving through its recent exertions. Its head and shoulders were behind a bamboo clump, and it was quite oblivious of our presence. I was so overjoyed when I saw this wonderful chance that I quickly raised my old ·405, aimed for a lung shot and fired. The tiger "Woofed" twice, and bounded away. To my dismay, a small sapling, between me and the tiger, fell in half, cut through by my bullet!

I raced to the little hillock, hoping to get in another shot, but the tiger had disappeared. Some animal did dash through the grass, but strangely enough this was not in the direction the

tiger had taken. Mad with rage and disappointment, I returned to the dejected Darbari, whose looks spoke the words he dared not utter. What a frightful mess I had made of the whole thing! I must have been blind with excitement not to have noticed the small sapling in the way!

Very despondently Darbari and I now crossed over the small nullah to where the tiger had been standing, and there, behind the bamboo clump, lay an enormous wild boar, stone dead. This so delighted my pork-eating companion that he practically whooped with joy, and immediately called out to Saktu and the others to join us quickly. They arrived with looks of apprehension on their faces, but when they saw the dead boar, their faces too lit up with joy. Bless that pig! The loss of the tiger now seemed a matter of complete inconsequence! Darbari and Saktu most graciously pointed to the wounds the splinters of my bullet had made in the pig, and not only in the pig but in several bamboos and another tree as well! A truly marvellous shot! Closer examination of the boar, however, disclosed that one hind leg had been broken just above the hock, and that the back of his neck had been bitten through by the tiger. To my mind, the cause of his death was not in the least due to any part I had taken in the proceedings!

When the excitement subsided, we decided to form a line and walk through the grass to look for traces of blood from the tiger. Actually, we could hardly have expected to find any, and we undertook to do this more in fun than in earnest. It felt more like looking for a snipe than a tiger, but before we had gone many yards there was a yell of fright from Saktu, who turned and bolted back. And no wonder! For there, under a tree, only a few yards ahead, lay the tiger. We could hardly believe our eyes. It looked like a tiger lying asleep. I stopped to satisfy myself it was not breathing, and then advanced towards it with my rifle at the ready, being begged by all not to do so. But the tiger really was quite dead. There was no bullet mark on it anywhere, but it was still bleeding from its mouth and nose.

Well, that was that, but Darbari was not fully satisfied. He had heard the noise of that other animal dashing away, and now insisted on going over to investigate. To allay the fears and suspicions of the readers of this story, I must say at once

that we did not expect to find another tiger lying dead! No, Darbari merely wanted to clear up the mystery of the noise we had heard. He argued that no jungle animal would have stood there while the tigress was killing the boar and there must have been another tiger. Though we were unable to find any clue to solve the mystery I personally think Darbari was right and it must have been another tiger. It is well known that a big boar such as this one can stand up to a single tiger, and quite often get the better of the exchanges. This boar had been rooting about near the bamboo clump, and I rather fancy one tiger had broken his leg, hamstringing him, while the tigress had seized him by the neck. The other tiger probably spotted us approaching and slunk away, leaving the tigress to her fate.

Our entry into camp that evening, with the very large tigress on one bullock cart and the enormous boar on another, was triumphal. I sent to the village of Lamta for a four gallon drum of the most vicious toddy, and I need hardly say that "A very happy evening was enjoyed by all". Prohibition in those days was unknown!

When we skinned the tigress next morning, we found a splinter of my bullet, no bigger than an air-gun slug, embedded in her heart.

When a tiger is killed, hundreds of people come long distances to see it. When they catch sight of the tiger, they fold their hands in pious reverence, then step forward, and, bowing low, touch its paws with their hands. Others, specially the old and decrepit, come to beg a little tiger fat, which is considered an excellent remedy for rheumatism. Amongst the assembled crowd, I was surprised to see my old friend Jirroo of Kanaheri, who had just walked seven miles to tell me a very large tiger, apparently an old acquaintance and regular visitor, had arrived back in his jungles. Darbari and Saktu welcomed the news. They knew the old tiger too, but said he had once been wounded over a buffalo kill, and now absolutely refused to touch a buffalo bait.

Early next morning we set out, with the day's provisions in our haversacks, prepared to walk the fourteen miles there and back, and ready to spend the day in making our reconnaissance.

Our luck was in. After scouting round for an hour or two we came across fresh pug-marks of the extra large variety, leading into a patch of jungle which the shikaris said was a

deathtrap for any tiger in a beat. All that remained to be done now was to persuade the old tiger to take a bait.

My suggestion to tie out a pig was turned down by Darbari. Tigers love pork, but, Darbari argued, it would be useless unless I agreed to sit up over the live bait. Such a large tiger would finish off any pig, however big, at one sitting, and that would be a shameful waste of good money and good pig! It would mean sitting up all night, in hopes that the tiger would pass that way, whereas he might not come that way again for several nights. No, it would be quite useless to tie out anything but a large animal.

For religious reasons, tying out a bullock was taboo, but what other large animal could we possibly find? The shikaris began an earnest conversation in their own dialect, which was Greek to me, and I could not understand what they were saying to each other. Presently, however, they turned to me and asked permission to visit the nearest village, to see what they could find. I agreed and sat down on a jungle road to await their return.

A couple of hours later, with broad smiles, they returned, leading a mule. What a dilapidated hat-rack he was; every rib and practically every bone of his emaciated body was protruding. It would have delighted the heart of any Veterinary Officer in the Army to mark him "C & D" (Cast and Destroy). He was very old and completely worn out. On seeing him I told the shikaris I did not think any self-respecting tiger would touch him. Taking my remark seriously, they both explained that any tiger would absolutely love to eat him! Anyway, as there was still quite some time to spare, we allowed the old moke to graze. How he managed to do even this was difficult to understand, as his teeth were completely worn down. It stunned me I should have to pay a fabulous price for such a bag-o'-bones!

I had always hated the idea of tying out a live bait. To me it seemed grossly unfair. I argued with myself that it was a practice that had come down through the ages, and was the accepted means of baiting tigers, but I disliked it all the same. The first time I sat up over a live goat, the wretched thing bleated so pitifully that I got down from my tree, untied it, and led it home, much to the disgust of my shikaris! Now, hardened by experience, I watched the old moke being tied to the stake.

Here I must explain that tigers, unlike lions, hunt by sight and hearing, and have practically no sense of smell. Putting out a dead bait is quite useless. It would have to be in a high state of decomposition before a tiger would realize it was there. This is an undoubted drawback, which leaves one with no other alternative except the live bait. Many have argued that this is not as cruel as it seems, and that the end justifies the means, for it brings to book a tiger, who kills thousands of animals during his career. Nevertheless it is a practice of which I have never really approved.

At dusk we tied him to a tree stump and as we turned to return to camp, the monkeys on a nearby hill could be heard shrieking their curses at some hated foe.

When a scout went out in the morning, the old mule was gone. The rope was broken and there was blood, a drag, and the tracks of a big tiger in the sand.

Accompanied by the shikaris I hurried to the spot. Very eagerly we followed the drag, which for the first hundred yards followed the course of a dry river-bed, but then the cunning old tiger had dragged his kill up a steep bank into some very tall elephant grass. I followed the drag some little distance into this tall grass, until my heart failed me. Monkeys in the vicinity were sitting in the treetops, uttering their alarm cries from time to time. Tiger! Tiger!! Beware! Beware!! Obviously, the old tiger was near at hand, and, might easily have turned nasty. Abandoning the idea of finding the kill also meant abandoning the idea of sitting up over it, which for economic reasons would have suited me better. There was no alternative now but to have a beat.

Three or four men were sent post haste to the neighbouring villages to collect beaters, but returned a couple of hours later to say it was market day and everyone had gone to the bazaar at Lamta eight miles away. No one was expected back much before four o'clock in the afternoon. This was shattering news!

At about three o'clock, however, beaters started assembling, arriving in twos and threes, until by about four o'clock we had collected over a hundred men. Darbari now split them into two parties, keeping about forty-five men as "stops", and reserving the rest for the beat. In silence the beaters were placed on their starting line, and we then started putting the stops up trees on the right flank of the beat, following a line

leading up to my machan, which was in the apex of a wide "V", and Darbari then led the remaining stops along the other flank, putting the stops up trees one by one until he joined up with the beaters, thus completely ringing in the tiger. It was the first time I had seen this done and was most interested. When all was ready it was Darbari's duty to give the first shout as a signal for the beat to begin.

Unfortunately for me, the men who had been entrusted with putting up my machan had placed it only about seven feet from the ground, well within easy reach of an angry tiger, and now, at the eleventh hour, there was no time to make any alterations.

While I was waiting alone for the beat to begin, a leopard began roaring on the hill behind me. He roared three or four times, but his was the only voice disturbing the jungles. And then suddenly Darbari's signal heralded an outburst of fiendish yelling that literally shook the jungles. The beat had begun. What a wonderful sound! I waited feeling almost sick with excitement. But hardly had the beaters uttered more than a few yells, when I heard the quick "Tap! Tap! Tap!" of a stop on my right, followed almost immediately by the next, and the next, and then a truly enormous tiger appeared, coming over a small knoll about thirty yards in front of me. He was moving at a brisk walk, and, although I had been warned by experienced hunters never to fire at a tiger in a beat until he was abreast of the machan, I was too excited to wait, and when he was about twenty yards away I drew a bead on his shoulder and fired.

The tiger sprang like a flash into the nullah between us, and reappeared a second later coming obliquely towards me. I had tried to reload, but my very old single barrel ·405 rifle had jammed. And now there was the tiger standing only about five yards from me. He was in a towering rage, and with every nerve tensed and every muscle braced, was looking for his assailant, but, by the Grace of God he did not see me. Beside me in the machan was my shotgun, loaded with spherical ball, but I knew instinctively that if I moved even a finger the tiger would see me and instantly tear me to pieces. If my rifle had not jammed I could have shot him through the head. As it was I could do absolutely nothing. He must have stood there right in front of me for two or three seconds, but to me it seemed like

half an hour. Fortunately for me, at that precise moment a "stop" on my left suddenly lost his nerve, and decided to scramble a bit higher up his tree. This movement immediately caught the tiger's eye. With a roar of rage he bounded forward, leaving me still trembling with the useless rifle in my hands. What followed was a wonderful display of rage. Roaring furiously he sprang at the man in the tree, but fortunately did not reach him. Then, still roaring with rage, he broke back at full gallop towards the beaters, disappearing into the jungle without giving me the chance of another shot. I shouted till I nearly burst my lungs, trying to warn the beaters. Fortunately all had climbed up trees.

When Darbari arrived a few minutes later, his experienced eye immediately traced the exact line the tiger had taken in coming towards me. Standing in front of me where the tiger had stood he said, "Where's the tiger?" I told him I thought I had missed. "But," said he, "how could you possibly have missed? The tiger was here, where I am standing now, only a few feet from you!" When I explained what had happened and how my rifle had jammed, he fairly fumed with rage, and told me in the plainest language what a fool I was to keep on using such a rotten old rifle. And then, calming down a bit, he said, "Sahib, I cannot understand why the tiger did not kill you. You were completely at his mercy." Never in my life had I been so ticked off by a jungly hunter, but I realized there was truth, and nothing but truth in every word he had said. Hitherto, remembering always the saying about bad carpenters, I had refrained from blaming the old rifle, but Darbari was right. Had I not in his presence missed the first shot at a huge tiger on the banks of the Weinganga, and then made a low shot at a leopard, and again hit a sapling instead of a tigress? And now I had missed a huge tiger a few yards away! A truly shocking record! Considering I had been chosen to shoot at Bisley for my school, and was still considered a marksman in my Regiment, there did seem to be something wrong somewhere. I promised faithfully never to use that rifle again.

But to return to the tiger and the beaters. My shot, followed by the roaring had sent the beaters helter skelter to the treetops! Many said they had seen the tiger after he broke back. While some said he was wounded and leaning over to one side, others said he was moving normally. This had to be checked

up, so we ordered the beaters back to a rendezvous, while the shikaris and I proceeded to follow up the trail to look for blood. There was none. The tiger had escaped unscathed. The sun had set and darkness was overtaking us.

It was Christmas day next day, and I had organized an entertainment for that evening. A man had gone to Jabalpur for fireworks, cartloads of firewood had been purchased for a bonfire, and gallons of toddy had arrived from Lamta. The stage was set and a general invitation had been issued to all my jungly friends. But the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. I was having my afternoon tea when a man ran in to tell me that a tiger had killed a bison. He did not seem to know full details, but apparently a woman from his village two miles away had been out gathering wood in the forest and had come across the kill. This was wonderful news. I set off at once. On arrival at the village a young aboriginal woman confirmed the story, and to my surprise, even volunteered to guide us to the kill. She then said the kill was a bison calf.

She was only about four feet high. I felt like a giant walking behind her as she led the way. Before entering the jungle she hitched up her skirt to look rather like a pair of shorts, and discarding her cloth head-dress, wound it round her waist. It was an eye-opener to me how she picked her way for a mile or more through the dense jungle, moving as silently as a cat and led us straight to the very spot. On arrival there we were greeted with a terrific snort, and, before we could recover from the shock were nearly swept off our feet by a charging bison. It was the mother of the calf, keeping guard over her dead baby. Actually, I do not believe she meant to charge us seriously. She swerved off at the last moment, and did not repeat the charge, but she certainly succeeded in giving us no end of a fright!

This little excitement over, we looked all round for the dead calf but could find it nowhere. It had been removed from where our girl guide had last seen it. There was a good deal of blood but no calf. To our astonishment we found it eventually about ten feet from the ground, hanging in the fork of a tree. It was a very young calf and must have been killed, while on its own, probably when its mother had gone to drink at a neighbouring pool or stream.

It was getting late and our guide asked permission to go.

When I thanked her, and pressed a couple of silver rupees into her hand, she bowed her thanks, and without more ado, started running towards the village, through that dark dense jungle all alone. Do not think that we were being unchivalrous. It would have been an unforgivable breach of jungle etiquette to send a man to escort her home.

A closer examination of the bison calf and other clues convinced us that the killer was a leopard. It looked as though the cow bison had returned soon after the calf had been killed, and had chased the leopard away before he had had time to eat more than a very small portion of his kill. Then, I imagine, the leopard had lured her away from the dead calf, by showing himself at a safe distance and inviting her to chase him, which apparently she had done. Then he had slunk back, and jumped with the calf in his mouth into the fork of a tree, a remarkable feat of strength, for the calf must have weighed about a hundred and fifty pounds.

We were now confronted with the problem of getting rid of the old bison who would otherwise remain in the vicinity and do her best to keep the leopard away. It would have been extremely unsporting to shoot her, and the shot would in any case have scared the leopard away. The best solution would have been a goat, but the village was too far off to get a goat in time. The sun was about to set, and we were up against time.

Finally we pulled the calf out of the tree, and dragged it about a hundred yards into a clearing, where we pegged it down to a wooden stake, hoping that the leopard would follow up the drag. A rough perch of branches was hastily put up in a tree for me to sit on, and when this had been well camouflaged with leafy branches, I took up my position and the others departed, talking loudly, hoping to impress the leopard that everyone had gone away. The sun had set and complete darkness soon enshrouded the jungle.

Two hours rolled slowly by. My legs were aching with cramp through having to sit absolutely still, and the rough branches I was sitting on were making life seem hideous. There had been no sounds of conflict between the bison and leopard. I could see absolutely nothing in the pitch darkness of the night, and wondered whether the leopard would have enough sense of smell to follow the drag, or whether I was just sitting there like a fool, while a bonfire, fireworks, and my guests were

probably waiting for me to return. I had almost decided that I could bear my tortures no longer when I heard the rattle of a piece of wood being dragged along the ground. Pointing my gun in the direction of the kill, I switched on my torch. The calf was gone! In dismay I swung the light from side to side, and, to my joy, found the leopard a few yards away to the left, sitting quite calmly with the calf in his mouth. The torch did not seem to worry him in the very least, and he gave me an extremely easy shot. I used a "Lethal" bullet from my shotgun, and he never moved an inch; in fact, he did not even release his hold, but died with the calf in his mouth.

Hearing my shot my men soon arrived, and in a few minutes we were all racing back to camp, complete with leopard. Over a hundred guests had arrived. The bonfire was lit, the toddy passed round, and then came the fireworks, the likes of which had never been seen before by my very simple friends. The rockets and Catherine-wheels thrilled them, but the crowning joy of all was a spark-emitting grenade, which got going too quickly, and went scooting along the ground into the midst of the spectators, who up and fled in all directions. The joy this caused was phenomenal!

Darbari and Saktu had never seen a town, and asked me to take them with me to Jabalpur next day. I was on the Headquarters Staff there, and, on my return, found it had fallen to my unfortunate lot to write the orders for the big New Year's Day Parade. This used to be one of the biggest ceremonial functions of the year, at which all troops in the garrison took part. After being inspected in Review Order, units marched past the Saluting Base, in order of their Army precedence, while Massed Bands played their Regimental marches, and big guns boomed a salute. While drafting orders for this ceremony, the Devil entered my soul. I ordered something that had *never* been done in Jabalpur before. I ordered the Cavalry to reform after marching past, and with squadrons in line, to gallop past the Saluting Base!

On the great day, Darbari and Saktu, looking very self-conscious in the new khaki clothes I had provided, were escorted by Baloo to the special enclosure near the Saluting Base. There, for the first time in their lives, they saw troops on parade, heard big guns booming, and heard a military band. They told me afterwards they had no idea there was a large and

wonderful Army in India. But the thing that impressed them most was the Cavalry Charge!

What the Cavalry Officers said later about my orders does not bear repeating. I received their caustic remarks in humble silence, and in all humility expressed the opinion that the Charge had been excellently executed! No one ever knew that the Lancers, with pennants flying, had galloped past purely for the benefit of two insignificant little aborigines from the remote jungles of Lamta!

Just a word about my old ·405 rifle. I had bought it second hand for sixty Rupees! The previous owner had assured me it was accurate, and I had taken his word for it, with the result that it nearly cost me my life. A test on the rifle range later proved that fifty per cent of the shots went very wide of the mark. The barrel was very worn. The mechanism was very worn too, which accounted for the rifle jamming. It should have been scrapped long ago.

MORAL: *never* go after dangerous game with a rifle you have not tested yourself.

There is an old saying, "You can't buy humming birds for fourpence!" I had no ground for complaint. I had bagged two tigers and a leopard with the old rifle, and it had provided thrills that money could not buy!

CHAPTER V

THE SIWALIKS

MY FIRST adventures in the jungles had taught me a few very important lessons. I had learnt, for instance, that the friendship of the jungle people was well worth cultivating, and that an unreliable rifle is a dangerous thing. I had begun to realize also that failures had been due to my own stupidity, or sometimes to gross ignorance, and successes, such as they were, had been due more to good luck than good judgment. Actually, everything had happened in a haphazard sort of way, until that last beat, which, although the tiger escaped, was really the first well-organized bit of hunting that had come my way. I had shot my first leopard over a goat that had been killed by chance, and my first tiger in a small game beat. All the other encounters had been either partly or wholly unplanned. But the last tiger beat had been planned from A to Z, from the tying out of the bait to the shot that finally missed him, and I realized as I had not done before, that there was, after all, an art in the handling of tigers. For this lesson I owed my friends Darbari and Saktu a debt of deep gratitude.

But it was just then that Fate was unkind to me. I was whisked away from the land of green jungles and tigers to the land of barren hills and Pathans. The ever-faithful Baloo went with me, and accompanied me to the northernmost outpost of Chitral. Three incidents remain fixed in my memory. The first, when Baloo saw a small crowd near our gate in Nowshera. Full of curiosity, he went to investigate, but ran back into the house with his eyes popping out. A woman had had her throat cut, and the body was lying in a drain by the roadside. The second, when Pathan snipers fired into our camp at night, and Baloo dashed into my tent looking terrified. I ordered him to extinguish the lantern, and get down on the floor with his head between two yak-dans (small leather trunks). This was Baloo's first baptism of fire! And the third, when he went to the dhobi with my ironing, and a Pathan relieved him of my new bicycle—a three-speed B.S.A. But poor Baloo was

not happy in that strange land, so far away from his own native heath. Very sadly I realized it was unkind of me to go on keeping him there and eventually I sent him back to the peaceful sunny south, to where he really belonged.

The nearest tiger jungles were several hundred miles away, though even these, situated in the Siwalik Hills, foothills of the Himalayas, were only about half-way to my beloved Balaghat. Somehow or other my duties kept me tied to the Frontier, and, although I longed to get away, I only got as far as buying a good rifle, a ·470 Cordite double barrelled hammerless, belonging to a friend, who was going home to England on retirement. How I longed to try it out on a tiger!

When at long last the chance came, I found myself at Kasumri, a delightful spot in the Siwalik Hills. It was the beginning of November, and the jungle grass was still high after the monsoon. It seemed wonderful to find myself in green jungles once again. The Forest Bungalow was perched on top of a spur, not far from the Forest Motor road, which skirted the foot of the long range of hills for several miles, and formed the boundary line between the Reserved Forests and the fields of the Plains below. The front veranda overlooked a wide boulder-strewn dried up water-course, known as a "Rao" in that part of the world. The hills above and beyond were very thickly wooded, and the forests were full of deer, specially large herds of chital (spotted deer), who raided the fields at night, and returned to the sanctuary of the Reserved Forest by day. The alarm cries of the deer, and occasionally the roar of a tiger or leopard could be heard from the bungalow at nights, and, by day, one could sit in an easy chair on the front veranda, and watch the chital browsing on the opposite hillside, while proud peacocks strutted across the open river-bed of the Rao.

The inhabitants of the villages bordering the Forest were very different to the aborigines of Balaghat. They were keen agriculturists and depended more on their fields than the jungles for their food. They were more independent and sophisticated, and, unfortunately, took rather a more commercial view of the jungle produce and of a visiting sportsman. But the biggest snag of all was a Forest rule forbidding the shooting of a tiger after dark. It all seemed strange and very different to what I had been used to. However I was lucky, and soon made friends with Abhu, the local shikari, a quiet old

man, who knew the jungles well, and knew how to entice a tiger into a beat.

Without much loss of time three baits were put out in different directions at places selected by Abhu, but, as often happens, we were not too successful for a start. A tigress visited one of the baits every night, but never attempted to make a kill. Sometimes she sat down a short distance away, and even circled the bait, but never would she take it. It became a standing joke to hear the shikari tell the same tale day after day. He, poor chap, began feeling quite annoyed about it, and begged me to sit up one night and finish the tigress off, but, as sitting up at night was forbidden, I refused to do so.

One morning Abhu greeted me with a broad smile on his face. "You don't mean to tell me she has killed at last?" I asked hopefully. "No," said he, "she has not killed, but she is roaring on the hill above, and if you come now, you will perhaps be able to shoot her."

I looked at my watch. It was just after nine o'clock, and it would have taken us about an hour to get there, too late to catch her before she retired to some dense jungle to lie up for the day. We decided, therefore, to leave the matter over till the afternoon.

Just before three o'clock I left the bungalow with Abhu and two men, but before we had gone very far, we heard men calling after us. Looking round I saw three of my camp followers, who had never been in the jungles before, and now wanted to accompany us. They said they wanted to see a tiger. I did not think there was really much chance of our seeing one, but they seemed so keen that I agreed.

When we reached the spot where the bait had been tied, Abhu pointed out the tracks of the tigress. The spot had been well chosen, being near the junction of a jungle track and a nullah. The bait had been tied close to dense cover, and the shikari assured me it had been tied by the foreleg, so really there was nothing to be said against the arrangements he had made to procure a kill. In a deep ravine about a hundred yards further on, the tigress had been up and down so often, that there were literally dozens of her pug-marks in the sand. Beyond the ravine the hill rose steeply for about seven hundred feet, and Abhu pointed to the top, to show where the tigress had been calling in the morning.

We started up the hill, but soon found ourselves in difficulties. The whole hillside was covered in yellowish spear-grass, about waist high, and the sharp pointed little spear-heads worked their way through our clothes, forcing us to stop frequently to remove the spikes. It was with a sigh of relief that I eventually reached the summit.

From here there was a wonderful view. The hillside we had just scaled was bare and open, but just over the ridge there was a dense jungle which was specially dense in a deep nullah about two hundred yards below us, and which, by its very looks, proclaimed itself to be the ideal lying up place for a tiger. After posting my men at various vantage points to watch and listen, I sat down at the foot of a tree overlooking the dense nullah, which, almost instinctively, I had chosen as the most likely place to hold the tigress.

I had not been there more than about ten minutes, when the tigress roared, less than about two hundred yards below me. Her roar brought the others immediately to my side. The three camp followers were dithering with fright.

Leaving them all to sit where they were, I started going down the hill to try and stalk the tigress, who by now had repeated her roar. Judging by some of the deep gasping noises she made occasionally, I concluded she had not yet risen from her couch.

Things went very well for a start, but when I entered the nullah, the grass and undergrowth were so thick that I could hardly get along. It was impossible to see more than a few feet ahead, and still more impossible to move forward without making a certain amount of noise. However, the tigress kept on roaring every few minutes, which was, of course, a very considerable help to me in keeping direction, and eventually I found myself about thirty yards from her. Doing everything I possibly could to avoid making the slightest noise, I crept forward very slowly, hoping to catch her unawares. But the roaring ceased, and presently I heard a kakur (barking deer) give his alarm cry about a hundred yards further down the nullah, followed a few seconds later by the belling of a sambur, from which I realized that the tigress was on the move, going away down the nullah towards the deep ravine below.

Whether she had heard me, or whether she had started moving as part of her usual routine I shall never know, but I

now ran as fast as I could to get back on to the ridge, and down into the ravine. At the back of my mind I felt the tigress would enter the deep ravine and then turn up it, as apparently she was in the habit of using the ravine as a thoroughfare.

My dash down the steep hillside, waist deep in grass was accomplished in a series of slips, skids and rolls, until at last I reached the ravine, panting for breath. Had I stopped there all would have been well, but I could not see more than a few yards, and decided to go down a bit further to get a better view. I was pretty worked up with excitement, and in my haste slipped on a smooth rock, and landed with a bump in some soft sand about twelve feet below. I had instinctively held my rifle up to save it from damage, but in doing so had fallen awkwardly and hurt my back. While struggling painfully to get up, I was just in time to see the hindquarters and tail of the tigress disappearing round the bend only a few yards ahead of me. . . . I ran forward, but she was gone. Tucked away round the bend was a lovely fresh water pool, under an overhanging rock, and from the tracks and splashes of water it was quite easy to re-construct what had taken place. The tigress had reached the pool just before me, and must have been lying down in the water, when I slipped and fell heavily in the ravine round the corner. She had jumped out of the water, and seeing me sprawling in the ravine, she had sprung up on to the rock above, and disappeared.

I turned back up the ravine, and climbed painfully on to a little knoll on the other side. I had been there only a few seconds when I saw my men running for their lives, coming down the hillside in skids, rolls and toboggans, much as I had done a few minutes earlier. Quite obviously their wish had been granted and they had seen a tiger!

When at last they recovered sufficiently to explain, they said the tigress had suddenly fetched up where they were all sitting huddled together in the grass. She had snarled at them and lashed her tail so vigorously that they had taken to their heels in a desperate bid to escape alive!

There was nothing more to be said or done about anything, and we were just preparing to call it a day and wend our way homewards, when, to our surprise, the tigress roared from the top of the hill again. She must have been at the top of the cliffs, because the gural (Himalayan chamois) started

sneezing their alarm, and presently three of them came dashing down the hill towards us. Then a sambur belled and he too came crashing down the hill. Every time the tigress roared, some animal bolted for its life, and presently there were more animals on the move than one could ordinarily hope to see in a beat. It was amazing to see how her roar struck terror into all these creatures. Then the tigress herself appeared moving leisurely along the top of the crest, about four hundred yards away. I raised my rifle but changed my mind, as it was hardly worth the risk of wounding her at that long range. Instead, I made another dash to try and get ahead of her again, but, after scrambling over one or two spurs and through intervening nullahs, I realized I could not possibly do it. The tigress too seemed to have changed her course, and her roars grew fainter and fainter, as she steadily increased the distance between us. It was beginning to get dark when I turned to rejoin my men. Imagine how I felt when I got back to find nobody there. It was almost quite dark, and they had decamped with my torch. After a hair-raising half hour, picking my way through the dark jungle, I found them all sitting cosily together, round a fire they had lit by the side of a Rao. Apparently they had imagined the tigress was coming down the hill towards them, and not being at all keen on another encounter, had got going while the going was good.

Never before had I seen or heard a tigress behaving like this one. The conclusion I came to was that she was looking for a mate.

Next morning, news came in that the bait two miles up the Kasumri Rao had been taken. Old Abhu was delighted. The kill, he said, had been dragged into the famous Ulga beat, and any tiger entering there had automatically entered a bottle. I am using his own expression. Forty men were quickly collected from the neighbouring villages, and soon after breakfast I headed a procession moving up the Kasumri Rao towards the kill.

The annual fair, known as the Skakumbra Debi Mela, had been held there a couple of weeks earlier, and had, as usual, been attended by thousands of Hindu devotees, visiting the temples and shrines built in and around the Rao about a mile from the Forest Bungalow. I have never actually seen this fair, but I believe the Kasumri Rao, for a mile and a half of its

length, becomes a seething mass of humanity. Now in the dry boulder-strewn bed of the Rao, hundreds and hundreds of brown monkeys were moving about everywhere, turning over the stones with their hands, and picking up the grains of rice and gram, dropped by careless shopkeepers during their occupation of the Rao. As we neared the temples I handed Abhu a couple of shining silver rupees to offer at the shrine, for this, according to him, would ensure a lucky day.

For a mile or more beyond the temples, the Rao became gradually narrower, and the hillsides to left and right became steeper, until at last we rounded a bend, and, emerging from the defile, entered a beautiful valley, surrounded by densely wooded hills. About a furlong from the bend a jungle pathway crossed the Rao, and here it was that the bait had been tied. The tracks in the sand were those of a large male tiger, and the kill had been dragged into "Abhu's bottle"!

I now made sure that only the most experienced men were chosen as stops and that none of them had a cough. Remembering Darbari's lesson, I myself posted them in trees leading up to my position, while old Abhu took the responsibility for posting the remainder beyond. There were not enough men to guard every possible exit, so we used a few clothes arranged on bushes to look like men and act as dummy stops.

Sitting on top of a small cliff I had time to take stock of my surroundings before the beat began, and could not help feeling fully satisfied with all arrangements made. One hundred and fifty yards to my front there was a semi-detached hillock, which lay between me and the beaters. The hillside facing me was sparsely wooded, and descended rather abruptly to a ravine, full of very tall grass. My position overlooked this ravine and commanded a good view of its approaches, while the hillside below me, on my own side of the ravine, was steep and bare. I could hardly have wished for a better place to sit in.

For the first few minutes of the beat nothing happened. The voices of the beaters could scarcely be heard behind the intervening hillock. Then, moving briskly with his head held high, a tiger crossed over the top of the hillock in front. He looked magnificent, and, even at that distance, I could see he was a fine big male. He had cut obliquely across the hillock from right to left and disappeared into the undergrowth. It looked as though he was trying to break out of the beat through

the stops on my left. I could only hope they would succeed in turning him into the beat again. Not a sound, however, came from the stops, and, in the absence of any tapping by them, it was difficult to know which way the tiger had gone. I expected to see him reappear somewhere on my left, and looked out for him in that direction, but as time went on, and the beaters began appearing over the crest, I began wondering if the tiger had managed to escape out of old "Abhu's Bottle" after all! Just by chance I looked to my right, and there, sneaking along very cautiously and slowly, with his belly almost touching the ground, was the tiger, just outside the tall grass in the ravine. When I fired at him he sank into a crouching position, and remained absolutely stock still. I could not make out whether he was dead or just lying doggo, so I fired again. When he did not move I realized he was dead. Actually the first bullet had killed him.

He was a big, heavily-built male in the prime of life, with a very handsome deep orange-coloured coat, much darker in colour than the tigers I had shot in Madhya Pradesh. It was the first time I had used my ·470 on a tiger, and I must say the result to me was quite amazing.

There was a nasty shock awaiting us at the Forest Bungalow. We returned to find a host of clerks, servants, and camp followers in possession of the place. All they said was that the Collector Sahib was arriving that evening. As officials travelling on duty had a prior claim to these bungalows, and, as I had no tents with me, I had to pack up immediately and prepare to depart. Fortunately there was another bungalow a few miles away still within the limits of my shooting block, so I made a bee line for Badshahi Bagh, to spend the remaining few days of my leave there.

A day or two later a panther killed a goat. The tracks showed that he was a big male. He had carried the goat off without dragging it, and it took me nearly an hour to find the kill, which had been carried about a furlong, and then hidden under a thorn bush at the foot of a hill. I chose a suitable tree for my machan and having shown my men exactly how I wanted it put up, left them to do the rest.

That afternoon, my men having gone on ahead, I left the bungalow alone, and was on my way to sit up for the panther, when a villager in distress ran up to me and fell at my feet. He

begged me to go to his house. He was obviously very upset, so I asked him what he wanted. "Sahib," he said, "all I want you to do is to fire a shot at the wall outside." This did not seem to make sense to me. I pointed out I was on my way to shoot a panther, and the delay would probably spoil my chances, but he wept bitterly, and assured me that God would reward me and give me the panther, but that I must go with him to his house. The poor man was in such earnest that I gave in, and, in spite of the fact that his house was about a mile in the wrong direction, I told him to lead the way. When we got there I fired a shot into his outer mud wall. He ran into his house, and after a minute or two came out again and said, "Please fire one more." I meekly complied. Then he went into the house again, and presently returned, touched my feet and thanked me. I went away feeling puzzled.

Soon after getting into my machan, I saw a small sparrow-hawk perch himself on a small tree stump a few yards away. He sat there motionless, awaiting his chance to pounce on some stupid little birds that were foraging for worms in the leaves a few yards from him. I was just wondering which one of them he would catch first, when suddenly the birds and hawk all flew into the trees, and an enormous panther glided past noiselessly as if moving on air. He moved like a phantom, without making the slightest sound, his glossy coat shimmering in the light and shade of the jungle. A few yards from the kill he crouched and sat listening intently. I raised my rifle slowly and shot him.

Later that evening I was able to unravel the mystery of the villager. His wife was having a baby, and was in difficulties. He had hoped my shots would help, but actually the scheme had not worked. I immediately sent over such medicines as I thought might help, but heard next morning that things were just the same. I then offered to lend my car to take the woman to a maternity hospital in Dehra Dun about fifty miles away. At first this offer was refused, but good counsel prevailed, and, eventually, the woman, wrapped in a quilt, and several of her female relations were piled into the car, and, with the panther tied on outside, left for Dehra Dun. My driver had instructions to take the woman to the hospital, and then go on with the panther to the local taxidermist. But, as things turned out, the panther nearly caused a riot. When the car drew up outside

the hospital, someone raised a shout that a man had been mauled by a tiger, and in less time than it takes to tell, a huge crowd had gathered and surrounded the car, making it quite impossible to get the woman out of the car into the hospital. With police intervention, and after a considerable delay, the poor woman was eventually admitted in a gasping condition. I am glad to say, however, that her life was saved, and I heard later that she had returned safely and happily to Badshahi Bagh.

PART II

MORE ADVENTURES

CHAPTER VI

NEW IDEAS

THRILLED THOUGH I had been with my experience of meeting the Kasumri tigress, the idea of trying to imitate her roar would never have occurred to me, had it not been for a lucky coincidence. I was amazed one day to hear a tiger roaring in the middle of Cantonments. I stopped to listen. Yes, definitely, a tiger was roaring on the maidan. On inquiring I was told that a travelling menagerie was encamped there, and, as I have always had a weakness for visiting zoos and menageries, I went over to the enclosure, whence the roaring came. Having paid an anna to go through the wicket, I was disappointed to find the tiger lying fast asleep, and, as there was no other animal there capable of roaring, I turned to the man in charge and asked to see the tiger I had heard roaring. He replied that the tiger was asleep, and pointed out the tiger I had already seen. This, of course, was utter bunkum, so I slipped him a note and said, "Show me the animal that was roaring." He grinned and led me to the back of the cages, where, hidden in an outsize packing case, was a small Indian boy, with a wonderful contraption that made the most perfect imitation of the full-throated roar of a tiger. The boy was delighted with the four anna bit I gave him, and let me into all his trade secrets, without which even the contraption would have been quite useless in my hands. Never, by any stretch of imagination, could I possibly have invented such an ingenious instrument, but now, in the course of a few minutes, I had discovered something that would turn me into a tiger, and enable me to study other tigers, and the reaction of all other animals to my presence in the jungle. I was delighted.

My first attempts to make a contraption of my own were not too successful. It produced the most ghastly sounds, but not the sounds I wanted! The first time I tried it, terror-stricken neighbours came out with their guns, and it is a wonder I was not reported to the police. However, in time I improved the design, and gradually mastered the gentle art of roaring. I now

ached for an opportunity to test the efficiency of my new discovery.

The opportunity came at last, about five months later, when, once again, I was fortunate enough to find myself at Kasumri. I wasted absolutely no time about getting started. I went out the very first evening with the tiger-call, and obtained the following results:

(1) All peafowl, and a kakur (barking deer) began calling at once, and continued to do so every time I repeated my roar.

(2) All men cutting wood and grass in the jungle called out to warn each other, and a party of men, returning with bundles of Bhaber grass, dropped their loads and took to trees, where they remained for a couple of hours.

I had hoped a tiger would answer me from somewhere, but this did not happen. I forgot to mention that when I arrived Abhu told me a big hunting party had visited Kasumri just before I came, and they had greatly disturbed the jungle. They had also had a tiger beat, and missed what Abhu described as the biggest tiger he had ever seen in his life. It had been caught in the famous Ulga beat, and in spite of several shots fired, it had escaped unscathed.

Having borrowed the idea of the tiger-call from a menagerie, I had used my own wits to construct something to imitate a panther. On the following day I left the tiger-call at home and set out in the evening to test my own invention. I called from the same place, and, at first, had exactly the same results. The peafowl and a kakur called and the men grazing cattle and goats in the jungle started shouting to get their animals together. After calling about half a dozen times, however, I was answered by a panther from a hill across the Kasumri Rao. I was thrilled with this first success, and so were the men with me. We could hardly believe our ears. The panther was answering us call for call, and was coming towards us. He could not, however, cross over the wide Rao in daylight, but continued to answer us from the other side. At dusk we went back to the Forest Bungalow, and soon after we got back, he made use of the darkness to cross the Rao, and called from the ridge above us. I did not answer him, but he went on calling every few minutes for about an hour. Eventually, tiring of this, he made off along the ridge, calling as he went. When I called, he raced back, and went on calling for another hour. It was a

pitch dark night, and, as shooting by artificial light was forbidden, I could not go after him, but, in the morning, I found he had been scratching up the ground every few yards, and had apparently been behaving in a most excited manner. It was evident he had been completely deceived.

In Africa, the most usual method of baiting a lion is to shoot a zebra, cut it open, drag it some distance, and then leave it out at night for the lion to find. That works well, because the lion has a well-developed sense of smell, and his nose leads him to the dead bait. The tiger, unfortunately, has the poorest nose in the Indian jungle, his sense of smell being just about equal to a human being's. The Indian leopard or panther has a better nose, but even his is not as good as the lion's. Tigers and panthers depend on their sight and hearing to procure their food, and it is for this reason that the usual means employed to attract them is a live bait. I had always disliked that method, and now decided on a new plan. I shot a chital stag, and had his entrails dragged along the ground for about a furlong in two or three directions. Then I tied his forelegs round the base of a sapling with strong rope, and, finally, just before sun-down, called up with my panther-call.

Abhu was disgusted. He said it was a sin to feed such good meat to the jackals! No panther would come to that spot anyway! I promised to shoot him a pig to make up for the meat he was losing. He did not smile!

The plan worked. Next morning we found the big panther had discovered the stag, and had a good feed. No jackals had been near the kill. I had chosen a spot near a suitable tree, and now ordered Abhu to put up my machan.

That evening I shot the big panther. I was particularly pleased with these results, not so much because I had succeeded in bringing the panther to a dead bait, but because I had drawn him to an out-of-the-way place by calling him.

The next few days were without incident. Tigers seemed to have deserted the Kasumri Shooting Block. Abhu and I walked miles and miles, looking for tiger tracks, but in vain. Baits were tied out in all the likely places but were not touched. With only two days left of my leave, Abhu became quite uneasy, and declared that, if nothing happened by the following morning, he would offer up a goat in sacrifice to the local deity. Luck, however, was on the side of the goat. Next morn-

ing, we had hardly gone a mile from the bungalow, when we came across fresh tracks of the big tiger. I looked at them almost with incredulity. They were the biggest tiger tracks I had ever seen. Abhu assured me the tiger was at least twelve feet long! We followed the tracks as far as we could along the jungle road, where they were distinctly visible in the dust, but when the tracks entered the grass it was not possible to follow them any longer. We could only surmise which line the tiger had taken.

That evening we climbed to the top of the highest ridge, overlooking the valley the tiger had entered, and I roared and roared and roared! Then we descended slowly down the hill towards the Kasumri Rao, roaring at intervals until we reached the Ulga beat. By the time we got there it was nearly dark. I stopped roaring and we made tracks for home.

Next morning, the morning of my last day, news came in that the big tiger had killed the Ulga bait.

Abhu went off to collect beaters, but, to his dismay, found that nearly all the men had gone off to a distant rendezvous to receive their wages from a contractor. The villages were practically deserted, and Abhu returned with five elderly men.

I suggested sitting up that evening for the tiger, but Abhu shook his head. It was too well known, he said, that this old tiger never returned to a kill before dark. Would I break the Forest rule and sit up till midnight? I said I would not. Could I stay another day? I said I could not. So, then, what?

"Abhu," I said. "There is no alternative. You and these five men must do a beat."

I sent Abhu and his men off to collect all the spare clothing they could, while I unearthed all my underclothes, pyjamas, bed sheets, towels, handkerchiefs, shirts, newspapers, and anything else I could lay hands on to festoon the jungle with dummy stops, and hope thereby to prevent the tiger from breaking out of the beat.

When passing the shrine, I again gave Abhu a couple of silver rupees for the Priest. In return, he sent me a little bouquet of "Gendas" (Indian Marigolds). Our luck for the day was now assured.

On arrival at the Ulga, we stalked the kill, in the hopes of getting a shot at the tiger, but the tiger was not there. We then decided to do the beat in the same way as we had done for the previous tiger. It took us quite some time to hang up our

lingerie on clothes-lines between bushes and trees and, finally, when all was ready, I took up my position, and handed Abhu my shotgun and a few cartridges to go off and do the beat. He was to fire a shot to get the tiger started, and was thereafter to fire a shot or two at intervals to keep the tiger well ahead of the five men, who might otherwise be regarded by the tiger as rather a joke.

The beat was carried out according to plan, but *no* tiger appeared!

Crestfallen, and very dejected, our little party descended the hill down to the Kasumri Rao, where we sat down under a shady tree. Abhu was convinced the tiger had not been in the beat, and we were just discussing the possibility of his being in some other hiding place, when a sambur belled from a hillside further up the valley, and presently the alarm was taken up by two or three others in the same vicinity. Abhu stood up, and pointing in the direction of the sound, very simply said, "The tiger is there." He then pointed up at the cliffs that topped the steep hillside, rising about a thousand feet above us, and said to me, "Sahib, I am too old to climb that hill, but you can do so, and if you go and sit at the bottom of the cliff, I will send these five men up from the valley below, and you may see the tiger." I struggled up the steep ascent, and, after half an hour's stiff climbing, carrying my heavy rifle, I at last gained the foot of the cliffs.

The old shikari knew his jungles well, and had sent me up to my position, with a full knowledge of what he was doing. In front of me lay a long bare ridge, which divided the Northern from the Southern aspect of the hill, with a series of small ridges leading up from the valley enclosed in the proposed beat. No stops were needed. The perpendicular cliffs on my left were unscalable, even for a tiger, and I could see along the bare ridge to my right for nearly two hundred yards, so that no tiger could escape that way unnoticed by me either.

When the beat began, the widely dispersed beaters yelled and shouted and struck their axes against tree trunks to make as much noise as possible but the steep climb soon wore them down. Presently only a shout here and there reached my ears. Quite obviously it was a mug's game trying to do a tiger beat with only five men. Suddenly, however, I heard something in the grass below me. It sounded like a breeze gently rustling

the grass, and then, the big tiger appeared, scarcely ten yards from me, but, no sooner had I seen him than he disappeared into some tall grass beyond. My heart thumped while I waited for him to reappear. When he did so, he was not more than twenty yards from me, but he had turned right to go up the hill and was half hidden by a little ridge. He was moving quickly to try and get over the crest. I fired at his right shoulder, and saw him topple over and disappear behind the ridge. In my excitement I ran forward to the ridge, and was just in time to see him crawling into the ravine below. My next shot finished him off.

I would very much have liked to measure this tiger in the recognized standard way "Between Pegs". He was colossal, with tremendous shoulders, and enormous fore-paws. He was, however, past his prime, with rather a dull tawny coat, and indistinct markings, which lacked the lustre of a tiger in his prime. Unfortunately, he was lying on a steep hillside, and it would have been impossible with five men to get him to a level piece of ground. He measured ten feet seven inches over curves. As we could not move him, we had to skin him where he lay.

Abhu was waiting for us in the Kasumri Rao. I got down a bit ahead of the others carrying the skin, and tried to pull his leg by saying I had missed, but the old boy simply bowed and saluted, and said, "Sahib, the skin will be down here in the Kasumri Rao in a few minutes."

Whether the tiger had sneaked out through the dummy stops in the first beat, and then walked on to the sambur lying up somewhere on the next hillside, or whether the sambur had bolted out of the beat and stumbled on to the tiger must always remain an open question. The dummy stops could not be questioned! I was inclined to agree with Abhu, and believe it was the latter. As he had been driven out and fired at previously in the Ulga beat, it is more than likely the old tiger considered it an unnecessary risk to lie up there again, and probably chose to lie up elsewhere on that memorable day.

Before going further, I must point out that my duties had kept me pretty well tied to what, in those days, was known as "The North West Frontier". Lack of opportunity prevented me from trying any more experiments for some time. I had

failed to call up a tiger, and, although I had had a certain amount of success with panthers, the real value of the call still remained to be proved. I had yet to succeed in calling a panther up to my gun.

My next efforts were in the Himalayas. Several dogs had mysteriously disappeared from our neighbourhood, and it was suspected they had been whipped off by panthers. By calling up late one evening I succeeded in attracting a small female panther to a dead bait, and also succeeded in shooting her the following evening, but this, once again, was just a repetition of what I had succeeded in doing at Kasumri. One evening, however, I chose a spot on the outskirts of the town, just below a house from which a dog had disappeared. It was a quiet locality, bordering on thick scrub jungle. Directly below me the densely wooded hillside descended steeply to a stream about 500 feet below, and across the valley, about 300 yards away, the sun shone brightly on the opposite hillside, which was covered in scrub, but had open patches here and there. I was carrying an 8 millimetre Mauser, in which I had the greatest confidence, and I hoped, by calling up, to persuade a panther to show up on the opposite hillside. Directly at my back was a perpendicular rock face about thirty feet high.

My two coolies and I hid ourselves as best we could in some bushes, and I began calling. Nothing at all happened, and after about half an hour I decided to move to another spur about half a mile away. Having handed my rifle and the call over to the coolies, I had just got up to go, when a quick movement on the big rock above caught my eye. I could hardly believe my eyes, for there, although the body was hidden in grass, was the unmistakable head of a panther, outlined against an open patch of sky. On seeing us get up out of our hiding place, he had quickly tried to take cover, and now his head, with the ears laid well back, was about all to be seen of him. I quickly reclaimed my rifle, and as I raised it I could still see the head of the panther jutting out like the head of a great big lizard on top of the rock. He was almost directly above me and not more than twelve yards away, so I had to make quite sure of my aim before trying to send a bullet up through his gullet into his brain. When I fired he somersaulted forwards, and fell with a dull thud on to the pathway we were standing on, or rather on to the pathway we had been standing on, for

the coolies had vanished, and, in doing so, had dropped the call and smashed it to pieces. Animals hit in the head usually kick frantically with their hind legs, and now the panther was doing so with all the life left in him. Even at their last gasp, tigers and panthers have an unhappy knack of springing up and tearing men to pieces, so to make quite sure, I put another bullet through him.

Another sportsman now arrived quite breathless and speechless. He was astonished to see the panther lying dead on the pathway. He had heard my panther-call from his bungalow about a mile away, and had immediately seized his rifle and run on to a neighbouring ridge. From there he had seen a panther moving across the opposite hillside, and had then run in our direction to try and intercept it. Believing our call to be a real panther he had been stalking us. It was perhaps just as well we had got up to go when we did!

The panther was a fine big male, in perfect condition. Pleased though I was with the trophy, I was still more pleased that, at last, the call had proved a success.

In the high hills, barking deer have a habit of grazing in the evening, and one can occasionally get a shot across a valley when this small deer steps out from the dense cover it usually lives in, and stands for a few seconds in a small clearing. The sportsman should choose his position with this object in view, and provided he sits absolutely still, he is occasionally rewarded. I had chosen a position one evening to do this, when a panther called high up the opposite hillside. It took me some time to discover him through my field-glasses. He was standing just outside a cave, and presently moved into it. I sent one of the men with me to fetch the panther call.

When the man returned, the shadow of our hill had started moving up the opposite hillside, and I knew that in less than half an hour it would be too dark to shoot across the intervening valley. We therefore moved down to a spur below, from where the distance would be considerably reduced, and from there I started calling, and continued calling, without success, until it was getting dark. Presently it was too dark to shoot, and we started on our homeward journey.

There was a steep climb ahead of us and I handed my rifle to a coolie to carry, but when we had climbed for two or three minutes and reached a small pathway leading round the

shoulder of the hill, a strange feeling came over me, and, without quite knowing why, I turned to the coolie and took my rifle back from him. I can remember feeling quite amused at myself for doing this, because there was no apparent reason for doing so, except that roaring in the jungle at dusk does sometimes create a rather tense atmosphere, and I was inclined to put it down to that. The second coolie, carrying the contraption, was moving somewhat noisily, and again, for no known reason, I ordered him to lag behind. But hardly had I gone thirty paces, when, rounding the corner of the hill, I walked straight on to a large panther. Whether he had seen me before I saw him, or whether he had bumped into me coming round the corner I cannot say, but there he was, right on the bend, less than five yards away. He made no attempt to crouch or run away, but stood stock still, hoping, I imagine, that in the semi-darkness, his colouring would save him from being seen. Unfortunately for him, however, he was right on the corner, and the outline of his body was distinctly visible. It seemed ridiculous that this most cunning of all animals was going to stand there and let me shoot him, but that was exactly what he did. The whole blade of my mauser's foresight was painted white, and I could see it fairly clearly even in that bad light. Aiming at the middle of his shoulder I fired. The immediate result was alarming. He roared and stood right up on his hind legs to try and get at me, but, in doing so, fell over sideways, and I immediately put another bullet through him, and yet another as he rolled down the hill. Meanwhile the coolie just behind me had seen all this and yelled blue murder, and now people were calling out anxiously from the hilltops to ask what had happened. I had no torch with me, and it was impossible to see what had happened to the panther, who was last seen rolling down the steep hillside. Very early next morning, however, I found him lying dead about thirty yards below where I had shot him.

In the light of this and the previous experience, I came to the conclusion that panthers, in the hills, approach a call from above and behind the caller.

CHAPTER VII

WAITING AND WATCHING

NOTHING IS more boring or disappointing than to go out to a shooting block, and have to wait several days without news of a kill. I was once unlucky enough to find myself in this unfortunate position. Morning after morning the shikaris returned only to report that all baits were untouched, and I became heartily sick of seeing them shake their heads. And they, poor fellows, were as disappointed as myself. We had seen the tracks of a big tiger the morning after our arrival, and two days before that a tiger had killed the Forest Guard's best cow, less than half a mile from the Forest Bungalow. According to him, two tigers had fed and dragged the carcass about almost up to the very minute of my arrival. Since then baits had been tied out regularly every evening, but . . . *nothing*! As generally happens on such occasions, my shikaris began suspecting some evil spirit was at work, or there was some hoodoo in our midst, and, according to them, no tiger would touch the baits until this had been righted. The remedy suggested, of course, was the appeasement of the local deity by sacrificing a goat, but, when all the evidence had been fully discussed and thoroughly thrashed out, the blame really seemed to descend, not on any evil spirit, but on a poor wretched individual, who, on account of his local knowledge of the jungles, had been engaged as an assistant shikari. This poor unfortunate man had an implicit faith in the Will of the Creator. If ever anyone suggested that, perhaps, a bait had been tied out in the wrong place, he used to answer quite simply, "No, it is the will of God Almighty. If He ordains that a bait be taken, then only will it be taken." It was, of course, quite impossible to argue against anything like this, and, although I told him I did not think God would help us unless he took a little more trouble, and tied the baits a bit further away from home, he was still unconvinced, and his great faith remained unshaken.

My faith, however, had already suffered something of a setback. I felt something ought to be done, and, as exercise, and

a little extra exertion often dispel doubts and superstitions, I told the head shikari, who used to enjoy an afternoon siesta that he himself would have to go out that afternoon with the baits, and see that they were properly tied out as far out in the jungle as it was possible to go before nightfall. This was *not* a popular decision!

There is no truer saying than the one—"Man proposes, God disposes". The proposed jaunt into the jungle for the head shikari ended abruptly. Less than an hour after his departure, he and his men arrived back dripping with perspiration. They had just reached the place where a bait had always been tied, when a tiger roared a hundred yards ahead of them, and the whole party, as one man, together with the baits, had turned and fled. They said the tiger was still roaring, and asked me to go back with them. Fate had very neatly turned the tables on me!

On arrival at the spot, we soon discovered the fresh tracks of a tigress but, as she had ceased roaring, and entered dense jungle, it was impossible to locate her. We followed in the direction she had taken, and wasted considerable time hoping she would roar again, but she did not do so. The result of all this was that baits were tied out in exactly the same places as before!

At about midnight that night there was a terrific thunderstorm with torrential rain. It poured for four or five hours, and did not stop raining till dawn. When the shikaris went out in the morning, they found one of the baits had been taken. All tracks had been washed out by the rain, but the drag of the kill was still faintly visible, and, on following it up a short distance, the shikaris had seen two tigers on the kill. A big tiger, they said, had growled at them.

On hearing the news, I set out at once, but, no sooner had I got there than it started raining again. Actually this was more a help than a hindrance. The patter of the raindrops on the leaves enabled us to move noiselessly towards the kill. When we had got to about fifteen yards of it, the shikari suddenly pointed out a reddish object, under a bush, about ten yards to the right. Quite naturally, we concluded it was the tiger lying up near his kill, but although we could actually see the hair, we could not for the life of us make out what part of the tiger was showing. As I did not fancy hitting him in a soft spot at such close

range, I signalled the shikari to pass me my field glasses. To my disgust it turned out to be a Kakur (barking deer). We did not attempt to disturb him, but, presently, he got up, barked a couple of times and then went slowly up the hill. Strangely enough, I have quite often seen a kakur near a tiger kill, and, although I have never actually seen one eating from a kill, I rather suspect these small deer of being carnivorously inclined. Certainly a tame kakur will eat meat.

The half-eaten kill was lying on a level piece of ground at the foot of a hill. The only suitable tree for a machan was about twenty yards away, leaning over at a dangerous angle from the side of the hill towards the kill. Two thoughts struck me at once. Firstly, that a tiger could easily run up the tree trunk to share the machan with me and secondly, that it was a thin tree and might not stand the weight of my fifteen stone at the top end of it. But, as the jungle was quite unsuitable for a beat, there seemed no alternative but to sit up. I ordered the shikaris to get the machan ready, and also had the kill tied to a sapling, to prevent it from being dragged away.

I do not usually start sitting up till about four o'clock in the afternoon, but on this occasion I was half an hour early, because, after rain, tigers sometimes return early to their kills. When I had settled myself comfortably into my machan, I ordered my men to go away talking loudly. As usual, they shouted "Chalo Bhai" (Come on brother) at the tops of their voices, and then coughed vigorously! Further words completely failed them. I have often wondered why men, who spend day and night talking nineteen to the dozen, become absolutely tongue-tied when ordered to talk! I have never yet been able to persuade shikaris to go away talking to each other in a normal way. Anyway, off they went, leaving me feeling anything but safe in my precarious machan.

It was a glorious afternoon. The rain clouds had disappeared and the sun was shining brightly. The leaves of the trees had been washed clean by the rain, and, instead of looking dusty and dull, they were now glistening and green. The whole jungle looked beautiful. I had been gazing into this lovely woodland for about ten minutes, when I heard something coming noisily down the hill behind me. I imagined it to be a troupe of monkeys. A minute or two later, however, I caught a fleeting glimpse of a tiger, moving through the bushes towards

the foot of my tree. Leaning over to have a good look, I discovered it was a cub, a bit bigger than a large Alsatian. It sat down right at the foot of my sloping tree! A minute later it was joined by another of about the same size. They were in a playful mood, and I wondered when they would start running up the tree trunk to start playing with me! Then they rolled over and over each other on the ground, and indulged in quite a fair amount of all-in wrestling, quite regardless of the noise they were making. I realized then that the noise I had mistaken for monkeys must have been these two playing on their way down the hill.

The game at the foot of the tree went on for a few minutes, and then one of the cubs, suddenly remembering the kill, broke away from his playmate, and stalked solemnly down the slope to the carcass. There he soon got down to business. Seizing bits of flesh with his teeth, he threw his full weight on to his haunches, jerking and tugging with all his might to tear off large lumps of meat from the carcass. The second cub sat watching him for a while, but shortly joined him in tearing at the kill. The two of them behaved like little savages over their meal, snarling and growling at each other, and competing for the best titbits hidden inside the carcass. It was when both dived in together that the fiercest arguments took place. I was so engrossed watching this gruesome savagery, that I had not noticed the arrival of Mama, but there she was now, a fine big tigress, sitting up on her haunches, proudly watching her cubs fighting over their supper. All the same, she was very much on the alert, and kept looking all round, obviously doing sentry while the cubs were feeding. When, however, they had more or less finished their meal, she approached the kill, and, seizing it by the exposed rib with her teeth, lifted it off the ground, and tried to drag it away. But I had tied one of its legs to a sapling, and when she found she could not take it away, she, too, threw all her weight back on to her haunches, and gave the kill a couple of tremendous jerks, which would have snapped a single rope, but I had been careful to double this one! Strangely enough, this did not seem to raise any suspicions in her mind, though she did take the precaution to start feeding standing up to avoid all the stinging insects now teeming round the carcass. She too tore chunks of meat off the carcass, and gulped them down whole, and, by growling and

snarling, kept the cubs away while she was eating. But, if by chance she tore off more than an easy mouthful, she used to carry it away in her mouth, and sit down a few yards away to chew and eat it there. Whenever she did this, the cubs seized the opportunity and returned hurriedly to the kill, to bite off as much as they possibly could during her absence.

What worried me now was that a whole liver weighing several pounds was lying a few feet away from the kill, but neither the tigress nor the cubs had noticed it. I kept wondering how long this juicy morsel would remain undiscovered, and which of the three would be the lucky one to find it. When, however, the tigress had more or less satisfied her hunger, and had given up making quite such vigorous tugs at the kill, the liver caught her eye, and, after bending down to sniff it, she picked it up in her mouth, gave it a couple of hearty chews, and swallowed the whole thing in one big gulp. This then was the savoury! Looking well pleased with herself, the tigress now stalked off and sat down about ten yards away. Actually, she had not taken more than about ten minutes over her dinner, and now the cubs were down to business again, tugging away as hard as they could at the carcass. Occasionally they stopped, and one or other of them would walk over to the tigress, who, from time to time, growled, purred, made a sort of throaty hissing sound, and twice made a chirruping-whistling noise, which I had never heard before.

Just before dusk, with the tigress and cubs still lying about near the kill, I was delighted to hear the full-throated roar of a tiger about half a mile away. Surely, this was Papa, coming along to have his dinner. For the first time now my thoughts flew to my rifle. But when the tigress heard the roar she sprang to her feet immediately, and the two cubs at once dashed to her side. In absolute silence, they stood looking in the direction of the roar. When the tiger roared again, the tigress's body literally heaved as she tried to suppress an answering roar. She was obviously dying to answer the tiger, but her motherly instinct made her refrain from doing so. The tiger, still roaring, went down the Forest road about a furlong away, but did not come to the kill, and I firmly believe he did not know anything about it. He, however, put the wind up my shikaris who were waiting further down the road. Needless to say they had all climbed trees, and stayed in them till the danger had gone by!

When it got dark it was up to me to obey the Forest rule, and get down from my tree to go home, but, with the tigress and cubs still having occasional tugs at the kill, I wondered how this was to be accomplished. They had been with me now for over three hours, and much as I had enjoyed their company, it was now time to call it a day. I therefore began trying to pave the way for my departure. First of all I flashed my torch on the kill. The tigress immediately bolted. Both cubs were on the kill. One was buried head and shoulders inside the carcass, so he did not notice the bright light, but the other had obviously never seen such a thing before, and, after staring and blinking at the light, turned right round and began displaying the keenest interest in its own shadow. This was most unexpected, and I had great fun shaking the torch, and making the cub jump after its shadow. Eventually, both cubs sat together watching their shadows, but it did not seem to strike either of them that they themselves were being watched by anyone. Next I blew my whistle, which was the signal for the shikaris to come and fetch me down, but although they heard me and shouted to say they were coming, the cubs still sat on. Realizing that it would be serious if the tigress came back to protect them, I clapped my hands several times, but still with no result. As the shikaris now were only a couple of hundred yards away, I shouted to them to halt, but it was not until I had shouted again at the cubs, that they finally decided to move slowly away.

When I got down from my machan and told the story, the shikaris were most disappointed I had not shot the tigress, and I am afraid no argument would have convinced them that I had acted rightly in sparing her life. It had been lucky for her that her cubs came to the kill before her, or things might have turned out otherwise, and I should have lost three hours of interesting jungle entertainment.

It had been interesting to see how the tigress and her cubs behaved when they heard a male tiger roaring. It is generally accepted that a big male tiger will kill a small male cub if he comes across it. A tigress therefore takes good care to keep her cubs out of Papa's way while they are young. Actually, she always separates from her mate before the cubs are born, and goes away to some remote jungle, as far away as possible from the beats of all other tigers. This is done primarily to avoid the notoriously bad temper of her spouse, who is intolerant while

the cubs are young and at the silly stage. Later, when they are well-grown and have learnt how to behave properly, they return with their mother to her old haunts, and sometimes even rejoin Father, who then does not take exception to his well-behaved children. It may even be considered a pity that this system is not more universally adopted! It is not uncommon to come across tiger families of Papa, Mama, and two or three cubs, all living happily together, but this does not happen until the cubs have reached the age of reason.

I cannot describe what infinite pleasure it gave me to see these two cubs, the tigers of to-morrow, at home in the jungle with their mother. I wished over and over again that I had had a camera with me in my machan.

In jungles where beaters are not available, "Sitting up" has to be resorted to, and if, added to this handicap, there is a Forest Rule forbidding shooting at night, the chances of bagging a cunning old tiger become rather slim, especially if he has been educated up to realizing it is dangerous to return to a kill before dark. It was with mixed feelings, therefore, that I received news of a kill, where circumstances, as described above, were all in favour of the tiger. However, as it was possible to motor to within half a mile of the kill, and as this particular tiger was a confirmed cattle-lifter, and had been doing a great deal of damage, I decided, though reluctantly, to see what I could do about it.

I found the kill had been dragged over a furlong into a sheltered nullah, where the tiger had eaten his fill, and then proceeded to drag the carcass still further to hide it in a deep ravine. The kill was a large bullock and it could not have been dragged that distance except by a very large tiger. He had taken such pains to hide the kill that it seemed pretty certain he intended to return. I took great care to conceal my machan, and, so far as I could see, it was perfect. By four o'clock I had taken up my position, and my men went back to wait near my car about half a mile away.

Within a few minutes of their departure, three or four long-tailed Himalayan magpies arrived, and started feeding on the kill. In the Doon and in the upper hills, these birds are nearly always the first to find a kill. If a sportsman knows and understands their various calls, he will benefit considerably by his

knowledge, for they will, on occasion, help him locate a kill, and will also warn him of the presence of a tiger or panther, by giving their chattering alarm cry denoting danger.

The magpies were enjoying themselves, and their complete ignorance of my presence was convincing proof that my machan was well concealed. One magpie, evidently the accepted champion, was bullying the others, driving them off the kill into the trees, where they sharpened and cleaned their bright orange-coloured beaks on branches while awaiting a chance to return again for a feed. They seemed to have insatiable appetites, and tugged vigorously with their beaks to tear off bits of flesh, even resorting to flapping their wings to put more pep into these efforts to do so. Nevertheless, one could not help admitting that they were very handsome birds. The pity was they were quite so greedy.

Time wore slowly on, and the jungle was peaceful enough, until just before sundown, when thousands of crows flew over on their homeward journey, to roost in some favourite spot for the night. These birds fly great distances every morning to far-off feeding grounds in distant cities or towns, and return at nightfall to roost in the trees that for generations have been the roosting place of their forebears. Seeing them flying over, my mind was carried back to many crow-infested places, such as the large Pipal trees outside Meerut Cantonment Railway Station, the Cantonment Garden at Ferozepore, and the big Banyan tree in front of my bungalow in Jullundur Cantonment. I even thought of the night, when startled by a severe earthquake, they had all flown out of the Banyan tree, cawing vigorously! But now a bright-eyed crow had spotted the kill, and was circling round overhead. Soon others joined him, and presently, hundreds of crows settled in the trees all round. I knew it would be a matter of seconds before I was discovered. I sat perfectly still, but it was hopeless. They rose in a cloud, and flew round cawing for all they were worth, to warn the whole jungle of my presence. It had never struck me there would be this invasion, or I would have arranged overhead camouflage. Fortunately it was getting late, and after making life hideous for a few minutes, they suddenly decided to continue on their way.

Now there was peace again. A jungle cock was crowing his last crow of the evening, before flying up to roost in a tree, and far away in the distance grey partridges were calling cheerily

and loudly to bid each other good night. Soon it was dusk and I sat rigidly still, hoping against hope that the tiger would arrive before darkness set in.

Coop! Coop! Coop! Something had startled a herd of chital a couple of furlongs away. The shrill cries, repeated sharply over and over again denoted alarm, and I knew they had seen an enemy. Perhaps the tiger was on his way, or maybe it was only the panther who had suddenly dashed across the Forest road in front of my car.

Soon my mind was put at rest. Suddenly, from the hill beyond my car, the tiger roared. He roared again and again, and it became obvious he was coming down the hill towards the car. Even if he hurried now he could not arrive at the kill before dark, but what worried me was that he would probably hold up my men when it was time to fetch me down from my machan. I had ordered them to come for me as soon as it got dark, but now if they hesitated I could hardly blame them. A roaring tiger is not a pleasant customer after dark.

Having roared about a dozen times the tiger became silent, and my interest in him subsided. I resigned myself to the probability of having to wait in darkness for at least an hour, and also to the possibility of having to listen to him having his dinner a few yards away, without being able to do anything about it—both very exasperating thoughts! If he came to the kill I could not so much as switch my torch on to have a look at him, as that would spoil all chances for the following day.

A few minutes later, however, I was amazed and pleased to hear human voices. Knowing me to be a stickler for obeying Forest Rules, my men were coming for me after all, even at the risk of meeting an angry tiger. It was a stout effort for which I gave them full credit. They were all unarmed except for a shotgun with the shikari.

As I had thought, the tiger had first roared from the hill beyond the car, and had then come down a jungle path towards it, roaring from time to time as he sauntered down the hill. My shikaris and men, about a dozen souls in all, had all squeezed into my car, and wound up the glass windows. Finally, the tiger, who had come to within twenty yards of the car without seeing it in the dense jungle, put the wind up the party by giving vent to a full-throated roar. Then, emerging from the jungle on to the motor road, he had stood and looked at them.

The suspicious old tiger did not return to the kill at all that night. The only result of the whole outing was that my city-born motor driver came to me next morning and tendered his resignation.

It rained heavily the next day, and the next. Cattle went out into the jungle after the rain, and while they were grazing, the tiger singled out a fine fat cow from the herd, and killed her. The news was brought to me at once.

On arrival, I found the cow had evidently succeeded in evading the tiger's first rush, but he had given chase. Judging by the skid marks in the slippery wet mud at a road junction thirty yards ahead, both had turned the corner at full speed. Twenty yards further on there were more skid marks, and then a patch of blood on the roadside, where the tiger had eventually overpowered his victim. From there the drag led into extremely dense jungle. We crept forward very slowly, until eventually we found the carcass lying in a deep narrow nullah, with almost perpendicular sides.

Trees were plentiful in that dark, dense jungle, and my machan was soon ready. Once again, all was set, and by four o'clock my men went away talking, leaving me to eke out yet a few more hours in what so far had been a wild goose chase.

An hour went by without incident. Not even the magpies had discovered the kill concealed in that deep dark ravine. Twenty minutes later my hopes were dashed to the ground, when suddenly the jungle resounded to a shot fired with a black-powder cartridge, obviously the work of a poacher. I fairly boiled with rage.

But then a kakur began calling, and my hopes were revived. One cannot rely too much on the alarm cry of these small deer, but in this case it did seem to fit in with the general scheme of things, and I imagined that the loud report of the gun had probably jolted the tiger out of a sleep, and he was now evidently on the move.

A few minutes later I heard a light footfall and the leaves of a bush being gently brushed aside by the body of an animal moving under my machan. Instinctively I knew the tiger had arrived. The sun was setting and it was still quite light enough to see, but I dared not move an inch to look over the side of the machan. Tigers have extremely sharp ears, and he was only a

few feet away. Then I heard a heavy animal jump down into the nullah near the kill.

For the next three or four minutes there was dead silence, and I began wondering whether my ears had deceived me. Then, once again, I heard movement in the nullah, and a huge tiger appeared moving slowly towards the kill. Owing to the sandy nature of the nullah I had not been able to peg down the kill. The tiger picked it up in his jaws, and I realized that unless I took a shot at once, he would simply walk away with it, never to be seen again. Aiming directly behind his left shoulder, I fired. At the shot he went right over backwards, and fell on to his right side, where he lay snapping viciously with his mighty jaws, and lunging forwards with his great forearms, an awe-inspiring sight. I felt thankful I was not within his reach.

He was a beautiful big male, with the darkest coat, and the biggest head I had yet seen in a tiger. It took a dozen men nearly an hour to get him out of that deep nullah, and on the way home he broke the rear springs of my car. Two things made all who saw him gasp—his huge head, and his remarkable physique. He looked and really was a tough guy, with a muscular development that would have turned any world champion green with envy.

But what had made him return so early to his kill that evening? Perhaps in killing the runaway cow he had imagined it to be a natural kill that would not be discovered by man. Besides this, he had dragged the kill into the darkest, densest jungle, and concealed it in such a deep nullah that even the birds had not discovered it. Another factor was the heavy rain, which had kept men out of the jungle. Then that shot, fired somewhere near him had made him move. It was a damp, cold evening in January, and as he had no reason to be suspicious, he had for once thrown off his usual caution and cunning, and had come along early to meet the doom Fate had in store for him.

Let us now move to another part of India, where the shooting rules do not prohibit shooting tigers by night. As sometimes happens news reached me about a kill too late in the afternoon to be able to do a beat. The kill had taken place eight miles away, and the men bringing the news said that the local shikari would have everything ready for me on arrival.

When I got there I found the dead cow lying in the depths of very dense jungle, under the bank of a stony nullah. The local shikari, an old friend of mine, had indeed done a splendid job. My machan was ready, beautifully sited in a big tree on the opposite side of the nullah, with a clear view of the kill about twenty-five yards away. The men grazing the cattle had driven the tiger off his kill, before he had had time to snatch more than a few mouthfuls of meat off the carcass. He was apparently very hungry and would probably return early for a feed.

As usual, my men had hardly gone when crows started arriving. They cawed joyously to call up their friends. More and more started arriving, and presently, one or two of the bolder ones flew down on to the kill, soon to be joined by the rest. Provided that the crows do not discover the sportsman in the machan, they serve a useful purpose. Their presence is always reassuring to a tiger or panther, provided they are behaving normally, and are actually feeding on the kill.

When the sun was low on the horizon, grey monkeys started swearing about half a mile away. They were very excited and I imagined the tiger was on his way. Presently they were joined in their chorus by a barking deer, and the riot continued for several minutes. Then some peafowl joined in and the air was still full of their piercing cries, when the jungles vibrated to the roaring of a panther. This was something I had not bargained for. I had accepted the word of the local shikari that a tiger had made the kill, but there were no pug-marks in the stony nullah, and I had not bothered to examine the fang marks in the neck. These would have told me the truth. I sank back in my machan, full of disappointment. I felt most annoyed with myself, and decided to shoot the first feline coming to the kill.

Soon it was dusk. The alarm cries had died down, and a hush had come over the jungle. If the culprit was a panther, he would be coming along now. I was in revengeful mood, and was prepared to settle his account.

But no panther came. There was a dark interval of about half an hour, and then the moon, one day over the full, rose in all her glory. As she rose the moonbeams lit up the opposite bank of the nullah, and the trees and bushes began taking on mystic shapes. The jungle became a fairyland. I sat enraptured, watching the ever-changing effects of moonlight and

shadows, which were playing hide and seek in the enchanted forest.

It was not long before the spell was broken. A man had come into his fields to plough by the bright moonlight, and although he must have been a mile away, the exhortations and curses he rained down on his unfortunate bullocks, rent the air and were so distinctly audible, that he might have been less than a hundred yards away. No tiger would dream of coming to the kill while this tirade was going on. Would the wretched man ever stop? It seemed as though he never would, and for over an hour he continued to ruin my chances. Then suddenly the noises stopped almost as suddenly as they had begun.

A few minutes later I heard the gentle rustling that makes the tiger hunter's heart start thumping in the machan, and to my joy a huge tiger appeared on top of the bank above the kill. He looked almost pale yellow in the bright moonlight. A few seconds later I heard him jump down into the nullah, but I could see nothing in the deep shadows. As the kill had been securely tied to a root in the bank, I now waited patiently for the situation to develop. I knew he would pull and tug to break the rope, but I also knew that it would hold fast, and my chance would come when I heard him eating the kill. He shook the kill vigorously, and then I heard him tugging to break the rope, but for the life of me, I could see nothing, although I strained my eyes to see what was happening. There was a long silence, and I wondered if he had become suspicious and cleared off, but eventually I heard him pulling at the kill again, and presently I heard the noises I was waiting for—the chewing and gulping noises a tiger makes when he is having his dinner. Very slowly I raised my rifle, and when I had it pointing in the right direction, I pressed the torch switch, and there, standing by the kill, was an enormous tiger. He was so engrossed in what he was doing that he did not seem to notice the light. I had ample time to pick my shot, and fired at his shoulder. At the shot he leapt in the air and fell over. Then he did what most tigers do when they are dying—he seized one of his own paws in his mouth, and bit through it, as much as to say, "You are to blame for this. You carried me here to my doom."

CHAPTER VIII

TIGER NOISES

ONE OF the most thrilling noises one can hear in the jungle is the full-throated call of a tiger. Indeed, when this roar is heard at close quarters, its volume is so great, that it is awe-inspiring, and can be really terrifying. The reaction of most animals to this mighty roar, is one of terror, and the instinctive action taken by those in close proximity is a headlong dash for safety. In the hills, the full-pitched voice of the tiger probably carries at least two miles, but, to appreciate the full value of this terrifying "A-oonh", one should hear it fifty yards away and at night! I have heard it in this way, but, fortunately from a safe perch in a tree. Nevertheless, it all but made me jump out of my skin.

Tigers and tigresses both use this call in the mating season. The Kasumri tigress, who was a prima donna at the art, taught me my first lesson. A tigress seldom leaves her own particular beat to go in search of a mate, but relies on her far reaching call to attract a mate to herself. This then accounts for her persistent roaring at the beginning of the mating season. She is the first to give the call, and any male tiger within hearing distance will come along to investigate, although he may or may not at once give an answering roar. My own experience, gained through "calling up", is that quite a few male tigers who have heard my "call" have not answered at once but have been so excited by it that they have come along to investigate, and have later spent the whole night roaring about the place, trying to find the imaginary tigress they had heard calling earlier in the evening. I do not think a male tiger goes about roaring in search of a mate, unless he has heard a call and has failed to make contact, or unless he has discovered other unmistakable signs of a tigress's presence in the neighbourhood.

When I first started trying to call up tigers, I used a long-distance call, equivalent to or perhaps surpassing in volume the full-pitched roar of a really big tiger. The noise pleased me and my shikaris immensely, and scared everyone and everything

else in the jungles to death! I am inclined to think, however, that too powerful or resounding a roar tends to frighten all but the very large tiger, who alone is sure of his own strength, and will therefore come along to investigate, but even he will not answer such a roar. He will approach cautiously, to try and size up the animal capable of producing so great a volume of sound. When dealing with a male tiger I would suggest using a more persuasive or feminine roar! For this I now use a short-distance call, which can be modulated. On the other hand, if this is used by mistake to call up a tigress, she will be equally chary about coming forward to meet what she thinks might be another tigress.

I have noticed in zoos where the tiger cages open on to a general enclosure, into which the animals are let out by turns, that tigers will rub themselves up against the trees or bars in these enclosures, and will also sniff at the places where others have done so before them. I imagine this is done not merely to rub or scratch themselves but mainly for the sake of "sizing". In this way they leave a trace of their individual smell, and also indicate their height on the objects they rub up against. The same applies in micturition. Both sexes urinate backwards, and in the jungle usually choose tall grass or some vertical object as a background.

Roaring is also resorted to by both sexes to call up a mate to come and feed at a fresh kill. By "fresh" in this case, I mean one that has not already been visited by the mate. I am not quite sure, however, that a tigress is as generous as a tiger in this matter, for I have known one take quite a lot of pains to lead her mate away from her kill. It was during the mating season, and a tigress had killed and partly eaten one of my baits. I sat up over the kill, not with the intention of shooting the tigress, because I wanted her to call a tiger or two into the block, but just to see whether she would return to the kill alone, or bring her mate along with her. At dusk she called about half a mile away, and started by giving the sambur-like call, known as "pooking". When she had repeated this call three or four times in quick succession, she broke into a full-throated roar, and was immediately answered by a tiger about a mile beyond. Thereafter they called to each other at intervals, but, instead of bringing the tiger on to the kill, the tigress deliberately went down a forest line, calling as she went, to lead him away

from it. I listened to the roaring going further and further away, and eventually got down from my machan and went home.

Early next morning I visited the kill, and found that the tigress had returned alone during the night, and had had a feed. I had my tiger-call with me, and decided to call, but, as luck would have it, found that an important gadget had snapped. Leaving the shikaris to repair it, I sauntered down a forest line to have a look at the tracks of the tiger I had heard roaring the night before, and also to select a good spot for calling up. While I was doing this, the shikaris succeeded in mending the gadget, and, just to see if the call would work, tried it, and it did! To their horror, and to my dismay, the call was immediately answered by a tiger less than a quarter of a mile away. I raced back to the shikaris, and, arriving breathless, found them absolutely panic-stricken, for the tiger had called again, and was advancing. They knew, and so did I, that a tiger in the mating season was not to be trifled with. The position we were occupying was totally unsuitable, as it was surrounded by dense jungle, and it was not possible to see more than a few yards in any direction. I hurriedly called again to draw the tiger on, but at the same time decided to make a speedy withdrawal to the more open jungle about a furlong away, where at least we should have been able to see the tiger before he was right on top of us. I called once or twice on the way, and was answered by our pursuer. But when he had reached the edge of the dense jungle, he stopped and came no further. Either he saw us, or he did not fancy leaving the dense undergrowth to come out into the more open jungle ahead. Or it may have been that he was with the tigress when he first heard the call, and, having very successfully driven his imaginary rival out of the domain, his honour was satisfied, and he returned peacefully to his lady-love. Judging by his tracks he was a fine big male.

As regards "pooking", my experience of this call has been very limited. I have heard it quite often but, except for the above occasion, I was never able to discover whether the noise had been made by a tiger or a tigress. I have never used the call myself, but it might prove very interesting indeed to imitate it in the jungle, and see the results it produces. In the Central Provinces, my shikaris Darbari and Saktu used to press a large

leaf against their lips, and, by blowing hard against it, produced the "pooking" sound of a sambur fawn. On one or two occasions this drew a sambur hind to come towards us, and I believe the device can be used for attracting a tiger or panther, but I, personally, have never met with any success in this way. I have never heard this tiger call answered by another tiger, except on the one occasion mentioned above, but even in this case the three or four sharp pooks given by the tigress had been followed up with a full-pitched roar, and perhaps it was the roar and not the pooking that had caused the tiger to answer. I have never heard any other animals in the jungle give their alarm cry on hearing a tiger pooking, and so I cannot say whether they recognize it as a tiger call. The only experience I ever had which might throw a little light on the subject was with peafowl. Having bought myself a new car in Bombay I was driving up to Rawalpindi, and, while going through the jungles in Central India, I noticed that every time I tooted the electric horn, all the peafowl in the jungles called immediately. It then struck me that the electric horn closely resembled the "pook" of a tiger, and that perhaps the peafowl had mistaken the noise for the pooking of a tiger.

Talking about that trip has reminded me of an incident, and I hope I may be forgiven if I deviate for a moment from the subject of shikar to tell the story. It was towards the end of August, when the monsoon was at its worst, and all the rivers were in flood, that I undertook that ill-advised journey by road. In the heart of Central India I was held up for a couple of days at a small Rest House, because the river ahead was in flood, and the causeway, which was about half a mile long was several feet under water throughout its length. On the third day the flood waters subsided, and, although there was still about a foot of water flowing over the causeway, and in spite of a very strong current, I decided to risk the crossing. Putting the car into first gear, I entered the water, but although the car was a powerful eight cylinder Buick I fairly soon realized that it was going to be a fight to get across. Half-way across the current was so strong that the car was nearly pushed over sideways, and my terrified motor driver, who was sitting beside me in the front seat, kept beseeching me to heave over to my own side. I must say we had some exciting moments, but when eventually we got across, and were flying up the steep hillside on the opposite

bank, I was cheered by the lorry and car drivers who were assembled there with their vehicles waiting to cross over in the opposite direction. I imagined they were admiring the streamline of my new car, and it was not until nearly three months later, that I realized the reason for their cheering. Then, when I was heading Southwards on my return journey, I came to the same causeway, and found that if I had gone over the side, it would have been into over twenty feet of water! The causeway had no railings, and I had imagined it to be just one of those slightly raised Irish bridges leading across a shallow river-bed. I raised my hat as I crossed over.

If a tiger and tigress have approached each other from a distance, and have been roaring so as to keep direction, they sometimes resort to giving the low "moaning" call instead of roaring when they are drawing near to each other. The "moan" is the call most ordinarily used by tigers to keep in touch with each other at close range, and is also used in other circumstances, which I will now endeavour to describe.

Firstly, in my opinion it is used as a warning to other animals to get out of the way. I have generally noticed that a tiger moans before returning to a kill, if he apprehends danger of interference by other large animals, such as bears, panthers, or elephants. For instance, if a panther has been heard roaring in the vicinity of the kill, he will probably moan to get the panther out of the way. Or, if there are any wild elephants about, he will moan to suggest they get a move on, and he will sometimes moan if a tame elephant has been used by the sportsman anywhere near the kill. In the same way a tiger will sometimes moan before entering a dense patch of jungle in the early morning, especially if it is his intention to lie up in that particular patch for the day. Unlike many other animals a tiger cannot rely on his sense of smell to warn him if there are any other powerful or dangerous animals, such as elephants, bison, panther or bear in the dense patch ahead, and he therefore moans to warn them of his approach, knowing full well that they will vacate the patch if they know he is coming. I would not go so far as to say that the tiger is a coward, for I have the greatest respect for him, but I would say that I think he is peace-loving, and likes to avoid any unnecessary misunderstandings with the other powerful animals of the jungle. He is fully conscious of his own strength, but dislikes throwing his

weight about unnecessarily, and, above all, dislikes a challenge. He knows that all the other animals of the jungle have a very healthy respect for him, and that they will make way for him if they are warned, but he also knows how silly an old bear can be if he steps on to him when he is asleep, and how hysterically courageous a she-bear can be when she is protecting her cubs, to say nothing of the cow-elephant with a small calf, or even a big old boar who has selected a shady spot for a snooze. He therefore prefers to maintain his dignity by issuing the necessary warning. In this respect, I would liken him to the good old Indian chowkidar (watchman), who, although armed with a heavy stick, always coughs at night before rounding a corner of the bungalow, in the hopes that any burglar will take to his heels long before he comes in contact with him. By means of this gentle cough he has maintained the dignity of his profession for countless years, and his strength and courage are seldom put to the acid test!

Secondly, I think the moan is probably used by a tiger while hunting, either when working with a mate to flush game hidden in dense jungle, and drive it towards his mate, working on a line parallel to his own, or when hunting alone to locate hidden game by causing it to panic, and then deal with it himself later at his leisure. In the former case, the moan also helps the mate to maintain touch.

To try and explain why I have come to these conclusions, I must return for a moment to the Kasumri tigress. It will be remembered that when she first started roaring, she was lying up in a deep nullah on a sunny hillside. At that time, all animals in that vicinity were in hiding, and none of them gave the alarm, although all of them must have heard her roar. As soon as she got up and started moving, however, any animals anywhere near her jumped up every time she roared, and, giving their alarm cries, made a headlong dash for safety, until eventually there were several deer of various species running down the open hillside, while she herself wandered slowly and unconcernedly along the ridge above. What a chance this would have been for any tiger moving parallel to her somewhere lower down the hill! I did not attach very much importance to this lesson at the time, but in later years when I myself acted as a tiger, and wandered through the jungles roaring, I began to realize that the animals reacted to my roaring just as they had

done to the roaring of the Kasumri tigress. Chital and sambur lay doggo, and maintained absolute silence so long as I remained stationary, but every time I moved forward after roaring, they sprang up from their hiding places, and, giving their startled alarm cries, made a headlong dash for safety. If I was on top of a ridge, they always ran straight down the hill away from me. I also found that certain other animals, always reacted to my roaring in certain ways. For instance, solitary grey monkeys (langurs), anywhere within hearing and sometimes at very considerable distances, always gave their alarm call immediately. This greatly surprised me, for I had always been under the impression that langurs never gave the alarm unless they had actually seen a tiger or panther. Apparently, however, the roar of a tiger upsets their nerves, and they call immediately, even if they hear the roar from a distance. Apart from this, however, their alarm cry can be regarded as one of the most reliable sources of information in the jungle. I have heard langurs giving their alarm cries in the middle of the night, but, generally on a moonlight night, when it would have been possible for them to see a tiger or panther passing under their trees in the moonlight. I do not know whether they are gifted with enough sense of smell to be able to detect their enemy under the trees on a dark night, but I have heard them cursing on a pitch dark night as well. Barking deer also reacted like the solitary langur, unless they happened to be very close, say within fifty yards, when I started calling, in which case they always tried to sneak quietly away unnoticed. When I had done this in several localities, always with the same results, the idea at last began taking a definite shape in my mind, and I advanced a step further and tried "moaning" instead of roaring. The sambur and chital behaved in exactly the same way, and so did the kakur and solitary langurs, provided they were within easy hearing distance.

A tiger does not hunt by scent, but depends on its eyes and ears. A sambur, that would lie doggo while hidden in dense jungle and allow a man or tiger to pass within a few yards of it without giving itself away, is unnerved by the roar or moan of a tiger, and cannot stand the strain of remaining in hiding, when it sees or hears what it believes to be an angry tiger approaching. It is the fear of the tiger's anger, conveyed through the medium of his voice, that causes the animals to stampede. Then

why should a tiger not play this game? It costs him nothing to moan occasionally to startle hidden game, which, otherwise, he could never hope to find. I can say from my own experience that on occasions when I have moved along a ridge to reach some spur to do a bit of calling up, I have startled nothing, but, on moving back along the same ridge after calling up, I have put up a Sambur, that, obviously, must have been lying hidden, and allowed me to pass within say forty yards of its hiding place without moving on the first occasion.

The conclusion I have arrived at after much thought, and after having "played tiger" quite a number of times myself, is that deer probably feel quite safe so long as they can hear the tiger calling, and know where he is, and they often remain in hiding quite close to where a tiger happens to be. This was shown very clearly in the case of the Kasumri tigress. As soon as the tiger moves, however, they are on the "qui vive" at once, and, if he has been calling, then, on seeing any movement whatsoever, say within a hundred yards, they conclude at once that it is the tiger, and immediately give the alarm, and dash away. By this I mean to say they do not wait to see whether it really is the tiger. That to them is a foregone conclusion, and any person or animal moving in that part of the jungle will set them off at a gallop.

When a tiger's suspicions are aroused, he sometimes makes a sort of suppressed, complaining moan to express his disapproval. On one occasion, a village herd of cattle was grazing in the jungle, when, according to the herdsman, a tiger suddenly attacked and killed a cow. The tiger had only just thrown and killed this victim, when another cow stupidly blundered on to him, and was also immediately killed. The news was brought to me in camp about six miles away, and by the time I got there I found that the first cow had been dragged and half eaten, and had then been most carefully concealed by the tiger under a bush. He had taken the trouble to cover the remains of the carcass with dry leaves which he had scraped up with his paws, and it looked as though he had every intention of returning to this kill. The other cow was untouched, and was still lying where it had been killed. Having suspended a large cloth from a branch above the untouched cow, I sat up in a machan over the other kill. Just before dusk, however, another member of my party arrived, and decided to sit up over

the uneaten carcass, about a hundred yards away. Unfortunately, his men made quite a lot of noise putting up his machan, in consequence of which the tiger did not return to either kill. But, just after the men had finished putting up the machan and gone away, I distinctly heard the tiger give a mumbling complaining moan. I was told later that the men had seen him, and he had seen them when they arrived to put up the machan, so that his suspicions had been aroused, and I am sure he moaned to show his disapproval.

On another occasion a tiger had killed one of my baits, and dragged it about a hundred yards into dense jungle. He was a very cautious old tiger, and I had had trouble with him before. I therefore took very great pains to see that my sitting up arrangements were perfect, and I also tied a leg of the kill to a tree, so that he could not remove it before giving me a shot. The tiger arrived just after dusk, and tried to drag the kill away, but as he was half hidden behind a tree I decided to wait and let him settle down to a meal. Instead of doing this, however, he made off quickly, and a few seconds later moaned three or four times from about fifty yards away. On finding he could not drag the kill away, his suspicions had been aroused, and I have no doubt he moaned to show his disapproval.

In several parts of India, boys tending cattle grazing in the jungles adopt a novel method of rounding up animals straying from the herd. They attach a cord about two yards long to one end of a strip of hoop iron nine or ten inches long, and bend the iron into the shape of a hook. By whirling this round and round the head, in the manner of using a sling, it produces the sound of a moaning tiger. The cattle immediately stampede, and bunch together. It is not a loud sound, but it puts the fear of the devil into cattle when they hear it.

Tigers sometimes give vent to the full-throated roar out of sheer *joie de vivre*, and occasionally do so out of pique. The full-throated A-oonh however, is different to the terrifying outburst of roaring of the enraged tiger, who finds himself caught in a beat and roars to try and frighten the beaters. It is also different to the terrible short sharp series of coughing roars given by a charging tiger moving to the final attack.

A tigress with cubs that are large enough to find their way through the jungle, will roar to call them to come and feed at a fresh kill. I have never, however, known a tiger go away and

start roaring after being missed, though a panther will certainly do this, and will sometimes continue roaring defiantly from a safe distance for an hour or more. The moan is used for local effect, and replaces the roar on occasions when the roar would be "overdoing it", so to speak. Obviously, to go about the jungles roaring on all occasions would inevitably give away his position to his most dreaded enemy—*man*. If a tiger has discovered men putting up a machan over his kill, he may show his disapproval by roaring at sundown. If the roar is repeated and sounds further away than the first, it is a sure indication that he does not intend to return to the kill.

Apart from the full-throated "A-oonh", which can be best described as the "Call of the tiger", there are the angry roars as described above, the "Pook" and the "Moan", which are the calls and signals most ordinarily used by tigers. A tiger defending his kill or a tigress demonstrating to drive men away from her cubs will use the angry roars described above. Then there is the growl of the angry tiger, a deep threatening sound that strikes terror into the hearts of all who hear it in the jungle, and which, once heard, can never be forgotten. Finally, amongst the greater noises there is the Woof! Woof! which is the noise sometimes made by a tiger when he has been fired at and hit, and sometimes, if I am not mistaken, when he has been startled suddenly, and finds himself in a fix.

Amongst the lesser noises, I will deal first with those I have heard tigers make when returning to a kill, and which I think were made with the intention of driving away other animals from near their kills.

When sitting up one evening over a tiger kill, I had been in the machan only about five minutes, when I heard a distinct cough. Thinking it was one of my men returning to ask some silly question, I leant over the side, and was just about to say "Ab kia ho gia?" (What's up now?), when I saw all four feet and the tip of the tail of a tiger moving through the bushes about thirty yards away. The rest of his body was screened from my view by intervening branches. I thanked my stars I had not spoken! This tiger hung about in the dense undergrowth near the kill for over an hour and a half, and I had a most uncomfortable time trying to keep absolutely still, for, although I could not see him, I knew he was there, listening very carefully for any noise that would give away my presence.

Just before dusk a jackal arrived to inspect the kill, but, after taking one look in the direction of the tiger, he scuttled away more quickly than he had come. Then the tiger himself came on to the kill, and, picking up the remains of the carcass in his mouth, tugged to snap the rope with which I had tied it. That proved to be his last action on this earth.

When I told the shikaris about the cough, they said without the slightest hesitation, that the tiger had undoubtedly coughed to drive away some animal lurking somewhere near the kill.

On another occasion, I was sitting up over a tiger kill on a pitch dark night, when I heard a noise which sounded like a guttural hiss—"Khuishhh". The noise was repeated three or four times about thirty yards away, and then I heard the movement of some animal under my tree, but, although I peered into the darkness for about half an hour, I saw nothing, and nothing came on to the kill. Ten days later the same tiger killed again in the same locality, but this time there was a fair moon, and when I heard the same "Khuishhh", I looked in the direction of the sound and presently saw a large tiger moving towards the kill. He stopped every few paces and made this noise, and finally disappeared into the shadows without coming on to the kill. He was a very cunning old tiger, and apparently understood the game thoroughly. On the first occasion there had been heavy rain a few hours earlier, and I think the damp ground may have held the smell of the bare feet of the men who had put up the machan. Actually, for unavoidable reasons, this had been done rather late in the evening. On the second occasion, we had had to move the kill a few yards to be able to see it from the machan, and the cunning old tiger had spotted the difference and sheered off. Nevertheless, having seen the tiger, and heard him making this peculiar noise, I have no doubt he was in the habit of doing this before approaching any of his kills, presumably with the intention of warning intruders of his approach. I can vouch that he had not seen me on either occasion. I have said above that the motive probably was to drive some animal off his kill. One might well ask why in such circumstances the tiger had not moaned to carry out this purpose. I think the right answer probably is that in this locality there were no elephants or panthers or other dangerous animals and the tiger had therefore

used this lesser sound to clear the way before approaching the kill.

I have never heard a panther make any noises whatsoever when returning to a kill. The actual tread and approach too of a panther is more silent than a tiger's, but then, of course, the tiger is a much larger and heavier animal, and this difference is understandable. I have nearly always heard a tiger approaching a kill, but never a panther.

The Timli tigress hissed and purred while her cubs were playing round her, and also twice made that whistling-chirruping sound. About these noises I have nothing more to say, except that in the Central Provinces I was often told by native shikaris that tigers whistled to keep in touch with each other while hunting in pairs, and I was astonished to hear the same from a jungle man in the Dehra Doon jungles. I, myself, have never heard this, though I can vouch for the whistling-chirrup made by the Timli tigress. It would not surprise me, however, to find that tigers do whistle instead of "moaning", to keep in touch with each other at close quarters, while hunting in fairly open jungle.

Some people say a tiger sometimes neighs like a horse. I was talking to a very experienced sportsman about this, and he said that he himself had never heard it, but that on one occasion, many years ago, his brother had done so while sitting up over a tiger kill. Apparently, when he went after dark to fetch his brother down from the machan, he was accused of spoiling the whole show by allowing his horse to neigh! But as there was no horse, and as it was unlikely anyone else's horse would have been in the jungle at that time, and as a very thorough search next day revealed no tracks of a horse anywhere, they had concluded that perhaps the tiger had made the neighing sounds.

Well, quite recently, I was sitting up over a tiger kill, and soon after dark I heard the dry leaves rustling under my tree, and imagined the tiger had arrived. Then the animal neighed. It was different to the neighing of a horse, but, nevertheless, it was a neigh. It sounded rather more like "Hon-hon-hon-hon-hon!" than like the "Hin-hin-hin-hinhin!" of a horse, and each note was a separate and distinct "hon". The neigh was then repeated again a little further away. A few minutes later I heard the kill being tugged, and the tiger had arrived.

I was absolutely delighted that I had at last obtained proof

through my own ears that a tiger does neigh, but my delight was very short-lived. When I told the shikari about it, he said he thought the noise must have been made by a porcupine! He then imitated the noise, and it was so exactly like what I had heard, that I had to believe him. He then went on to explain that porcupines make this noise when they are alarmed, and quoted the instance of one that had got a shock when it had bumped into him in a field at night, and had immediately given vent to its feelings by uttering this peculiar neigh.

I have known porcupines visit tiger kills, and have also heard all the noises they generally make when doing so, but this was a new one on me. The shikari said that in this case the porcupine had probably come along after dark and discovered the tiger sitting somewhere near the kill. It had then neighed in alarm, and had neighed again while scuttling away. Perhaps he was right. Anyway, his explanation robbed me of the right to claim having heard a tiger neigh!

When a tiger roars with rage he lashes his tail up and down, and not sideways. The crude paintings one sees on walls in certain parts of India, depicting rampant raging tigers with the tips of their tails almost touching the backs of their heads, are, though exaggerated, not without foundation on fact. There is a general belief too amongst older Indians that the tiger has a claw at the tip of its tail. This is partly true about the lion, who has a clawlike bone concealed in the tuft of black hair at the extremity of his tail. Apparently therefore the belief has been handed down from the time when lions were more plentiful in India, and the tiger is now erroneously believed to have the same.

Indian shikaris say that the movements in a tiger's tail are sure indications of his temper and intentions. If the tail is moving from side to side, it means "No", but if its starts moving up and down, then beware! A charge is bound to follow.

Unlike the panther, a tiger does not lower his head to roar. In uttering his saw-like roar, the panther lowers his head until his nose is practically on the ground between his fore-paws, and, to all intents and purposes, roars into the ground.

I am sure that some readers of this analysis of tiger noises will have spotted an omission, and rather an important one. When tigers are mating, I believe they, like ordinary domesticated cats, go in for the most fearsome caterwauling. Although

I have been within minutes of arriving, I have never yet arrived in time to hear one of these serenades. I have had special messengers ready to bring me news on such occasions, and have frequently rushed out several miles in a car to hear the serenading, but my luck has always failed me.

CHAPTER IX

CALLING UP

I ONCE FOUND myself in a particularly tigerless Shooting Block and, after four or five uneventful days, had almost decided to pack up, when the Forest Guard, returning from his morning rounds, told me he had heard a tiger calling in a coppice about four miles away. I practically leapt to my feet. Armed with rifle and tiger call, and with the Forest Guard as guide, I set off immediately for the coppice.

It was about eleven o'clock when we got there, and it was very hot. At that hour the tiger was, in all probability, sound asleep, so we followed a small nullah into the dense coppice, to get as near as possible to where we thought he might be lying up during the heat of the day. Then, having chosen a well-concealed spot, with a fairly good all-round view, I started calling. I was immediately answered by a solitary grey monkey, who shrieked his alarm from about a hundred yards away. Every time I called, so did he. This went on for about twenty minutes, and eventually became rather exasperating. Noticing my irritation, the shikari suggested he and I should go forward towards the monkey, while one of my trained men stayed behind with the others to go on manipulating the calling contraption. To this I agreed, and we moved forward about fifty yards to the bank of a narrow nullah, where we sat down. From this new position we could see the monkey in his tree on the other side. Our presence there seemed to give him a new sense of safety, and he now proceeded to compose himself, squatting on a branch, and regarding us with complacency. But when the trained man tried to call, it sounded like a crocodile with a sore throat! I tried to control my wrath, but when he had done it half a dozen times without any signs of improvement, I sent the shikari back to pull his ear. As the shikari got up to go, it was on the tip of my tongue to tell him to leave my spare rifle with me, but as I had a double barrelled ·470 in my lap I dismissed the thought as superfluous. Anyway, the shikari had hardly

gone when the monkey suddenly started a fresh tirade, and began going through some frantic antics in his tree. A few seconds later I saw the head and shoulders of a large tiger appear in the bushes under the tree. He was about forty yards away. Presently he advanced very slowly, with his head held high, looking over the bushes, but it struck me he was looking half-dazed with sleep. I pushed my thumb against the safety-catch of my rifle to get it forward, but it refused to act, and, although I practically took the skin off my thumb pushing, it just would not move. The tiger was now standing in the open on the other side of the nullah only twenty yards away. I slipped my hand quietly into my pocket for a penknife, and with this I pushed the safety-catch as hard as I could, but still it did not budge, and now the tiger had come down the opposite bank, and was crossing over the nullah straight towards me. In such circumstances it was difficult to know what to do, but, in the hopes that he would see me and turn aside, I stood up. He saw me at once, but instead of turning aside, he quickly crouched with his eyes fixed on me, and once! twice! thrice! I saw his whiskers flick sharply upwards as he snarled at me, and I really believed my hour had come. With a useless rifle in my hands, and the tiger less than fifteen yards away, I was entirely at his mercy. By the grace of God a thought flashed into my mind—I would pretend I had not seen him! I turned sideways and pretended to look up the nullah, fully realizing that the next second would decide my fate. But there was no charge, and out of the corner of my eye, I saw him swing round on his haunches, and spring up the opposite bank into the jungle beyond. Meanwhile my men were completely oblivious of what had been happening, and when I told them about it, they really thought I was fooling. But when they had all had an unsuccessful try at moving the safety-catch, and had seen the fresh pug-marks of a big male tiger in the sand of the nullah, only a few yards from where I had been sitting, they became convinced of the truth. Very sorrowfully I led the way back to camp.

It may seem strange that I had failed to test the safety-catch before going into the jungle. One should, of course, always see to that kind of thing before going after dangerous game, and I have always done so since! About a month earlier I had sat up for a panther in the rain, and I can only imagine some damp had got into the mechanism and rusted it. Anyway, the safety-catch

was so firmly jammed, that I had to open up the rifle, and soak the mechanism in kerosene oil, before I could persuade the catch to move again. By three o'clock, however, the rifle was in perfect working order, and by half past four I was back again at the coppice. As I went past the spot where I had met the tiger, I respectfully raised my hat.

After a short reconnaissance of the jungle, I selected a small promontory, which overlooked a nullah, and faced a densely wooded hillock about a hundred and fifty yards away. Between me and the hillock the ground was pretty open and about fifteen feet below my level. Everywhere else the jungle was extremely dense, and the undergrowth and young trees in the coppice made it difficult to see more than a few yards. The idea at the back of my mind was that by calling up from the promontory I could persuade the tiger to cross over from the hillock, where I imagined he was, and come across the open space towards me. At the end of the promontory, there was a dried up tree-stump, about four feet high, which I selected as a back-rest. My men had orders to do the calling up from behind bushes a few yards to my rear.

Everything went beautifully. The jungles echoed to the call, which seemed to be in capable hands. The evening sun, however, was just above the tree-tops, and was shining into my left eye. We had called only three or four times when I saw the shadow of an animal moving across the hillock. I watched it carefully, and, when it stopped, I imagined I could see the head of a tiger, but in that dark dense jungle, it was impossible to be quite sure about it, and presently the shadow moved on and disappeared. I was convinced, however, that this was the tiger, and I kept careful watch on the open patch, hoping to see him creeping through the grass ahead of me. I must have been watching for about five minutes, when I suddenly realized my men had stopped calling, and I turned my head round to signal them to go on doing so. As I looked over my right shoulder, I had one of the biggest shocks of my life. There not more than five yards away was the tiger sitting up on his haunches like a dog. We saw each other simultaneously, and I have never seen a tiger look more surprised in my life. I could not have fired at him, except from my left shoulder, and as that was something I would not have risked doing in such circumstances, I scrambled to my feet. While I was doing this the

tiger got down on to his elbows, and at the same time got up off his haunches, so that he was down in front and up behind, and in this extraordinary position started moving backwards. Then by swinging to his right he bounded away. By this time I had found my feet and just had time to let off one barrel before he disappeared. He went through that coppice like a train, and the frantic alarm cries of the deer showed that he had gone about a furlong at full speed. Well, that was that and for the second time that day I felt I had had a miraculous escape.

It was easy now to re-construct the whole picture. The shadow I had seen moving across the hillock was the tiger. He had stood there for a minute or two in the dense jungle to listen and locate our call. Having heard the call repeated, he pin-pointed the sound, and then moved round in a semi-circle, taking care to move under cover the whole way, to come up from a flank and from behind. It was amazing how extremely accurately he had judged the exact position of the call. When I saw him sitting so close to me he was obviously listening again. He must have been less than six yards from my men. They swore they had not seen him coming, but when a friend of mine went to that shooting block three weeks later they told him a different story. Apparently they had seen the tiger coming, but were so terror-stricken that they did not attempt to warn me, and had simply huddled together crouching as low as possible to avoid being seen. This accounted for the mysterious silence, which had caused me to look round. Actually, they had been well concealed, but I had been sitting more or less in the open, with my back against the tree-stump, and the tiger failed to see me only because I was sitting perfectly still, and the rays of the evening sun were shining straight into his eyes. That he had not smelt us just shows what a poor sense of smell a tiger has.

He was a fine big male with a good ruff, and would have made a splendid photograph. One point was of special interest —on both occasions he had not answered the call, but had approached silently to investigate.

There was absolutely no blood trail, and though darkness prevented me from following up for more than about fifty yards, I went there very early next morning, and discovered I had missed him clean. And what was more, he had gone

through the coppice, and killed one of my baits, about a mile away.

I remember once discussing with a very experienced sportsman in the Nilgiris the art of calling up deer by imitating the call of a fawn. He said the local inhabitants often did this, but many had lost their lives while doing so. While hiding and calling up they themselves had been stalked and killed by tigers and panthers in mistake for the deer they had been imitating. This experience with the tiger made me realize how easily this could happen.

When we discovered that the tiger had killed a bait, my shikari wanted me to sit up for him, but I refused. He had twice spared my life when he could have taken it. I had fired a shot at him in a moment of tense excitement, but there was no excuse now to repeat the mistake. It would have been pretty vile to shoot him from the safety of a tree. I let him feed on the kill to his heart's content.

"Calling up" does away with the necessity of tying out a live bait to be killed by the tiger. This is a consideration which speaks for itself, and, for the humanely minded sportsman, it requires no further recommendation. Furthermore it gives the sportsman the opportunity to meet his powerful quarry on the level, and also to see this magnificent animal in broad daylight, behaving and moving normally in its natural surroundings, as opposed to seeing it when driven forward by a horde of screaming beaters. Every sportsman decides on the methods of shooting he likes best, and eventually fixes his own limit to the risks he is prepared to take, but for those who are willing to chance their arm, I can recommend calling up from the ground as one of the most thrilling ways of shooting a tiger. There will be many failures before a sportsman succeeds in mastering the art of imitating a tiger, but I am convinced that anyone who succeeds in doing so, and also succeeds in calling up his tiger either to shoot or photograph him, will be thrilled with his experience.

I have never gone in for photographing tigers, or, for that matter, any other subject. The primitive instinct has been predominant in my nature, and for me the rifle has always had more appeal than the camera, though I must frankly admit I have often wished I had had a camera with me in the jungle. Many sportsmen have tried to photograph tigers, but, if I am

not mistaken, very few have succeeded in doing so, except by flashlight at night. I cannot help feeling that excellent results could be achieved in daylight by using the calling up method, to bring tigers up to or across the line of a camera. As already explained, one of its greatest advantages is that it brings this nocturnal animal out of its hiding place in broad daylight, and with concealed cameras I have no doubt one could take some wonderful movie pictures. Provided the tigers were allowed to shape their own stories, the pictures could be woven into a most thrilling and fascinating jungle romance. I sincerely hope the idea I am putting forward may inspire other lovers of the Indian jungle to produce such a picture. I know of no better way of attracting a tiger to a selected spot in daylight than by imitating his call.

On another occasion, a thousand miles or more away from the last incident, I sat up for a tiger who had killed a cow and dragged it into very dense jungle. It had been a difficult and hair-raising business following up the drag. The tiger had dragged it through almost impenetrable undergrowth into a deep ravine, where, owing to the bamboos, and entwining creepers, it was almost dark even at midday. I had a shikari with me, and when we were nearing the kill, the tiger growled. We could not see him, and presently, when he moved away, we dragged the half-eaten cow into a small open space, a few yards square, and there we pegged the carcass down. The only place for a machan was in a tree about thirty yards away, at the top of a slope. This was barely eight feet from the ground, but from nowhere else could the carcass be seen, so there it had to be. The whole ravine was dank and eerie, and the one thought that struck me was, "What if I only wound the tiger in this death-trap of a place?"

The tiger was reputed to be a monster. I had the machan thoroughly well camouflaged, and prepared myself to sit up the whole night through. I sent my men away with orders to return in the morning. When daylight vanished a three-quarter moon shone brightly down on the jungle, but, in spite of this, the carcass remained invisible in the deep shadows of the ravine. I had to depend entirely on my ears, but, instead of hearing the tiger come on to the kill, I heard him, every half hour or so, circling round and round my tree, and once or twice he came right under my machan. Needless to say, I sat

perfectly still, but kept one finger round the trigger! It was a most unenviable position to be in. Apparently the tiger had a pretty shrewd idea of exactly where I was. As the hours wore on I found myself in difficulties with cramp in my legs, but I dared not move. About midnight the situation worsened. There was a heavy dew, and the trees began a drip! drip! drip! that eventually blotted out all other sounds of movement in the jungle. I could no longer hear the tiger moving and had little hope of being able to hear him, even if he came to the kill. Then at half past two in the morning the moon set, and the jungle became as black as ink. I nearly jumped out of my skin when a chital stag belled his alarm a few yards behind me. He had evidently seen the tiger.

I strained my eyes to catch any signs of movement near the kill. Striped forms began appearing before my tired eyes, and once, when I thought I heard a tug at the kill, I turned on my torch, but there was nothing there. I cursed myself for having done this, because, if the tiger happened to see it he would clear off for good and all. However, about half an hour later there was a loud noise, and there was no mistaking this time that the tiger was tugging at the kill. Pointing my rifle in the direction of the kill, I pressed the torch switch, and there was the tiger! But he was not actually on the kill. He had just stepped back, and when the light fell on him he turned to bolt. As he did so I aimed quickly at his ribs and fired, the front part of him already having disappeared behind a tree-trunk. He disappeared in complete silence, leaving me to curse my luck. At most, I had only wounded him, and that was the very last thing I had wanted to do in that terrible jungle. I swung my torch from side to side, hoping to see some trace of the tiger, but all I discovered was a whitish scar in the tree-trunk that looked like a bullet hole. I hoped it was and that the tiger had escaped unscathed.

Well, there was nothing more to be done about that. I stretched and straightened my stiff limbs. It was mid winter, and I suddenly realized that I literally was stiff and frozen. I pulled up my blanket and went to sleep.

Just before dawn I was awakened by a sudden noise. I listened intently, and a few seconds later the noise was repeated. The tiger was roaring about fifty yards away. There was no mistaking the meaning—the tiger was obviously wounded.

At first light I heard the welcome sound of voices in the distance. My men were coming to fetch me down. The shikari whistled when he was a hundred yards away, and I answered with a whistle, which was the signal to approach cautiously. They then approached in silence, with apprehension written all over their faces. I whispered that the tiger had been wounded. Then the shikari and I went quietly down to the kill to pick up the trail. Yes, there was blood and the trail led straight into a tangled mass of dense undergrowth and creepers. We had to follow, either on all fours, or bent almost double, and with every nerve tensed we pushed slowly forward through that leafy tunnel, peering ahead to try and discover the tiger. It took us nearly half an hour to do about fifty yards, and we were greatly relieved when we emerged from this death-trap into a narrow marshy nullah, with high grass and reeds on the one side and dense grass and jungle on the other. Here the tiger had been lying down in a pool of blood. We then moved forward again, and had just discovered that the trail, fortunately, led into the jungle and not into the marsh, when the grass ten yards ahead of us began swaying, and the tiger let out a blood-curdling roar. Had he been able to he would have charged, but it seemed to me he had either decided not to and moved off or he must have been too crippled. The grass and bushes ahead of us presented an almost impenetrable barrier, and, even if we could have pushed our way in, we could not have seen even a yard ahead. I ordered the shikari to fire a shot with my shotgun, while I awaited a charge. Nothing happened. We decided to retrace our steps and give the matter a little more time for consideration.

It is extraordinary how much a wash and a good breakfast can do for one's morale. Feeling refreshed, I took half a dozen good tree climbers, and the shikari back with me, and we now worked on a plan. I put the men one by one up trees in a circle round the jungle in which the tiger was lying, to watch and listen in complete silence, and report immediately if they discovered anything. Three or four hours went by without anyone discovering anything. Then I called like a tiger; not a loud resounding roar, but what might be called a gentle roar. No answer. Then I called again, and about a minute later the tiger spoke. Presently he spoke again, and very quietly we now started concentrating our efforts on trying to pinpoint his

position. To see him in that dense undergrowth was quite impossible, but his voice helped us to locate him, and presently we discovered that every time he spoke, the long grass near a certain spot could be seen moving just a little. By climbing up a bank, I was able to get a better view, and, although I could not see the tiger, I was able eventually to decide more or less where he was, and finally risked a shot at the unseen target. There was a scuffle with grunting and groaning, then heavy breathing, and at last . . . Silence. My aboriginal help-mates had now collected round me, and they proclaimed the tiger "Dead". Men of the jungle have very sharp hearing, and they argued that if the tiger were alive they would be able to hear him breathing. I cannot say this reassured me, but after waiting half an hour we decided to go and see. My men literally hacked their way through the undergrowth, while I accompanied them with my rifle at the ready to deal with any emergency. But we found the tiger dead. My first bullet had hit him behind the lung, and the second in the chest. He was an enormous male.

Now let us go back to my beloved Madhya Pradesh. I had invited a friend and his wife to join me in a shoot. Neither of them had ever seen a tiger in the jungle, and now were very anxious to shoot one. It was not long before we got a kill, and as it was in a splendid place for sitting up, I gave my friend the chance. Just about dusk, my shikari who was with him heard the tiger approaching, and quietly nudged him to get ready. Unfortunately, just at that moment, the shikari's throat started playing up, and he felt he would either have to cough or choke, a sensation which in a moment of intense excitement often overtakes one at the wrong time when sitting up for a tiger. Anyway, in trying to stop himself from coughing, he made a few indescribable noises that frightened the tiger, and caused him to run away! Tigers never hesitate to do this when they hear any suspicious noise near a kill. A couple of hours later I went to bring my friend home, and found him almost heart-broken over the chance he had missed.

The tiger did not return to the kill that night, but did so the night after, and on the following day we decided to have a beat. It was the beginning of November, and the grass was still green after the monsoon, and as high as a man's shoulders. All we

could muster was forty men as beaters and, as this was not enough to cope with the situation, I decided to send my shikari with them, to fire a shotgun occasionally and so keep the morale going, a very necessary factor when wading through high grass. It would also ensure that the tiger would keep well ahead of the beat. We divided the men equally between stops and beaters, and had two machans—one for my friend and a shikari, and the other for his wife and myself. For various reasons, however, we were not able to start the beat before three o'clock in the afternoon.

Soon after the beat began, I heard the stops tapping on my right, and it looked as though the tiger was heading towards my friend. A few minutes later, however, I caught a glimpse of the tiger sneaking through the jungle in front of our machan, about sixty yards away. He vanished almost at once, and as the beat came nearer and nearer, I began thinking he must have succeeded in slipping between the stops to our left. A few minutes later, however, a magnificent tiger stepped out of the dense jungle into the sandy nullah, about thirty yards ahead of us. At that precise moment the shikari with the beaters fired a shot, and the tiger stopped and looked over his shoulder towards the beat. He was a huge heavily-built tiger, with a wonderful ruff, and a truly enormous head. I whispered to my companion to take her shot, and when she fired, so did I. The tiger fell forward on to his head, and lay kicking in the sand. My companion was about to fire again, but I stopped her. With her ·375 and my ·470 bullets in him, I did not think any more was necessary. I lowered my rifle to re-load, and as I did so the tiger jumped up, turned round, and bolted towards the beaters. Fortunately all beaters had been warned to stop shouting if they heard a shot, and to remain silent for a minute or two before continuing the beat. But, if they heard me blow my whistle they were to climb trees immediately. I now blew my whistle for all I was worth. Then I shouted and warned my friend not to get down from his machan.

Half an hour later, followed by my shikari with a shotgun, and with three men to climb trees, I went forward to investigate. The blood trail was clearly visible, and we followed it for about thirty yards to the edge of the high grass into which the tiger had disappeared. Here we put a man up a tree. He climbed to about twenty feet, but stupidly kept on looking in the wrong

direction. In sheer exasperation, my shikari said to him in a hoarse whisper, "Oh, son of an owl, look this way!" As he did so, the tiger sprang up in the grass ahead, and charged, filling the air with the most terrifying roars. I could not see him in the high grass, but the "Owl" in the tree saw what happened. A few yards ahead of me there was a broken tree-stump, half rotten and whitish in colour, about six feet high. The tiger in his rage mistook this for a man and mauled it, tearing off great chunks with his teeth and claws. Then he turned, growling and grunting, and made off into the grass, where he remained growling in a semi-exhausted condition. The owl said he was wounded at the junction of neck and shoulder and also above the right elbow. Hoping to dislodge him I made the shikari fire a shot into the grass, but, instead of charging, he disappeared into the high grass beyond.

It was getting late. The sun was setting, and I decided to call it a day.

Both my friend and his wife wanted to help me in the following up next morning, but I would not hear of it. I considered them too inexperienced, and begged them to stay at home. I went out very early, and was back in the jungle at the first light of day. I cannot say I relished the task before me. The grass in places was right over my head, and the tiger, I feared, would still be very much alive.

The following up was a very slow and tiring business. We advanced very cautiously, putting men up trees to right and left, to peer into the sea of grass ahead, while the shikari followed the trail, and I advanced with my rifle at the ready, and my eyes skinned to look out for the tiger, not only ahead, but to right and left as well, to avoid walking into an ambush. We found the tiger had gone only a few yards from where we had last left him the evening before, and then he had spent the night, or part of it, thrashing down the grass for several yards around. After that he seemed to have recovered himself, and wandered off, leaving only a very light blood trail, just a small drop every ten or fifteen yards or so, and the following up became a very tricky business. I knew from long experience that when that happened, one could practically never hope to come up with the tiger again. However, we followed doggedly on for hour upon hour, until tired and worn out, we gave in at about four o'clock in the afternoon and went home.

Early next morning I organized what I call a "crow party". Taking a dozen men with me I put them up trees one at a time, in a wide circle round the nearest water, to watch and look out for any unusual commotion in the jungle, such as the alarm cries of monkeys, deer, peafowl etc., and take note of the behaviour of crows and vultures. Nothing happened, but the next day one of my "crows" discovered some tracks which he swore were the tracks of the wounded tiger. I decided I would go out with him and try "Calling up" that evening.

When I called I was answered by some animal about half a mile away, but neither my old shikari nor I could make out what animal it was. From the funny noises it made, we thought it might have been a bear or even a very hoarse barking deer, but the "crow" said he had heard the same noise in the same place in the morning, and he was sure it was the tiger, gone hoarse through repeated calling in his distress. To make this assertion more convincing he added, "We men of the jungle know that a tiger has a hundred ways of calling!" Anyway, I called and it called, and we both went on calling till it got dark, and then I went home.

After dinner, as it was a beautiful moonlight night I suggested that my friend and his wife accompanied me to the same spot to try more calling up. We went out in the car, and had the shikari and a motor driver with us. When we got there, I made the shikari do the calling up, while I stood by the car to listen. My friends remained where they were in the back seat of the car.

The shikari called and called for about twenty minutes, without response from anywhere. I put my head through the window, and was just telling my friends I thought the tiger had "hung up his receiver", when the driver, who had wandered to the back of the car, dashed to my side with a look of terror on his face. All he could say was "Sher!" (Tiger!). The shikari leapt on to the bonnet with a torch, and he too then said, "Quick, Sahib! The tiger!" My friends jumped out of the car with their rifles, and to our amazement a huge tiger stepped out of the jungle on to the road, in the full light of our torches about thirty yards away. Their shots rang out and the tiger dropped in his tracks.

This tiger measured ten feet four inches over curves, and was forty-four inches high at the shoulder, but he had a normal-

sized head and no distinguishing ruff. He was *not* the wounded tiger.

The local inhabitants, however, were convinced that this and the wounded tiger were one and the same animal, and this belief persisted until we finally killed the original tiger, a fine big tiger with a big ruff and enormous head, and wounds corresponding exactly to the wounds described by the "owl", the-ever-to-be-remembered "Ullu ka Bachcha!"

CHAPTER X

MOTICHUR

FOREST GUARDS are usually very happy, contented people. True it is they have to live in isolated, lonely places, but have much authority, and, being provided with uniform to wear and well-built houses to live in, are, in their own way, the little kings of the forest within their own domains. When, however, I stopped at Koelpurra Forest Chowki on my way through to Motichur, I was taken aback to find the Forest Guard looking most unhappy. My shikaris who had arrived there a day ahead of me were consoling him, and, if I am not mistaken, had been helping him drown his sorrows in a modicum of toddy.

It was a simple story. The Forest Guard's milch buffalo had strayed with her two year old calf into the tall grass at the edge of the forest a couple of hundred yards away. There, about an hour earlier, the calf had been attacked by a panther. The mother had immediately charged and driven the panther away, but the calf was now in a dying condition.

While motoring through the Kansrao sanctuary a few minutes earlier I had come across a panther walking leisurely down the Forest Motor road. I had put the car into second gear, and followed him slowly, keeping about fifty yards behind him, but he had completely ignored the car behind him and had continued down the road without paying the slightest attention to it. It was not until I had accelerated and come to within twenty yards of him that he condescended to look over his shoulder, and then, having walked quietly into the short grass at the side of the road, he had crouched and half-snarled at the car as it went by. Surely this must have been the culprit.

I asked to see the calf, and was led into a small thatched shed, where I found the victim lying semi-conscious, with deep fang marks in the nape of its neck—obviously the work of a tiger. The Forest Guard did not agree that it was a tiger, and begged me to lend him a gun to shoot the panther, which he said had caused him endless loss from time to time. If only I would lend

him a gun, he would go out at once into the jungle, and avenge these losses, even if it cost him his life to do so. Realizing that it was the toddy speaking, I tried to pacify him by promising to shoot his hated enemy next day. Nothing, however, short of shooting his enemy himself would satisfy him, and he swore by all the gods that he would not be able to eat, drink, or rest until he had done so. He would take the semi-conscious calf back into the jungle where it had been attacked, would sit over it, and would himself shoot the Shaitan (devil) that very same evening, or would die gloriously in his attempt to do so.

It was no good arguing with the poor man. I mixed a few grains of Permanganate in water, and had the calf's wounds thoroughly washed, fully realizing, however, that nothing I could do would save its life. The fangs had been deeply buried. The calf was already breathing heavily, and its eyes had become listless and glazed. Sitting beside it, and now calmly chewing the cud, was its mother, fortunately quite oblivious of the precarious condition of her calf, which only an hour earlier she had so gallantly risked her life to save. What thrilling stories some of these dumb animals could tell, if only they had the power to tell them! What tragedies entered their lives, and how very little the outside world knew about them. A scene such as the one now before my eyes would bring people face to face with realities. It was a pathetic sight, which at that moment made even me feel very strongly that the Forest Guard was right, and that this cattle-killer should be brought to book as early as possible. Although I did not lend the Forest Guard a gun, I gave him and my shikaris instructions to do everything in their power to bring about the downfall of the murderer. Having told them to report progress to me at Motichur I then continued on my way.

Forest Bungalows, in the Winter time, are always in great demand. Touring Forest Officers, and Civil Officers on duty have always, quite rightly, had a prior claim on accommodation, and, on this occasion I had had to wait eleven days to gain admission to the Forest Rest House. However, now that I was there at last, I was fully determined to enjoy to the very utmost the four days still remaining at my disposal for a shoot. Motichur had the reputation of being the best shooting block in the Dehra Dun Forest Division. Fourteen years earlier I had once had a permit for this block in the latter half of March. On that

occasion I had sent my men on ahead with half a dozen buffalo baits, and had arrived a few days later, only to find that four of the buffaloes had been killed by wild elephants, and that my men were too terrified to enter the jungle. As nobody is allowed to shoot an elephant unless it happens to be a proscribed rogue, the presence of a herd of elephants in a shooting block is a nuisance, and can sometimes completely upset all arrangements for a shoot. However, it was now only February, and the wild elephants had not so far crossed over the River Ganges on their annual visit to Motichur.

Having settled into the bungalow, I spent the evening exploring the jungle bordering on the wide "Rao" at the back of the house. In the course of an hour I came across two herds of chital such as I had not seen for many years. Deer were shot indiscriminately during World War II, and, in many places, the once large herds of chital had been exterminated. It was refreshing to my eyes to see, once again, even a few heads gathered together in one place, and I stood and watched them for some time. Apart from that, however, I saw nothing else, and did not come across any tiger tracks anywhere, but, when I was returning at dusk, my attention was arrested by loud cracking sounds, like the cracking of bones by a tiger eating his kill. At first I could see nothing, but presently half a dozen wild pigs emerged from some grass and the cracking noises then continued as before. They were biting and cracking the hard shells of a round jungle fruit, the name of which I do not know, but which was lying about here and there under the trees on the ground, and, judging by the keen competition going on, the fruit was evidently considered a delicacy. The pigs were so busy running hither and thither in search of more, that they had not noticed me, but, as it was getting dark, it was difficult to pick out an easy shot. When eventually three or four pigs were bunched together, offering a fine big mark to aim at, I decided my chance had come, and fired. To my astonishment, instead of bagging only one, I knocked over two with the one bullet.

Just before dawn next morning I was awakened by the alarm cries of a herd of chital, calling quite close to the Forest Bungalow. They seemed very agitated, and no wonder, for presently the jungle echoed to the roaring of a panther, who had apparently failed in his effort to catch his quarry, and was

now loudly vowing his vengeance on the herd. Or was I wrong? He had repeated his sawing note seven or eight times before pausing for breath. Was he calling up his mate?

At early dawn I set out to explore, and discovered the tracks of the panther, but there were no signs of a kill anywhere. I was still investigating when I heard men calling me from the bungalow. Realizing that they probably had something important to tell me, I returned to the house immediately.

There I found the shikari from Koelpurra. After my departure the previous evening, he and the Forest Guard had gone out to the spot where the latter's buffalo calf had been attacked, and found the fresh tracks of a tigress, which confirmed my diagnosis of the fang marks on the calf's neck. They had then followed the tracks of the tigress for about a mile, and had tied out a bait. Now he had come to report that the bait had been killed and dragged by the tigress into some dense jungle in the vicinity. This was quick work. After having breakfast, I left for Koelpurra in my car.

On arrival there the shikaris and I had an argument. I thought the tracks were of a young male tiger, but they insisted it was a tigress. As a rule tigresses have long narrow feet. The pad is narrow, and therefore looks long in comparison to the male pad, which is wider. The toes too of a tigress are thinner, and often, if one is in doubt, this serves as the most certain indication.

We now followed up the drag, which, fortunately, went only about fifty yards into the dense jungle, and there we found the kill well concealed in some thick undergrowth. It was a quiet locality, and the chances of bagging the tiger by sitting up seemed to me to be better than those of getting him out in a beat, so I chose the position for my machan, and left the shikaris to do the rest, telling them that I would return to sit up at about four o'clock that afternoon.

When I returned I found everything ready. The shikaris said they had heard the tiger growling while they were putting up the machan. Apparently the tiger was lurking about in the jungle quite near at hand, and there was every indication that he would probably return quite early to the kill.

At about five o'clock the chital started calling a furlong or more away, and a quarter of an hour later I heard noises and looked down to find the tiger had arrived and was feeding on

the kill. I had not heard him coming, and he had not lifted or shaken the kill as tigers generally do to get rid of the ants and hornets which invariably find their way into the carcass. He had arrived very quietly, and had straightway got down to a feed. The shikaris had rather overdone the clearing of brushwood and branches between me and the kill, and the tiger looked up every now and again, as though apprehending danger from above. He had not seen me, however, and I watched him for quite a time. It seemed ridiculous that he had come back quite so early in broad daylight, and that he was so oblivious of my presence, only ten yards away. I wished very hard that I had had a camera instead of a rifle, for there he was, sitting full length with his tail straight out behind him, chewing away at the kill, just as a dog would at a bone. He stopped feeding once or twice, and raised his head to listen, and I must admit I was sorely tempted to shoo him away, but remembering the buffalo calf and my promise to the Forest Guard, I very reluctantly raised my rifle, and, more in sorrow than in anger, closed the previous day's account.

My shikaris, who had not expected quite such an early finish, had gone off to the Koelpurra Forest Chowki, I think to have another look at that bottle of toddy, but, according to themselves, to have some tea. On hearing my shot, however, they and everyone in the neighbourhood rushed to see the tiger, and presently, having been assured by me that it was dead, a dozen or more very willing pairs of hands were helping to place the dead tiger on the string hammock which I carry for this purpose. The hammock is fitted with strong loops through which poles can be passed to form a stretcher, or even ropes can be used to hoist the tiger off the ground, and carry him out of the jungle. Without some device of this kind it often takes much time and trouble to get a tiger as far as a road.

The Forest Guard was jubilant, and helped carry the tiger to the car. Many others, who had had cattle killed from time to time, now recounted their losses, and laid all blame on the unfortunate tiger they were carrying. Incidentally, it had turned out to be a young male and not a tigress after all, but the most remarkable thing about him was that he had a large thick porcupine quill embedded about three inches in his cheek, a couple of inches below his right eye, while the rest of the quill, about five inches in length, was sticking straight out just above

his whiskers. It gave him quite a comical look and was so awkwardly placed that it must have caused him considerable pain every time he moved his jaws to eat. Perhaps it was this that had made him take to cattle killing, and probably was the reason why he had not dragged the kill more than fifty yards, and also the reason why he had refrained from shaking or dragging the carcass again when he returned to the kill. The quill must have been stuck into his cheek for some time, as the hair all round the wound had slipped, and it looked rather like an old scar. Apart from this he was in very good condition, and had a marvellous winter coat. He was, however, not quite fully grown, being only the size of a big tigress.

It is an amazing thing that although monkeys and langurs are such intelligent animals, they immediately give their alarm cries even if they see a dead tiger going down the road tied on to the back of a car. And they do the same if they see a dead leopard slung to a pole, even though he is being carried upside down, and will give the alarm if they so much as see a tiger or leopard skin. On this occasion they screamed their alarm when I drove back to the bungalow with the tiger tied on to the back of the car, and next morning, when the tiger was taken out under the trees to be skinned, it caused panic amongst a troupe of langurs near the bungalow. These cursed and swore so much from the safety of the trees that, just to see what they would do, I had the tiger carried to the foot of one of the trees in their midst, and left him there half-hidden by some bushes. The big male langurs then came down lower and lower in their trees, with much swearing, and a great show of bravado, and eventually descended either on to or very near the ground. Some bounded across an open space between one tree and another, sometimes dangerously near the tiger. This made me wonder whether tigers and panthers would take advantage of such behaviour, and seize the odd gallant langur, when, for the sake of playing to the gallery, he happened to venture just a little too close to be able to escape from a sudden rush. It is difficult to imagine how otherwise a panther or tiger could catch a langur, for they are gifted with the keenest eyesight in daylight of all the animals in the jungle, and are astoundingly agile. When frightened and in a hurry the tremendous speed they attain in bounding from tree to tree has to be seen to be believed. A langur will jump from the top of one tree to

another thirty feet below, and can at the same time do a long jump of well over twenty feet. To see them at their best one should see them do this in the high hills, where bounding from one tree to another thirty feet lower down a precipice is nothing beyond the normal ability of the average langur.

Having spent a good few hours seeing to the skinning of the tiger, and to the treatment of the skin, I had just sat down to enjoy an afternoon cup of tea, when a herd of chital started calling on the hill a couple of furlongs from the bungalow. They were calling hysterically, and it was quite obvious they were being harassed by some enemy. I immediately whistled up my shikari, and off we went together to investigate. Leaving a spur of the hill between ourselves and the chital, we scrambled to the top, and then advanced along the crest under cover of the bamboo clumps covering that particular hillside. On reaching the end of the ridge we could still hear the chital calling about seventy-five yards down the hill below us, but could not see them. Very slowly we wormed our way down the slope keeping out of sight by making use of all available cover, until at last we reached a bamboo clump, from under which we caught sight of three stags, one with magnificent antlers, standing shoulder to shoulder about fifty yards away and gazing into the grass ahead of them. I studied them through my field-glasses. Their noses were twitching, and they kept throwing up their heads to sniff the breeze which was blowing towards them from the patch of grass they were watching. Every few seconds one or other of them stamped his forefoot and called, but now the calling was no longer hysterical. It had become querulous, and sometimes finished up on a sort of note of inquiry. For the life of me I could not see anything in the grass ahead of them, though, obviously, there was something there. I had just put my field-glasses down beside me when I saw a panther sneak out of the grass and get behind a bamboo clump, where he was hidden from our view. I very nearly got up to go after him, but fortunately thought better of it. Either he or the chital would have seen me, and both would have disappeared in a trice. We sat perfectly still, and about a minute later the panther reappeared, retreating up wind. After going a few yards he turned to come up the hill towards us, hoping, I am sure, to be able to sneak right round, and come up from behind the stags, who were still gazing stupidly into the grass ahead of them. He

had not seen us, and I allowed him to come to within thirty yards before bowling him over. In spite of being badly hit, he roared and disappeared into the grass. There, however, we had very little difficulty in finding him, for he had gone only a few yards, and collapsed.

It may seem odd that a herd of chital will for preference park itself near a Forest Bungalow during the day. Actually, there is a great deal of sense in this seeming madness, for they have learnt from experience that a poacher with a gun does not venture into the jungle in any vicinity where he could be caught easily by a Forest Guard.

A few minutes after returning to the bungalow, I got down to a fresh cup of tea, and then to some more skinning. I felt very much inclined to leave the skinning of the panther over till the next morning, but, as things turned out later, it was perhaps just as well that I did not do so.

Fairly early next morning the shikari from Koelpurra arrived post haste on a bicycle to say a tiger was roaring at the foot of a hill near there. I hastily collected my calling up paraphernalia, and set off immediately in my car, but by the time I got there the men at Koelpurra said the tiger had gone up the hill calling, and crossed over the crest into the jungles beyond. I decided to follow, but it took me and my men the best part of an hour to scramble through the very dense undergrowth and grass to reach the top of the hill. Once there, I began calling, and continued to do so for about half an hour, but without any answering call from the tiger. This was most disappointing, and now, of course, it was difficult to guess which direction the tiger had taken. To find any tracks in those grassy surroundings was impossible. Staying where we were was useless, so it was now a toss up between going on or going home. Finally, I decided to go on, but very soon found myself regretting this decision. Every step seemed to take us further and further into a tangled mass of grass and undergrowth, until eventually we were literally fighting our way through to get along. My men, who were all very much shorter than myself, seemed to avoid most of the branches and cobwebs which seemed to catch me every time in the face! We went down the far side of the hill, up a deep ravine, and up the side of another hill, and then, to my great joy, emerged on to a long grassy slope, with fewer trees and no undergrowth. As I stopped to

mop my brow and admire the view, I realized that this would be an ideal spot for calling up. My call from there would be heard in the deep valley below, and in the range of hills beyond, and if the tiger did condescend to come towards us, it would be far easier for us to see him than for him to see us. Telling my men to hide themselves in the grass, I called. Imagine our delight when, at about the third call, we heard the tiger answer from the hills beyond. He was more than a mile away, but at each call he seemed to be coming nearer. Our excitement grew intense. Call answered call until at last the tiger was only about half a mile away. Here, however, he apparently decided to stop, and nothing we could do would persuade him to advance any further towards us. But although he refused to come any nearer, he still continued to answer our call. Leaving a shikari to continue calling, I then went forward with the intention of stalking him, or of intercepting him if he eventually changed his mind, and started coming towards the call. Unfortunately for me, what looked like a perfectly straightforward hillside was in fact a series of small ridges separated by deep nullahs, and by the time I had waded through the waist-high grass and gone up hill and down dale half a dozen times, I had fully realized that to see the tiger in that grass would be very nearly impossible. Besides, the tiger too had got fed up, and had ceased calling.

I now took up a commanding position on a small knoll, and sent the man accompanying me back to the shikari, with orders to join me at once, and to bring the call with him.

It was nearly an hour before the shikari joined me, and when I called again there was no response from the tiger. As it was now after four o'clock, and as my men had had nothing to eat, we decided to call it a day, and make tracks for home. We also decided to split up into two parties. The men were to go back to the car at Koelpurra and get the chauffeur to drive them back to Motichur, while I, accompanied by the shikari carrying the tiger-call, would descend into the valley, and then take the shortest route home. This seemed the most reasonable arrangement. While sauntering homewards I stopped occasionally to call, but it was not until we had been going nearly an hour, that the tiger suddenly started calling again, away back in the hills, whence we had just come.

Both the shikari and I were tired and hungry, but, to the astonishment of my companion, I grimly turned to go back. The shikari now had to run to keep up with me. It was getting late and we were up against the age-old problem of time and space.

On rounding the first spur we realized that the tiger was calling about a mile and a half away from a hill to our right front. We therefore quickly decided to go obliquely up a hill from where we hoped to be able to answer the call. My shikari was not a local man, and neither of us knew the jungle, but our luck was in. After we had panted up the hill we found ourselves at the beginning of a long narrow plateau covered in grass. The plateau itself had very few trees, but there was dense jungle on the slopes on either side, and a narrow pathway led straight through the middle of the grass in the direction of the tiger, who, judging by the volume of his roar was coming towards us. We now answered each other call for call. The shikari and I ran along the pathway towards the tiger, stopping only from time to time to answer him when he roared. There was no doubt at all now that we were both approaching each other very fast. It was amazing how many chital and sambur sprang up out of the grass and bolted for their lives.

When eventually we had got to within two hundred yards of the far end of the plateau, we halted to take stock of our surroundings, and also to regain our breath. While we were doing this the tiger called about a furlong away. I answered immediately. A moment or two later we were delighted to see the tail of a tiger, held straight up in the air, moving, like the periscope of a submarine through a sea of yellow grass, towards the dense jungle to our right. The body of the tiger was completely hidden from view. The shikari and I now moved to our right, and got behind a small tree, about fifteen yards from the edge of the dense jungle, into which the tiger had disappeared about one hundred and fifty yards further away.

Between us and the edge of the plateau there was a small bare patch, devoid even of grass, marking the upper end of a narrow ravine, which a few yards further on entered the dense jungle, and then descended abruptly towards the valley below. Standing behind the tree with the shikari crouching in the grass beside me I now leant my rifle against the tree-trunk, and eagerly scanned the edge of the jungle through my field-glasses,

hoping the tiger would soon reappear coming that way towards us. He had ceased calling, and as minute after minute went by, my hopes sank lower and lower, until at last in sheer desperation I decided to call again. But even this failed to produce any response, and I had almost given up hope when my shikari whispered hoarsely that he could smell the tiger. The wind certainly was blowing from the jungle towards us, but, for all that, I could smell absolutely nothing at all, and was just thinking to myself how ridiculous it was of the shikari to talk such utter rot, when from the jungle about twenty yards to our right front out walked a tiger straight on to the open patch ahead. I still had my field-glasses in my hand. As I put them down to seize my rifle, the tiger saw me, and immediately crouched facing me. A head-on shot is always dangerous, but with the setting sun behind me, lighting up the target, it was irresistible. Aiming at the middle of the chest, I fired. The tiger went straight over backwards, but by a miraculous effort, succeeded in getting back into the fringe of the jungle, roaring furiously, and tearing up everything within reach, but without giving the chance of another shot. When this first outburst had subsided, I reloaded and went forward a bit to the right, hoping to be able to see the tiger again. Eventually I got a shot at something, but this turned out to be a paw! The tiger immediately got going once more, but, although I could hear it jumping about, for the life of me I could not see it. Fortunately, in the end, the tiger rolled down the hill, and gave me the chance I was waiting for to finish it off.

It turned out to be a tigress. This then accounted for the reluctance she had shown about coming forward to meet us when we were calling her earlier on. She evidently considered it was up to the boy-friend to go to her, and when that did not happen, she must have concluded it was a tigress and not a tiger calling. I am quite sure I should never have seen her if I had not gone forward to meet her.

My first bullet had hit her a couple of inches below her left eye, and had carried away the back portion of her lower jaw, without doing any further damage. This had rendered her semi-conscious. I am convinced she would have recovered consciousness and been a difficult problem if I had left the following up over till the morning. It was indeed a blessing that I had followed immediately.

When the tigress stepped into the open, the rays of the setting sun brilliantly lit up the orange and chestnut tints of her handsome coat, showing her up to great advantage. It would have been a grand opportunity to take a good picture with a camera.

Leaving the tigress where she lay, the shikari and I hurried homewards, and got back to the Forest Bungalow just before dark. The rest of our party had arrived back from Koelpurra in the car, and, having heard the three shots were now all agog to hear the story. I left it to my companion to tell the tale, which, I knew, would lose nothing in the telling!

During the night it rained very heavily, and when I set out just before dawn the sky was very overcast. The shikari and a skinner accompanied me. We picked our way through the jungle with a torch, and had not gone far from the bungalow when a small chital fawn jumped up out of the grass by the side of our pathway, and bounded away at full speed. We reached the beginning of the plateau just as it was beginning to get light, and were moving ahead in complete silence, when suddenly I noticed a large black object about twenty yards ahead. Thinking it was a sambur hind I stopped to make sure, and was surprised to see the object take three or four quick, sharp steps, advancing towards me. Realizing then that it was a big boar, bent on charging me, I hurriedly turned to the man behind me for my rifle, but when I turned again the boar was galloping away as fast as his legs would carry him. I think, in the half light, he must have mistaken me for a tiger.

I was pleased to find the tigress lying where we had left her, not that I had expected her to come to life and wander off again, but I had once lost a panther by leaving him out in the jungle overnight. When I went to fetch him in the morning, I found he had been half eaten by another panther!

Skinning the tigress on a steep hillside was not an easy job, and to add to our difficulties it started pouring again with rain, soaking us all to the skin. However, the expert skinner soon had the skin off, and before long we were on our way home again, with the skin folded into a neat little bundle, now cleverly balanced on the skinner's head.

On our way home, the little fawn again sprang out of the same patch of grass, and bolted just as it had before dawn. Young fawns are apparently well-disciplined. When left by

their mothers in a certain place, it is their duty to remain hidden there till they return. If disturbed by an enemy, they make a mad dash for safety, but, when the coast is clear, return again to exactly the same place. There is much to be learnt from the wild animals of the jungle!

CHAPTER XI

TALAMALAI

IN THE DAYS I am writing about, the main road going Southwards from Mysore through Nanjangud towards Satyamangalam and Coimbatore was not too good. At least, it was fairly good as far as Chamrajnagar, but after that it was bad. At the top of the ghat (pass), marking the end of the plateau and overlooking the plains of Coimbatore, there was a small Rest House by the side of the road, at a little place called Dimbhum. It was here that I found myself at the end of my first day's journey from Bangalore. Heavy rain prevented me from going any further that day, for from there to Talamalai there was thirteen miles of unmetalled jungle road, which the rain had made impassable for the time-being. My car was full, and very overloaded with servants, kit, and stores, and, after thinking things over, I decided to try and hire a bullock cart to relieve the car of some of its burden for the last lap of the journey. With the help of a fine old Mohamedan named Adam Khan, I was able to do this. He was so delighted to meet someone who could speak and understand his mother tongue, Urdu, that he took great trouble to arrange the bullock cart for me. He was the only one of his kind in the heart of this Tamil-speaking country, and was apparently in charge of some fellings in that part of the forest.

Very early next morning the bullock cart arrived, and, after it had been loaded, I left for Talamalai, taking my bearer and motor driver with me, with just the guns and enough provisions for the day. The road was still very wet after the heavy rain, and we skidded along through the treacherous mud, over the narrow track, which, for the first mile, followed the top of the cliffs forming the upper ramparts of the plateau. These cliffs descended abruptly to the thickly wooded hillsides several hundred feet below. The view of the plains beyond was magnificent, but the narrow track was truly hair-raising in places, for there was barely enough room for the car to get along, and there was nothing at the side of the road to prevent

one from skidding over the edge to hurtle down the cliffs below. Thereafter the road went up hill and down dale through very dense forests, and we were getting along famously in spite of having to plough our way through the heavy mud, until at last we came to a small stream, where a herd of wild elephants had so churned up the wet mud on both sides with their heavy feet, that the car sank up to its axles, and the rear wheels spun round hopelessly in the mire, without being able to grip solid ground. So there we were, absolutely stuck, and unable to move. My Punjabi motor driver, who had never been in a dense jungle or seen wild elephants in his life, now imagined that a whole herd of monstrous pachyderms would rush out upon us, and trample us to death. He looked pale with fright, and when I suggested he should cut some brushwood to put under the wheels, he said in a whisper, "But what if the elephants hear me?" It was indeed a sorry plight, and we might have been there still if Adam Khan and about a dozen men had not arrived on their way to do some fellings. With their assistance, and after much pushing and shoving we at last managed to get the car out of the mire. I thanked my stars I had had the sense to send all the heavy kit on by bullock cart. Adam Khan then put two men with their axes at my disposal to accompany us on the next stage of our journey, in case we should find ourselves in difficulties again. Six or seven miles from Dimbhum we came to a small Forest Bungalow on the top of a hill, and from there, for the first time, one could see the Talamalai plain. Here we were about half-way to our destination, and the road now descended steeply, winding its way round many hair-pin bends, and passing through magnificent forests of enormous trees. The scenery was wonderful. Beyond the wide plain ahead, the Blue Mountains of the Nilgiris raised their proud heads to meet the sky, and the hills and valleys we were passing through were truly very beautiful.

Arriving at the foot of the hill, we now crossed a mile of open cultivated lands to the village of Talamalai, where, after many inquiries by my Tamil-speaking bearer, we were at last directed to the house of Krishna, the local shikari. Now, Krishna is the name of a Hindu god, but, strangely enough, Krishna shikari was a Mohamedan. Although he looked and dressed like all the Hindus around him, he, unlike the rest, spoke remarkably good Urdu, and so it was that I met a man

whose name will live in my memory for ever. Without more ado he got into my car, and after we had called at the Range Quarters, and met the Forest Ranger, we sped on about another mile to the little Forest Bungalow, conveniently situated by the side of the road. It was not much of a place really, but, except for having no bed, it had most of the other necessities, including a table and chairs, and a zinc bath-tub, besides which it had servants' quarters and a kitchen. Krishna very soon arranged men to fetch water and firewood, and in less than half an hour the kitchen chimney could be seen smoking quite merrily, while my bearer busied himself cooking something good for master to eat.

I forgot to mention that this was Christmas week, and I was now on five days leave. The primary purpose of the trip was a tiger, while the secondary object was a thoroughly good rest and change from work and civilization. After having seen the jungles we passed through that morning, all seemed to promise well.

Krishna now departed to collect as many animals as he could for me to buy as baits, and I wandered into the jungle across the road, with no object other than to get a better idea of my immediate surroundings, and also to while away the time until Krishna's return. Less than a furlong from the bungalow I came across a young sambur stag, browsing peacefully on the luscious green leaves of a stunted tree. He was out late, for it was now nearly nine o'clock, and he should have been in bed long ago! However, it was a dull cloudy morning, and he had evidently forgotten all about the time. Just to see how close I could get to him without being discovered, I decided to stalk him, but, by the time I had gone round by a fire line to come up behind him, he had disappeared, and very cleverly turned the tables on me. While I was looking for him where I had last seen him, he was standing stock still and watching me from a flank. When I was only a few yards away, he belled so suddenly, that I nearly jumped out of my skin, and, in a flash, he was gone!

When Krishna returned with the baits and their owners, I really could not help having a jolly good laugh. Such a motley collection of men and animals indeed presented a truly ludicrous spectacle. I think the people of Talamalai must have had a sense of humour too, for when I laughed, they all

laughed with me, so that made a pretty good beginning anyway, and the bargaining which took place in the next few minutes was conducted in a spirit of jovial cordiality. I must say these jungle folk were much more honest and amenable to reason than many I had met in other parts of India. The prices they asked were fairly reasonable, and they agreed to receiving only part-payment, if their animals were returned alive and intact at the end of my stay, which was a thing others rarely did elsewhere. In a few minutes I found myself in possession of all the baits I needed, having bought or hired all except those which were really beyond a joke.

That evening Krishna and I went out more or less Southwards into the more open jungles away from where the baits were being tied. I say "the more open jungles", but to all intents and purposes they were quite dense enough, though perhaps the trees were not quite so large as those we had seen in the denser forests in the morning. The Lentana bushes, and other dense scrub made it difficult to see more than a few yards. After wandering about for an hour or more without seeing anything, we had just turned homewards, when a herdsman ran up to us, breathless, and announced that a tiger had just killed one of his bullocks, about half a mile away. We raced back with him to the spot, which happened to be on a grassy spur, and which we had visited only a few minutes earlier on. Very quietly we advanced through the grass hoping to get a shot at the tiger feeding on his kill, but, instead of this, we found the old bullock, standing up, about fifty yards down the steep hillside on the far side of the spur! We then went down to look at him and found that his throat had been torn open, and that he had rolled or been dragged down the hill. Furthermore, he had been seized by the muzzle, and his nostrils had also been badly torn. As a result of this, blood was oozing from his nostrils and throat, and the poor beast's body was heaving and lurching in a desperate struggle to breathe. In addition, the breathing was making a wheezing gurgling sound which could be heard several yards away. We tried to get him to move, but he was too done for to do so. In the circumstances there was nothing we could have done to help the poor animal. It would have been a mercy to have shot him, but I dared not do so for fear of offending the religious susceptibilities of the Hindu population. I therefore hid myself in the grass, and told Krishna

and the herdsman to go away talking. The sun was setting, and I hoped the assailant would reappear before darkness set in. Nothing, however, came, and I sat there till it became too dark to be able to see my sights. Then, getting up very quietly, I crept back to join the others who were waiting for me on a forest line about a furlong away.

Both Krishna and I were of the opinion that it was a panther and not a tiger, though the herdsman still swore that it was a tiger that had attacked the bullock. It was no use arguing about it, but the fang-marks in the throat distinctly said "panther", and I have never known a tiger seize his victim by the muzzle, though I have quite often known a panther do so. The bullock was a fine big animal, and had evidently succeeded in driving off his attacker, but to what purpose? When we returned very early in the morning, he was gone.

Krishna and I then followed up the drag, and found that the bullock had been thrown down a cliff, and, after falling about a hundred feet, had rolled another forty or fifty, and stuck in some bushes in a ravine. We had the greatest difficulty letting ourselves down this precipice, for there was no other way round. The hindquarters of the bullock had been eaten, and there was no doubt at all now that it was a panther, for his tracks were clearly visible in some damp earth near the kill. There was no suitable tree for a machan, and I was just pointing out a position for a hideout on the side of the ravine, when Krishna suddenly had a most unfortunate brain-wave. The kill, he said, was outside the boundary limits of my shooting permit! Well, that was that, and, as there was no way of dragging the carcass into our own territory, we had to abandon the idea of sitting up. It was indeed unfortunate that Krishna had not had his brain-wave a bit earlier, and I told him so in no uncertain language.

The nearest Post Office was at Talavadi twelve miles away, and, that morning, I had sent a special runner to post some letters, and also collect my Christmas mail. In the afternoon, he arrived back with my post, looking none the worse for having covered twenty-four miles on foot, and he also brought the news that on his return journey he had heard people shouting, and had discovered that a panther had killed a bullock near a small village, about four miles away. He said he had arranged with the villagers not to remove the carcass.

Unfortunately for me, Krishna had gone off to supervise the tying out of the baits, and I was obliged to go without him. Taking my Punjabi driver, the post-runner, and a couple of men with me in the car, I succeeded in reaching a spot about half a mile from the kill. It was then that my difficulties really began, for neither my driver nor I could speak the local language, and my coolies could not understand a word I said. However, the post-runner led us to the kill, which was lying partly eaten, close to a narrow forest line, and after much gesticulation, I succeeded in getting the coolies to tie up a machan, more or less as I wanted it. Then, when all was ready, I climbed into my perch, and ordered the driver to take the men away, but to return for me at about eight o'clock.

It was now about four o'clock, and it was a lovely warm afternoon. A grey jungle-cock had just uttered a piercingly shrill squawk, but, not understanding his language, I lay back on the machan, and gazed up at a few white clouds floating over very high up in the sky. The panther had had a very good feed, and I did not expect him to return till late in the evening. Imagine my surprise, when I turned my head, and saw a huge panther, standing broadside on by the kill. He had just arrived, and was surveying his prey, one hind leg of which was broken at the hock, and was sticking up in the air. The panther sniffed this, and licked the blood off the protruding bone. And then, as though apprehending danger, he stood stock still, and looked sideways towards the foot of my tree. I lay quite still, hoping he would start feeding, and give me the chance to sit up, and lay hold of the rifle lying by my side. The slightest movement now would have attracted his attention. Instead of starting to feed, however, he came straight over to the foot of my tree, presumably to look down the forest line, and make sure there was nobody about. He must have been there a couple of minutes, and, although I could not see him, I dared not stir for fear of frightening him away. Then, having moved round out of sight, he appeared again beyond the kill, where he sat down, sitting upright like a dog. Very slowly and noiselessly I raised myself, and caught hold of my rifle, but his luck was in. Something prompted him to move on, and, before I could put the rifle to my shoulder, he had disappeared into the very heavy undergrowth beyond.

The conclusion I came to was that he had evidently heard us

putting up the machan, and had come along a few minutes after the departure of the men, just to see if they had interfered with the kill. Having satisfied himself that they had not, he moved over to the forest line to make sure the men had really gone. He was not hungry, and returned to the jungle without having a feed, leaving me to curse myself for having let such a wonderful chance slip right through my fingers. My only hope now was that he would return again at dusk, and this time I was determined to be ready for him, if he came. He was a remarkably big, heavily-built panther, and looked very fine standing there in the bright sunlight only ten or twelve yards away. The sight would have delighted the heart of any big-game photographer, provided, of course, that he had not been so unready with his camera, as I had been with my rifle.

Dusk came, but no panther, and, although I sat on for a couple of hours after dark, nothing at all came to the kill. Then, to my horror, I saw the bright headlights of my car coming down the narrow forest line towards me. That arrant coward of a driver had funked walking down the line with the coolies in the dark, and had therefore driven the car into a veritable cul-de-sac, to come and fetch me. To say that I was angry, would be putting it very mildly. Not only did this action spoil the chances that still existed of getting the panther the next day, but I also realized that it would be the very devil backing the car a furlong down the narrow line in the dark. Trust a coward to make a hash of things, just to save his own precious skin! I am afraid that driver was a degenerate, unworthy of his own gallant race. Taking everything into consideration, it had been rather an unfortunate day.

The men who went out early next morning to look at the kill, came back and reported that men from the neighbouring village had skinned the bullock and removed the meat. All that remained was the head, the skin, and the legs. Whether the panther had returned during the night to the kill, they did not know.

I was more than a little astonished to find that the Hindus, in this part of the world, were prepared to eat a cow killed by a tiger or panther. According to Krishna, they did not slaughter cows, but had no objection to eating one killed for them in this way. Very few Hindu shikaris in Northern or Central India

would deign even to touch a dead cow, let alone eat one, after it had been killed by a tiger or panther.

As Krishna had reported no casualties amongst the baits, and as there was just the possibility that the panther had fed on the kill and retired to the jungle before the villagers had removed it, I set out that afternoon, with the forlorn hope that the panther might once again return to have a look at the kill. We stuffed the old bullock's hide with branches and leaves, and made him look as much like the original kill as possible, hoping in this way to deceive the panther, but, in spite of this, and, in spite of the fact that I sat bolt upright in the machan awaiting another opportunity such as the one I had missed, no such opportunity came again.

I had ordered Krishna to go and buy a goat from the neighbouring village, and tie it on the forest line near my tree at sundown. He arrived rather late when it was getting dusk, and said he had been delayed, because the village goats had returned late from their grazing grounds. He also warned me that he had heard a noise in the jungle coming down the line with the goat, and he suspected a panther was following him. He said he had pulled the goat's ears a couple of times, to make it bleat and lead the panther on!

Having tied the goat, Krishna had hardly been gone two minutes, when there was a sudden rush, and I saw the goat bowled over by a panther. I was absolutely ready for him, and shot him dead, but I am sorry to say it was not the large male I had seen the day before. Nevertheless, it was a good big panther, and a few minutes later we were on our way home with the prize tied on to the luggage-grid at the back of the car. Incidentally, a luggage-carrier is always a good thing. It may not be beautiful, but it is very useful on occasions such as these. It must be remembered, however, that the carrier should be well covered with grass and leaves to prevent the possibility of hair being rubbed off the skin of the trophy. I once put a tiger inside my car, and it took some weeks to remove all traces of blood and smell. Besides nothing bites harder into the skin than a tiger tick! He buries his head under the skin, and causes a most painful inflammation, which takes some days to subside. Ticks start leaving dead tigers and panthers as soon as they begin getting cold, so beware!

Next morning Krishna reported that one of the baits had

been killed by a panther, about half a mile from the place where the bullock had been killed on the day of my arrival. The bait had been tied at the junction of a forest line with what was known locally as the Sultan Road, a relic of the historic days of the greatly feared Tippu Sultan. Between this junction and the village of Talamalai about a mile of this road was bounded on both sides by gigantic fig trees, the fruit of which fell, at this time of year, in large quantities, on to the road below, and was a source of great attraction to the sloth bears, who came down at night from the hills specially to eat it. In the opposite direction, this old thoroughfare was bounded by jungle on the one side, and by extensive cultivation on the other, and was, in consequence, quite often used by wild elephants coming down to raid the rice and other crops in the Patta-lands (Cultivated areas) of the Talamalai Plain. In particular, there was a very large tusker, who was at that time terrorizing the whole countryside. He raided the patta-lands regularly at night, and chased men whenever he met them in the forest by day, but, as he had not actually killed anyone, he had not been proscribed as a rogue. He was therefore immune, within Forest limits, from being shot, except in self-defence. Krishna begged me to sit up one night, and shoot him in the fields, for there he was "out of bounds", and could be shot by anyone, but I did not like the idea of shooting an elephant that had not been proscribed.

To return to the kill. As there was fear of interference by elephants, Krishna had put up my machan at least twenty feet from the ground, but he had chosen a very slender and delicate looking tree, that could, in my opinion, have been knocked over by an angry elephant! The kill was lying at the edge of the jungle, by the side of the Sultan Road, for the panther had not been able to break the thick rope with which the bait had been tied. It was the custom in this part of the world to use thick ropes. The undergrowth was so thick, that if a tiger or panther succeeded in removing a kill, it was sometimes impossible to follow it up. Funnily enough, this did not seem to raise the suspicions of the local tigers and panthers, and, according to Krishna, they nearly always returned to a kill. This practice would not have worked in the Central or United Provinces.

I had no end of a struggle trying to climb into my high

perch, but when eventually I succeeded in getting up there, I asked Krishna to cut down a small sapling, which was obscuring the view. He pointed out that it was a Government tree, and he could not take the responsibility for destroying Government property, as, after my departure, he might be had up for doing so. Apart from that, however, all was well. It was now about three o'clock, and having settled myself in I ordered the men to go away.

Shortly after their departure, a musician in one of the neighbouring fields, decided to do a bit of "tom-toming", and, having started beating his drum, continued to do so for half an hour without stopping. It was really quite exasperating, for no panther could have faced such music, and, at one time when he got worked up, it almost felt as though he was deliberately trying to drive all wild animals out of Southern India. It was indeed a relief when he eventually stopped.

Shortly afterwards, three peahens came out of the jungle on to the road near the kill. Their long necks were stretched out to the fullest extent possible, and their hackles were up. They were looking round nervously behind them, and it was obvious they had been disturbed by some dreaded enemy. A few seconds later I saw the head and shoulders of a panther appear in the undergrowth behind, and, after a slight pause, a fine big panther came out to the edge of the forest and sat down, screened by the jolly old sapling! However, a few seconds later, he got up and moved forward a few paces, to look down the Sultan Road, just to make sure there was no one approaching. It was then that I took my shot, and, as he fell over and lay kicking on the ground, I hurriedly fired again, and cut the sapling in two! So that was that! But a very strange thing happened to me. While the panther lay there kicking and dying, a very clear vision of that first tormented bullock flashed across my eyes. Surely, this was the murderer!

Krishna and party soon arrived, and we all had a good laugh about the sapling. I told him about the drummer, and he then confessed, that, after leaving me, he had run off back to the village to have some tea, and was horrified when he heard the drum. The drummer had then been silenced by him.

Krishna now suggested that I should stay on in the machan, and sit up over the kill for a few hours that night. He seemed to think some other panther or even a tiger would come along

to the kill. I, however, decided it would be better to take the panther back to the bungalow first, and return later to sit up. My car was only about a quarter of a mile up the Sultan Road, and, having tied the panther on at the back, we took it first to the village of Talamalai, where it was admired by all, and then drove on to the Forest Bungalow.

It was now about five o'clock, and I was peacefully drinking a cup of tea, when a man ran in to say a panther had killed a goat near the village of Mudiyanur, less than a mile away. We hurried to the spot, only to find that in the meantime the panther, or possibly somebody else, had removed the kill. The tracks were of a very large panther, and there was blood to show where the goat had been killed. Now, however, there was no hope of discovering where it had gone. I therefore selected a climbable tree, and hid myself in the upper branches, while a man was sent to the village to fetch another goat. This, however, took so long, that by the time it arrived it was getting dark, and, although the goat bleated hysterically, it failed to attract the panther. Thus ended another little incident, but, as I had had enough for one day, I did not return to sit up over the kill on the Sultan Road. I told Krishna I would sit up there the following evening, if there were no further kills elsewhere, and ordered him to cover up the kill first thing in the morning, to save it from being devoured by vultures.

The next morning was spent skinning the second panther, and, as none of the baits had been touched, it seemed we were in for a dull day. In the evening, however, while Krishna was on his way to tie out the baits, he suddenly saw a tiger strolling down the jungle road ahead of him. He ran back to fetch me, in the hopes that we might see it again, but I am afraid the tiger had got too well ahead by the time we got back to the spot, and, although we followed in his tracks for nearly a mile, we never saw him. Baits were rushed forward to various vantage points, in the hopes that the tiger would find them during the night.

Later that evening I went and sat up over the kill on the Sultan Road. The tiger had caused an unexpected diversion, and as Krishna had great hopes it would kill somewhere that night, and wanted me to accompany him in the morning, it was decided that I should sit up only till about eleven o'clock that night. The moon was full, and I was able to see down a long

stretch of the Sultan Road, which was gleaming white in the beautiful moonlight. It mattered not in the slightest whether or not anything came to the kill. It would have been enough to sit there alone in those wonderful surroundings on a night such as this. The hours went by without my seeing a thing, until suddenly I thought I saw a large shadow moving some distance down the road. Gradually it became larger and larger, and presently I realized that a solitary elephant was coming down the road towards me. I now slipped a couple of "solid" into my heavy cordite rifle, just in case of any trouble, for I had very little faith in the slender tree Krishna had selected for my machan. Now the elephant was in the moonlight, and his white tusks gleamed, as he swayed on his way along the ancient highway. He looked very big, and I could not help thinking at the time that even Tippu would have been delighted to see such a magnificent old tusker on the Sultan Road. He looked, and was a King, like Tippu himself, before whom all humans fled in terror at the very mention of his approach. So this was the "Terror of Talamalai!" Indeed, I did not wonder people were frightened of this mighty king. Even though I was high up in a machan and out of his reach, I felt my fingers tighten round my heavy rifle, as he drew level with my position, and stopped suddenly, as if arrested by some unusual sight. The smell of the kill had reached his sensitive nostrils, and he was now holding his trunk out before him to sniff the tainted air. Very slowly he advanced to investigate, and whether it was the smell of the kill or of the panther's blood that enraged him I cannot say, but suddenly he rushed forward towards the kill, making sounds such as I cannot describe. He was now in the shadow of the trees, and I could not see exactly what he was doing, but he seemed to be kicking mud forwards with his forefeet over the kill, and was still giving vent to his disapproval by making terrifying noises. I was glad when he moved on again, but prayed that he would not go on to find and wreck my car half a mile further down the road towards Talamalai, or meet and play skittles with Krishna and his party, who were due to come along shortly to fetch me down from my tree.

Very early before dawn next morning, Krishna and I set out together to see if the tiger had killed any of our baits. These had been put out at intervals along forest lines and roads over a very large area. We were going to look at the most likely

places, while men were sent to look at the others. Krishna seemed very full of hope when we started, but as time went on, and we found bait after bait untouched, we realized that the tiger had eluded us. Although this was very disappointing, the morning, nevertheless, proved to be a most interesting one in many little ways. When we got to the second bait, Krishna showed me the tree from which a young officer had shot the biggest tiger ever shot near Talamalai. The bait had been tied with a stout rope in exactly the same place, and the huge tiger had returned in daylight to the kill. The young officer had shot the tiger, and had shown his gratitude to the Tiger god, by having a large wooden tiger made for the temple of the Tiger deity. I was much intrigued, and asked if I could see it. "Yes," said Krishna. "We can see it on our way home."

Then, while cutting across some cultivated land, to avoid going all the way round by the forest line, we were nearing a high impenetrable hedge, when I noticed blood on the little pathway we were following. Krishna then pointed out three sharply pointed wooden stakes, about four feet long, bent forwards to face a gap in the hedge, so placed that any animal jumping through the gap would be impaled. The red blood-stained stake, and some bits of clotted hair proclaimed that some unfortunate chital had jumped to its doom through the gap an hour or two before our arrival. Further on, when we reached a field adjoining the Reserved Forest, Krishna pointed out a trench, running along the side of another impenetrable hedge. The trench was shallow at one end, and gradually grew deeper and deeper, until it terminated in a dead end about ten feet deep. The steep sides were undercut, and Krishna then explained, that in this way a dozen or more wild pigs could be destroyed in one go. When the pigs entered the field, by yelling or firing a shot one man could drive them towards the trench, and the pigs, entering the shallow end of the trench, would run down to the deep end and find themselves entrapped. The man would then throw in the dry brushwood and grass already placed in readiness near the shallow end, and set it on fire, thus ensuring that the pigs could not escape. Finally with the aid of men armed with spears, the pigs could be exterminated. After seeing these two simple but diabolical devices, I came to the conclusion that the inhabitants of these parts did not really need firearms for the protection of their crops!

On the way home we called at the temple. There, not in the temple itself, but in a shed all to itself was the large wooden effigy of a demon tiger, painted bright yellow, with long black stripes, and a very red mouth and tongue. It was mounted on a wooden platform, and had its own wooden chariot, in which Krishna said it was taken out in procession on the appropriate day. I exclaimed at its beauty, and Krishna was delighted to see that I admired it. I asked who had made it, and was given the full history, including the name of the carpenter and the bazaar from where the paint had been purchased, but I cannot remember these details now. With great pride Krishna also showed me the letter this officer had given him as a testimonial, but I cannot remember the officer's name. Anyway, if he has survived World War II, and should chance to read this story, he will perhaps be glad to know that his present to the temple was greatly appreciated, and probably will still be appreciated by many generations to come. The effigy of the tiger is one of Talamalai's most treasured possessions.

Krishna had been gored by a wounded bull bison, and the wound in his thigh, where the horn had penetrated, was large enough to put a fist in. He said he had not been able to walk for a very long time afterwards, and I can well believe it. The wound had thoroughly healed, and he had the full use of his legs when I knew him, but I must say he had a terrible scar. He could tell a good story, but he never liked saying too much about this incident. I rather gathered he had been poaching in the Reserved Forest, and mistaking the half-hidden body of the bison for a sambur, had fired at it with his muzzle-loader, with disastrous results. He also told another story, which I think will probably interest others as much as it did me, so I will tell it in his words:

"I had gone into the hills early one morning, together with another man, to try and shoot a sambur. While we were sitting on a spur watching the opposite hillside, in the hopes that we should catch sight of a sambur grazing somewhere, a big bull bison appeared, grazing peacefully, and moving slowly across a grassy clearing. He did not see us, because we were hidden in the grass, and were sitting absolutely still. Presently, to our horror, we saw a very large tiger come out of the jungle behind the bison. The tiger began to stalk the bison, who was quite unconscious of his presence. We were very frightened, and

wanted to run away, but our blood was turned to water, and we could not run even though we wanted to do so. Suddenly the bison must have smelt the tiger, for he gave a very loud snort, and the tiger immediately ran back into the jungle. Then the fun began. The tiger showed his face from behind the trunk of a tree, and the bison put his head down and charged, hitting the tree such a mighty smack, that he himself was thrown over backwards, and the tiger ran quickly away to one side. Again the tiger showed himself from behind another tree, and again the stupid bison charged and hurt himself without doing any damage to the tiger. This went on for a very long time, and sometimes when the bison refused to charge, the tiger used to come out into the open to annoy him, so that he would charge again. It was a terrible tragedy, for the bison had no sense. After about four or five hours he was completely exhausted, and blood was flowing from his forehead. His flanks were heaving, and he was too tired even to turn round. Then the tiger attacked him from behind, and tore open the veins of his hind legs with his teeth and claws. The great bull sank down backwards, making a bellowing sound."

"And did you shoot the tiger?" I asked. "No," said Krishna, "we had gone only to shoot a sambur, and we hardly dared breathe now that we saw the mighty bison had been over-powered by the tiger. We were sore afraid that the tiger might see us and kill us too. We crept away quietly, and then ran as fast as we could to get out of the jungle."

I am afraid I never got a tiger on that trip. Time was too short. The place was stiff with panthers, but tigers were few and far between. With more time at my disposal, things would have been different. I made no attempt to go after bison either, although those jungles were known to hold one or two exceptionally good heads.

Owing to the fact that the local inhabitants often stole away tiger and panther kills for their own use, it seemed to me that both tigers and panthers in those parts were in the habit of returning constantly to their kills, even in daylight, just to see that they had not been taken away. Furthermore, as they did not seem to mind not being able to remove the kills which were secured by unbreakable ropes, it would have been possible to take photographs under ideal conditions. Certainly, it would

have been extremely easy to photograph the two panthers that came out in front of me in the bright sunlight.

I left Talamalai with a feeling that I had visited a very interesting part of the world, and that I should very much like to go there again. I wrote the Forest Officer, asking him to let me know if ever he decided to proscribe that elephant as a rogue, but up to the time of my leaving, a few months later, to take part in a small war on the North West Frontier, I heard nothing from him, and I was never able to visit the place again.

Nine years later, when I was given a month's leave to go to the Nilgiris, I wrote the Forest Officer to ask if I could shoot at Talamalai again. He very kindly said I could, and the trip was duly arranged. I bought a silver-plated axe, fitted with a polished bamboo handle for my friend Krishna, and wrote ahead telling him that I hoped to see him again very shortly. The letter was eventually returned to me through the dead letter office, and I had a short note from the Forest Ranger to say that my shikari Krishna had been killed by a wild elephant.

And so I did not go to Talamalai again.

PART III

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT INDIAN WILD BUFFALO

NOT MANY SPORTSMEN alive to-day have seen this magnificent animal, and fewer still have had the privilege of hunting him. During the last half century his numbers have dwindled so considerably that only the strictest conservation has saved the species from extinction. Permission to shoot a buffalo was granted only to important personages, and was limited to only a few other sportsmen in each year. It is a great pity that even more could not have been done to save this wonderful wild animal. All sportsmen who have known him are agreed that he is one of the gamest and most dangerous of big game animals, and he certainly is a very fine trophy, being the possessor of the largest horns of any of the genus "Bos" anywhere in the world. When Kipling wrote his *Jungle Book* and said: "His spots are the joy of the leopard, his horns are the buffalo's pride" he could hardly have made a truer statement. Imagine a huge black animal, standing six feet six inches at the shoulder, and carrying massive scimitar shaped horns that sweep outwards and backwards, and have reached a record of 167 inches, i.e. just one inch under fourteen feet from tip to tip along the curve across the forehead. That is the measurement of a head shot just over two years ago. In an old book in my possession I see recorded a single horn measuring 78½ inches in the British Museum. Other heads recorded measured 13 ft. 8 ins. and 13 ft. 4 ins., each with a girth of 20 ins., and one massive head measuring 12 ft. 9 ins. had a girth of 34 ins.

Alas, that these great horns should have contributed so much towards the buffalo's own undoing! When two big bulls meet and decide to have it out, either to gain mastership of a herd or to assert their rights in what each considers his own domain, they often fight to the death. The ghastly wounds inflicted by these enormous horns often result in the death of both victor and vanquished, and far too many fine bulls have perished in this way. Alas also that wild buffaloes, unlike their cousin the Indian bison, cannot resist the temptation of raiding cultiva-

tion, and many pay the extreme penalty for this unfortunate weakness. Exasperated by the extensive damage caused, the inhabitants resort to using poisoned arrows. And, finally, there is yet another cause for their downfall. They leave their own preserves to visit the fields, and, in doing so, pass through the grass lands used as pasture by the village cattle, picking up infection, which, in the form of Rinderpast, wipes out in one fell swoop all that it has taken years and years of careful preservation to build up. These then are the factors which account for the missing buffaloes of to-day.

People who have visited India and seen the domesticated buffaloes wallowing in pools of water by the roadside are quite naturally inclined to think of all buffaloes as "Water buffaloes". If it ended there it might be forgiven, but one subaltern of a famous British Regiment, (or so the story goes!), went out one morning, and seeing these animals for the first time in his life, shot five of them before breakfast, believing them to be the genuine thing. He even remarked at breakfast that he did not see why his elders and betters made such a fuss about the difficulties and dangers of buffalo shooting, when he himself had found it so simple to do what he had done that morning! It cost him a tidy penny in compensation to the owners, but, fortunately, he was blessed with this world's goods. That was some years ago; but recently I met a Maharajah, or rather, the son of a Maharajah, who held his sides while telling me that some American tourists had shot three tame buffaloes that had been deliberately tethered to trees by the roadside, to be shot from a Jeep by spotlight when the tourists went shooting by night. Some domesticated buffaloes do have fairly good horns. Let us hope that these will serve to deceive their friends at home!

Some writers have described the wild buffalo as a glorified specimen of the tame one. This is only true of the resemblance to the tame ones of the same part of the country, where the domesticated buffaloes, though much smaller than the wild, do generally have the same shaped horns, far bigger than those of the tame buffaloes in Northern India and elsewhere. One thing, however, seems to be inherent in them all, and that is a superb courage. Domesticated bulls will fight to the death, and fights for high stakes are often arranged by their owners. Also a tame herd will ring in and kill a wounded tiger. A domesticated herd-bull will unhesitatingly come forward against all odds for

the protection of his harem. Sometimes a wild bull comes out of the forest to take over a domesticated herd grazing in the jungle. The herd-bull comes out immediately to meet him in mortal combat. He is only about half the size of his opponent, but that does not deter him. They meet in a head-on clash, and the poor gallant herd-bull is thrown to the ground in the first onslaught. Then it is not a fight, it is sheer stark murder. The enormous neck muscles, rising in a great bulge in front of his withers, come into play, and with a sweep of his sharp-pointed scimitar shaped horns the wild bull delivers a *coup de grâce* that practically tears his opponent in two. The herdsmen in charge flee in abject terror or climb the nearest trees, leaving the conquering hero to do his will. The poor dead herd-bull is soon forgotten. Once again it is the old story of the fickle and the brave! The ladies of the harem are delighted with their new lord.

When at long last, after many years of waiting for an opportunity to visit Buffalo land I received permission to shoot a wild buffalo, I started on the journey without any mixed feelings. It took me two and a half days travelling southwards in a train to reach railhead, and three more days to make arrangements for the onward journey, but there was no happier man in the world than when I found myself in a large motor truck, stacked sky-high with the usual impedimenta, surmounted by my servants and other hangers-on. Hangers-on in this case was the right expression, for, after spending the major portion of the day rumbling along about two hundred miles of metalled roadway, we turned down a track leading through the jungle, and hanging on became indeed most necessary. The truck lurched and groaned horribly, while over-hanging branches and bamboos all but made a clean sweep of the gentlemen perched atop. There were about fifty miles of this to reach our destination, but darkness overtook us when there were still some twenty miles to go. That does not sound like much of a problem, but it did not turn out to be that way. With a last despairing gasp the red-hot engine refused to pull us out of the sandy ravine into which we had floundered and that was that for that day anyway!

The night was intensely cold, so cold that all of us hugged the camp fire. We eventually slept under and around the truck, and awoke next morning to a misty dawn, with the grass soak-

ing wet and the trees dripping from a heavy dew. The old truck had by now recovered from her heat-exhaustion, and, although it took a supreme effort to re-start the engine, we sailed out of the ravine with renewed vigour, and once again went a-lurching on our way. We were passing through a magnificent forest of big trees, standing in high grass and tangled jungle. Occasionally a deer stepped into the road in front of us, and after taking a look at the truck, darted into the jungle again. We ourselves were all muffled up to our ears trying to ward off the chilly morning air, when, to our amazement, some naked human figures appeared in the road ahead of us, and, believe it or not, four young women were holding a long bamboo across the road to bar our way. Except for a few inches of cloth around the middle they were completely in the buff! They smiled nervously and demanded toll—eight annas —a monopoly enjoyed by the wild, wild women of that happy land. I must say I was astonished, and so apparently was my cook, a citizen of Delhi, who toppled off the truck, so keen was he to have a look! The toll was paid, and the damsels sped into the jungle in much the same way as the deer had done before them.

News of our intended visit had preceded us, and as we approached the little hamlet that was to be our headquarters for the trip, more damsels, colours ranging from light copper to dark brown, clad as before, rushed into the road to bar our way. They looked frightened, but smiled amiably, and again we paid the customary toll. The aborigines, for that was what they were, had prepared a large bamboo archway to welcome us, and as we passed through it I noticed that it was festooned with jungle leaves and flowers. A little further down the road we found the camp which had been prepared for us—grass huts with timber uprights and rafters, comprising a dining-room, two bedrooms, two dressing rooms and four bathrooms, and also a kitchen and servants' quarters. The villagers had collected in large numbers to greet us. They spoke the language of the Maria Gonds, which was Greek to me, but, fortunately, the village headman was capable of acting as interpreter.

As soon as the truck had been unloaded, I unpacked the gramophone which invariably formed part of my camp equipment, and set about making friends with my guests. I tried a few Hindustani Comics on them, and the enthusiasm

and appreciation these caused were astounding. It became difficult in the end to persuade the guests to go home, and when they did go it was only to snatch a mouthful of food and return for more "Machine" as they called it.

To wander about aimlessly through miles and miles of jungle, looking for buffalo, leads one just nowhere. I realized that the first thing to do was to locate my quarry, and that it would save me endless time and trouble to employ scouts to do this part of the business for me. It did not take long to enlist the local talent, and having arranged for scouts to go out in all directions, I decided to spend a few happy hours, beating the neighbouring jungles for a stag. All aborigines love meat, and no sooner did I make the suggestion, than about a hundred men, all armed with bows, arrows and spears, appeared as from nowhere, so off we all went together.

The headman of the village was a particularly enterprising fellow, anxious both to please and display his authority. With a sweep of his arm he signalled the beaters to enter the jungle, and then led me to a selected spot, where, according to him, the animals always came out in a beat. Having stationed me there, he put out "Stops" on either flank to turn in the game, and himself took up a position about thirty yards to my left. He assured me there were no tigers in this jungle, but, somehow, the jungle looked more than somewhat tigerish to me. It was pretty dense, and the grass out in front was more than waist high. My bones told me it would be wise to place myself behind a tree, and I signalled the headman to climb his tree too, but he preferred to stay where he was on the ground. But now the beat had started, and nearly a hundred men were yelling their lungs out, making the jungle echo to their screams. On they came but no living creature came my way. The beaters were less than fifty yards away, when there were two loud coughs, followed by a resounding roar, and I saw flashes of orange and black streaking through the grass towards the headman. He was so taken by surprise, and so terror-stricken, that he forgot to climb his tree. Aborigines are expert climbers, and use both hands and feet to run up a tree, in much the same manner as a monkey. In fact their first instinct in an emergency of this kind is to climb a tree, but the tiger had left him no time even to do this. Instead he hurled himself headlong into the grass to race for his life. Either the tiger was kind-hearted, or

Fate was kind to the headman, for the tiger did not pursue him, but, still roaring and growling, disappeared into the jungle behind him. I caught a glimpse of him as he went, but it was not worth risking a shot which might have meant death to my friend through a wounded tiger. The roaring had sent the beaters helter skelter up the trees, and pandemonium raged around me. When peace was restored I went in search of the headman, and found him a quarter of a mile away on the jungle road, a mass of scratches from the thorns he had encountered, and nursing a ricked ankle, but thankful, I feel sure, that nothing worse had happened to him. I patted him on the back, and made a great fuss over him, imagining what I myself might have done, unarmed, in a similar position. Had I laughed at him, his position in the village would have become untenable.

We did not get a stag. I wanted that tiger, and decided to call it a day, to give him time to recover from the beat, and settle down peacefully in the jungle which was so conveniently near camp. I was interested later to discover that the aborigines of these parts regarded their tiger more or less as a family butcher. They lived almost entirely on the produce of the jungle; roots, herbs, yams, and jungle fruits, which meant that they spent their days more in the jungles than at home, and in the course of their foraging often came across deer or pig killed by a tiger, and were thankful to annex the meat. They avoided all mention of tigers. Even when they knew, or must have known, there was a tiger in the jungle, they flatly denied all knowledge of any tiger anywhere! Whether this was because of a superstition, or because they liked their tigers, I was never quite able to discover.

There was buffalo news for me the next day. The scouts had discovered that buffaloes raided the fields at night near a village about seven miles away. They had seen a small herd consisting of a big bull, a smaller bull, and a few cows, and had also come across the tracks of a solitary big bull, who was reputed to be very large and kept himself very much to himself. That was the one that interested me, of course.

To get to the fields by dawn meant making a very early start next morning. The trackers and I started out in the dark, and arrived at the fields just as it was beginning to get light. On inquiring from a naked figure perched on a high platform on

poles whether he had seen the buffaloes, he said "No", but that the watchman in the fields half a mile away had been shouting a short while earlier, and, maybe, he had been trying to drive them away. Standing up on his platform he shouted to the watchman by name. "Yes," came the answer. "The buffaloes were here a short while ago." We now hastened through the fields to join him.

My trackers lost no time in getting to work, and, like hounds trying to pick up a scent, they moved round in circles. There were numerous tracks near the fields, but they were looking for those of the big bull, who may or may not have been with the others. Presently one of the trackers motioned the others to join him. There was a nodding of heads, and they signalled me to come over to them.

If you have not seen the tracks of an Indian wild bull buffalo before, you will be astonished at their great size. They are about twice the size of the African buffalo's. This is not only because the animal is larger, but because the Indian wild buffalo loves wallowing in swamps, and spends a good deal of his time in marshy places, where, for a heavy animal, large feet are a decided advantage. Dame Nature has therefore endowed him with outsize feet.

Tracking through the short dew-laden grass in the vicinity of the fields was easy enough, but, presently, we struck a patch of hard stony ground, where no trace of any tracks was visible to my eyes. The trackers fanned out again, until, with a click of his tongue and a broad smile, one of them called us over to where he had found the unmistakable sign, to which he was pointing triumphantly with the end of his bow. As we entered the jungle beyond, the first rays of the sun began lighting up the treetops ahead of us, and presently we found ourselves submerged in a sea of tall grass, which in most places was well over my head. It was here that I discovered to my joy that the men with me were real experts. Bending down from time to time they separated the tangled grass with their hands, and carefully examined the tracks to make sure they had not lost the trail in the mass of other tracks crossing and re-crossing our line. Except for their loin-cloths they were stark naked, and they were shivering from the icy cold dew-drops, which were sparkling on their bare bodies. I, too, was soon soaking wet, and felt like a spaniel in a marsh—wet through, but delightfully

happy. We went forward very slowly and in absolute silence. The business had begun, and I eagerly looked forward to catching the first glimpse of those enormous horns. It was my duty to look ahead and to the flanks, and to leave the tracking to the experts. Much as I was tempted from time to time to watch these human sleuth hounds at work I had to keep reminding myself of this duty, and kept my eyes fixed on the task allotted to me. During a check, however, it was indeed a pleasure to watch them for a while, almost sniffing out the scent, so to speak, and then discovering in a tangled mass of grass and jungle, the minutest of clues which would guide us on our way. Sometimes it was a nibbled blade of grass, then a tiny bit of bark rubbed off a tree or creeper by the big horns in passing, or an upturned pebble, a twig snapped underfoot, or a leaf dangling from a broken stem. It was indeed fascinating to watch.

Two hours of tracking through the high grass brought us at last to an open glade, and I heaved a sigh of relief that I could see around me once again. Here the buffalo had stopped to graze, and the grass was nibbled and trampled down in several places. He had wandered round and round in small circles, and the trackers were at pains to discover the ultimate line he had taken to enter the heavy jungle beyond. But now by casting round they had found it, and before we had gone much further we came upon fresh droppings. A tracker immediately stuck his big toe into the large cow-pat, and a grin came over his face. Here my mind flashed back over the years to my old friends Darbari and Saktu, and to that first time I had set out with them to track that bison in the hills near Lamta. Saktu had used his toe in the same disgusting manner, and had grinned the same grin of triumph that my friend was grinning now. The warmth of the dung was an indication that our quarry was not far ahead.

From now on we moved with increased caution, checking up frequently on the wind. Buffaloes are blessed with an extremely acute sense of smell, and it is useless going ahead if the wind is wrong. Suddenly a tracker laid his hand on my arm. I strained my eyes to see what he had seen in the depths of the dense jungle ahead. There was a sudden movement of big horns, and the huge buffalo crashed away without giving me the chance of a shot. I felt absolutely mad with myself.

There was nothing to be done now but to sit down and wait for at least a quarter of an hour, to make the buffalo feel it was just a chance meeting, and that he was not being pursued. He would possibly calm down then and give me my second chance.

The trackers were now fully assured that sooner or later they would lead me up to him. An hour might pass or even two without catching up on him, but that did not matter. He would be bound to settle down in the heat of the day to have a little snooze.

When we resumed the chase, we came to a spot a couple of miles ahead, where the buffalo had rested for a while in the shade of the big trees, but apparently he had decided to go on, and the tracks now headed in the direction of a big marsh. It was nearing midday and the sun was very hot. He was probably on his way to wallow in the swamp. The trackers now moved apace. They felt we should hurry to get to the swamp in time.

The swamp consisted of a long narrow belt of small pools, slush and high reeds, covering an area of about twenty acres, surrounded by heavy jungle on all sides. It was about three hundred yards wide in the middle, and when we reached it we noticed innumerable buffalo tracks leading into the marsh. We were able, however, to distinguish the huge tracks of our quarry, and from the muddiness of the water seeping into them, it was quite obvious that they were very fresh.

I noticed my trackers were hesitant, and were looking at the swamp with misgivings, for now there were no trees anywhere ahead, and they had only Providence and my rifle for protection. I signalled them to go on. It was like leaving the safety of a trench to go "over the top" in France. As we moved forward the reeds seemed to grow taller and taller. Suddenly the trackers bobbed down, and signalled me excitedly to come to their side, Peering through the reeds, a magnificent sight greeted my eyes. Forty yards ahead, standing knee deep in an open pool was an enormous black buffalo, carrying a wonderful pair of horns, such as I had always dreamed of. He had just quenched his thirst, and was looking round suspiciously, as though his ears had caught some little sound. I raised my rifle, but as I did so, he turned away. I did not fancy plonking him in the tail, and lowered my rifle to watch him disappear slowly into the tall rushes beyond.

We knew now that he was going to lie down and wallow in

the slushy mire, and decided to give him a few minutes' start. Presently we heard the unmistakable sounds of squelching slush and splashing water, and again we prepared to advance. Checking the wind carefully we moved round, and selected the driest route we could find, so as to make the least possible noise in moving forward. The trackers now allowed me to take the lead, and I moved forward with my thumb on the safety-catch. The thought struck me rather forcibly that I was perhaps being a trifle imprudent in doing just what I was doing at that moment, following one of the most dangerous animals on earth into a veritable death-trap of a morass, where I was likely to be absolutely at his mercy, but it was hardly the time now to reconsider my decision. Inwardly I was cursing the squelching sound my shoes were making every time I pulled my foot out of the slush, and innumerable little frogs were jumping out of my way, splashing into the water ahead, and doing their damnedest to warn the buffalo of our approach.

Very suddenly the trackers disappeared as if by magic, and ten yards ahead of me a huge monster rose from the marsh. He threw up his head, and his enormous horns swept back over his shoulders as he turned to face me. I did not stop to think, but fired the right barrel of my ·470 into his chest. I expected to see him collapse, but he merely swung to my shot, and blinded with pain and rage charged a tracker who had been silly enough to try and run for it. I fired the second barrel just as he lowered his head to descend like an avalanche on the unfortunate tracker, and by doing so just managed to save his life. The shock from the heavy bullet caused the buffalo to miss his mark. To avoid the sweep of the huge horns the tracker had dived head first into the reeds. My shot did not so much as make the buffalo check in his stride, and I felt as though I was holding an air-gun and not a heavy rifle in my hands. The buffalo had galloped straight on out of the swamp into the heavy jungle beyond. The trackers were gasping, with their knees still buckling under them with fright, and I, why I, too, Sir, was a trifle out of breath. It had been a breath-taking encounter, and a pretty narrow squeak for at least one of our party. Fortunately, a sense of humour came to my rescue, and when I laughed we all had a good laugh at ourselves. One can often have a good laugh at oneself—if one lives to laugh!

Our nerves needed a little steadying, so we decided to sit

down and wait a few minutes before tackling the business ahead of us. The trackers sat down in the sun, and were soon scratching themselves contentedly, smoking tobacco rolled up in a green leaf for a pipe. Soon they did not seem to have a care in the world.

When we took up the trail again, there was no blood to be found anywhere. I tried to persuade myself that solid bullets were poor at providing a blood trail, but when we had gone about a hundred and fifty yards without finding blood, my hopes began to vanish. The tracks, however, showed that the gallop had ended, and the buffalo had slowed down to a walk. Then I noticed that a small sapling ahead had been knocked down and broken off about five feet from the ground, and on seeing this my hopes began to rise again, for this was indeed a hopeful sign. Further ahead there was some dead ground hidden in the dip of a nullah surrounded by thick scrub, and we paused to consider the situation before going ahead. It looked like the sort of ambush a wounded buffalo would choose. When I put a tracker up a tree, he started pointing excitedly towards the bushes, but for the life of me I could not see anything from the ground. Then he called out that he could see the buffalo lying dead. I went forward slowly with my rifle at the ready. Not once, but many a time, has a sportsman been killed by a wounded buffalo he had assumed dead, and on one occasion it actually happened while he was measuring the horns. I was taking no chances on that happening now.

But the buffalo was dead. On reaching the hidden ground he had turned round to face his pursuers. Had we followed at once he might quite easily have had his revenge, but alas for him his last hope had failed him. He had waited for us there in vain. The powerful rifle had done its work. His strength had failed him and he had sunk down on his knees to die without uttering a sound. I was amazed at his enormous size, and the great girth of his massive neck. I am not given to fits of remorse, but I felt sorry when I saw this magnificent animal lying dead before me. His horns measured 124 inches from tip to tip across the forehead—not a record by a very long chalk, but, maybe, a bit bigger than anything one usually has hanging on a wall at home.

The aborigines took charge of the carcass after we had removed the head. Dozens appeared from out of the forest,

and proceeded forthwith to cut up the meat, while others prepared the camp, for here they would stay encamped around the buffalo, until no vestige of the meat remained. No campcots or clothes were needed here. A camp fire would be their blanket at night, and the jungle would be their home. Meat and water were at hand, and that was all they wanted.

News of the buffalo had reached camp before me. When I was returning there in the evening, the village maidens stopped me with their bamboos and ropes, and demanded five rupees. That was the fee for a tiger or a buffalo. They were happy people, so happy that I still wonder whether civilization really is the boon some people think it is. I also sometimes cross my fingers when I see the big head on the wall.

CHAPTER XIII

HIMALAYAN HOTCHPOTCH

THOSE WHO HAVE spent a winter or even part of one in a hill station of the Himalayas must know that when the social season finishes at the end of October, the visitors depart to return to the sunny Plains, the shops and offices close down, and most private bungalows are left deserted for the winter, which lasts till the end of March. The town assumes a moribund appearance. The shop-windows are boarded up, and large brass locks appear on the doors, with here and there a notice: "CLOSED FOR WINTER." Masonry gateways and pillars are covered over with thatch to ward off the cracking effects of snow and ice, and desolation takes the place of gaiety. Only a few spartans remain to enjoy the snow, the champagne in the air, the freedom of the deserted roads, and the shooting—pheasants, chikor, gural, barking deer, and the bears, who, at this time of year are driven down by the snows at higher altitudes, and arrive to feed on the acorns of the ubiquitous oaks on the lower ranges. Snow and cold also drive down the hardy hillmen, who, with their household goods and chattels loaded on their cattle and on their own backs, now descend to lower altitudes and warmer climes. The panthers of the hills, now hard put to it for food, close in round the towns, where stray dogs and goats become their chief source of food and interest. Chowkidars in charge of deserted bungalows bang drums and kerosene oil tins at night, to warn burglars that they are awake, and call out at intervals to their colleagues in neighbouring houses to confirm that "All is well".

I used to enjoy visiting the hills during my leave in the hot weather, but it so happened, now many years ago, that, to fit in with the unit's annual leave programme, I had to take my month's leave in February, and decided, perhaps foolishly, to enjoy myself in the snow. My decision was received with misgivings by my servants, who made it quite clear that they did not at all relish the idea of going up to the hills in mid-winter, and, when we got there, they made it even more obvious that

they would willingly leave me to enjoy the snow on my own. In fact, it nearly turned out that way, for soon after our arrival a dreadful thing happened. While they were serving dinner in the evening we were startled to hear the most piercing wails and screams that I had ever heard in my life. The three or four servants in the compound all rushed to the house, and ran into the dining-room, looking pale with fright. All they could gasp was "Churail! Churail!" A churail is the ghost of a woman who died in child-birth, and is one of the most dreaded by Indians of all the ghosts and evil spirits of their belief. The apparition, when seen, is a fearful sight indeed. The eyes glow like red-hot coals, the hair is dishevelled, the face distorted and terrifying, and, worst of all, its feet are turned the wrong way round, so you cannot tell whether it is coming or going. To our horror the terrifying shrieks were repeated, reducing my slaves to a state of panic. They were literally dithering with fright. I ordered the bearer to fetch my gun from the bedroom. At this they all beseeched me not to attempt to shoot the ghost, for that would bring disaster on them all. I reassured them by saying that the disaster, if it came, would come to me alone, and to take the full responsibility on to my own shoulders I now went and fetched the gun myself. Pushing a couple of cartridges into the breech, I stepped out bravely into the inky-black darkness of the night. There I fired a shot into a pine tree, and the "Churail" flew away. So that was that. I have never actually seen a churail, but believe it is a kind of owl. However, my servants' belief remained unshaken, and the more I explained that it was only a bird, the more their apprehension grew.

A day or two later I received another solemn deputation. The servants arrived *en bloc* to say that during the night they had all heard most terrible screams, like the shrieks of a soul in torment. They were sure the place had again been visited by some evil spirit. They were so very much in earnest that their fears could not be treated lightly. I therefore decided to show deep concern, and started a thorough investigation. It was perhaps just as well that I did so, because ten yards from the kitchen I found blood, and the ground around it had been scratched and scraped up by the claws of some animal. I then looked round for further clues, and presently found the pug-marks of a panther in the damp earth of a flower-bed. Beyond

that there was a distinct drag through the garden and over a badminton court into a thickly wooded ravine below and there, to my joy, I found the half-eaten remains of a big "Bhotia" dog, a long-haired black dog about the size of a large Alsatian. So now the evil-spirit had been located! The poor hungry dog had been stalked and killed while on a visit to the kitchen bin.

That evening I sat in a hide-out on the ground near the kill. It was freezingly cold, and after sitting a couple of hours in rigid silence, the latter half in complete darkness, I was on the point of giving up, when I heard the kill being moved. I raised my rifle and pressed the torch switch, and there was the panther, but before I could press the trigger the wretched bulb fused, and I heard the panther bound away. There was nothing more to be done about that. I left the kill where it was and walked back up the hill to the house.

That night the panther removed the kill, and finished off the remains. He had won the first round, but the fight was on. There was a nice little spur below the house jutting out towards the jungly hills, and here it was that I decided to make myself a comfortable machan. I took up my position shortly before sundown in the evening, and when I had settled myself in, a white goat was brought along and tethered to a small bush about fifteen yards away. It had a powerful voice, and did its duty well, but no panther came. I sat on in pitch darkness for two or three hours, but when I turned on my torch to get down from the tree I was astonished to see the goat lying dead. The panther had strangled it in absolute silence, and then sneaked away without having a meal. I decided at once to continue my vigil, and spent the whole of that freezingly cold night in my tree. The panther, however, did not return.

At dawn I covered over the kill with a few leafy branches to protect it from vultures, and crawled back to the house, just in time for a very welcome cup of hot tea. My servants were more convinced than ever now that it was an evil spirit, and not a panther after all!

In the evening, about an hour before sunset, I climbed into my machan again, but I must admit that I was feeling anything but full of hope. If the panther came at all I thought he would come rather late, and I prepared myself for a longish vigil. However, when the sun set, and the light of day was beginning to fade, I was amazed to see a panther appear on the open

ridge, about twenty yards below the kill. After having a good look round, he flattened himself to the ground and started crawling up the ridge as if he were stalking a living animal. It was just his cunning way of avoiding being seen on the skyline, for he knew, of course, that he was in an exposed position. It was a sight so well worth watching, and I was so enthralled that I forgot to notice it was getting darker and darker every second. He was moving so very slowly that by the time he reached a point a few yards below the kill I could hardly see him. However, he now seemed to feel assured that there was nobody about, and that he was quite safe. Casting all further precautions aside he stood up and advanced towards the kill. I got ready to take my shot. I was using a shotgun, and fired without using the torch. The panther roared, a sure indication of being hit, but he bounded down the hill and completely disappeared.

I was up before dawn next morning, and on the spot at the earliest signs of daylight. There was blood a few yards down the hill, but the panther had travelled about thirty yards at top speed, before turning left along a steep hillside, where, judging by the heavy blood trail he must have slowed down to a walk. After that the blood trail led downwards again towards a deep ravine about forty yards below. I was carrying my shotgun loaded with ball and slugs, and was accompanied by a man carrying a rifle. I had to do the tracking in addition to looking ahead, and our advance was perforce very slow. I was bending down looking for blood, when, with a coughing roar the panther sprang out of the bushes about ten yards ahead of us and charged. I have never been one of those wild west hip-shooters, but on this occasion I hardly had time to bring my gun up to my shoulder, and fired both barrels at point blank range. Fortunately for us the panther fell over sideways, and rolled into the ravine, because when I turned for my rifle I found my gun-bearer struggling to get it back over his shoulders with the sling stuck under his chin! A fat lot of use he and his slung rifle would have been to me in a real emergency! I thanked my stars the panther had not been able to come straight on.

When we looked for the panther in the ravine, we were astonished to find he was not there. A pool of blood showed where he had been hiding, but somehow he had managed to

crawl out of the ravine into some rocks and very heavy thorn scrub on the other side. To follow the trail now into this tangled mass would have been sheer madness. However with the arrival of a few reinforcements I got half a dozen men to stone the brushwood from above, and finally finished the panther off with a rifle shot while he was attempting to crawl away down the hill. This panther had a magnificent winter coat.

The Himalayan chamois, known in his own country as the gural is one of the gamest of little game animals to be found anywhere. He is a small brownish goat with small curved goaty horns, which look nothing of a trophy on a wall, but he is the mountaineer of the lower Himalayas and lives in the most inaccessible and precipitous places, which defy even the highlanders of his own native hills. Personally I hate cliffs, and going after goats or sheep has always ended in being rather a nightmare for me. Nevertheless I find myself compelled by an irresistible impulse to chase these animals whenever I get the chance, although I know, even before I start, that the precipices, dropping sheer for hundreds of feet will make my head swim and my body reel to cling to the hillside when I look down from the dizzy heights into the deep chasms away down in the depths far below.

It was on one of these occasions that I found myself perched precariously on a precipice, watching the cliffs across a deep narrow valley. It was typical Gural country—steep grassy hillsides with perpendicular rocky cliffs, shaley landslides, and deep ravines leading abruptly downwards to a rumbling mountain torrent, which splashed and bounded on its way down a long winding valley, leading to the Plains several thousand feet below.

Sitting next to me was a young highlander of these hills, whose keen eyes also were scanning the hillside for a sight of the little goats. Suddenly, catching my arm he exclaimed "Kaker!" (Barking deer), but I could see nothing that looked anything like a kaker anywhere. I got him to explain exactly where it was, but when I examined the spot through my fieldglasses I discovered it was not a barking deer but a panther. It was about three hundred yards away, but presently started moving obliquely across the hill, and seemed to be coming more or less in our direction. I decided therefore to await my chance.

He disappeared into one of the intervening ravines, and a few seconds later five gural came over the ridge at speed, and crossed the cliff in front of us with as much ease as if they had run across a football ground. They posted themselves on rocks as look-out posts, and kept giving their alarm cry which is just like a "Sneeze". It was at least ten minutes before we saw anything more of the panther. Then he reappeared following in the tracks of the gural, and it was extremely interesting to watch how slowly and carefully he moved forward, making full use of ground and cover to carry out a stalk. As time went on the gural started getting impatient, and presently started to graze, all except one, which, through the glasses, looked like an old Nanny Goat. She was on a rock about fifteen yards above the others, and she acted as sentry, standing as still as a statue, the only movement being an occasional flick of her ears. Meanwhile the panther had crept forward inch by inch, and had now reached a small ridge about forty yards from his quarry. Here he sat crouching and stock still, carefully studying every move the goats were making. He was obviously summing up the situation before taking the final step, and I kept wondering whether he would have the good sense to realize that goats and sheep should always be approached from above, but either the ground was unfavourable for this, or he did not know this rule, for he crept forward over the ridge, and got behind a bush. I think the old Nanny goat must have seen this last movement. Her suspicions had certainly been aroused for she now stood gazing at this spot, and began stamping impatiently with one of her forefeet. The others also stopped grazing, and looked in the same direction. They were all very much on the alert. And then the panther did something that I have very seldom seen a panther do—he stood up on his hind legs to look over the bush, and that finished that. The old girl gave a sneeze, and the whole lot dashed headlong down the cliff, bounding from rock to rock, stopping only, as gural always do, to take a look ahead before crossing over the next ridge. The panther realized he had lost, and returned to the ridge behind him, where, at about a hundred and fifty yards, I took the easy shot he offered, and he rolled a hundred feet or more into the thick scrub below the cliff.

I fear I must have been rather petty-minded in those days. The constant beating of drums and empty kerosene oil tins at

night had been keeping me awake. The deserted bungalow next door had a particularly noisy caretaker, who used to beat a drum mercilessly for hours on end. I sent my bearer over one day to ask him not to make quite such a noise, but I received an impolite reply. It is more than likely that my bearer did not make the right approach, or he may have been too bossy with the caretaker, but, at any rate, the reply he got was "I am not your Sahib's servant". He kept me awake the next night, and it was then that a brain-wave struck me. I got out of bed and donned my fancy-dress, and in a few minutes I was a "Red Shirt" Pathan, with white tresses and a flowing white beard, topped by a blue and black silk lungi (Pathan turban). In a few minutes I had transformed myself into a Frontier Chieftain. I was the "Haji of Turangzai", and that firebrand's spirit had entered into my soul. I strode into the moonlight with a stout stick in my hand. I would teach that son-of-a-gun a lesson! Most houses in the hills have railings round them, and I decided to approach from below, so that when I got to the railings my enemy would be taken by surprise. Having got there, I peeped through the railings, and saw him sitting on an open veranda only a few yards away, with a drum across his knees, and a stout stick beside him. I did not at all like the looks of the latter, but, after all, I had come on business. The watchman was, as usual, knocking hell out of the drum, and had not seen me. The moonlight was full on me as I raised myself slowly to my full height, and also slowly raised my stick to my shoulder. With a yell of terror the watchman threw away his drum, and, before I even had time to think, had jumped clean over the railings, and was racing down the hill screaming for help. The whole hillside then took up the alarm, but my mission had been fulfilled. I returned to bed and *slept.*

The news spread like wild-fire, and I was amused to hear many thrilling but grossly exaggerated accounts of the incident next day. Some declared the apparition was definitely a ghost. Others said it was a huge man at least eight feet high, with white hair and a long white beard, dressed in a bright red shirt that reached down almost to his knees. But what pleased me most of all was that the watchman never played his drum again.

But while on this subject, and before I leave this winter's tale, I feel I should tell the story of another watchman. A friend of

mine was coming home along a main road round about sunset, when he heard the terrified shrieks of an Indian woman, coming from the bungalow about fifty yards below the road. He ran to the railings, and was horrified to see a hill woman being carried off by an enormous black bear. The bear was ambling off on his hindlegs, carrying the woman in his arms, and she was screaming her lungs out for help. Below the house there were some terraced fields, such as one sees in the hills, and when he got down as far as these he dropped the woman from terrace to terrace jumping down each time after her, and was finally making off with her into the thickly wooded forest beyond when her husband and some others rushed to her rescue, and managed to save her by driving away the bear. I had often heard of hill women being carried away by bears, but never from such an authentic source. Anyway, the bear disappeared, but was seen next morning entering a cave about three quarters of a mile away from the scene of this incident. The men who saw him immediately ran in search of someone to shoot the bear, but it so happened that the only person available was an elderly British resident, whose armament consisted of a very old double barrelled hammer shotgun, as old, if not older than himself. However, he rose to the occasion, and accompanied by three or four men he went down to the cave, which was situated on a very steep hillside in a dense oak forest. The hill was so steep that the old gentleman had to be assisted by the others to get down to the cave, but when they got there they found that there were no means of looking into the cave, which was concealed under a huge perpendicular rock, and the only approach to the mouth of the cave was along a narrow rocky ledge, below which there was a sheer drop of about thirty feet to the steep slope below. It was an impossible situation, but one of the hill men who was the watchman of a neighbouring bungalow, at once volunteered to dislodge the bear. While the old gentleman waited at the ready with his gun, this very gallant watch-man, armed only with a billhook, crept along the ledge, and on reaching the mouth of the cave shouted: "Nikil Salay!" (Come out you old basket!) With a woof of rage the bear rushed at him and carried the watchman headlong over the cliff. The old gentleman fired his gun, and the bear left the man to bolt up the hill. There was a heavy blood trail which was followed all day until they reached a stream where

the trail was lost, and then for lack of time before nightfall the chase was finally abandoned. Alas! If only they had known! The bear was lying dead in a thicket less than a hundred yards away, and it was not till some weeks later that the vultures gave away the secret.

This story goes to show how brave these hill men really are. It is only the fear of the supernatural that sometimes defeats them, and I dread to think what might have happened to me if my red shirt and long white beard had not turned me into a ghost!

Many years ago I remember reading about a remarkable coincidence. A sportsman had a tiger beat, and while the beat was in progress and he was waiting for the tiger to appear, an eagle came and settled on a tree-stump, about thirty yards from his machan. Then he heard something approaching over the dry leaves, and, believing it to be the tiger, got ready to take his shot. Instead, a peacock strutted out of the bushes, and the eagle immediately swooped, caught him by the neck, and carried him away. A couple of minutes later a tiger came out in the beat, and the sportsman bagged him. Twenty years later he found himself sitting in the same tree, waiting for a tiger to be driven out in a beat when to his astonishment an eagle came and alighted on the same tree-stump, and presently a peacock appeared, and the eagle carried him off in exactly the same way. The sportsman regarded this as something of a good omen, but hardly thought the whole drama would be re-acted, step by step, as it had occurred twenty years earlier. However, out came the tiger, and he shot it within a yard or two of where he had shot the first one.

It is, of course, quite common knowledge that tigers do seem to follow the same course in a beat that other tigers did before them, and are shot, year after year, in the same places, but I was very taken with this story, because, although I have myself shot tigers and panthers in the same place and in similar circumstances, the repetition of the same combination of circumstances in this case was truly remarkable. It could, of course, have been the same eagle, but certainly not the same peacock or the same tiger! I remember as a small boy hearing someone say that three times the life of a dog was the life of a horse, and three times a horse's life was the life of a man, and

three times a man's life was the life of a stag or an eagle, and three times that was the life of an oak tree. If this is to be believed, it probably was the same eagle. It is also probable that both beats took place at the same time of year, because the seasons make a great difference in the type of place a tiger chooses to lie up in. In fact, when a sportsman is depending on local knowledge, and has been informed that many tigers have been shot in a certain beat, and from a certain tree, the one question he should ask is whether it was in the hot or cold weather, for it is on this that the success of his own beat will depend. A tiger always lies up on the sunny side of a hill in winter, but chooses the shady side in the hot weather, and this important fact is apt to be overlooked by local shikaris. In summer, there *must* be water in the area enclosed by the beat, or the tiger will not be found to be lying up in that area.

And now to tell of a fairly remarkable coincidence of my own experience. It was at the end of World War II, that I found myself free to wander over the hills again. I felt compelled to breathe the mountain air, and tread again the paths I had trodden when I was young. Twenty-two years had gone by since Fateh Singh had been mauled by that big panther, and also since I had shot my first bear, but now, after many years of trial and tribulation, I was free to visit Pari Tibba again.

The air was lovely, and the sun was shining brightly that afternoon, when with three or four coolies I set out for a tramp over the hills. We descended into a deep valley, and after crossing over a rippling mountain stream, started the climb up the old mountain on the other side. The goat-track we used to follow in the old days had fallen into disuse, and presently we found ourselves in difficulties with the thorny undergrowth. Fortunately, however, two of my men were carrying billhooks and although we had to hack our way through in several places we made good headway, and eventually emerged on to an open spur overlooking the mountain stream, now a good two thousand feet below us. Here we took a short breather before going on. The pathway then led us to a big cave in the mountain side, where under a huge overhanging rock at the mouth of the cave we found the fresh tracks of a pair of panthers, distinctly visible in some powdered dust. From here we had hardly gone another fifty yards when a most extraordinary noise reached our ears. It was half clatter, half roar, and I

had never heard anything quite like it in my life before. My men too looked puzzled, and when I asked them what it was they shook their heads, but said they thought it might be bears fighting.

The noise had come from the hillside about five hundred feet above us. Realizing that our best chance of seeing the animals would lie in climbing to a spur on the opposite hillside, we now hurried to cross over a deep ravine to get there. While struggling and scrambling through the thorny scrub in the ravine we heard the clattering roar repeated, and my men now were more convinced than ever that the noise was being made by bears. However, by the time we reached the spur there was absolutely nothing to be seen anywhere. It was a strange fact, however, that I was now sitting in exactly the same place as I had sat to fire at my first bear twenty-two years earlier, and I rather hoped that the old performance would now be repeated. I searched the opposite hillside through my field-glasses but could discover nothing. At the top of the hill, about six or seven hundred feet above us, about a hundred or more ravens were flying round and round in wide circles, but there was nothing extraordinary about that either, because ravens in the hills do delight in congregating to sail through the summer breezes that sweep over the mountain tops at that time of year. Flying into the strong wind they remain practically stationary in mid-air, and then by swinging round are carried down-wind at terrific speed, and, after circling round, return to do it again, I imagine for the fun of it. However, what I did notice after a few minutes was that about a dozen ravens kept swooping over a large rock across the valley about four hundred yards away, but even through my field-glasses I could not at first see anything there. Then a slight movement caught my eye, and there, lying in the yellowish brown grass above the rock was a large panther. So well did his coat blend with the dry grass that it was difficult to pick him out with the naked eye, although I knew exactly where he was. I tried to find him over the iron sights of my rifle, but could not see him. It would have been pretty hopeless to try a shot. And how glad I was later that I had not tried. A couple of minutes later a second panther suddenly appeared from nowhere and sprang up on to the rock beside him.

For the next hour or so I witnessed a courtship such as I had

never seen before. The girl-friend led him on from rock to rock across a precipice, played hide and seek with him, pounced on him only to dash away again, and eventually, having worked him up into a frenzy, capitulated. It was then, when things were at their peak, that she uttered this clattering noise while turning round to bite his ear. I could not make out whether it was he or she who made the roaring noise, but I think it was he, and the two noises intermingling made the curious clattering roar we had heard. When this performance had been repeated a couple of times I suddenly realized the sun would soon be disappearing over the hill. Milady had just jumped up on to a high rock, and was looking down coquettishly at her lover, inviting him to follow. He was now about three hundred yards away, and almost exactly where the bear had stood to receive my shot, but every time I raised my rifle, he seemed to disappear behind the bead of the foresight. It was a case of now or never, and in desperation I put my sights up to four hundred, and rested him on top of the bead. At the shot he raced down the hill roaring, and when he reached the top of the precipice, within a yard of where the old bear had jumped into space, he also sprang to try and reach a ledge about thirty feet away, but turned over in mid-air and crashed down about a hundred feet into the deep ravine, just as the bear had done twenty-two years before him. It was an amazing repetition of the old scene.

And then to my astonishment the girl-friend sauntered down the hill following in his tracks. She paused at the top of the precipice to look for him. Obviously her feminine pride had been outraged by his very abrupt departure, and she did not seem to have cottoned on at all to what had actually happened. I did not want to kill her. I knew she would call all night for her missing boy-friend, and another would surely appear to take his place, perhaps to provide me with another afternoon's entertainment, so I fired a shot at the rock in front of her. She completely ignored this gesture, so I fired again, and this time she gathered herself for a spring, and bounded across the thirty foot chasm which her lover had failed to make. He, poor chap, had taken the bullet about an inch below the spine, about halfway down his back. It all but missed him, but, alas for him, had instead practically broken his back.

CHAPTER XIV

FOLLOWING UP

WHEN A FRIEND and I were out shooting together in Central India a particularly large tiger killed a bullock in a small Native State adjoining our Shooting Block. The Chief of the State, who was not keen on tigers, sent us the news and invited us to come and shoot the tiger. The invitation was, of course, immediately accepted. After a journey of about ten miles on an elephant, we arrived at the spot, and were welcomed there by the Chief's Ranger, who had assembled about a hundred men to act as beaters. All were armed with bows and arrows, and all seemed quite eager for the fray.

I did a quick reconnaissance, and found the bullock had been killed in a field adjoining the forest, and had been dragged by the tiger into very dense cover. The forest itself was a long narrow strip of dense jungle about three quarters of a mile wide, jutting out from the main forest, and bounded on both sides by fields throughout its length. What could have been better? The tiger would not, of course, attempt to break out into the fields in daylight, and so it was just a matter of arranging the beat to drive him in a direction away from his kill, which also happened to be the direction of the main forest, towards which he would quite naturally wish to go. It was as ideal a beat as could be wished for. But what astonished me was that the locals insisted that the tiger, when driven, would keep along the edge of the forest, instead of trying to sneak through the dense cover in the middle. They apparently knew their jungles from long experience, and there may, of course, have been a hidden nullah or other lead which induced game to follow this route, but there was no time for me to make a further reconnaissance, and I accepted their advice, as indeed one should when one visits an unknown jungle. I must admit, however, that it was with some misgivings that I placed my friend's machan in this position. I wanted him to bag the tiger, but, in my own heart, I hardly believed that the tiger would come out there.

However, I was wrong. The beat had hardly begun when the tiger appeared exactly where they said he would, but he disappeared again into some bushes before my friend could get in his shot. Time went on, and the tiger lay concealed until the beat was only about a hundred yards behind him, and then he reappeared somewhat unexpectedly from cover more to the right, forcing my friend to swing round to take rather an awkward shot. The tiger fell over, roaring furiously, but picked himself up and bounded away into the jungle behind the machan. The Indian shikari, sitting with my friend in the machan, said the tiger was the biggest he had ever seen in his life—an enormous male of a light yellowish colour such as one finds in Central India, and with an outsize ruff, which added considerably to the majestic appearance of his huge head. My friend said the tiger was almost under the machan and not more than twenty yards away when he fired. He had aimed at the head, but had a nasty feeling that the tiger had turned his head just as he was pressing the trigger.

I did what I always do on these occasions, and spent a few minutes examining the spot to try and discover exactly what had occurred. I found that the bullet had made a hole in the ground, which usually means a miss or only a superficial wound. Not many sportsmen realize that a bullet nearly always cuts off a few hairs from the animal, and, in the case of a tiger, when the shot has been taken downwards from a machan, one almost invariably finds a few hairs that show where the tiger has been hit. There is no mistaking what part of the body the hairs belong to, because the variations in colour, length and feel tell the tale. I now found on the ground a few short orange and white hairs which brought me to the conclusion that the bullet had grazed the tiger's cheek. Against the assumption that the wound was only superficial was the fact that the tiger had been knocked down, and, according to my friend, had rolled over and over three or four times before recovering himself to make good his escape. The shikari said he had heard the tiger crashing through the jungle for at least a hundred yards. This made it safe to follow the trail a short distance to look for blood.

Twenty yards ahead we found a few large drops of blood. As the tiger had then galloped on into very dense cover, we decided to sit down and wait for the customary half hour, before attempting to follow any further. Meanwhile the beaters had

collected near the scene of action, and were listening intently to the graphic description being given by the shikari of the huge tiger, its furious roars and its ferocious behaviour after being wounded. All were agog, and there was much speculation going on as to what would happen next. We took this opportunity of sending for the elephant, who had been left behind in a field during the beat. He was a fine young tusker, about twenty-five years of age.

It was now when practically all was ready for the next step that a comedy began to unfold itself. The Ranger, a fat little man clad in khaki shirt and shorts and wearing a solar topee, came up to us and announced dramatically that he had just received a very urgent message to say His Highness wished to see him, and that he was therefore compelled, much against his will, to leave us at once. He much regretted that he would not be able to accompany us in following up the wounded tiger, but he would leave his assistant to assist us! The poor man looked pale and nervous, and there was a hollow ring about the story he had told us. Little did he realize that we had no intention of endangering his life anyway, so we thanked him very much for the arrangements he had made for the beat, which, by the way, had been excellent, and he bowed and went his way.

The elephant had arrived, and it would have suited the occasion if we had decided to use him to follow up, but one look at his Mahawat convinced me that he too had no stomach for the fight. Besides, the elephant had been lent to us for our shoot, and we did not fancy getting him mauled. The Assistant Ranger was full of bravado, and volunteered to accompany us, and finally, as a compromise, we gave him a shotgun and asked him to follow behind us on the elephant, while we followed up the trail. After selecting four experienced stalwarts to do the tracking, we ordered the rest of the beaters to stay where they were and to wait in absolute silence.

There was very little blood, and presently the trail led into an extremely dense patch of high grass and leafy bushes, which cut out practically all view in all directions. We started putting men up trees to look ahead, and also signalled the elephant to come up level on our flank. As we moved forward slowly in dead silence, the air became tense with excitement. The jungle was so quiet that you could have heard a mouse breathe. It

was at this juncture that the elephant's tummy rumbled as elephants' tummies sometimes do, and the sound it made was not unlike the low growl of a tiger. The trackers whipped round nearly knocking us over, the Assistant Ranger fired his gun, the elephant let out a shrill shriek, and the beaters, who were less than seventy-five yards away, yelled with one accord, and ran for their lives to scramble up the nearest trees. The Mahawat, meanwhile, had swung his elephant round, and, to add to the panic, was crashing through the jungle towards the fleeing beaters. It was one of the best displays of mass hysteria I had ever seen in a jungle.

Eventually, when we had all recovered from this nervous breakdown, I asked the Assistant Ranger what he had fired at. He simply said he thought the tiger was charging, so he had fired in the air! I noticed that he was sitting on the elephant minus his shoes and socks—no doubt a precaution he had taken just in case he found it necessary to forsake his mount and climb a tree.

Well, we took up the trail again. It wound in and out of dense cover, but nowhere had the tiger decided to halt or lie down. Eventually, after about three hours of following with only a small drop of blood here and there to guide us, we arrived at a rocky ravine with a small pool of water. Here the tiger had rolled on the ground, and left behind quite a collection of the same short orange and white hairs, smeared with blood on a smooth stone. After this the blood trail ceased altogether, and we were compelled to abandon the chase. The sun was low on the horizon, and we decided to make tracks for home.

We left camp before dawn next morning to renew the search. In the absence of a blood trail it was impossible to guess which way the tiger had gone. The trackers told us they had heard the grey monkeys coughing in the jungle all through the night, but all was quiet when they came out into the jungle in the morning. It was now that we were lucky enough to contact a herdsman with thirty or forty buffaloes in the forest. After a good deal of persuasion, he decided to assist us, and we drove the herd back and forth through all likely places, while my friend and I placed ourselves on either flank to deal with any emergency. They were jungle buffaloes, used to grazing in the forest, and, had the tiger been anywhere there, they would undoubtedly have found him, but even this last effort proved

fruitless, and finally, after a long and very tiring search we regretfully abandoned all hope of finding the big tiger.

After we had given up all hope, and were preparing to return to camp, the trackers asked if we would be willing to offer a reward for finding the tiger. Their only outfit was their bows and arrows, and, although the arrows looked more like javelins than arrows, it would have been a mean thing to do to tempt these poor fellows into risking their lives. I declined their offer with thanks. No sportsman should ever in any circumstances offer a reward to anyone to find a wounded tiger. It is his own duty to continue the chase till no hope remains.

It was an unfortunate experience which bore out my old belief that if a tiger gets away wounded and is not met with again within the first half mile, it is almost a dead cert that he will get away altogether, at any rate from the sportsman who wounded him. He might even be found dead later or be caught in another beat or over a kill, but, as a general rule, unless the tiger lies down or dies within that half mile, the chances of bagging him are nearly nil. But here now is another story which goes to prove that nearly all theories should be accepted with a certain amount of reserve, for, as we all know, it is often the exception that goes to prove the rule.

A tiger of my acquaintance had become quite famous, firstly because of his great size, and secondly because he had outwitted endless sportsmen, including myself. One of his habits was to drag his kills long distances into dense cover, and as he had been known on occasion to defend his kill, very few fancied their chances in following drags for long distances through high grass and dense cover into heavy jungle. He was a bad tempered old tiger, and beaters flatly refused to beat for him. He invariably charged the beaters, and after roaring furiously and scattering the men, used to make good his escape. He had mauled a beater or two seriously enough to convince all others that he objected to interference, and, with his reputation established, he enjoyed a life of almost complete independence. For his part he did not molest men if they left him alone, but that did not deter him from lifting the fattest cows and calves out of the herds of cattle grazing in the jungles. It was also a fact that he had killed a herdsman, who, armed only with a bamboo quarter-staff, had very bravely but stupidly run to the rescue of a buffalo the tiger had overpowered. One stroke of the

powerful forepaw had reduced the man's skull to pulp, but, though he had killed his assailant, he had made no attempt to carry him off or eat him, and he was, therefore, in the eyes of jungle law, not considered a man-eater. The offence had been committed on the spur of the moment, and had not been repeated.

To deal with a tiger who drags his kill long distances it is advisable to tie out an outsize bait, and also to select a spot where a steep hillside or some other obstacle would prevent him from carrying away the kill. This trick provides the anchor, so to speak. I had tried it on our friend, but he defeated me by refusing to touch a tied-up bait. He was, undoubtedly, an old tiger of great experience. But in spite of all his cunning, Fate led him one day to make an awful mistake. A mixed herd of cows and buffaloes was grazing peacefully just outside the jungle at the foot of a thickly wooded hill, which jutted out at right angles to the rest of the Siwalik range. The old tiger must have been very hungry, for he did what tigers seldom do—he charged the herd in the open, sprang on to the back of his victim, which chanced to be a full grown milch buffalo, and having thrown her and cracked her neck in approved tiger fashion, dragged the heavy carcass to the foot of the hill. Here he ate his fill, and then tried to drag the remains further into the jungle, but the steep hillside and the great weight of the carcass defeated him. The screams and yells of the herdsmen did not worry him, for he was used to screams and yells. He had enjoyed his meal, and he had no intention now of abandoning his kill for man, beast or bird. He concealed it from the view of vultures by dragging it under a bush, and took the further precaution of covering over the exposed portions of the carcass with leaves which he scraped up with his paws. He obviously had every intention of returning to his kill. Having made all these elaborate arrangements he then betook himself off to the shade and security of the great forest, there to drink from a crystal stream, indulge in a contented slumber, and await the evening, when the sun would disappear behind the hills, and he could return to finish off his dinner. From the top of the hill he roared a great roar, expressing the joy he felt in his strength. It would be a warning to all buffaloes, cows and to their herdsmen! For was he not the King of the Jungle, and who could say him nay?

Meanwhile, two pairs of spindly brown legs were moving apace to bring the news to me in camp. Jia Lal, my old shikari, was smiling all over his face when he came to tell me what had happened. It was indeed most excellent news.

When we got to the spot we found the kill lying where the old tiger had left it, only about thirty yards from the edge of the forest. It had been simple enough to follow up the drag this time, but now we were confronted with another problem. The carcass was lying in heavy scrub, and there was no suitable tree for a machan. As tigers almost invariably come down a hill when returning to their kills, it was necessary to find a position that would not be overlooked from behind, and eventually it was decided to place the machan fairly high up in a tree up the hillside, almost straight above the kill. It was anything but an ideal solution, as it would mean shooting almost straight downwards, but in this case there was no alternative. We also moved the carcass a few yards, to get it out of the bushes into a more suitable position for a shot, and, as it was in heavy scrub, we took good care to peg it down, so that the tiger could not drag it away out of sight from the machan. This is something that a cunning tiger nearly always does, so in this case it was a very necessary precaution. And finally we put the last touches to our preparations by cutting away the bushes round the kill. This, however, was done sparingly, and the exposed stumps were covered over with mud to make them less conspicuous.

At four o'clock in the afternoon I got into the machan. A few minutes later some wood-cutters arrived, and, much to my annoyance, started cutting brushwood about half a mile away. This meant that the tiger would not come till they had gone, and I prayed that their departure would not be long delayed. The noise of their voices and their axes continued exasperatingly till nearly sundown, and then, with their departure, a deep silence fell over the forest. It was the 31st December, and it was very cold. It was also, so far as I knew then, the last time I should ever sit up for a tiger. I was due to leave India, never to return.

A few minutes later I heard the sound of a small displaced stone rolling down the hillside. It rattled its way through the dry leaves, and came to rest not far from the kill. Then I heard the gentle brushing aside of the bushes, and finally the light footfall of the tiger approaching the kill. A big head appeared,

and very cautiously a huge tiger stepped into the clearing we had made round the kill. He stood for a second or two, as if taking stock of the situation, and then seized the kill with his jaws and shook it violently. Tigers always do this to remove the hornets, ants, and other stinging insects that find their way into the carcass, and the noise, if it takes the sportsman unawares, makes him jump out of his skin in the machan. The tiger then tried to drag away the kill, but, despite the terrific jerks, the ropes held well, and it was now that I very slowly raised my rifle and aligned the sights, taking care not to make the slightest noise in doing so. In the dim light I could hardly see the tiger over the sights, but I took care to make as sure as possible of hitting him between the shoulder blades, and squeezed the trigger. The tiger let out three or four blood-curdling roars, and bolted up the hill. He passed right under my machan making roaring and grunting noises as he did so. I was using a ·470 and wondered how he had managed to get away.

Many old and experienced tiger-slayers say that when a tiger roars immediately after a shot, it is a sure sign that he has been hit. This is undoubtedly absolutely true, but I have found that it is not sound to assume he has been missed just because he fails to roar. When using a heavy rifle I have found that a well-placed shot in a vital spot knocks the squeak out of the animal, and if he manages to get away without roaring, he will most assuredly be found lying dead, whereas if he roars it can be assumed that the bullet has not inflicted a mortal wound and the tiger, when followed up, will be found to be very much alive. The roar I am referring to is, of course, the roar the animal gives when the shot is fired, and not the roaring or grunting noises that may be heard later when he is dying. With a light rifle, the tell-tale roar does mean a hit, but it may also mean a mortal wound, because the lighter bullet does not have the power to shock the senses sufficiently to prevent the angry roar. If the shot is fired in daylight, and the tiger bounds away, the surest indication of a mortal wound is the way he kinks and waves his tail. When he does this he is waving farewell to this world!

My shikari and men had heard the shot, and also the loud roars of the tiger. Half an hour later when I blew my whistle for them to come and fetch me, it soon became quite obvious

from their querulous and quavering shouts of inquiry, that they did not exactly relish the idea of coming for me. It was by now pitch dark, without even the slightest trace of a moon to reassure them. However, I told them that all was well, and at last they advanced, carefully examining the ground with the torches I had given them. When they drew close enough I ordered the shikari to fire a shot or two with my shotgun before advancing any further. This he did, and as there were no sounds from the jungle, they were now fully reassured. Finally, when only a few yards away, they heard something, and in panic the shikari fired in the air. He was amazed when I showed him the pellet marks right under my machan in the trunk of the tree next morning!

Next day, which happened to be New Year's Day, I set out long before dawn, and arrived at the scene of action just as the wintry sun was beginning to shine over the hills. There was lots of blood, and I hoped to find the tiger lying dead, but it did not turn out that way. After passing under my tree he had galloped straight across an open clearing, and then entered dense creeper-covered jungle on a steep hillside. The blood-trail led straight into this awful death-trap. Higher up the hill, sitting in the topmost branches of trees were about twenty monkeys of the grey variety, huddled together on the branches in small groups of twos and threes trying to keep each other warm, for the morning was freezingly cold. They looked frozen and regarded us with complete indifference. Their presence there, however, was comforting. They would hardly have been sitting there so placidly if the tiger were alive. Anyway, they were not for giving away any jungle secrets, and it was no use looking to them for any help, except that if the tiger moved and they saw him they would immediately give the alarm.

Bent double I followed the shikari along the trail into the creepers, which were of the thick ropelike variety with big leaves, and afforded excellent cover for a tiger but were a truly formidable obstacle for us to negotiate. It was an extremely dangerous and foolish thing to do to enter that death-trap, and just as I was regretting my folly, there was a sudden commotion in the tangled mass ahead of us, and my heart jumped into my mouth. Then realizing that the animal was going down hill I fought the creepers to try and catch sight of it, only to see a

barking deer skidaddling for its life. It was now quite obvious that the tiger was not there, and we followed the trail through the creepers with less fear of being pounced upon. When we emerged the trail led on to a ridge and then into a further tangled mass of creepers on a very steep hillside. This time I sent my men up the hill to stone the creepers from above, while I went round to the other end to await eventualities there. Again nothing happened, but by scouting round we discovered that the tiger had passed right through, and the blood trail now led straight along a ridge leading up to the top of the hill.

It is always most unwise to approach a wounded tiger in the hills from below. I realized this, but in this case, unfortunately, there was no alternative. All I could do was to try and reduce the danger as far as possible by putting men up trees, to look ahead into the grass and bushes, and escape, if possible, from an ambush. The men were put up one at a time, and I escorted each one to the foot of the tree, and waited there with my rifle at the ready, to protect him in case of a charge before he got high enough to be out of danger. The man remained there in his tree as a look-out, until the next one had been posted, and so we sort of leap-frogged forward, searching each bit carefully, before making a further advance. It was of necessity a very slow and nerve-racking business. We threw stones ahead whenever this was possible, and did everything possible to avoid being caught suddenly unawares.

When nearing the top of the hill, however, the trail entered high grass and extremely dense undergrowth. It became impossible to see ahead even from trees, and it was not possible to stone more than a few yards ahead either. It had taken us over three hours to climb about five hundred feet, and the whole distance covered could not have been much more than about six hundred yards, and yet, in spite of a terrific amount of blood, we had not come across the tiger. Our minds began to fill with serious doubts, for it is most unusual for a badly wounded animal to go up-hill.

Much as I wanted that big tiger, I did not feel a bit inclined to enter that dense cover ahead. As a last resort I ordered the shikari to fire a shot into the cover with my shotgun. Nothing happened, so I ordered him to fire again. As still nothing happened, I now very bravely led the way! About forty yards ahead we reached the top of the hill, and here we found that

the tiger had been lying down just inside the further edge of the dense cover, through which we had just passed. This was the top of the hill from which he had roared his challenge to the world less than twenty-four hours earlier, and here it was that he had decided to lie and wait for us. The blood was smeared all over the grass where he had been lying, and judging by the way the stalks kept lifting even while we were examining the spot, it seemed pretty evident the tiger had only just a minute earlier moved on. A yard or two further on we found that in moving along the crest he had suddenly toppled over sideways, and judging by the smears of blood and the way the grass was pressed down he had rolled down the hill into another tangled mass of big creepers covering the steep hillside below. The shikari now proclaimed the tiger dead, for what other explanation was there for the way he had rolled down the hill? To me, however, it seemed that the shots fired into the cover had startled him, and he had got up to get away, but his wound had stiffened, and he could not make it. In his anxiety to escape he had toppled over, and had not been able to save himself from rolling down the hill. However, what had to be accepted was that, right or wrong though we might have been in our summing up of the situation, it was only right to go on assuming now that the tiger was still alive, and to continue taking all precautions in our further search. We thoroughly stoned the creepers from above and eventually managed to get a man up a tree half-way down the hillside, to try and peer into the ravine below. He started gesticulating wildly to get me to join him, but as I could never in my life have climbed such a tree I sent the shikari to see what he wanted. He returned breathless to say the tiger was sitting up in the grass across the ravine. It was no use attempting to go through the creepers, so I decided to work my way round the hill and stalk the tiger, whose position had been marked down and could be pointed out by the man in the tree. The shikari accompanied me carrying the shotgun. We moved very slowly taking the greatest care not to make the slightest noise, but a tiger has wonderful hearing, and when I peeped over the ridge, I found the tiger looking straight at me, only twenty yards away. I fired as he got up, and the bullet went through his head.

I stood and gasped when I saw how big he was, and I realized at once I had shot a tiger of no ordinary size. He

measured ten feet eight inches over curves, as I measured him where he lay—a truly enormous tiger, huge in every sense of the word. He was in the pink of condition and I do believe even the base of his tail was thicker than my forearm. My first bullet had entered a couple of inches to the left of his spine behind the shoulder blades, and, as the shot had been fired downwards, had gone right through his body and entered his right forearm. How he had managed to travel such a distance after being so severely wounded was a mystery to us all. His skin with mounted head now measures twelve feet six inches and is proportionately broad. A wonderful trophy—the biggest tiger I ever shot, and the skin now is probably one of the biggest tiger skins in England.

As a wounded tiger is considered one of the most dangerous animals in the world, I feel I may be forgiven if I conclude this chapter by introducing one or two points of discussion. Some sportsmen argue that it is better to follow up at once, while the tiger is still suffering from the shock of the bullet, and that it is safer to do it this way than to wait and allow the tiger's wounds to stiffen. From my own experience of being wounded, I must say I cannot agree with this. Many of us know only too well that although it may be possible to carry on in the heat of the moment, it is not possible to hold out against it for any length of time. Some sportsmen also say that it is better to follow up at once with a torch at night than to wait till the following morning. They argue that the light immediately picks up the shining eyes. I agree that this can be done, and I myself have done it, but I do *not* recommend it. Much, of course, depends on the power of the rifle used, and the extent of the wound inflicted, and a sportsman might decide to act at once in a special case, but so far as using a torch at night is concerned, I would rule it out for several reasons. You might, for instance, be charged by the tiger in the dark from fairly close quarters, and you may get off your first shot, but you might miss. There is no denying that if the torch is fixed to the barrel, the jump of the rifle, when it is fired, will temporarily obscure the target from view, and in that split second anything might happen. Also I have known a torch fuse when a shot was fired. Then what? Besides you cannot hope to follow the blood trail and look for the tiger's eyes at one and the same time. You may, therefore, blunder on in a wrong direction, or worse still

you may blunder right on to the animal itself, if it is lying facing away from you. It might be lying in a dying condition, but it might spring up and tear you to pieces at its last gasp, a nasty habit which these felines undoubtedly have. On one occasion while following up a wounded panther in the dark, my shikari stepped right on to the animal, while I was looking for him in another direction. Fortunately, the panther was stone dead.

As regards using buffaloes, a herd of jungle-grazing buffaloes can be usefully employed to locate a wounded tiger in dense cover. These animals often come across tigers, and the herd bulls know how to deal with them. These buffaloes will pick up a blood trail and follow it, and will attack the tiger if he shows fight. Other village buffaloes and herds of ordinary village cattle are often more dangerous to the sportsman than to the tiger. If they smell the tiger they usually stampede, and may run down the sportsman, or anyone else in their way. When using buffaloes, the sportsman should keep behind the herd with the herdsman, who is the only one who can control them. If the tiger is alive, he will jump on to the back of a buffalo, and the sportsman then gets his chance, which should be taken immediately, otherwise the tiger may attack and damage several buffaloes, and will himself be battered and torn to pieces by the rest of the herd. In the ensuing mêlée it will, of course, be quite impossible for the sportsman to use his rifle. But there is one big consideration. Even if buffaloes are available, the owners and herdsmen may be unwilling to lend them. You cannot blame them for this. They might agree, but will not usually do so unless you promise to pay for all damage, and also promise a handsome reward.

It is my experience that a tiger with a flesh wound will keep on trying to evade his pursuers, so long as he is possibly able to do so, and can seldom be induced to charge. If, however, a limb or bones are broken, the tiger is probably unable to get away, and in this case he will wait in ambush for his pursuers, and will most certainly fight when they come up with him. In following up a wounded tiger I would advise the sportsman to use the most powerful weapon available.

CHAPTER XV

THIRTY QUESTIONS

1. *Do tigers eat a carcass they happen upon?* Yes, they do. I have always hated the system of tying out a live bait, and have been into this question rather thoroughly, hoping to find a means of using a dead bait instead of a live one. Both tigers and panthers will readily remove and eat a dead animal they happen to find in the jungle. By employing the "call" of a tiger or panther, I found I could attract these animals to a dead bait, and, if the bait used was a wild animal, I found that both tigers and panthers were less suspicious about it, and often returned to the carcass quite early. I understand dead baits are frequently used in Burma and Malaya, where apparently, owing to the very dense jungles, tigers do not roam quite so extensively as they do in India, and are therefore more likely to come across the bait in their more limited wanderings. In Africa dead baits are extensively used for lions, but the lion has a good nose and uses it. Live baits are used in India, because the tiger hunts by sight and hearing, and a live bait attracts his attention. A tiger, however, has such a poor nose, that he might pass within a few yards of a fresh dead bait without noticing it. And another big snag about trying to use a dead bait for tigers is the non-availability of animals for this purpose. The shooting of deer is restricted to a few animals only, and nothing makes a sportsman more unpopular with the shikaris and men than to shoot a deer or pig and leave it out in the jungle for a tiger! A live bait therefore must be regarded as a means to an end, to save the lives of other animals in the same way as a soldier may be used to save his country. Soldiers, however, are usually well-treated, whereas baits more often are not. I would appeal to sportsmen to treat their baits well.

2. *Do tigers eat carrion?* Shocking though it may sound, the King of the Jungle loves carrion. He literally relishes maggots, and will actually scoop them out of a carcass with his paws, to

suck them up and swallow them. But then, quite a few highly civilized individuals love Gorgonzola cheese!

3. *Do tigers and panthers return to a kill lying on its left side?* There is a widespread belief amongst shikaris that, if the kill is lying on its left side, the killer, be it tiger or panther, will not return. I have often found a fresh kill left completely uneaten for no apparent reason, and, strangely enough, it has generally been left lying on its left side. On the other hand, if the kill has been partly eaten, I have never known the tiger or panther to abandon it because it was left lying on its left side. I am not superstitious!

4. *Do tigers possess a sixth sense?* Tigers, and most wild animals, seem to have a sense that warns them of danger. What this sense really is, I have never been able to discover, but that it exists I do not doubt. I have discussed it with other experienced sportsmen, and some have suggested it is a form of telepathy. For instance, when you first catch sight of a tiger coming on to his kill only a few yards away, the sight of him, if he has arrived unawares, gives you a shock. Call it a shock of excitement, or what you will, but it is a kind of jolt to the system, which immediately sets your heart thumping. I have often noticed, when this has happened, that my feelings have immediately been transmitted to the tiger, who has at once stopped and started looking round suspiciously, almost in the same way as you would look round, if you suddenly felt someone was looking at you. Whenever this happens, I at once try and switch my mind to someone or something thousands of miles away, or I deliberately try and transmit my thoughts to the tiger, by saying to myself, inaudibly of course, "What a nice juicy buffalo! Just where I left it too. No one has been here. Now for a jolly good feed!" The tiger then quite often begins to look reassured, and again advances towards the kill.

I believe hunters quite unconsciously develop this sense. I have often felt myself being warned of hidden danger, and have then discovered that the warning was not for nothing. It may be the shock action, as described above, working in reverse from animal to hunter. But quite the most remarkable of all the warnings I ever had was in 1951, when, while listening to the General Election results from the B.B.C., I suddenly felt

myself in danger. I was sitting in a comfortable chair in my sitting-room in semi-darkness, so I got up and switched on the light, and there, coming towards me was an outsize scorpion. This was a truly remarkable warning.

5. *Does a tiger leave a double or a single spoor?* When he is walking carelessly, and is not actually hunting, he sometimes leaves a double spoor. When prowling in search of game or stalking, however, the imprint of the hind foot is always made exactly in the one already made by the forefoot. The remarkable thing, however, is that the legs on one side of the body move simultaneously, or nearly so. If the tiger were a horse, he would be called a "pacer". It is difficult to understand, therefore, how the hindfoot moves into the imprint of the forefoot, when both feet move at the same time. I can only imagine that it moves in at the second step. When a tiger has been moving and leaving only a single spoor, you will find separate imprints of the hind feet, where he has turned to left or right, or where he has stopped to listen. The biggest mistake artists make in drawing tigers is to show the feet diametrically opposite, touching the ground simultaneously.

6. *Is the direction in which a kill's head is pointing a sure indication of the direction the tiger has gone?* This depends on certain circumstances. In killing an animal the tiger bites through the back of its neck just behind the ears, and then proceeds to drag the carcass into the jungle holding it in its jaws by the same place. A tiger generally drags the kill in the direction he intends to take to lie up in during the day, so that when he starts feeding at the hindquarters, the neck and head are left pointing in the direction he had intended to take for lying up. But here is where this indication becomes unreliable. A tiger certainly drags a fresh kill by the neck, but when he has eaten the hindquarters and exposed the ribs, he will, the next time he drags, seize the carcass by the hindmost ribs, and drag it backwards, i.e. with the head pointing backwards. So where are you? Suppose the tiger is really hungry when he kills, he might start eating at once before he drags or he might drag only a short way by the neck, then feed, and later drag by the ribs to get the kill into denser cover. Still later, he might drag again to hide the kill where better concealment exists. If a tigress with cubs is

the killer, the cubs will almost certainly pull the carcass about. My advice is not to worry about the position of the carcass or the direction of its head. Clues on the ground, and the general nature of the surrounding jungles, are far more reliable pointers to where the tiger has gone.

7. *Are tiger kills useless, if left in the open?* No, not always, but generally speaking, a tiger realizes that if his kill is left exposed it is bound to be found and eaten by vultures during the day. If the kill is a very large animal which the tiger has been unable to drag away, such as a bison or wild buffalo, or if it has otherwise got entangled and stuck somewhere, he will probably hang about in the jungle near by, to try and keep the vultures off the kill, and will nearly always return after dark, just to see if his kill is still there. On the other hand if he has seen vultures descend and cannot come out into the open to drive them away, he will abandon the kill and not return. On a rainy or very cloudy day, he might return in the hopes that vultures have not discovered the kill. I nearly laughed outright on one occasion when I saw a tiger return to a kill that had been eaten by vultures. He sat down a few yards away, and heaved a tremendous sigh of disgust and disappointment. Unless the hunter has something more important on hand, it is worth his while to sit over an exposed kill, at any rate till about an hour after darkness sets in. I am inclined to think that both tigers and panthers cannot bear the smell left behind by vultures, after they have been at a kill.

8. *Is the ordinary unhunted and uninjured tiger dangerous?* No, he is not dangerous, except under the following conditions:

(a) When he is with a tigress in the mating season. Then he is inclined to show off, and might, just for the fun of it, attack any man or men who happen to come his way.

(b) When he has been crossed in love, particularly when he has been defeated in a fight by a rival, and is feeling sore in more senses of the word than one.

(c) When he is hungry, and on a fresh kill. After he has satisfied his hunger, however, he will usually abandon it when men approach, unless the kill is a pig or a porcupine, in which case he will usually demonstrate or even show fight, if the

men persist in approaching. A tiger generally regards a jungle animal killed by himself as his own personal property, and resents interference by man, but will normally slink away if the kill is a domesticated animal, apparently realizing it is stolen property. In this respect he is exactly the opposite to the African lion, who fights over a domesticated animal, but will abandon a wild one when men approach.

(d) If he is suddenly startled, or taken by surprise. In case of a chance encounter, a tiger is more inclined to give way to man in the day-time than at night.

As for a tigress, she is dangerous as in (c) and (d) above, and also:

(a) When she has small cubs, i.e., when the cubs are too small to get out of the way to escape from humans approaching. A tigress will usually only demonstrate by roaring and growling, but will fight if necessary to protect her cubs.

(b) When she has lost her cubs or is suffering from milk fever.

(c) When she is looking for a mate.

NOTE. It is my experience that tigers in Madhya Pradesh are more inclined to be truculent than those in other parts of India.

9. *How do tigers kill their prey?* The usual methods employed are:

(a) After stalking a grazing animal, the tiger springs straight on to its back, if stationary, or chases it and then springs on to it, gripping it at the back of its neck with his teeth, and at the same time, by placing one forepaw on its shoulder and another round its nose, and by tripping up the animal with his own hind legs, he brings the animal down with tremendous force, cracking its neck. When this method is employed, the animal's head will be found twisted round, sometimes right round, with the nose pointing towards its tail.

(b) If the animal is a tied-up bait, the tiger will rush up to it, and seize it by the throat. He will then pull the head downwards with a jerk, and pin it to the ground, holding it down till it dies. In this case the neck may or may not be broken, and the head will not be twisted round.

Apart from the above two methods, a tiger may use his paw to smash the head of a porcupine or pig. This can be done with one stroke of the very powerful forepaw. This method is also sometimes employed on human beings. The tiger in this case dashes up to the man, rears up on his hind legs and strikes down with his forepaws at the man's head. When a tiger stands up like this, his forepaws reach a point between nine and ten feet from the ground. Imagine then the plight of an unarmed beater whose average height would be about five feet, and weight between a hundred and a hundred and ten pounds. Actually, the man who could stand up to a tiger has not yet been born.

Finally, there is the ham-stringing method, which is employed on the largest animals such as bison and wild buffalo. This is done, I believe, with the teeth, though I personally am inclined to think it is done with claws and teeth. I have only seen full-grown domesticated buffaloes killed by this method, but my old friends Darbari and Saktu told me about a bison injured in this way. They were attracted to the spot by the bellowing of the bison, and found him, a big bull, lying on his side, with about twenty pounds of flesh eaten from his hind-quarters. He was still alive. They said a pair of tigers had over-powered him. Although I have never seen it, I believe one tiger engages the attention of the intended victim, while the other sneaks up from behind, to do the ham-stringing. Finally, when the animal has been incapacitated, he may be despatched in the ordinary way, or the tigers may feed on him while he is still alive.

10. *Size of tigers:* This has been a controversial question for several years. I think the best way to tackle this debatable point is to leave all the old measurements alone. Why should we dispute them? It is a well-known fact that climatic conditions have a direct effect on the size of human beings, and, generally speaking, the Northern races are bigger than the Southern. The Siberian and Manchurian tigers are still reputed to go up to thirteen feet in length, and, as all tigers are supposed to have migrated to India from there, it is possible that tigers in India were bigger a hundred years ago than they are now. Why should there not have been a twelve foot tiger in India? One might argue that some of the old record heads

of Ovis Poli, Markhor and Ibex were all hooey, but the horns are still here to prove their previous existence, although there is nothing to touch them now. In my own experience of tigers in India, I have found that the tigers from the North are bigger than those in Madhya Pradesh, and the Indian tiger is certainly much bigger than the Malayan. The biggest tiger I saw shot in Madhya Pradesh measured ten feet four inches over curves, and stood forty-four inches at the shoulder. The two biggest tigers I ever shot myself were ten feet seven inches and ten feet eight inches over curves, both in the Siwaliks. They were shot in two different shooting blocks, less than 10 miles apart, one in 1939, and the other ten years later.

I remember being greatly impressed by a pair of huge Siberian tigers I used to go and admire in the Regent's Park Zoo in London, when I was a boy. They had long, almost shaggy coats and were much bigger than the Indian tigers in the cages next to them.

I do not pay much attention to the overall length of a tiger. Tails vary in length from about two feet six inches to about three feet three inches. I am inclined to be more impressed by the size of the body and its physical development. A big tiger with a short tail, measuring over ten feet over curves is a whopper, and anything over nine feet six inches is not to be sneered at. A big tigress measures from about eight feet five inches to about nine feet five inches over curves. I doubt whether any Indian tiger of to-day would stand more than forty-eight inches at the shoulder.

Of my two biggest tigers, the skin of the second one now, with mounted head, measures twelve feet six inches, and is proportionately broad. Unfortunately the skin of the other was eaten by insects while in store during World War II.

Some people are not pleased unless they bag a record or near record of the species they are after. Such people to my mind are somewhat petty-minded. Any big male tiger is a good trophy. It is really the fun and excitement of the chase that counts for more than the actual overall measurement from tip of nose to tip of tail.

The standard way of measuring a tiger is to lay him on his back on a level piece of ground. Then, after pressing the head down, a peg is driven into the ground at the nose, and another at the extremity of the tail. The measurement is then taken

between the pegs. This method, I think, is unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

(a) It is often impossible to find a level piece of ground where the tiger is shot.

(b) If he is carried out of the jungle on a stretcher, or in a hammock, or slung on poles, the body is bound to take on a different shape, and it may be difficult or even impossible to straighten it again for measurement between pegs.

(c) Unless he is then transported in a motor truck, he is usually subjected to still more contortion in or behind an ordinary car, so that, if measurement is delayed, it will be inaccurate.

If he is measured over curves where or near where he was shot, there is nothing more to worry about. As I do not bother about records, this is the method I always employ. I do not consider any extra credit is due to the hunter whose tiger tapes a bit more than somebody else's.

11. *Do tigers ever indulge in wasteful killing, just for killing's sake?* A tiger generally does not kill more than he requires for food. The following are the exceptions to this rule:

(a) A young male tiger, full of the exuberance of youth, anxious either to try out or show his strength.

(b) Males, while with females, during the rut—done with the object of showing off.

(c) Tigresses with cubs—done probably to ensure a plentiful supply of meat for the family.

(d) Sometimes unintentionally, or at any rate without malice aforethought when, having killed a cow out of a herd, some other stupid cow dashes past or towards him, practically bringing death upon itself.

Except in the above circumstances, a tiger cannot be considered a wasteful killer. A panther, on the other hand, does indulge freely in wasteful killing, and when the opportunity offers he kills and goes on killing for killing's sake.

12. *Is there any comparison between tiger and panther senses?* Probably the best developed sense in a tiger is his hearing, which, I should think, is about equal to a panther's. As regards

eyesight, both tigers and panthers are gifted with wonderful sight. Both are quick to detect any sudden movement, but the panther is quicker at picking out a motionless object from its surroundings. The panther also has a much more developed sense of smell, and is capable of picking up a scent, or following a drag, which would be unnoticed by a tiger.

13. *Do tigers and panthers eat grass?* Yes, they do, and so do lions. They eat green grass in the same way that dogs do, and vomit it back in the same way too. An old sportsman I knew, always took green grass with him for the tigers in the Nagpur Zoo.

14. *What are the gestation periods of tigers and panthers?* Lions and tigers are the same—about 106 days, panthers about 93 days.

15. *Do tigers have individual characteristics?* Yes, they do, and these individual characteristics are often very marked in certain individuals. Most tigers can be distinguished by some special trait in their natures. Sometimes a tiger earns a nickname from the jungle dwellers who get to know his ways, for instance, a tiger with a particularly bad temper or truculent nature may be referred to as "Badmash" (villain) or "Shaitan" (Satan), or one that behaves extraordinarily as "Pagla" (Maddy), and the old respected tiger may be referred to as the "Maharaj" (Great Monarch). Physical characteristics may also earn nicknames, such as "Langra" (Lame one).

Amongst a variety of other characteristics, the following are often attributable to certain individuals:

(a) Relieving Nature, just before coming on to the kill to feed. In such cases the unmistakable pungent odour is often the first indication of the tiger's presence. Some tigers also relieve themselves just after feeding. This may be done to keep other animals away from the kill, and is generally a sure indication that the tiger intends to return.

(b) Covering up a kill with dry leaves, scraped up with the paws, or with long grass, actually bitten or torn up with the teeth. These signs are also indications of intention to return.

(c) Chasing and killing vultures off a kill. Some tigers are keener on doing this than others.

(d) Never returning to a kill, usually a tiger that has been fired at over a kill.

(e) Always breaking back through a beat, usually a tiger that has been fired at in a beat.

(f) Making noises before approaching a kill, i.e., hissing or moaning.

(g) Roaring in a beat to frighten the beaters. Some tigers habitually do this, while others do not.

(h) Refusing to kill a tied-up bait, or a certain type of bait.

(i) Showing nervousness, equal almost to cowardice, when attacking a bait, which, being tethered, cannot run away. Tigresses and some young tigers, imagining the bait is showing fight, shy off it, especially if the bait has horns.

(j) If a man-eater, showing preference in choice of men or women as victims.

(k) Returning to a kill, even after a beat in that area. Most tigers do not do this, but certain individuals will do so.

16. *Do tigers ever eat salt at salt-licks?* I have never actually seen a tiger doing this, but, on one occasion, while following in the fresh tracks of a tiger, I came across his droppings, which were composed entirely of grey sandy mud, such as one finds at salt-licks. The droppings were quite fresh and perfectly moulded, but did not appear to be composed of any other substance except sandy looking mud. Shikaris, who often sit up over salt-licks for deer, aver that tigers do lick the salt at salt-licks, and, certainly, tigers do lie in wait for deer in their vicinity.

17. *Do tigers like lying in water?* A tiger always indulges in a daily bath, if he possibly can. He lies down in a quiet pool or stream to do this even in mid-winter, when it is freezingly cold. Then, however, he just rolls in the water for about half a minute, gets out, shakes himself, and finally rolls in the sand to dry himself. During the hot weather, particularly in May and June, tigers actually lie in water during the hottest hours of the day to keep cool, and can be stalked while doing so. See also Question 18 below.

18. *Can tigers be stalked on foot?* Yes, as already mentioned in the previous paragraph, tigers can be stalked in the hot weather, while lying up in water. At that time of year, water is scarce, and the few pools that exist are known to all. The hunter should take note of the prevailing wind at the hottest time of the day, and then have a pathway swept in advance to enable him to approach up-wind, without making any noise with his feet on dry leaves etc. The stalk should be made at the hottest time of the day, when the tiger will be found lying in the water, or in a shady spot just outside it. It is dangerous to fire at a tiger lying down, especially if he presents a head-on shot. The hunter should wait patiently until the tiger gets up, which he will do sooner or later, and should then take the first really sound shot offered, i.e., one that will knock the tiger down and kill him. It is an exciting way of shooting a tiger, but is dangerous, and as already pointed out, can only be done during the hottest hours of a hot day, in the hottest months of the year, i.e., in April, May and June. I do not advise anyone to try doing this with anything but a big bore rifle.

Tigers can also be stalked on a kill. This can be done by very quietly following up a fresh drag after a kill, or, when a kill has been located, by stalking it at dusk or in the early dawn, in the hopes of finding the tiger on or near the kill. In the latter case, the kill should be pegged down and a pathway should be carefully swept in advance, having regard to the prevailing wind. This kind of stalking can be done at any time of the year, and is also an exciting way of shooting a tiger. I repeat my advice of using a big bore rifle.

One early dawn I stalked a tiger in this way. The kill was lying in a sandy nullah. The shikari and I crept up to the bank of the nullah and peeped over. There were no signs of the tiger. In disgust I handed my rifle over to the shikari. As I did so the tiger sprang out from under the bank, practically at our feet. Fortunately, he got as much of a shock as we did, and bounded up the opposite bank into the jungle. I sent the shikari away, talking at the top of his voice to an imaginary companion, while I hid myself at the foot of a tree. Ten minutes later the tiger returned, and I shot him.

19. *What happens when a tiger suddenly rushes out roaring?* This

form of demonstration is usually resorted to in the following circumstances:

(a) By a tigress with small cubs, when the cubs are with her, and are too small to make a get-away. She then demonstrates in this way to try and frighten men away from that locality, but she will rarely do more than rush out roaring and growling, and will then turn back into the jungle without attacking anyone. In this case, if you recognize her to be a tigress, either by her looks or by her tracks, she is best left alone. No one would want to shoot a tigress with small cubs.

(b) By any tiger with a kill concealed in that vicinity, but usually only if the kill is a wild animal, and more especially if it happens to be a pig or a porcupine. In this case, if you have men with you, you should all talk loudly, but not shout, and pretend to be wood-cutters. Give the tiger time to calm down and move off. Then try and find the kill. If you succeed in doing so, hide yourself, and send the men away talking. The tiger will usually return to the kill within half an hour, just to see if it is still there. Jungle dwellers often annex a tiger kill for themselves. Hence the tiger's anxiety to protect his kill, and later, to find out if it has been taken away.

If you cannot find the kill, you can, if time allows, arrange a beat.

20. *Do tigers congregate?* Unlike African lions, tigers are not gregarious. I have seen prides of lions of from two to a dozen individuals, and have read of large prides consisting of anything up to sixty or seventy lions. Tigers have never been known to congregate in such large numbers. Within my own experience I have known:

(a) Five male tigers shot by a single sportsman in a beat. This occurred in the Pench Valley of the Nagpur District. These tigers were with a tigress in season. She escaped.

(b) Four tigers shot by a single sportsman in a beat in the Siwaliks. This was a family party of Papa, Mama, and two nearly full-grown cubs.

(c) Six full-grown tigers seen together by a missionary motorist, in the jungle by the roadside in the Raipur District.

21. *What effect does rain have on tigers and panthers?* I have never known a tiger or panther return to a kill while it was raining heavily. Tigers like lying in water, but apparently dislike moving around while it is raining. Both tigers and panthers are prone to visit their kills soon after a heavy downpour.

In dealing with cunning old tigers who do not habitually lie up near their kills, or who do not return to kills till after midnight, I have always welcomed a rainy day. Rain seems to give them a false sense of security. The tiger then does not expect men to be abroad in the jungle, and often forsakes his cunning ways. I remember an old tiger, who, time and time again, killed my baits, but cleared off each time and never returned. I tried in vain to catch him in a beat, and was no more successful in sitting up for him. One night it rained heavily, and the next morning a bait was reported taken. It kept on drizzling, and the sky was still very overcast. I decided to inspect the kill myself. A grey monkey was swearing in a tree in the vicinity—that desultory swearing of a monkey, wearying of continued swearing, usually a sign of a tiger lying up near at hand. I followed up the drag very cautiously, and was only a few yards from the kill, when a huge tiger jumped up with a roar from under the bushes beyond. He went off growling, without giving me the chance of a shot. For the first time this tiger had chosen to lie up near his kill. An hour later I caught him in a beat. The rain had been his undoing.

22. *Do vultures depend on their eyes for finding their food?* The answer to this is probably "Yes, but not entirely." What usually happens is as follows:

(a) When the carcass of a dead animal is left lying in the open, it is not generally discovered at once by birds, unless it has been skinned or unless the body has been mutilated or partly eaten, and the meat or blood is showing. In fact, it will probably be discovered first by a jackal, or, if near a village, by a pariah dog, attracted to it by the smell.

A skinned carcass, however, or one with blood and meat showing, will immediately attract crows and pariah kites. Their descent on to the carcass will at once be noticed by vultures sitting on trees or hills in that vicinity, and as soon as one vulture sets off, others will follow, until in a few minutes the

carcass will be covered with a seething mass of these birds, fighting, screeching, and jostling to get a piece of meat off the carcass, while others will be seen hurrying through the air to join in the feast. The noise made by their wings while swooping down out of the sky can be heard from quite a distance, and is a signal to all carrion feeders and scavengers to race to the spot from all directions.

(b) If the carcass happens to be a tiger or panther kill, concealed in the jungle, it will first be discovered by birds—crows, magpies, or even common mynas. Magpies and mynas chatter, and crows caw loudly when they make the discovery. When a jungle crow finds a kill, he will usually perch himself on a prominent tree-top, and give the joyful call, which sounds something like: Kowah! Kowah! Karr-kew! Karr-kew! And sometimes for greater effect he will flap his wings while giving the call. This call invariably attracts his brethren to the kill, soon to be followed by the vultures, who also understand the signs.

Therefore in the above two cases it may be assumed that the vultures have been attracted to the kill by seeing crows and kites descending on to the carcass, or by hearing a jungle crow calling. But that applies only to the vultures nearest to the scene. Others miles away have seen the specks in the sky all moving in one direction, and they have at once understood its meaning. It is amazing how sometimes at an altitude of about seven thousand feet, one sees vultures at about ten thousand feet, heading in hasty flight for the Plains below, where, no doubt, they have caught sight of their brethren, swooping towards a carcass, far beyond human vision.

(c) But sometimes a very well concealed carcass has escaped the notice even of the crows and other birds. It is then, on the second or third day, that you will see a vulture flying over the area in diminishing circles, getting lower and lower, until it eventually alights on a tree near the carcass, and starts looking all round to try and locate it. Obviously in this case it has not been attracted down to the kill by sight, but by smell. When the weather is clear and warm, smells ascend upwards, and you will notice that any vulture passing over the area will at once start circling, and will eventually come down to the carcass as described above.

Sometimes, when sitting up over a panther kill in the high

hills, I have noticed this happen over and over again. But in the monsoon, when heavy rain and mists keep smells lying low, or even force them down hill, you will never see a vulture start circling the kill, unless he notices crows and other birds in the vicinity. I have so often seen vultures skim quite low over a kill in such circumstances without noticing or discovering anything.

In the North Coimbatore jungles, I was amazed to see a race between wild dogs and humans to reach a kill, on to which the vultures were swooping down out of the sky.

23. *What is the difference between a man-eater and a man-killer?* A man-eater is one who habitually kills and eats human beings, whereas a man-killer only kills but does not eat human flesh.

As tigers sometimes kill a man on the spur of the moment, when suddenly startled or frightened, or perhaps in imaginary self-defence, or in defence of their cubs, they should not be considered man-eaters or man-killers unless they repeat the offence. If a man is unfortunate enough to be killed in this way, the tiger, while in a frenzy, might carry him off, and might even eat a bit of him, but, if he never does it again, he should not be branded as a man-eater or man-killer. Repetition of the offence is the criterion.

24. *Why do tigers become man-eaters?* It is generally accepted that tigers become man-eaters for any of the following reasons:

(a) Wounds or other physical disabilities that prevent them from being able to secure their normal prey. Porcupine quills buried in the flesh are a common cause. These quills are often found in the paws and muscles of the forearm of tigers and panthers, and usually the quill ends inside the flesh are found bent over like a crochet hook, which obviously made it impossible for the animals to pull them out with their teeth. The other ends, will usually be found to have been bitten off flush with the skin. Also tigers and panthers, in fighting each other, inflict wounds, which may cause permanent injuries.

(b) The bad influence of a man-eating tigress, who, while in season, entices, and passes on the bad habit to males, or, later, passes it on to her cubs.

(c) Old age, which might incapacitate them, as also disease, and render them incapable of catching and killing other prey.

(d) A tigress with small cubs may become a man-eater if driven by the pangs of hunger to secure food for herself and her cubs.

Tigers do not usually become man-killers, unless suffering from wounds or are crippled in some way, or suffering from some physical defect, such as deafness, which might cause him to blunder into a man unintentionally. A male tiger might also vent his spleen on a man if defeated by a rival, and forced to lead a solitary life. A tigress might take to man-killing, if she loses her cubs.

25. *Are there any superstitions about man-eating tigers?* Yes, there is a general belief in many parts of the country that a man-eating tiger is guided towards his next human victim by the spirit of a human being previously killed and eaten by the tiger. This spirit is supposed to ride on the tiger's head.

Another belief is that anyone who assists in trying to kill the tiger will himself fall the next victim. This unfortunate belief often greatly handicaps a hunter in his efforts to end the man-eater's career.

There is still another belief, that a human corpse, partly eaten by the tiger, will sit up and point out the hunter in his machan to the tiger when he returns to his kill. In telling the tale some will go as far as to say they actually knew three hunters, who sat up in a machan over a human kill, and when the tiger came, the corpse sat up, and pointed with his right hand at the men in the tree. The tiger then departed, but as the hunters knew he would return, one man very bravely got down from the tree, and tied the right arm of the corpse to the body. Later, when the tiger came again, the corpse sat up and (Damn me!), pointed out the men with his left hand. This time the tiger, who was of course somewhat supernatural, sprang thirty feet up the tree, and killed his enemies in the machan.

My old friends Darbari and Saktu told me a story, which, in various forms, has often been told, but, as it is a story believed by nearly all jungle dwellers, it is perhaps worth repeating.

There was once a bania (shop-keeper), living in a village in

the jungle. He wanted to visit a neighbouring village on business, but as the road lay through a dense forest, haunted by a terrible man-eating tiger, he did not know what to do. Eventually he met a Sadhu (mendicant), who gave him two powders. By eating the first, he himself would be turned into a huge tiger, capable of defeating all other tigers in the jungle, and, by eating the second, he would at once become his old self again. What could be better?

Armed with these two powders, and accompanied by his pretty young wife, the bania started on his journey through the forest on foot. They had not gone far, however, when they saw the dreaded man-eater sitting in the road. The gallant bania, before swallowing Powder No. 1 told his wife to wait where she was, so that when he returned after killing the tiger, she could at once place Powder No. 2 in his mouth, and enable him to resume human shape. The plan worked well up to a point. The bania swallowed Powder No. 1, and immediately became a magnificent tiger. Roaring loudly, he bounded towards the man-eater, and, in a trice, killed his opponent. Then with his tail held high in triumph, and with his jaws still dripping blood, he returned to his spouse. But the poor girl was so terrified that she waved her arms in despair, and spilt the precious Powder No. 2 on the ground. Her husband, quite naturally, was greatly annoyed! He pounced on his wife, and in his rage killed and ate her. Thereafter, still being enraged at not being able to become a bania again, this terrible tiger, who still had the brain of a man, killed and ate thousands of people, and became the most dreaded man-eater in human memory.

This story is only one of many supporting the belief that men can be turned into tigers and panthers. In many parts of India, the people believe in were-tigers, and were-panthers, and contend that, in order to be able to prey on human beings, some individuals have the power, and actually practice the magic of turning themselves into these animals at night, resuming their own human shape at dawn. People suspected of this practice are greatly feared, and sometimes come to an unfortunate end, but normally no one comes under suspicion of being a were-tiger or panther, unless human kills continue, and the real culprit remains undiscovered.

26. *Do wild dogs attack tigers?* I have never seen this happen, but, on one occasion, when I was out on manœuvres near Jabalpur, I received a telegram from Darbari and Saktu informing me of a tiger kill near Lamta. I was not able to leave for Lamta till the next evening, and on arrival, was told the following story:

"We were out in the forest in the afternoon, along with several other men, cutting bamboos, when we suddenly heard a terrible riot going on in the jungle. A tiger started roaring, and kept on roaring almost without ceasing. We were so frightened that we ran down the hill to the forest road which borders on the village fields. We had just got there when we saw an amazing sight. A huge tiger galloped out of the jungle, closely followed by eleven wild dogs. They raced across the open fields, and up the opposite hill. There the tiger climbed on to a big rock about twenty feet high, and stood at bay, with the dogs standing all round the rock. He kept on roaring but the dogs held him at bay till it got dark. We wish you had been here to shoot the tiger, as you could have done so with the greatest of ease. Knowing full well that the dogs would break away at nightfall, and that the tiger, being thirsty after his exertions, would make straight for water, we tied a bait for him there, and he killed it. Next morning we sent you a telegram, but you did not come, so we let the tiger feed peacefully, and the next day gave him another bait. Now the tiger is lying up near the kill. He will surely return this evening."

27. *What is the difference between a leopard and a panther?* For many years controversy has raged on this subject. While we are all entitled to hold our own views, and many old sportsmen still do so, the "Experts" seem to have agreed that there is no difference. Both are one and the same animal, call it leopard or panther or what you will! In Africa one never uses the word panther, and, after spending a year big game shooting in Kenya, I found myself always saying leopard instead of panther, much to the annoyance of some sportsmen in India who held the opposite view, and still insisted that leopards and panthers were by no means the same animal. Let us compromise by saying that there are two or more different kinds of leopards or panthers in India! I have never been worried about the main difference myself, but quite often have had the old question fired at me,

and it seems to me that the general idea has been that panthers are larger and have more rosettes than spots, and leopards are smaller and have more spots than rosettes. But in all the many leopards or panthers I have shot in India, it seems to me, though I might still be wrong, that every leopard or panther has a preponderance of spots on the head, neck, and front part of the shoulders, and the rest of the body has more rosettes than spots. There are many variations in size and colour, and though it is generally agreed that the jungle panther is much bigger and darker in colour, I must say I have shot many exceptions to this rule. Panthers or leopards of the Plains are usually lighter coloured animals, but that rule applies to other animals as well, and certainly does so to tigers. Certain localities have particularly marked characteristics. While panthers of the Himalayas are usually light coloured animals, those of the Nilgiris are generally rather dark. And then, of course, there is the black panther, which is very occasionally found in the North, but is much more common in the South of India.

28. *What is the "Lucky Bone"?* This is a very thin detached bone, only a few inches long, known as the "Clavicle Bone", which is found embedded in the flesh between the fore-shoulder and neck of tigers and panthers. When the skin of the animal has been removed, this little bone can be extracted by cutting deep into the flesh in front of the shoulder. Occasionally one sees one mounted in gold as a scarf-pin or lady's brooch, but, apart from bringing the wearer "Good Luck" its outward appearance is of doubtful beauty! Jungle men say it is this little bone that prevents tigers and panthers from climbing trees with the same dexterity as their Aunt, the Jungle Cat! Tigers seldom climb trees, though they can do so, and the Indian leopard is not nearly so arboreal as his African brother.

29. *Is it advisable to use a heavy rifle for big game?* There are two schools of thought: (a) that a light rifle is just as effective, and (b) that a heavy rifle is indispensable. The advocates of both schools are so certain that they themselves are right that it is quite useless trying to convince either of them against their will. To cut out all argument on the merits or de-merits of either I can only say that I consider the heavy rifle more

humane for really big animals, and for dangerous animals like tigers I look upon it as a form of insurance. When one argues that a well-placed shot from a lighter rifle would be just as effective, it must be remembered that well-placed shots are not always possible, and there is no gainsaying that when a dangerous animal is wounded with a light rifle he becomes even more dangerous, simply because the light rifle is incapable of hurting him as much as the heavy, and the less incapacitated he is the more he will fight.

It is my experience that when hit by a heavy bullet from a really powerful rifle, no animal, whatever his size, will turn or wait to ask for more, provided, of course, that it is a body shot, and not one that has just grazed or nicked him, whereas he certainly will go for you if you tickle him up with a light "Pop-gun". Animals size you up by the weight of your punch. If you hit a dangerous animal good and hard, he will not want to fight, but will do his best to escape. You have him beat. With the light rifle it is just the opposite. He thinks he can beat you, and will have a darned good try to prove it.

30. *When a tiger is killed is his place soon taken by another in the same jungle?* Yes, almost invariably so. Tigers normally are very conservative about sticking to their own beats, and very seldom poach on each other's preserves. There seems to be a complete understanding between neighbours on this subject. There is no human way of accounting for the way in which these territorial claims are established, or how, in fact, the limits or boundaries are fixed, but there is no denying that they do actually exist, and are most jealously guarded by all concerned. Tigers continually check up on each other, and when a tiger is noticeably absent from his established beat for more than a few days, another tiger will move in to take his place.

I have often wondered how this unwritten law works in the case of tiger families. When cubs grow up they must perforce leave the jungles they were reared in. Strangely enough there does seem to be some law of succession because it is very noticeable that when a tiger dies his place is taken by a tiger and not by a tigress, and the same law applies to tigresses in the jungles that fall vacant. Certain jungles always hold males, and others always hold females, while some seem to be set aside as

maternity wards and nurseries, and a male tiger will not intentionally enter these. A few other jungles seem to be regarded as common property to both sexes, and males or females may be found from time to time. I have kept a note of these things over a period of several years, and although I have not been able to unravel these mysteries of tiger law, I am quite sure that there is this law, and that the law is almost invariably obeyed by all. Let us hope that there always will be a tiger to replace the one departed, and that the jungles will resound for years to come to that most wonderful of all sounds—The Call of a Tiger.

To the Reader

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