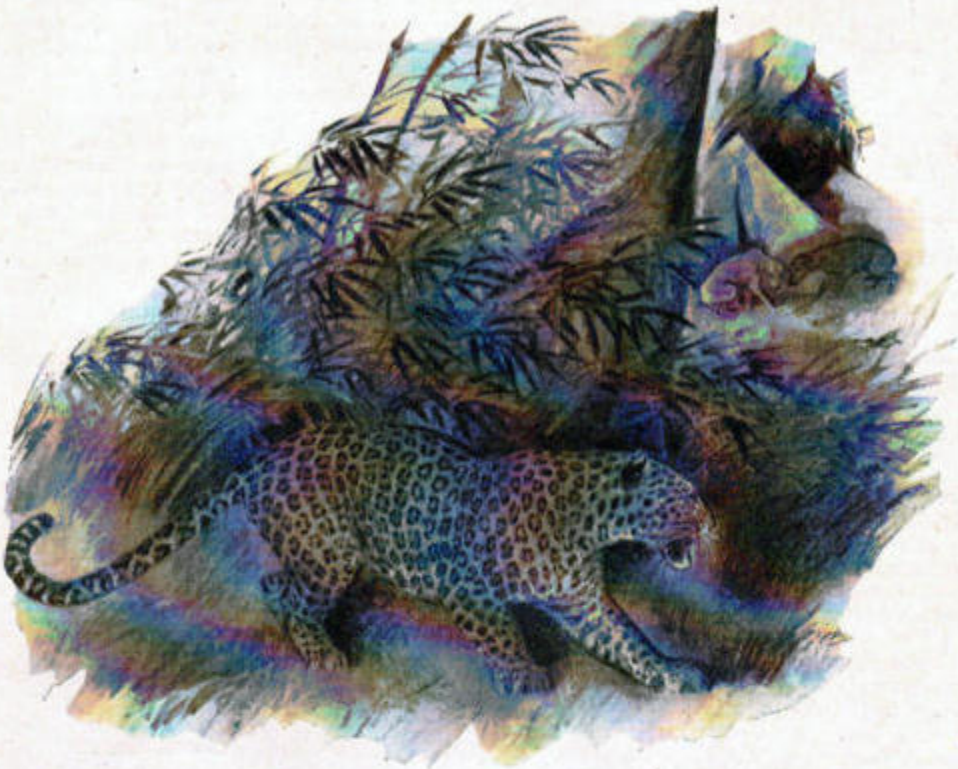


The leopard continued to visit our camp every night, scaring the dogs into fits

Tusk and Fang in BURMA

by EDISON MARSHALL

"JUNGLE" is a Hindu word, meaning country grown to rank vegetation and inhabited only by wild creatures. Lions do not live in jungle, but on arid plains and rocky hills. In fact, even the great ferny forests of west Africa do not count as jungle in my mind, dim as Hades though they are—the term applying only to southeastern Asia and the East Indias. Well, to get down to it, a real pukka first-chop jungle has got to have tigers. A jungle without tigers is like a beautiful woman without a mysterious soul.

One of the greatest of all guides, Francis DeFosse, had taken me hunting in the land of the sladang, the wonderful tiger jungles of French Indo-China; and I told the tale in FIELD & STREAM. John MacDonald, a remarkable Anglo-Indian, was with me in northeastern India, and I called that happy adventure "Tiger! Tiger!" Between those two hunting grounds lay the beautiful land of Burma, where, shortly, before the war, I had never fired a shot.

At least it was beautiful that year, the filthy Jap having not yet fouled it. It was still the "cleaner, greener land" of Kipling's song. Burma had enormous trackless jungles in which dwelt very bright-colored and elusive tigers—as well as wild elephants, if it came to that.

I had not really intended to go after elephants. Although an old, solitary bull elephant is as fair and as formidable game as lives, I had caught the tiger-fever with DeFosse; and like tropical malaria, it is prone to linger in the body as long as a hunter draws breath, flaring up at every whiff of an old striped cat in a zoo. The elephant is the king of the jungle, but the tiger is the very incarnation of its beauty, stealth, mystery and sudden danger.

But on arriving in Rangoon, I heard some news that changed my plans. There were many tigers in the southern Arakon Yomas, forest officers told me; and while I was there would I save one of them a trip? In a certain area not more than ten miles square a very old rogue elephant hung out, to be identified by his short, heavy, broken tusks and his savage disposition. When he raided the villagers' fields, which was at every harvest, he destroyed ten times what he ate, and had allegedly murdered an old woman, found rubbed out in a rice paddy. It might be, too, they suggested cautiously, that he was an extremely large elephant. No ten-footer had been shot in Burma for some years, but, from the villagers' reports, which had to be taken with plenty of salt, he might easily approach that height.

An exciting story of hunting the great beasts of the jungle—leopards, tigers and a mighty rogue elephant

By train and river boat, and then by buffalo-cart and riding elephant, I reached one of the most beautiful hunting countries I had ever seen—bright-streamed, high-hilled, with bamboo and evergreen jungle rustling with game. With me were an interpreter, two Assamese trackers and some camp-boys. We had two badly trained elephants: a nervous female on whose bony back I could get about, and an ill-tempered immature bull that would carry baggage when he could not, by any trick or tantrum, get out of it. We also had three or four useless native dogs.

On the first evening in camp I climbed a hill and with my glasses spotted on an opposite slope fourteen gaurs—the bison of India, and with noses a little more humped the sladang of Malaya. Right after I had gone to my tent, one of the dogs crawled under the side, with his hackles up and his tail down, and hid whimpering under my bed. If there was not a leopard hanging about camp, pursuing his favorite sport of dog-catching—in fact, it seems the purple passion of the spotted cats—I missed my guess. Just before dawn I was wakened by one of the most suggestive sounds in the whole jungle symphony—the prolonged brain-piercing shrieks of a wild pig in the talons of some big cat.

These were all good auguries for a wonderful hunting trip. So were the elephant, tiger, gaur, leopard and sambur tracks found in the sand of a nullah and the frequent crashings in the bamboos. But those auguries, and one young boar shot for the pot, were all we had to go on for a solid week.

We had plenty of alibis, too. The type of country was new to me. Drought had driven many wild elephants farther into the hills. The villages where we might buy cattle and buffalo to use for tiger bait were out of reach. But you can't put promises in the bag, or hang excuses in a trophy room. It would be perfectly possible to spend the three weeks allotted to this trip without bringing home any bacon.

The Assamese trackers roamed far and wide, but with no sign of Burra Hathi—the big elephant. The biggest track they measured was eighteen inches in diameter, which meant, by an almost infallible rule, a bull standing nine feet at the shoulder. You can bet that the shoulder-height of a bull elephant is within an inch or two of six times the diameter of his front foot and win every time. Now, a nine-foot bull is no midget, but I was resolved to take the broken-tusked rogue bull or none at all.

Although more than once we heard the thrilling "singing" of a hunting tiger—rhythmic deep-throated snarls that ended in crashing roars—the chance of running into one of the brutes in the jungle was slim, getting slimmer day by day. One possibility was to shoot a bison, build an ambush near by, and chain down the carcass for bait. Although I did not want another bison head unless it was a record, I resolved to try the trick unless our luck changed soon. In the meantime, a leopard continued to visit our camp every night, scaring the dogs into fits. To get a skin on the rack that the hopeful boys had built, I decided to lay for the big slinking cat.

Malarial mosquitoes had made a night of it when I sat up for tigers in India, two years before. To resist temptation that would surely down me for another count, I had deliberately left out of my outfit any equipment for night-shooting. Thus, the best I could do was tether a goat in the clearing in front of my tent—I could not bring myself to inflict such mental torture on one of our worthless cur dogs—and sit at the door under a mosquito net.

Such rough-and-ready tactics sometimes get results. You can never tell about any animal, let alone a leopard—sly as a fox one moment, bold as a lion the next. This was not one of those times. Although he chased one of the dogs into my tent and I heard his buck-saw cough in the darkness, he did not give me a glimpse of his spotted hide.

I slept late the next morning, and was just pulling on my pants when one of the Assamese trackers came rushing into camp with a yell that I had heard before. It was *"Bagh! Bagh!"*—one of the most thrilling cries that the jungle hunter knows, the Hindustani word for tiger.

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL BRANSOM

Moreover, his excitement indicated that there was no time to lose. In pajama coat, breeches and shoes, I grabbed the .404 Mauser, standing loaded by my bed, and followed him up the trail.

We had not taken time to hunt up my interpreter, and I could understand hardly a word of his breathless jabber. Even if he had seen a tiger on the hill, I could not imagine the striped Houdini remaining there till we arrived. Presently he signaled that we were approaching the quarry, and from then on he drifted through the tangled vines like the morning mist.

It was as pretty stalking as I had ever seen. That alone, I thought, ought to compensate me for the jaunt; however, I only thought it, and didn't believe it. It was the same pretty romancing that we do about our fly-casting when the trout won't rise. Meanwhile I was coming behind him not at all like the morning mist—more like a cow in comparison. Even so, I was making much less noise than I would have made alone, by stepping in his footprints and holding off the brush-stalks that he handed back to me.

Presently we gained a low, dense thicket. He peered over it, made a stealthy gesture—and, to my amazement, the movement of his lips formed the word *"bagh."* But when I looked, my rifle ready, I could see no yellow hide, no black stripes, no fierce flat head —indeed, nothing but the almost open hillside.

"Bagh! Bagh!" he whispered, his brown finger pointing.

Then I noticed that he pointed a little upward, and my eyes went along in a hurry. About twenty yards distant and fifteen feet up in an almost naked thorn-tree crouched a leopard. His eyes were on us now, and I thought he would surely leap down and fade away before I could get my rifle to my shoulder, even though it was coming up fast. Into the sights came his spotted breast, off went the gun—almost never have I been able to recall pulling a trigger—and down he fell with a crash.

"I thought you said it was a tiger," I yelled, the instant I was sure that the cat was in the bag.

"Chota (little) *bagh,"* he told me, grinning. I had quite forgotten that to the Assamese all the big cats are *baghs.*

The leopard proved to be a male, somewhat smaller than most mature toms, but with beautiful orange-colored fur. Nor was the rejoicing in camp confined to our worthless dogs. With that skin stretched mighty pretty on the rack, the gods of the jungle began to be friendly, if not downright loving. Indeed, it seemed as though they were resolved to give us the time of our lives.

Early in the morning of the following day, one of the trackers led my interpreter and myself to a lookout high above the dwarf bamboos. From this eminence we might spot a bison that would furnish not only a magnificent head, but bait for a tiger. Very shortly we located a herd on a distant slope, and then the tracker's quick eye caught a moving dot on the next slope that I thought was quite likely a solitary bull, almost always a finer trophy than a herd-bull. I put the glasses on the object—if this were a bison, it was the biggest in the world.

Presently he came clear of the bamboos, and I caught the gleam of white. It was not a bison, but a bull elephant.

"Look at him," I told the tracker, my voice shaking, "and tell me what you think."

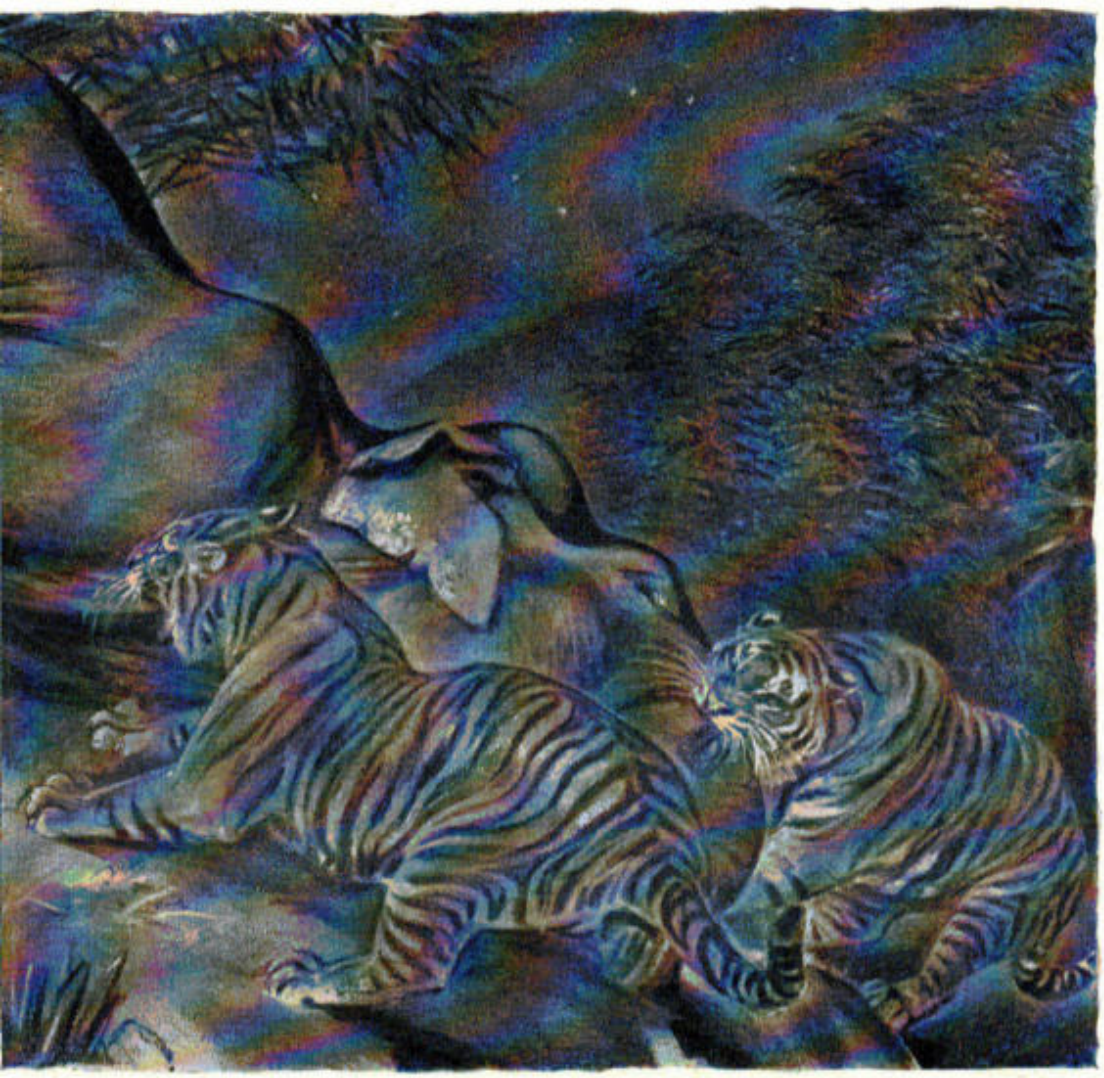
The tracker peered long. He shook his head—he could not see well through the Sahib's magic-eye—so I fixed the glasses at zero-zero for his perfect vision. Then he gasped out two words that I did not need ask the interpreter to translate. *"Burra hathi!* (The big elephant!)"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Sahib. He has the thick, short tusks and is very tall."

On the way to the hunting ground we passed the camp, where we picked up some lunch, my extra gun and three camp-boys with tools for cutting out the tusks. In case this looked too optimistic, the trackers averted bad luck with a little *poojah* to their gods. Then we set off with happy and hopeful hearts.

Actually, the conditions were highly favorable. The wind was right for us to approach the bull from above, and the bamboos had seemed of the right height to screen us well and yet reveal his lofty head, the only vulnerable portion of his frame. Nor did we think he would move very far at this time of day. (*Continued on page 54*)



During the night the tigers succeeded in moving that huge carcass!

TUSK AND FANG IN BURMA

(Continued from page 11)

Within an hour's march we sighted him again—now scarcely a quarter of a mile below us. All the boys would remain here except one, a tracker who would carry my extra piece. He was told to stay back when I gave the word. Although this would be a big and lonely job, he couldn't protect himself with the .404, and I didn't want him getting in my way.

For those who are not well up on elephants, perhaps this precaution should be explained. Circus elephants seem ponderous, awkward, gentle beasts, harder to miss than a barn door, but these are almost invariably cows either born in captivity or caught young. An old jungle bull is ponderous, too, when he catches and kneels on some one he doesn't like, but he is no more awkward than a General Sherman tank—in fact, the way he can get about in thick country is one of the wonders of the wild.

Some hunters have managed to outrun elephants in heavy jungle, but others have not quite made it. Sometimes when they hid in the thickets, the persistent monsters hunted for them like bird dogs. Both Bwana Cottar of African fame and DeFosse had this experience—enraged bulls sniffing for them in every bush—and they spoke feelingly about elephants ever after. Truly, there is no big game more ferocious and dangerous than these forest monarchs. A tiger will maul and kill, a buffalo will leave recognizable remains; but once he catches his puny foe, a bull elephant simply obliterates him.

Nor was Burra Hathi due to be an easy target. To fire into his vast body would be worse than useless, and to reach the brain, comparatively small in the huge bony structure of his head, required a tricky shot. Old ivory hunters knew how to make it from the front—aiming at a certain wrinkle in the giant's trunk at a certain number of paces—but counting wrinkles on six tons of charging, screaming fury would be away out of my class.

Burra Hathi was not only the king of the jungle, but a rogue elephant. He had learned to hate the sight and smell of human beings who stung him with buckshot when he raided the grain fields and the banana gardens. Maybe he was the wrong elephant for a first try. At least I wanted the safest possible shot—to creep up on the animal's flank and put my bullet between the eye and ear.

THE trouble was that the quarters were going to be mighty close. In fact, both Cottar and DeFosse had told me that a range of about ten paces—my paces, not the elephant's—was the best and surest bet.

The tracker began to lead me down the steep slope. At a hundred yards, the bull showed as no more than a big, dark patch in a clump of trees, off which he was lazily browsing. When we had halved this distance, we still could not tell one end of him from the other. The jungle shadows were tricky, and the bamboo growth, although generally only shoulder-high, constantly cut off the view.

This growth was dry from the drought, and it rattled and crackled. Of course, he heard us with those big ears, but, accustomed to the movements of deer and wild pig, he was not yet alarmed. Presently we were thirty yards from him, a mere ninety feet, and somebody was rubbing an icicle up and down my back-bone. Still I could not get a clear view of his head, only glimpses of his big ivories.

Signaling the tracker to remain here, I eased on down the slope. That black blotch in the bushes began to loom like a mountain. Maybe I was within the 10-yard range that Cottar and DeFosse had advised, maybe the distance was fifteen yards; anyway, it was as close as I was going. The bull broke off another tree-bough with a nerve-shattering crack, but he didn't eat its foliage; instead, he threw it down. Plainly he was getting uneasy, and that made it unanimous.

I waited a few frantic seconds for him to show me his ear. Instead he took a big stride forward, and his entire head emerged from the tree-boughs—a full front view. High above the bamboo growth in the clear sunlight and almost level with me, it looked colossal, every scar and wrinkle showing clear, his huge trunk waving and his little eyes gleaming. Burra Hathi had decided to come uphill.

Possibly he was merely shifting ground, but that I couldn't believe. I think he was coming to investigate the noise in the

"All he ever carries is that little saw"

bamboos, and perhaps a faint smell that he recognized and hated. He was hauling himself slowly but powerfully up the steep slope. He was not yet charging; but elephant rage is one of the fastest flames in the jungle.

I would have high-tailed it up the mountain ahead of him except for the danger of his seeing me and charging. He certainly could not climb very fast, but I might slip or stick fast in a bamboo thicket. Instead, I executed a flanking movement. In other words, I steamed along the side-hill at full throttle.

When I had gained about thirty feet, I whirled to shoot. Although he was still about ten feet below my level, I had a fair view of his ear, and the strain was getting terrific. I sighted just in front of the orifice and had the feeling of a dead aim. Even so, it took a wrench of my will to touch off the trigger.

There was a thunderous crash, and the elephant disappeared from sight. I hardly knew what had happened to him at first. If he was down, he had rolled into the heavy bamboo below.

Every once in a while a big-game hunter gets so excited over a trophy that he takes reckless chances. That is the way to have a serious accident. Fearing that I had missed the brain and only stunned the monster, I went tearing down the hill after him to put in a second shot.

The slope was steep, the bamboos that would have broken my fall had been flattened, and I landed within a yard of the elephant's head. Luckily for me, he was

a dead elephant, or he could have made a pancake of me with one blow of his trunk. Also, he was the biggest elephant, alive or dead, I had ever seen.

The boys came tearing down the hill at the news. When we had duly celebrated, we examined our trophy. There was not the slightest doubt that he was Burra Hathi: his stubby tusks had been broken—each twice, I thought—and worn to workable ends. Elephants are not as long-lived as some people think—ordinarily their span does not greatly exceed that of a man—but the boys thought him between sixty and eighty, which seemed a likely guess.

Having rolled over in falling, he lay with his feet downhill. When the boys had hacked away the bamboos so that I could get to them, I found that both front feet had cut into the dirt and I could not immediately measure them. When I asked the boys to lift one of them into the clear, we encountered a startling difficulty.

All the boys who could get handy holds on the foot were not able to lift it. Five or six heaved and puffed, not because the foot was stuck, but merely because it was too heavy. This is hard to believe; but when we had excavated the dirt from around the foot and applied a tape-measure, we did not wonder at it any more. The diameter of that great pad was exactly twenty inches. Of course, to lift the foot we would have had to raise a good part of the leg as well.

Six times twenty inches is ten feet. We could check the shoulder measurement in other ways, but none would be as accurate as this. Imagine another foot or two on the average room-ceiling, and you have a lot of elephant. I had no doubt that his total weight was twelve thousand pounds, and surely he was one of the grandest bull elephants in all Burma.

The tusks were only about four feet long, but were massive and finely curved. The pair weighed 120 pounds, and if they had not been broken that weight would have been increased by at least one-third. With these and two hundredweight of meat for the boys, we returned to camp. On the morrow we intended to skin out the feet—they make handsome waste-baskets—and procure other trophies.

WHEN at sunrise we arrived on the scene, you could have knocked off our eyes with a bamboo. Below where those six tons of dead elephant had lain was what looked like the path of a small avalanche down the slope to the brink of a shallow canyon a hundred yards beneath. Granted the steep hillside and slippery bamboo stems, what power in the jungle could ever have moved the inert mass enough to start its descent?

I could think of nothing but another elephant. But there were no elephant tracks near by; there were only two sets of four-toed tracks as big as my hand.

Plainly two big tigers had come during the night, and blind instinct had caused them to try to drag away the kill after their fashion. I would not have believed that they could have dislodged the huge body if Francis DeFosse had not told me how two tigers had once moved the carcass of a medium-sized female elephant nearly ten feet on level ground. Maybe I would have believed it anyway, having once followed for a quarter of a mile a tiger dragging a dead buffalo weighing 1,500 pounds. Once I had chained a cow to a big, up-arching tree-root, only to have the whole works torn loose and hauled away.

Truly, the strength of the tiger is one

of the greatest wonders of the whole animal world. But this is only one reason why we gazed upon those tracks with kindling eyes. No one who has hunted tigers can ever get them out of his head. They still haunt him when he is too old to dream of going hunting any more.

We followed the elephant to where he lay, but gave no more thought to waste-baskets. The tigers, too, had gone down there and feasted during the night; their rank smell was so thick that you could cut it with a knife. Doubtless they were even now lying up a hundred or so yards from us, and certainly after dark—quite possibly well before dark—they would return for another meal. Anyway, we must prepare an ambush at once.