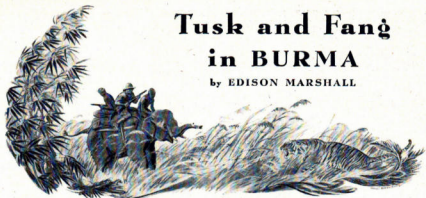


Tusk and Fang in BURMA

by EDISON MARSHALL



PART TWO

THE excitement and satisfaction of killing the big bull elephant was completely eclipsed by finding that tigers had been at the carcass. For me, a tiger is the greatest prize, and I was very eager.

There were two tigers in this deal, and one is often plenty. But when I looked around for a near-by tree in which to build a machan, I could see nothing but shrubs and saplings. However, the steep bank was hardly thirty feet from the elephant carcass, and without much trouble we hollowed out a cave big enough for me to sit in. Here I could watch until dark, when the boys would come for me on our riding elephant, bringing the beast in close so that I could make a quick transfer from my ambush to the almost-safety of her broad back.

The boys boosted me into the cave and handed up my gun and my big flask of tea. (Native boys can hardly be driven to boil drinking-water, but they will boil tea; and, anyway, the bouquet covers up the assorted flavors that collect in the jug.) Then they went away, singing and shouting, to persuade any tigers that the coast was clear.

I was left alone with the jungle. It was a wonderful jungle, and within ten minutes it began to come to life. A dazingly arrayed peacock came sailing by and lighted in a tree some fifty yards away. Some gibbons started howling, one of the most incredible and prodigious rackets in the animal world, blasting my ears in spite of the fact that they were several hundred yards distant. A varanus lizard hauled his ghastly length across the little clearing. A jungle cock and hen, which I would defy you to tell from a pair of banty chickens in the barn-yard, went scoting through, the underbrush.

I was not lonely, certainly not relaxed. There rose many little rustlings in the thickets that might at any instant materialize into the heart-stopping glory

of a tiger. A most marvelous pheasant that I could not identify lighted ten feet from me, flamed up in a shaft of sunlight, and flew away. Something coughed on the hill above me, and if it was not a leopard I don't know what it was.

I had got in the hole shortly before noon. About four I experienced the first major thrill of the day. The sun and the breeze had done away with the tiger-smell left from last night, but slowly it began to ooze in. There is no way to describe that smell, but I can tell you what it does to a waiting hunter: it gets up in his nose and almost knocks him down and causes his heart to do a remarkable series of jumps, bounds, somersaults and other athletic feats.

One tiger, or perhaps both, prowled within twenty yards of me. Once I saw the vines move, and once I heard a twig crack beneath a big velvet foot. But something made the brute suspicious—the foundation of tiger cunning is to avoid the unknown—and the fumes slowly faded away.

THE tiger had gone, and I offered to bet my immortal soul against a plugged rupee that he wouldn't come back until after dark. Of course, this was mere mumbo-jumbo—trying to bamboozle the gods of chance and the jungle into giving me the surprise of my life. Also, the little sounds and movements continued to give me fits. Just before sundown I heard a distinct and continuous sound in the thickets about fifty yards up the canyon. It was getting louder and coming nearer, and it was made by something big.

I couldn't believe that it was a tiger. Smoke drifts with hardly less noise than the cat approaching his kill. Presently I caught a glimpse of a huge dark shape, and my first thought was that this was

another elephant. And then the finest bison I had ever seen emerged full into the clearing.

The solitary bull, black as the moonless jungle save for white ankles and feet, and standing nearly seven feet at the shoulder, would be a wonderful prize. No wonder that my rifle made a little jump all of its own accord. But I already had a fine gaur in my trophy room. Anyway, it was very doubtful if my gaur in the hand was worth two tigers in the bush, tigers being what they are—the pride of the jungle.

My tigers had received one scare today. If I shot, they would certainly not return till after dark, and there was at least a chance that the lurking killers would rush forth and attack the horned monster and give me the thrill of thrills.

Nothing of the kind occurred. The gigantic bull pushed into the clearing, paused by the elephant carcass, sniffed at it, snorted and then, more skittish than scared, took off in a fast trot. He had passed within ten paces of me, apparently without getting my scent, perhaps because the wind was blowing uphill. If the tigers saw him, they had not liked the look of his big horns. Anyway, they already had several tons of meat for the mere eating.

The sun dipped swiftly, and the shadows were long and blue. This was the most exciting hour of the day, when every sound was breathtaking and the wild creatures left their lairs. Once I caught the tiger smell again, but it was quite faint and soon faded away. No, they weren't coming back until after dark. I kept hoping, but the light failed rapidly, and soon it was too dark to shoot. Then I heard the boys shouting and singing as they brought up the elephant, and there was nothing to do but wait for another day.

"These tigers, they are very big, and no doubt old and cunning," one of the boys told me through my interpreter. "I don't think there is a chance that they

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL SPANSON

will ever show themselves in daylight."

That doleful prediction stayed with me through the next afternoon as I kept the watch. Although the big cats had feasted during the night, I did not once catch their scent, and no game other than a few jungle-cock came near my blind. When the sun went under the hill and the light dimmed, it looked as though this tiger hunt was washed up. What an idiot I had been, I thought, not to have shot the blind!

During these melancholy reflections I had been leaning back in the blind, tired and discouraged. Suddenly it was as though someone had sprayed perfume on me—the most wonderful perfume in the world to a tiger hunter! The whole place began to reek with it. I leaned forward an inch at a time and peered through the vines that covered the mouth of my cave.

No tigers were in sight as yet, but off to my left there was a most peculiar sound. It seemed to be a slow *swish . . . swish . . . swish*, and at first I could not imagine what was causing it. Then I realized it could be nothing but the scythe-like sweep of a tiger's tail against the vines.

He certainly was not more than twenty feet away, and on the hillside almost level with me. Wouldn't he smell me and slink away? I knew that tigers are sight-hunters, and it seemed impossible that this odorous brute could smell anything but himself; yet those few seconds of waiting almost gave me apoplexy. Then, with a crash of brush, the tiger sprang from the hillside full into the clearing, hardly ten feet in front of my blind!

Only once before had I come so close to a wild, live tiger, and that had been too close. Moreover, the other had been a small female. This brute was a full-grown male, looming larger than life-size there at the end of my nose, and magnificent beyond words. Indeed, he was so near that I dared not push my rifle barrel between the vines.

Sitting tight, holding my breath, my heart going like a Burmese tom-tom, I caught sight of something over to the right—something big and of a general yellow color. Looking to the left, I saw some black stripes, too. It was the other tiger, and how he had got on the scene without my seeing him I don't know to this day.

That made two tigers. It made two of the finest tigers I had ever seen, although the near fellow looked considerably larger than the other. Presently he strode swiftly toward the dead elephant.

... The other saw the movement and dashed

in the same direction. They arrived neck and neck.

What to do next, any tiger hunter in his right mind ought to know. All the authorities advise that he wait patiently and calmly until the tigers have been feasting at least five minutes and are so intent on their work that they will not notice any slight movement in the blind. The trouble is, though, that no tiger hunter was ever known to be in his right

head for another survey of the scene. What had made him suspicious? I hadn't the slightest notion. He began to twist his big head around, and very presently his eyes would hit my blind. So I couldn't wait any longer and, moving my barrel very little, I got his ear in my sights and squeezed off the right barrel of the big double .470.

He went down hard, and I swung fast for the other beast. But he was a great

Both of the tigers returned to feast on the carcass of the bull elephant! Here is drama and breath-taking action



As it was, I seemed to have plenty of time to aim

mind when the big cats come. I began to push my gun barrel, silent as a snake, through the screen of vines.

I got it level and the butt against my shoulder; but when I tried to sight, the leaves got in my way and I had to push them aside with tingling fingers. And now, as I drew for the big, fat, striped head of the larger cat, he suddenly cut in behind his pal and more or less out of sight on the other side. I was completely out of air as I waited for his head or shoulder to show clear again.

Instead, the nearer tiger raised his

deal faster than I was—in fact, I don't know any animal in the world as fast as a tiger. I had to recover from the horse-kick recoil of the big piece before I could aim, and that takes longer than most people realize—possibly two or three seconds. The cat, on the other hand, had a coiled spring inside him, and the roar of the gun had instantly touched it off.

He had leaped at least twelve feet by the time I could swing, and those twelve feet carried him to the edge of the thickets. In his next jump he was out of

sight, although I could hear him cutting a swath through the brush for another fifty or more yards. Then he appeared to stop suddenly without any apparent reason.

The other tiger had not moved, but, fearing that I had only nicked his skull, I gave him the other barrel. The next few minutes were of pure exultation, as always when the big cat falls, and I was not going to be so mean and ungrateful as to spoil it with regrets over the larger tiger's getting away. Anyway, this one was no slouch. He looked as though he would peg out, unskinned, at least nine feet—a full-grown, although not an unusually large male. I decided to go out and look at him at close range.

I had already reloaded my piece and had it handy to swing when I climbed out of the blind. There was not the slightest reason to expect any trouble from the other tiger, but all tigers are very unpredictable. And the instant I hit the ground a very strange and startling thing happened.

From off in the thickets—perhaps a hundred yards, perhaps hardly forty—a tiger gave vent to an angry roar. It gave me the biggest start any animal ever gave me during my thirteen big-game hunting trips. I whirled to face what I thought sure was going to be a full-powered charge, the old gun swinging mightily fast—a deadly charge too, since I would be unable to shoot until he burst into the clearing ten steps away.

NOTHING more happened—not a sound, not a movement. Still I could not account for that angry roar from a tiger that, by all the books, should be making tracks by now. The thought came to me that perhaps he was burning to avenge his dead companion, but it was not a sensible thought—wild animals do not behave in this human fashion. It was a possibility, though, that they had hunted together so long that even the roar of a gun could hardly induce one of them to leave the other.

Then, from that same direction, only much farther off, I heard the boys coming for me on the elephant. Actually, they had been waiting for darkness to fall and had heard my shots. And if the tiger were angry and at bay, there was nothing to stop him from charging and climbing the elephant and killing both riders. One of them was carrying my extra piece, the Mauser .404, but did not know how to use it.

I began yelling at the top of my voice for them to go back and come in on the other side. Luckily they heard me in the hushed twilight, but the day's excitement was not yet over. As the elephant pushed into the clearing the tiger roared again, and this time he did not stop roaring.

It was a continuous crashing sound that in the gathering dark scared us half silly. The elephant liked the ferocious thunder no more than we did. In fact, she was twisting and turning about, waving her trunk and threatening to

stampede. Her mahout did not try to make her "push" for me to mount; instead, he and my interpreter lay flat on the pad, took hold of my wrists and hauled me, still clutching my gun, aboard. Then the old spinster struck off for camp as fast as she could go.

That night around the fire, two old trackers and myself held a serious pow-wow. We wanted that tiger plenty—all the more because he had given us such a fright—but this was only sport, not war, and I was resolved that we should not take too great a risk. I proposed that the boys pick up the dead tiger at sunrise and, leaving me in the blind, take it to camp for skinning. It seemed to me likely that some time during the day the angry cat would give me a shot.

"No, sahib," the old tracker, an Assamese hillman, answered, "Bogk will not come to the blind, where he heard the big gun. We must hunt him down on the elephant."

"You know well that the elephant will not face bogk. She will stampede and put us in great danger."

"Sahib's riding elephant will not face bogk, true. But I think the little baggage elephant may stand firm."

At first blush, the idea seemed absurd. Our baggage elephant, hardly seven feet tall and probably not over ten years old, had been caught in keddah operations only the preceding year, and the jungle still gleamed out of his eyes. He was frequently unmanageable on the cut trails, and I could hardly picture him standing to the full appalling power of a tiger charge. Yet I had so much confidence in the scarred old hillman that I consented to try it.

The jungle was hushed and cool as we came to the blind next morning. One glance revealed that the elephant carcass had not been touched during the night, and about one lively minute for all hands sufficed to cover the dead tiger with boughs in order to keep off vultures. Meanwhile our little elephant had shied and trumpeted at the rank-smelling brute, which I took for a bad sign.

We mounted for the hunt. The mahout squatted on the elephant's head so that he would be down out of my way. I sat behind him on the pad, and my interpreter, carrying my extra piece, sat behind me, facing the rear. Hathi began to lift and sway his trunk. He did not appear to like this part of the country, but when the mahout pricked him with the ankus he pushed on down the canyon.

I had been thinking that quite likely the tiger had pulled out during the night and all these palpitations were in vain. Well, I could think again. We had not gone fifty feet when the fun, if anyone wanted to call it that, began. Truly it was not fun any more—only the toughest kind of going for we three people, and what the elephant thought of it remained to be seen.

About a hundred yards in front of us the tiger began to roar in full-throated fury. The elephant came to a dead halt,

his trunk shooting forward. My interpreter gasped out an anguished "Wah!" and the mahout gave me a look of entreaty over his shoulder. In all conscience I had no more desire to come to grips with that pointed killer than they did, but I was in command and something more than a tiger was at stake now. So, trying to "whistle in the dark," I pointed ahead.

The mahout spoke to the elephant. Likely he wouldn't go, and then we could all retreat with some honor. To my amazement, the game little pachyderm rolled up his precious trunk out of harm's way and, with his small tusks bristling, marched on, straight toward the uproar.

The tiger's roars increased in volume and ferocity. If we kept on, he would charge—every one of us knew it—but we had become a team that could take what no one of us would take alone. Just the same, it was an almost incredible sound. Nature invented it to unnerve and stampede the tiger's enemies, and it almost turned the trick.

Suddenly it stopped. This was going to be the worst time, for it was the preliminary to the charge. To the right or left, the tiger was moving, in deadly silence now, so that he could take us by surprise; (Continued on page 99)

With a great, coughing roar, he launched his charge!



a definite threat for the future. Bye Bye's was, perhaps, the more fluent and attractively run boat—the loomed two beves and a single perfectly—but there was just that margin of difference. Understand, folks?

A few miles below Shuqaluk, Mississippi, a short piece on beyond the bustling town of Macon, where most of the National Free-for-All's guests are housed in a modern and hospitable hotel, field-trial visitors turn off the concrete highway, on to the old gravel road heading gulfward. Topping a rise, they sight a barn-like structure, surrounded by hitching racks and feeding troughs. It might be a school, or a meeting-house, or a fox-hunter's lodge—but it's not. It's the National's weather-beaten club-house, and has been for many years.

There are long, strong tables and benches, and there's a hot stove at each end. There's also a commodious kitchen housing a pair of hotel-size cooking ranges and all the other appliances calculated to produce just what they do—about the most marvelous food in the country. Cars and horse-lorries, station-wagons and dog-trucks are parked outside.

In Simuakak, Crown are housed the offices and warehouses of E. F. Nunn and Company, on whose feudal holdings of some 27,000 acres in Noxubee County the National's courses are mapped and marshaled by E. B. Norwood.

Heading the Nunn Company is Harrison Evans, and he, with his mother and lovely wife, conduct the Free-for-All for the National Club as a labor of love of the game. And it is run in the grand manner, with all that color and ceremony and detail which are, unfortunately, beginning to disappear in the pageantry of outdoor Americana.

TUSK AND FANG IN BURMA

(Continued from page 29)

or maybe he was creeping toward us. The one thing that we could be sure of was that he was not retreating. He had been brought to bay, and the battle he craved was about to be joined.

Again the elephant stopped, and again his trunk shot forward and waved high. Then, without a touch from the ankus, he started on, and now he veered a little in his course. There did not seem to me the slightest doubt that he had located the mowing cat by scent. We, too, could smell the tiger, but by means of the wonderful antenna in his trunk he was on the beam.

"Give him his head," I whispered to the mahout when again the elephant veered.

Not since his calf-hood had he feared Striped Death, and it was as though he

"She rides smooth when she hasn't the hiccongah"



FIELD & STREAM FOR APRIL, 1944

were once more riderless and free in the jungle of which he and his brethren were kings. I had never seen anything more thrilling than his slow, resolute advance straight toward the ambushed foe.

But that foe was no less brave. Suddenly, with a great coughing roar, he launched his charge. There was a noise like a sail ripped by a gale as he broke from the grass, and I caught the first glimpse of him as he bounded over a patch of heavy brush. At thirty yards' distance the comparatively open jungle gave me a clear view of him, his head down, his tail like an iron rod—coming in for the kill.

THEN I got an impression that did not take shape and meaning until afterward. He did not seem to be covering ground as fast as I had expected, and there was something uneven about his galloping gait. It was at least possible that these factors prevented a serious accident. Many a tiger charge in rough country has gone home when better and quicker shots than I were behind the gun. As it was, I seemed to have plenty of time to aim. When the brute's front came full into my sights, I fired my first barrel.

The ball knocked him down, and in his death-struggle he began to roll over and appear to spin around. The elephant was standing like a rock. Waiting my chance, I put in my second bullet. The mahout yelled with joy as the threshing form lay still.

After a while we stopped pounding one another's backs and talking in loud hysterical voices, and the elephant snatched a little snack for himself from a near-by bush. It was time to examine our trophy, and then we could hardly believe our eyes. Showing plainly in the beautiful striped body of the big cat were not two bullet wounds, but three!

I whirled on my interpreter, who had had orders not to shoot until I gave the word. He had not shot, he said; and, true enough, the Mauser was still loaded to the hilt. Yet the wounds were all fresh and marked the ingress rather than the egress of the bullets. Then I noticed that one of them was very large and ragged, and seemed older than the others, and also that it had entered the brute's shoulder at an angle that today's shooting would not have made possible.

A little investigating soon revealed the truth. The tiger had been struck by the side of an almost spent bullet that had previously passed through the skull of my first tiger. By no means a mortal wound, yet it had crippled the animal and brought him to bay. When we dug out the slug, the whole lucky accident became plain. In the first excitement of the hunt, I had forgotten to change my solid-ball elephant cartridges for the soft-nosed tiger shells. Otherwise the bullet would have very likely flattened and stopped within the iron-hard bone of the skull.

And what a pair of tigers we had in camp! The smaller beauty pegged out, unskinned, a fraction under 9 feet; the larger measured 9 feet 2 inches and was considerably heavier. I had shot larger tigers in India—grown heavy and huge from years of feasting on the villagers' cattle herds—but only one bigger jungle tiger, and none with brighter, heavier fur.

Looking at the handsome rug, they furnished me, I often wonder what has happened to the rest of our company of that wonderful day—my little mahout, my interpreter and stout-hearted, stubby Hathi. I would like to recommend them to an American soldier to help wipe out a certain kind of lagoon which temporarily occupies the Burmese jungle.

THE END

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TUSK AND FANG IN BURMA

(Continued from page 29)

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