

WILD BEASTS AS THEY LIVE

WITH REPRODUCTIONS OF THE ETCHINGS OF EVERT VAN MUYDEN*

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MUT in the fierce yellow glare of the great wastes of Africa, or amidst its high plateau lands of dense bush and forest, there, in his grand domain, one must

have sought out the lion; one must have seen the tawny gold of a tiger, or the glossy splendor of a panther's skin glance through the bamboo-choked ravines, or along the scorched hillside of an Indian jungle, to really know these grand brutes in all their magnificence of form and color. Once thus seen in their wild haunts, the unfortunate caged specimens of their race present but a pitiful sight in their stiffened, weedy limbs, degenerated muscles, and lack-lustre coats, causing one to hope that that barbarism, a "Zoo," may not flourish long.

To the hunter, matter of fact but highly critical of eye, the stereotyped representations of these beasts are often a source of wonder as well as gratification, in the pleasing opportunity they afford him for a display of his greater knowledge. But Mr. Van Muyden's etchings can well endure that severe ordeal. His animals are real—intensely real—notably so in their expression, in the hard, full, yet fleshless look of their great muscles (one can imagine these brutes doing their twenty to forty miles of nightly rounds seeking their food) down to the curl at the end of their most expressive tails.

*The remarkable etched studies of wild animals by Evert Van Muyden, born in Italy of Swiss parents and now living in Paris, which though extending over nearly ten years past are still too little known to the general public, first suggested this article. Captain Melliss, a high authority on lions and tiger hunting, and the author of "Lion-hunting in Somaliland," having been asked by the Editor for his opinion of their accuracy from a hunter's point of view, at the Editor's further request consented to accompany their reproduction by a paper which is not only an interesting supplement to the artistic verdict on Van Muyden's work, but a record of stirring hunting experience.

I have seen that evil-looking panther many a time. The living, alert face of that tiger, who has come with his mate to drink at the water's edge, looked down upon me one day as I crouched in the swaying bare branches of a slim bastard-teak tree half-way up a hillside, while a Central-Indian sun at its hottest slowly broiled me. I was watching over the remains of a dead cow for the tigress who had killed it. She came, but not, as I had expected, from below; for suddenly her large yellow head, barred with black and white chest, appeared on the crest of the hill some fifty yards above me. On either side of her were the heads of two large cubs, whose tails, curled high over their backs, clearly expressed keen pleasure in the near prospect of dinner. All the intense alertness which Mr. Van Muyden has portrayed so happily in his tiger was in her face as she surveyed the ground beneath her. Completely outmanœuvred, for I was greatly exposed to view from where she stood, I tried to shrink into myself, hesitating to fire; for so keen and watchful was her look that I felt paralyzed with the fear that the slightest movement would cause her to vanish. But she soon relieved my hesitating mind, for with one quick glance she seemed to take in the whole jungle, and my tree in particular. I saw three tails whisked in the air, and tigers and cubs flashed into the bushes and were gone. To refer critically to Mr. Van Muyden's picture of the "Attack" is unnecessary—its forcible realism speaks for itself. I can only gaze fascinated at the intense devilism displayed in the forms of those two tigers.

Here it seems must be the very story of the fight.

"About the end of February (1893), along the Pench River, on the borders of Seoni and Chindwara (Central India), there was a fight between two

huge tigers. One killed the other, and after having half-eaten him, went off lame and bleeding, evidently badly wounded, as was shown by his track on the sand. The tiger killed and partly eaten was discovered by some fireguards, who had no doubt as to the fight from the condition of the ground where the battle took place. The victorious tiger succumbed a few days afterward, but the skin was nearly rotten when discovered. It is curious to know that tigers will eat each other in a full-grown state, although it is well known that they greedily devour young cubs when they can get the chance in the mother's absence.

The above extract is taken from a letter to the "Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society," by an officer of the Indian Forest Department. With the help of Mr. Van 'Muyden's powerful drawing even the feeblest imagination may picture something of that terrific combat amid Seoni's jungles.

Lions, tigers, and panthers kill in the same manner, usually by seizing the throat, and so dragging the beast to the ground. Sometimes I have found claw-marks on the withers when the kill has been a big animal such as water-buffaloes, showing that the beast has sprung on its back first and then buried its teeth in the throat. Death is caused sometimes by a broken neck, but more often, I am inclined to think, by suffocation. I have been within a few feet of a lion as he killed a donkey. The weight of the lion's body of course dashed the donkey to the ground, but from the gasping sound I heard—it was too dark to see—I think the donkey was choked to death.

Once I saw, in broad daylight, a panther kill a goat. It was the work of an instant. The panther rushed in, made a complete somersault with the goat in his jaws, then sprang up, dropping the goat, which lay still with a broken neck. But then again I heard a panther kill a goat at night, when the poor animal's cries told of prolonged agony, as if it was being eaten alive.

The habit of commencing from the buttocks to devour their prey appears

identical to all three, also their fastidiousness in rejecting the entrails as food. At least with tiger and panther I have always found them carefully placed on one side, never eaten. I have known a lion with which I had most unsatisfactory dealings conceal the entrails of a donkey under a bush, covering them with leaves and sticks, while he carried off the carcass to a considerable distance. A dog-in-the-manger sort of spite toward the vultures must have been his sole motive for doing so. This formidable trio appear to have no nice scruples as to what animals should form their lawful prey. All is fish that comes to their net. Peacocks and monkeys are regarded by tiger and panther as the staple titbits of their jungles: snake has been found inside a tiger, and panther has been seen catching frogs from a pool. Lion also condescend in this respect. Following on the spur of a lion one day, in Somaliland, I came to where he had stalked a dik-dik, which is the smallest antelope in the world, I believe, being scarcely the size of a hare, and therefore but a mouthful for a lion. The whole story was written clearly on the ground; here the great paws had rested when the king of beasts had first viewed his diminutive prey, then he had made his rush, and beyond ran the continuous track of tiny hoof-marks showing the dik-dik's timely flight.

Even the "fretful" porcupine, with some of his quills included, has found its way inside a lioness's stomach. The wily panther has one habit peculiar to himself I think. Profiting by his ability to climb trees, he is often known to hide the remains of a kill up a tree, doubtless to the grievous disappointment of many a hungry hyena and jackal, whose noses had guided them to the spot. I have heard a tiger's charge described as a series of bounds, but as I have never had the distinction of being charged by one I can give no opinion. From lions I have received the attention several times. On such occasions when a yellow body, all muscle and bone, and weighing some four hundred pounds, is rushing into you with tremendous force, the mind is naturally so intensely concentrated on one's aim

that it is not likely to take in details, and I should be sorry to assert positively that a lion does not come at one by leaps. But the impression I gathered from those exhilarating moments was that the lion ran in at me with a pounding action of his paws and at a great pace. First impressions are said to be most vivid, and I certainly have a most lively recollection of the following encounter with a lion.

I take the extract from a recently written * narrative of my lion-hunting experiences in Somaliland. It was my first encounter with lion.

I was two hundred miles in the interior of Somaliland, hunting during the rainy season in the waterless plateau called the Haud, an immense stretch of level country alternating in vast grassy plains and broad belts of mimosa jungle. News had come in of two lions lying by a bush out on a plain. I had ridden to the spot and found there two fine black-maned lions, had dismounted and bagged one easily enough by a shot in the shoulder, which had prevented his attempted charge. I did not stop then to look at my grand prize, but rushed off toward my pony, mounted and galloped off in the direction the second lion had gone. Crossing over a slight rise I came upon the two horsemen motionless on the plain, and a couple of hundred yards from them I saw a yellow object lying on the ground—the lion, of course. I rode toward him, followed by Jama. When I had gone within one hundred yards of him the lion, who had been facing the horsemen, without moving his body, now turned his head toward me and received my approach with a show of teeth and much snarling. I pulled up and dismounted, though I was half inclined to fire at him from the saddle, as Jama urged me to do, for the lion looked in an exceedingly nasty temper.

Giving over my pony to one of the Somalis I walked slowly toward the lion, bidding Jama to remain in the saddle if he wished, but to keep as near as possible with the second gun. Very cautious and slow was my approach, for I did not want to bring on a charge be-

fore I had got in a shot, and it looked as if a too rapid advance would do so, for the lion, without stirring an inch kept up a series of snarls and growls, giving me an excellent view of his teeth, accompanied all the while by short, sharp flicks of his tail on the ground. I walked up to within fifty yards of him, hoping to shoot him dead at that distance and so avoid a charge. I then sat down and fired at him between the eyes, jumping to my feet instinctively to be ready if he charged. I was not a bit too soon. At the shot the lion sprang up with a furious roar. I had a lightning glimpse of him rearing up on his hind legs pawing the air, then he came for me. It was a fierce rush across the ground, no springing that I could see. How close he got before I fired I cannot say, but it was very close. I let him come on, aiming the muzzles of the rifle at his chest. Jama says he was about to spring as I pulled the trigger and ran back a pace or two to one side; but as I did so, I saw through the smoke that the lion was stopped within a few paces of me. The second gun and Jama were not as near as they might have been. The lion struggled up on to his hind quarters uttering roars.

I rammed two fresh cartridges into my rifle in an instant and fired my right into him. The grand brute fell over dying. The Somalis set up a wild yell, and I am not sure I did not join in.

A friend of mine was charged by a wounded lioness, who got home, the two shots which he fired at her merely striking her in the forelegs. He was hurled to the ground senseless, and rather severely mauled. Fortunately for him his brother was there to shoot the lioness. It was found that one of her canine teeth had been snapped off by her jaws coming into collision with the muzzles of the rifle. This will convey some idea of the tremendous force with which a lion rushes on to the attack. I have seen it questioned, "Does a lion ever charge home when faced?" He most certainly does, and is very prompt at doing so. I could give many authentic instances in addition to the above and apart from

* *Lion-hunting in Somaliland* (Chapman & Hall).

what I have myself seen of their determination to get home. I met two officers of the Royal Engineers in Somaliland. They told me of a wounded lion they had followed up to a dense patch of reeds, who, upon the reeds being set alight, charged out like a flash of yellow, and although the contents of an 8-bore elephant gun and a 577 express were emptied into him, he got in, felling one of his foes and dying on the top of him. Nine times out of ten I believe a wounded lion will charge if not rendered *hors de combat* by a smashed shoulder, or otherwise mortally hurt by the first shot—at least that was my experience.

The lion does not appear to possess the wariness of a tiger. He will dash into a tied-up bait in the most headstrong manner, heedless of the hunter seated behind a screen of bushes, whose presence, with his keen powers of smell, he cannot fail to detect. From what I have heard and seen of his habits, I should say he was a bolder animal than the tiger, but by that I do not mean a more dangerous one. In one respect, perhaps, he is less dangerous than either tiger or panther; for I am inclined to think that it is not so much his habit to feed on putrid flesh as either of the two latter, and consequently does not kill by blood-poisoning after mauling his foe so often as the other two do. Of late years, since Africa has become more accessible to sportsmen, one hears frequently of lions getting the best of it and leaving their adversary fairly well mangled; but in nearly all the cases I have heard of, the mauled man recovers, whereas in India, as surely as the hot season and its accompaniment, tiger-shooting, come round, tiger and panther score several deaths, usually by blood-poisoning consequent to a mauling received from one of the two.

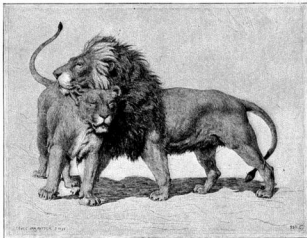
Here is an amusing instance of a lion's great audacity. An English officer was shooting recently in Somaliland. One night, when he was in bed inside his tent, a lion sprang over the rough thorn fence, which it is usual to throw up round one's encampment at night. Instead of picking up one of the men or animals that must have

been lying about asleep inside the fence, he would have none but the sportsman himself, made a dash into his tent, and seized him—fortunately only by the hand. Then, by some wonderful piece of luck, as the lion changed his grip for the shoulder, he grabbed the pillow instead, and so vanished with his prize. The pillow was found next morning several hundred yards distant in the jungle, and outside were also the spoor of a lioness, who had evidently been awaiting the return of her lord with something eatable.

The reason of these animals taking to man-eating is, as most people know, ascribed to age or disablement from wounds. It is probably the explanation for most cases of man-eating tigers and panthers, yet man-eaters have been shot, it is said, who were neither old nor crippled. As regards the lion, from what I have gathered from the natives of Somaliland, where man-eating lions are by no means uncommon, opportunity rather than any direct cause appears to breed man-eaters. Should a solitary native travelling at night encounter a hungry lion, the temptation would probably prove too much for the lion. I know an authentic case of a native having been carried off by a lioness in broad daylight as he rode along on a mule. I found the Somalis most reluctant to come outside their zarebas at night, if a lion was known to have been prowling near the preceding nights.

Lionesses are to be met with in greater numbers than lions. I once saw five full-grown lionesses in company out on a grassy plain. They came trotting toward the spot where the remains of an antelope lay, guided thither by the circling vultures overhead. Before this I had heard from Somalis that vultures gathering in the sky often draw lion or leopard to a carcass.

On two occasions I captured the family of lionesses which I had shot. They both consisted of a male and female. The two families were together in my camp for some time, and I often watched with much pleasurable interest the ways and expression of the little

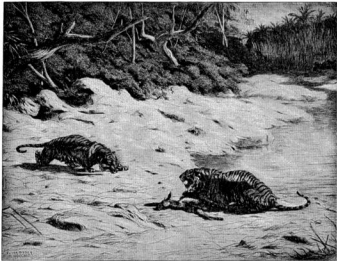


lions, and therefore I think I may consider myself a good judge as to the truthfulness of Mr. Van Muyden's charming representation of young lions. Many and many a time have I seen them "snoozing" inside my tent, resting one against the other, with just the same sleepy yet half-awake expression on their leonine little countenances.

Both my lion cubs died in camp, while the females survived to reach civilization. Perhaps this points to a greater delicacy in the male young as in the human race; and if so would probably be the principal reason why lionesses are so much more plentiful than lions.

Most delightfully characteristic of the beast is M. Van Muyden's evil-looking panther, or leopard, as the naturalists will have it, though I prefer the former term for the big species of the race, which have been known in the Terai jungles to run to nearly the size of a small tigress. This one is decidedly a big fellow, and Mr. Van Muyden has brought out very happily the noticeable points of a panther as well as his wicked expression, and those are his rounded muscular jaws, sturdy neck, and the large muscles on the shoulder

and forearms. He is considered by many shikaris in India to be a fiercer and more dangerous animal to meddle with than the tiger. He has the reputation of being ready to charge on the slightest provocation, and as he presents a much smaller mark to aim at, his chances of getting home are greater. With his courage he combines the greatest wariness, far beyond that of a tiger. The latter, if a beat is properly worked, can be usually depended upon to walk forward toward where the guns are placed, though some are known to have become so wary as to invariably, when being driven forward in a beat, race across the open spaces in the jungle, where of course the hunter is hoping to get a shot at them. But no reliance can be placed upon a panther to do anything save that which you don't expect him to do. He can hide behind nothing at all, and many a beat has passed over a panther crouching unseen by a small bush, after which, as the fresh prints of his retreating footsteps often inform the exasperated hunter, he has calmly retired in the opposite direction. Following him up when wounded is "ticklish" work, for, as I have said, he can hide behind nothing



practically, and thus can unpleasantly surprise one following on his tracks. And as to his powers of killing—when once taken to man-eating he is almost more to be dreaded than the tiger, since his cunning is greater. Two or three years ago, in southern India, a man-eating panther was killed who was credited with over one hundred victims. He also keeps up quite as good a yearly record of "kills" by blood-poisoning after mauling you as his greater neighbor. I once fairly outwitted a panther, and if my reader cares to hear a hunter's story, I will tell him how I did it.

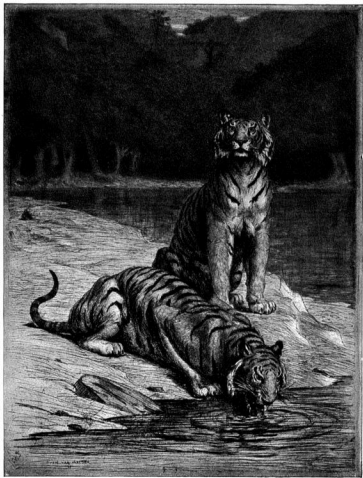


The scene is a small, saddle-backed hill, thickly covered with jungle, standing somewhat isolated from a neighboring range of densely wooded big hills. Some two miles distant lies a small Indian village of mud huts at the side of a glaring,

white, dusty road, one of the great routes that wind their hundreds of weary miles through the hot plains of central India. The cultivated lands of the village, originally wrested from the surrounding jungle, are now brilliant with the beautiful colors of its poppy-fields. In the above little hill there was a panther, so the natives of the village told me, for they had heard him "speak" from out its jungles at night. I had hunted him for several months in many a beat under a hot noonday sun, and many a weary all-night watching by moonlight, but in vain—I had not even seen him. But he was there, for my murdered goats, which were placed out in the jungle to attract him, and which always bore the panther's fang-marks in the throat proved that; but the beast himself remained invisible. Only when I did not watch over the goat would he kill, never when I did, although I took, I thought, every precaution to escape detection by the wily brute. I was in despair of ever getting him. At length one day I remembered a plan I had heard of as sometimes adopted by na-

tive hunters in southern India. I would try it. My native shikari was told to have a grave dug inside the jungle at the foot of the hill on the spot which witnessed the murders of so many of my goats. It was to be about seven feet long and about four

feet deep, to allow of my sitting up in it; it was to be covered with small logs of wood, then earth and dried leaves, and made to resemble the surrounding ground as closely as possible; an entrance hole sufficiently large to allow me to crawl in was of course to be left.





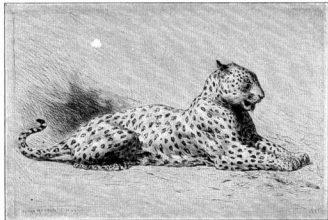
The next day, an hour or two before sunset, I arrived on the scene, and found all ready for me. My shikari was evidently an artist; the whole thing had a most realistic appearance, and the entrance might have been the mouth of a jackal's burrow. I crawled inside; the goat was secured a few feet from the entrance, and my shikari and his men withdrew to their village, saying they would return at night and lie out in the fields, awaiting the report of my rifle to join me. Thus left to my reflections I stretched myself out as far from the entrance hole as possible, having my feet toward it, and very soon began to feel as if I had been condemned to pass a night in my grave, and a night, too, that was going to be endless, for the weary hours ahead weighed upon my soul. However, regrets were useless. I would see it out this time, and I vowed it would be my last night-shooting. To console myself I sucked quietly at a bottle of Bass and munched sandwiches, lengthening out my meal as long as possible; but this distraction soon came to an end, and I wondered at myself for not having brought more. My view was limited; there were the logs above my head, through which the

earth trickled pleasantly into my eyes and ears, the earthen sides of my grave, and enframed in the entrance-hole was a portion of the goat, and beyond a bit of the crest-line of the hill and some swaying tree-tops against a blue patch of sky. Slowly and very slowly the day faded out—sky, hill-top, and trees grew from gray to black. Now was a likely time for the panther's arrival, and I sat up, rifle across my knees, all ready for him—but he did not come.

As the time passed the outlines of hill and tree-tops again stood out clear against a luminous sky, for it was a full moon that night, and I could see the moonlight play on the broad leaves of the bastard-teak trees as the night breeze rustled by. The jungle seemed absolutely silent, the only noise that reached me came from the goat as he nibbled the grass, and occasionally stamped the ground. Wearily the hours dragged on—fully an eternity it seemed to me, I had lain there and must have been on the point of falling asleep when, all suddenly, there came a dull, heavy thud outside and a stifled bleat that sent the blood racing through me and my heart thumping against my ribs. I became intensely wide awake

on the instant. The goat's down! My heavens, it is the panther at last! The goat's body was now no longer visible in the outlook, and I could see nothing of the panther either, but there was a slight gasping sound outside once or twice that told of his bloodthirsty presence. Very softly I drew myself up into a sitting position, brought my rifle across my knees, and with my heart in my mouth cocked my right trigger. I dared not risk cocking the left, the faint click seeming so terribly loud in the utter stillness. Then, while the goat still gave a choking gasp or two (it all happened in a tenth of the time it takes to tell of it) I worked myself forward with the utmost silence until my face was within two feet of the hole. Now I could see the body of the goat, lying down, with its head held up in a rather peculiar manner, it seemed to me; but where was the panther? Just by the goat's neck there was a palish yellow something, indistinct in the silvery shimmer outside. What was it? I rubbed my eyes and stared hard. I saw the whole body of the goat move—yet not of itself, it appeared to me, and then I made out that pale yellow something to be the top of the panther's head with its ears lying back. I understood the position now. The panther lay close

behind the goat's body with his jaws buried in its throat, and aided by the indistinct moonlight was invisible but for the top of his head. In anxious hesitation I wondered whether I should fire at it, for in the vague light I feared a miss even at that distance, when suddenly the panther dropped the goat's throat, and there, not six feet from me, was his round, yellow head and blazing eyes, staring in seeming astonishment down into mine. Quick as thought my rifle was up and flashed out into him. Then everything was lost in smoke—my grave was thick with it, for my muzzles had been inside when I fired. I cocked my left and wondered. "What has happened?" I preferred not to put my head out to see, lest perchance furious paws might close upon it. If wounded will he come in? I hoped not. No sound from outside came to tell me whether I had hit or missed. At last the smoke thinned and I cautiously put my head outside. There he lay, on his side, where he had crouched behind the goat's body. A faint gasping snarl told that he was mortally hit, but I took the precaution to retire into my hole for another cartridge for my right barrel and then crawled out. Full in the moonlight lay the panther, dying, his glossy yellow coat in strong contrast



to the black, shaggy hair of his victim, whose relaxing limbs still gave a kick or two, when the panther lay still. My bullet had pierced his chest and heart. It was half-past one by my watch. After I had sat awhile with my mind divided in admiration between the splendor of the panther's skin and the witching beauty of the night, I made my way out of the jungle into the fields to seek my men, where I found them stretched out asleep in the moonlight, their heads carefully wrapped in clothes, presumably to assist them in hearing my shot. Stout poles were cut down, upon which the panther

was slung, belly uppermost, and hoisted on the shoulders of four men, and thus we emerged from the jungle out into the open moonlit fields, and along the beaten tracks into the sleeping village. And so on to the roadside, where my horse was picketed, and where I stretched myself out on a blanket, and stared up at the glorious starry canopy above me until sleep came. But the dawn soon reddened the sky, and the creak and rumble of the bullock-carts slowly toiling along the road told of another long Indian day begun, and warned me it was time to start back for camp.



I

THE shabby street-cars jingling go
 Where modish coach-wheels rolled and ran,
 And back here from that roaring Row
 It leads from Beekman Street to Ann.