

CHAPTER IV.

THE NAGA EXPEDITION—IMPOSSIBILITY OF PROCURING ANYTHING EXCEPT FROM CALCUTTA—MY LANDING—ANT HILLS—DIMENSIONS OF ASSAM—THIBET—THE ASSAMESE AND OPIUM-EATING—PRODUCTS OF THE COUNTRY—RELIGION—THE GOSSAIN—THE RYOT—WOMEN'S WORK—WHERE DO THE FISH COME FROM?—THE BETEL-NUT—SUPERSTITIONS—MY WIFE'S RECEPTION—SPORT—GARDEN WORK.

FOR the benefit of those of my readers who are ignorant of the whereabouts of the Nagas, I must premise by saying that they are a warlike hill tribe, peopling the range of hills which form the southern boundary of the Assam Valley. The last Naga Expedition (1879-80) had a disturbing effect on the communications between Calcutta and the planters. Both of the steamboat companies were requisitioned for Government service, and every steamer that came up was laden with commissariat or military stores. During this time very few of the civilians' stores found their way up the river; those that did were badly treated. What difficulties the wretched planters had to put up with during this fearful period, arising from the uncertainty of

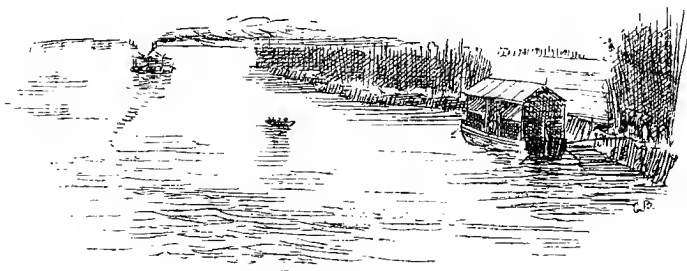
supplies and consequent deprivation of the absolute necessities of life that had been reckoned upon! Even when the orders had been executed and the packages brought up the river, the trouble of obtaining advices as to their whereabouts made this a memorable time for the unlucky fraternity. What has now become of the ship-loads of waggons, horses, field necessities, tons of stores, representing a huge waste of public money, I do not know; probably left for the white ant, or until they may be wanted for another hill expedition. In this event, according to the reports that have reached the plains from the recently disturbed districts, they will not be kept long waiting. It is to be hoped that when another scrimmage—a mere question of time—takes place, the planters, who would be well able with a little assistance to manage an affair of this kind at about one-tenth of the former cost, will be taken into the Government confidence, or entrusted with the total extermination of the Nagas. The mismanagement of the last expedition caused a heavy loss to them by the withdrawal of elephants to Government service, animals which at the time were indispensable in many ways, especially for garden work. I hear that the elephants have since been valued at a ridiculously low price, in order that the expense incurred by the deaths of some of these wretched animals when on the march may be reduced as much as possible, and so not to materially increase the already too long bill that had to be sent in for this pottering little affair. There

seems to have existed in the official mind a belief that an elephant could carry as much baggage as could be piled upon him, and that a regular supply of rice or other food was quite uncalled for.

The impossibility of rapid communication renders Assam anything but a charming place of residence. All the lesser stations or villages in the province boast a desultory, unenterprising race of native merchants, whose stores contain everything that is not wanted, and but few things that are. The stock-in-trade of any one of these gentlemen seemed to me always to consist of an assortment of the year before last's articles, that had been ineffectually offered in London shops, and being considerably damaged or out of fashion, had become unsaleable at home, and were thereupon shipped to such out-of-the-way places as Assam, where no one is in a position to gauge what is fashionable. A country like this must be a splendid *dernier resort* to the manufacturer with a surplus stock. Native shopkeepers have in stock a few marmalades and jams, all of an indifferent description, bearing unknown labels and brands; but these do not go off as rapidly as their owner could wish, and while awaiting a purchaser accumulate some magnificent developments of fungous growth. One article, Bryant and May's matches, can always be procured in any quantity. A few enterprising planters have combined to start stores at one or two of the chief stations, which supply a deficiency long felt, and are well supported by the community.

What Assam must have been twenty years ago, before the country was opened up, it is impossible to imagine. The telegraph is doing wonders in facilitating communication and consequent forwarding of all business negotiations.

My first landing in Assam recalled vividly the description of Eden in Dickens' "Martin Chuzzlewit." As it is impossible to improve on that graphic and powerful description, let it stand as it is, for Eden



OUR LANDING FLAT.

writing Assam, and accepting the whole account with one slight qualification, that Assam is rather worse than Eden. The intense flatness of the country is heart-breaking, and makes it intolerable as you ride or drive about the place; not a hill anywhere nearer than the Naga range, unless you have the good luck to be located close to the hills where gardens are few in number. Mile after mile stretches flatly away, and the monotony of the straight line remains unbroken except by trees and small wart-like mounds on the

earth's surface, that spring up in goodly numbers—ant hills. These edifices grow to an abnormal size, five or six feet high, and must contain millions of these wretched little pests. The exact number will never be ascertained, for no sufficiently conscientious lover of animals and their ways has yet been found to count the habitants of one of these abodes of abominations.

The whole district of Upper Assam seems at some period to have been covered by the waters of the Brahmapootra. There is no possible reason, seeing how that this river continues year by year to scoop out for itself new channels, why it should not, in past time, have flowed some thirty or forty miles from its present site, and gone over the whole of the intervening country since. The soil in the valley is all of a very rich alluvial character, producing crops with wonderful rapidity. The dense luxuriance of jungle bears constant witness to the powerful vegetative properties of the ground on which it stands.

The total length of the valley from end to end is nearly 400 miles, extending from Sudiya on the east away down to Dhubri; but by river this distance is immensely increased by the innumerable bends and twists. On the north the valley is shut in by the Bhotan Hills, a low outlying spur of the Himalayas; on the south the Naga and Garrow Hills separate Assam from Cachar. Beyond Sudiya is the termination of Assam territory, and beyond that, mystery. It is a matter for much wonderment, knowing how close Sudiya is to Thibet, with the advantage of a

large river connecting the two, that nothing is known of this curious country ; for not even by hearsay, or through native sources—usually prolific enough—can any information be procured of that much-talked-of potentate, the Grand Llama. Permission to pass over the border is invariably refused, and the adventurous spirit starts off to penetrate into Thibet with a pretty certain consciousness that he will be eventually numbered with the missing. Some fine day the Indian and Chinese governments will awaken to the fact—everybody else who knows anything of the two countries has done so long since—that it would be greatly to their mutual advantage to have more rapid communication. Then Thibet will be opened up ; and, armed with a Cook's tourist ticket, we shall be enabled to see what dread mysteries have been previously withheld from us. Most probably the Thibetans are a much maligned and most deserving set of people, retiring in their nature, unwilling to share their country with other people, but preferring their old-fashioned, barbarous notions to the charms of a civilisation, which they neither understand nor appreciate.

Many years ago, the Burmese made an incursion and overran Assam, carrying off a large proportion of the female population. To judge by the intense ugliness of the present race, it is probable that the Burmese were men of taste, and selected only the beauties of the valley, leaving their plainer sisters to raise up a generation that is unsurpassed for hideousness. Far be it from me to utter a single reproach

against the beauty of the opposite sex in any corner of the world: it is, therefore, with a sense of relief that I tell how omniscient Nature has balanced affairs by making the plain looks of the ladies comparatively beautiful when they are placed beside their better halves. In colour they are much lighter than the Bengalis, with eyes shaped on the same curves as those of the inhabitants of the Flowery Land, their limbs are rounder and plumper, and altogether they are a finer race than the rest of the natives of India, except the hill tribes. Betel-nut chewing is carried on to an enormous extent. So long as these people will keep their mouths closed, you can forgive them their ill-favoured appearance; but directly there is any cause to start a conversation, it is indeed a trying ordeal to have to pass through. Constant chewing this hard nut files the points of the teeth down, and makes them short square little blocks of ivory, and of a brick-dusty red colour. An Assamese with his mouth open conjures up visions of Dante's entrance to the infernal regions. They add another charm to the long interesting list of their peculiarities: they chew opium. The results of this terrible drug on the system have been so often spoken of that it is useless to dwell at length upon its effects; suffice it to say that a more enervating medicine could not have been found in the whole pharmacopœia wherewith to abuse the human system. Under its influence some men can work very much better for a short time; on others the stimulating result is not noticed, but they become

heavy and bereft of all powers of enjoying life ; on all the after-effect is exactly the same, and death speedily claims the too ardent votary of this pernicious stuff.

They are not a martial race, preferring to be left quietly to pursue their own humdrum mode of life to the hazardous chances of glory in the field ; and when the Burmese made a descent upon them, they (the Burmese) had matters very much their own way. I don't think that the country has ever quite recovered from the effects of this raid ; the population still continues small and very thinly scattered. Assamese are especially phlegmatic, and not easily upset, and are all more or less amphibious to meet the requirements of the country. If Nature had not providently so arranged this little matter there would have been no population at all.

The hills that form the southern boundary are rich in minerals ; recently discovered coal-fields are being worked, and there is every probability of the opening up of this comparatively new industry to the general welfare of the province, and the increase of communication between the North-Eastern district and stations down river. It only wants this business to be established as far down as Gowhatty to complete the chain of rapid travelling, for the Dhubri railway service has been supplemented by a boat running frequently between Gowhatty and Dhubri. Prices of coal brought up from Calcutta were naturally exorbitant, the large space that it occupied on board the steamers making the charge for freight high.

A small quantity of gold is found in the beds of

mountain streams, and is carried down with the rush of water into the plains. The natives adopt a particularly simple yet effective method of collecting the particles. They sew together and spread the fleece of sheep across a narrow portion of the stream, in which they arrest all small atoms floating down ; this is afterwards burnt, and the gold picked out from the ashes. In some of the streams sufficient quantities of gold used to be found to make it worth the owner's while to hire a man to constantly watch the fleece, and so prevent any casual passer-by from picking it up and reaping its golden benefits.

An intense love of finery is inherent in the breasts of both men and women in Assam, and great is their delight at the sight of a piece of the auriferous metal. They are denied the luxury of a gold coinage (the old gold Mohur being a thing of the past : a curiosity that commands a fanciful price nowadays). The system amongst the heathens of converting capital into jewellery is very handy, and does away with all those fears that affect us civilised beings for the safety of money invested in a company that does not quite realise our expectations, although encouraged by the prospectus of a hopeful promoter. The poorer Assamese are contented with large silver bangles ; but it is particularly noticeable how few of them there are that have not a gold ornament of some description.



ASSAMESE HEAD
WITH RINGS.

Nearly all are good Brahmins, very careful of the sacred rings or other religious symbols, which they wear slung round their necks, and which can easily be mistaken for any ordinary piece of jewellery. A good Brahmin avoids contact with the unregenerate white man for fear of his touching these religious insignia. Should he be defiled, a Brahmin's distress is tremendous, and many are the pigeons and goats, according to the length of his purse, that he would sacrifice; much moneys also would pass from him into possession of the Gossain ere he could be accepted an uncontaminated Brahmin again. The power of the Gossain, a very high caste Brahmin, always a man of importance and wealth, over the people is extraordinary; his word is paramount; and no right-minded co-religionist would think of questioning his decisions. This is a powerful factor that has to be reckoned upon if he happens to live in the neighbourhood of your garden, for if anything should cause him to be offended, and he wills it that no eggs, chickens, ducks, milk, rice, etc., should be sold by the people of his district, there would be no alternative but for the object of his displeasure to starve: therefore by all means keep on friendly terms with this tyrannical despot. He will probably, as a token of goodwill, send in from time to time a small present of dead pigeons or fruit: this must be punctiliously returned, only taking another and more valuable form. The chief products of Assam are tea, sugar-cane, rice, Indian corn, and

indiarubber. The last-named is brought down by the hill tribes to exchange for salt, tobacco, opium, etc.; but negotiations for a barter are often abruptly terminated by the discovery of a cheap form of adulteration that makes it necessary to be careful in dealing with these gentry,—an unbusiness-like trick that they have of secreting a large stone in the centre of a lump of rubber in order to increase both weight and size.

In this enlightened country every man is his own master. Each Assamese occupies a small plot of land which he, with the assistance of his family, cultivates, and the life of a ryot, or small land-owner, is inconceivably and supremely happy. He owes allegiance to no man (save the afore-mentioned gentleman, the Gossain), he works when he likes and how he likes; there are no new-fangled notions to bother him, and if the weather is propitious and he can get a fair crop of rice, sufficient in quantity to last him through the year, he is perfectly contented. He tills the same ground with the same pre-historic plough that far-back generations of his ancestors did before him. Is not this a picture of perfect beatitude? Money is of no account to him, for his surplus crop will more than supply him with the few luxuries that he may require. Amongst luxuries he does not include a heavy tailor's bill; in truth, this would probably amount at the outside to one rupee a year. His chief indulgences are opium-taking, or hubble-bubble smoking, both highly intellectual

recreations. After the day's work is finished he can speedily reduce himself to a fuddled state with either one or the other : then contentment is his. Can any one reasonably expect that this true-born freeman, upon whom Nature has set the seal of perfect independence, will work for the planters on their gardens? Saving money has no charm nor any object for him : why should he work and lay up stores of rupees for those that come after him, another



NATIVE WITH
HUBBLE-BUBBLE.

race of gentlemen like himself? While there is a sufficiency of rice, salt, and vegetables to eat, a bit of opium or the hubble-bubble in the house, he is happy, and cares not for the future.

A ryot's land is laid out in little square patches, and at a distance the cultivated part of the country appears like a large chess-board. Each patch is "bounded up" all round with muddy earth to regulate the supply of water in each little square. In his farming operations the ryot is ably assisted by his wife, who, after her spouse has ploughed up the mud with a couple of oxen or buffalo (if he is a man of wealth), and raked it down into something like a state of flatness, proceeds to dibble the young rice in with her fingers, planting each shoot four or five inches apart, and working along at a prodigious pace. In

the autumn the paddy (rice) fields present a beautiful golden tint that recalls the cornfields of the old country.

Labour is divided unequally between men and women here. The weaker sex uncomplainingly do the harder share ; for when the women are not assisting in farming operations, they are attending to the cooking of the dinner, or out catching it. By a mysterious dispensation of Providence it frequently rains fishes in Assam, not immense specimens certainly, but still large enough to make them fully representative of the piscine race. A dry hollow by the roadside, after a night's rainfall, will be found full of water : this result the average intellect would expect ; but in the puddle many little fishes from one to three inches long will be seen disporting themselves, and where they came from and how they got there is a zoological conundrum. These the thrifty housewife turns to good account, and starting off early in the morning, she will spend the whole day paddling about in the water, using her net as shrimpers do. On her return home the fishes are cleaned and curried against the time of her lord's return.

Notwithstanding the terrible nature of the climate, these people are very hardy, and with the exception of a death from spleen, fever, or elephantiasis, one does not hear of much illness amongst them. Even they, however, though to the country born, cannot escape from or resist the terrible malarious fever which is so fatal to the European. Three-fifths of the population



ELEPHANTIASIS.

NATIVE SUFFERING
FROM SPLEEN.

suffer from an enlargement of the spleen. Although this gives them a very comical appearance, it appears rarely in any way to affect their bodily health: one or two deaths resulting from such an universal disease represent a small percentage on the mortality lists. This unsightly complaint is the after-effect occasioned by frequent attacks of malaria, and does not confine itself entirely to the native. Sometimes, but happily unfrequently, it seizes on the white man. He is able on account of his stronger constitution or better living to resist, and finally, by a trip to England, get quit of the enemy. A continued diet of rice, fish, or vegetable curry, has scarcely enough strengthening properties to enable the native to throw off the after-effects of bad malarious fever; add to this a constitution undermined by the abuse of opium or betel-nut chewing, or hubble-

bubble sucking, and there is simply nothing to prevent this or any other disease from sweeping off thousands of the wretched poor-blooded people. And yet there are men to be found who advocate the use of the betel-nut (what abuses have not their apologists?), declaring that it promotes digestion and in no way impairs the general well-being. Can it be wondered at that a virulent epidemic breaking out amongst a collection of men like these, unnerved and debilitated by the excessive use of narcotics, cannot be resisted, but has everything its own way, sweeping off all who fall foul of it, finally ceasing because a whole district has been decimated or nearly depopulated.

The Naga Hill men used to work for the gardens adjoining their districts, but since our little differences with them they keep well out of the way. In colour of skin they are lighter than the Assamese, in disposition much more active. Heavy weights are carried in a basket slung on their backs, supported by a band passing round the forehead, on which the whole weight is thrown. This way of carrying weights is a heavy strain on the muscles of the neck, and in



NAGA WOMAN.

consequence the Nagas are unusually well developed in that part of their frame. On the march, in single file, they give vent to an extraordinary series of grunts at each step, and a planter has not much difficulty in being made aware of their close proximity if they are passing through his garden.

One planter that I met, accompanied by another Englishman, had penetrated across the Naga Hills into Burmah (the only two Europeans, I believe, who have safely accomplished this hazardous journey), and had found no necessity to carry a single rupee; the whole of the carriers' pay was in opium, of which they had, before starting, secured a plentiful supply. Through the same medium, opium payments, they found every facility for procuring food and all other requirements. Unlike the Assamese, the people are of a bellicose nature, and in the recent disturbances gave our men considerable trouble; their rapid marches, unencumbered by heavy baggage, presence of mind, and power of appreciating difficult situations in which to entangle our troops, and thorough knowledge of the ground, served them in good stead of long-ranged rifles. The Government have since bought up their arms at £5 a piece, and there are queer stories told of the trouble the Nagas went to in order to scrape together from every corner of their country all kinds of ancient weapons, long before laid aside as useless, that could with reason be called a gun, so as to satisfy the desire of Government to get hold of every firearm, and at the same time gratify

their own little weakness, not alone peculiar to these people, of procuring a good sum for a worthless article. Since this extraordinary proceeding, there is every probability of a renewal of the trouble; in fact, already ominous signs are not wanting.* In the next expedition up into their country we shall find them armed with a vastly superior weapon, and in every way, after their practical experiences of late, better prepared to meet us on equal terms.

Superstition prevails everywhere in the East, and curious jumbles of fact and fiction are now and again circulated, which manage to travel at a great rate, in a more or less mangled form, for distances of two or three thousand miles. Many of the odd rumours can be traced to the priests, who start a story for their own purposes. "*Fama volat*" under exactly similar circumstances to those that it did in the time of the Latin poet, and bearers of important tidings are not one whit more reliable or less prone to exaggerate now than then. Conversations or reports from bazaars are carried from station to station; news of any sort passes quickly from mouth to mouth.

I remember, on the sudden death of a planter in our district, a letter was sent off to the dead man's friend, forty miles distant. A few days after this gentleman rode in and told us that his own servant had given him the first intelligence at his breakfast the morning before the letter had reached him. There was no kind of direct communication between the

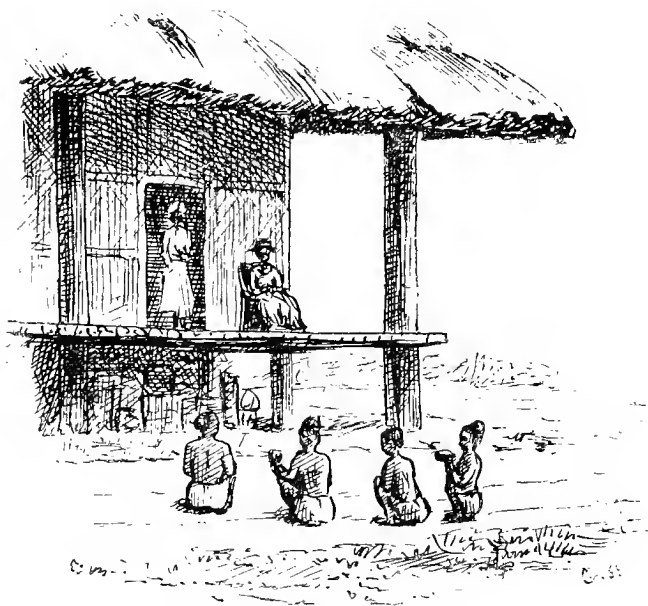
* Since the above was written there have been renewed disturbances.

two places; so that to convey the intelligence with such speed would have puzzled Hermes himself.

Strange anecdotes are circulated concerning the superstitious rites performed by the natives over newly-born infants and their dead—tales for whose accuracy I cannot vouch, but they were told me in all good faith, and I see no reason whatever that they should be doubted, considering the many other curious religious observances that are practised in this out-of-the-way corner of the universe. One story runs on the method of testing the hardiness of a baby by plastering it over with mud shortly after its birth, and placing it out in the open air to dry. If the little thing comes through the ordeal safely, they say that it will be a hardy man and live to a good old age; if it succumbs (I never got any statistics showing the percentage of these), it is as well out of the world, for it could only have been a weakly man. Another yarn is told of the felicitous means adopted for getting rid of ancient grandams or grandfathers, who, having nearly run their allotted course, and being of no further possible use either to themselves or their descendants, are gently conducted down to the river-side—the river is always selected for religious ceremonies of an imposing kind—there bound hand and foot, and left with mouth and nose stuffed full of mud. Needless to remark their sufferings are not prolonged. There are many other stories of a much more revolting description; but even such as these are not calculated to arouse in

the breast of the white man any great affection for the people amongst whom he is compelled to spend some few years of his life.

The Assamese are, like all Eastern nations, of a very curious disposition, almost amounting to inquisitiveness : not impertinent, but a seeking-after-cause-



MY WIFE'S LEVÉE.

and-effect form of inquisitiveness. Prompted by this feeling, when we first arrived, my wife was a source of considerable wonderment and interest to the villagers round about. The news soon spread that a white mem-sahib was in the neighbourhood, and as this was

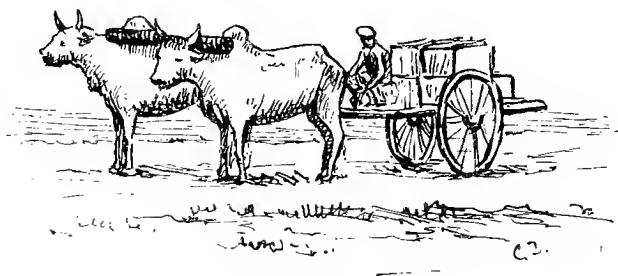
the first opportunity that they had ever had of seeing a white woman, some few seized the occasion to take a holiday and make a day of it. On waking up one morning and going out on to the verandah, my eyes were greeted with an unusual sight—a deputation, composed exclusively of ladies somewhat scantily attired. Each carried a large fruit, or a leaf containing some hidden treasure. They were squatting round in a circle in front of the bungalow, their eyes fixed on the door by which I had just come out. I was naturally flattered at what, at first sight, seemed a just recognition of my many merits; but my vanity received a rude shock when my friend informed me that it was my wife, not me, that they had come to see. In course of time she came out, and was duly presented with the hidden treasures, a few eggs, some prepared rice, mangoes, and various quaintly-formed fruits, names unknown, in return distributing largess in the shape of rupees—a form of beneficence greatly appreciated by these people. After the giving and receiving of presents had been amicably brought to a conclusion, our lady visitors subsided into a squat again, made themselves comfortable, fixed their gaze steadily on my wife, who was deeply absorbed in some needlework, and made it evident that they had no intention of removing for the remainder of that day. This *séance* must have gone on for about four or five hours, interrupted occasionally by my wife going inside the bungalow for a short time; and it was not till after tiffin that, finding the sun getting hot on their backs,

and no chance of again beholding the mem-sahib, who had retired for a siesta, they reluctantly took their leave.

This is the last remaining district where any sort of respect is shown for the Europeans; in all other parts of India the black man is as good as the white, a fact that is speedily brought home to a new comer. It is here, in Assam, that nearly all the old rights of servility that were exacted by Europeans in the days of the East India Company, are still in existence, and flourish to the general better feeling amongst the whole community. Here no heavy babu swaggers past with his umbrella up, jostling you on the way; but with courtly mien, on seeing your pony coming along, furls up the umbrella, steps on one side, and salutes with a profound salaam. A mounted native will dismount until the white man has passed by, and drivers of a conveyance will turn off to one side; but this gives rise to a difficulty in the case of the road being narrow and the sahib's buggy wide, a difficulty that is surmounted by the simple expedient of turning the cart off the road. If the block occurs, as it frequently does, on a raised road, with a steep embankment on either side and a paddy field at the bottom, the result is disastrous. It is pretty certain that the ghari will break away and career into the most sticky spot, have to be unloaded and dragged to the top, by persuasively twisting the tails of the bullocks, and then reloaded; but the dignity of a sahib must be maintained, no matter at what incon-

venience to the native. This method of driving bullocks by twisting their tails is universally adopted throughout India, and has only one thing to recommend its simplicity; the result attained. The sufferings the poor brute must endure before its tail arrives at the state in which it is commonly to be seen, knotted in great twists all the way up, sometimes, indeed, wrenched off close to the stump, must be awful.

An Assamese's stolidity is not proof against a sudden advent of wild animals in his vicinity; and if



TICCA GHARI.

there is a motive power in existence calculated to excite and arouse a native to action, it is the rumour that a barg (tiger) has been seen about. This will instil into him that amount of activity which Nature seems grudgingly to have withheld. On receiving news of the arrival of this unwelcome visitor, a native will at once come up to the sahib's bungalow—the same sahib that he has often slighted, and for whom he flatly refuses to work—and solicit help and protection, either by borrowing guns, powder and bullets,

wherewith to carry out his murderous intentions, or if he mistrusts the accuracy of his aim, asking the sahib to go out and shoot the creature. When thrown on their own resources, and no sahib to rely on, they adopt a very simple but expedient method of despatching the brute. Having previously worked their prey into the end of a belt of jungle, where the open country extends on three sides beyond, which the tiger cannot endure, a net is stretched across the narrowest and least wooded spot, some quarter of a mile farther back. Starting from the outside of the jungle, the huntsmen skirt along in a line with the beaters, driving in the direction of the net, and by dint of much shouting and tom-tom thumping, force their enemy to retreat before them. Men are stationed at either side of the net who drive the brute into it, at the same time whipping the ends round to entangle him. In this position, deprived of the power of doing much mischief, he is speedily despatched with spears.

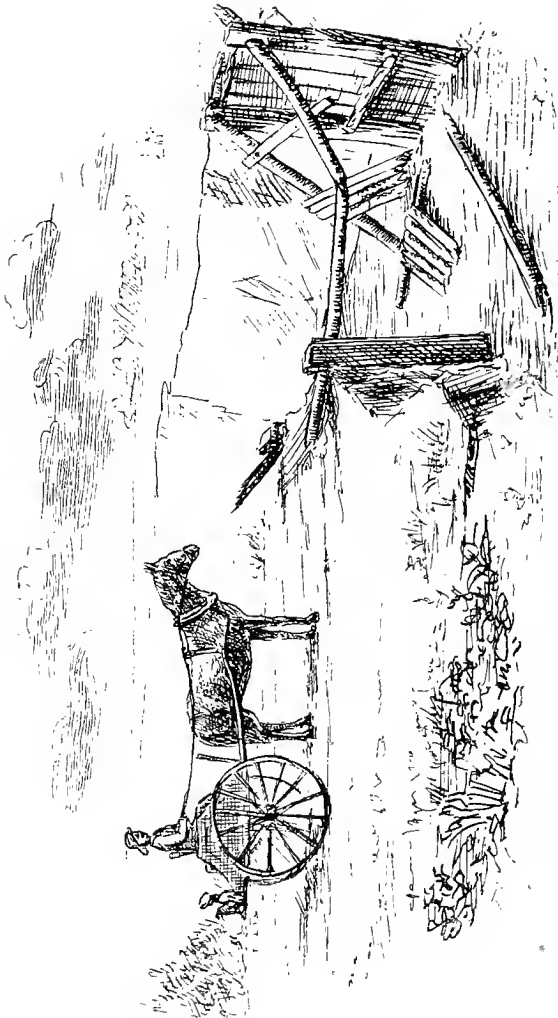
A tiger has, unfortunately for himself, an appetite that makes his presence soon felt in the neighbourhood that he patronises. He levies black mail on every man's cattle, without distinction, especially marking for his delectation your best-going pony and the milch cow which was imported at a cost of many rupees, or, when these delicacies are not obtainable, a favourite dog will serve his purpose. Horses are just as much afraid of tigers or cheetahs as the natives themselves, and will utter a sharp scream, and shy at any spot on the road where one has crossed,

manifesting signs of the greatest terror. It is a fool-hardy, dangerous sport to go out on foot to follow up the brute, as, besides his extraordinary tenacity of life, he is able to get over the ground much more rapidly than a man, even when severely wounded, and becomes an awkward *vis-à-vis*; yet at other times, if left alone, he is a most egregious skulk and coward.

A man engaged in tea-planting has his time fully occupied from the first of January to the thirty-first of December, and there is not much opportunity for sport. Elephants are in constant requisition for garden service and cannot be spared for the hunt. Assam abounds with tigers, cheetahs, rhinoceri, elephants, buffalo, etc., and is the best country in the world for affording every kind of big game shooting. On the whole, as a place of residence, my preference is given to the Zoological Gardens, London, thinking it to be the better place of the two for quiet observation of the habits and customs of the carnivora and graminivora. I confess that the sport of shooting these huge animals is, to my mind, a gross misnomer, and no amount of argument will convince me that I am in error. At the Zoo every facility is afforded to the seekers after knowledge; besides, there is the negative advantage of watching their pleasant little ways with good inch-iron bars intervening. Reasons that need not be entered into here render it impossible to be on such close terms of intimacy when the animal is in its wild state.

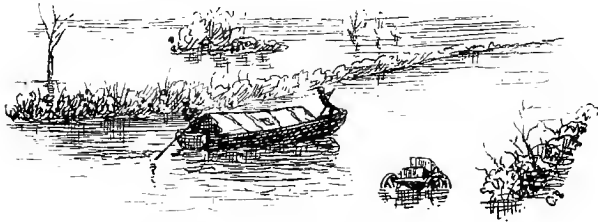
Travelling about the country is attended with numberless difficulties, and forms a serious addition to the bothers of life out here. The choice of conveyance is settled by the condition of the roads, a good road being traversable by buggy, but for an average road the only means of locomotion are tats or a hatti (elephant), the latter for choice. Many a journey, well commenced in a buggy, has been abruptly terminated by the road suddenly ceasing to exist ; where formerly stood a bridge, only a rushing stream and a few broken planks remain to mark its place. These same bridges are a source of endless trouble to roadkeepers, and it is judicious before starting to send on a man a day ahead to examine the condition of the bridges, and notify any changes that may have taken place in the state of the road. The continual wearing away of the sides is misleading on a dark night, and occasionally brings about a spill—not a pleasant break in a journey when some distance from one's destination. White ants and the rains work vigorously together and quickly rot all bridges made of timber ; a comparatively sound-looking plank often proves but a trap for the unwary voyager.

Sometimes the earth or plaited bamboo matting on the bridge, placed there to make a tolerably even surface, fall away, and your pony has to half scramble, half jump across the best way he can, at the risk of his legs and your neck. Then, too, in travelling by river, I have previously mentioned the unavoidable irregularity of steamers, how they are two or three



BROKEN BRIDGE.

days behind time. This entails a regular fit-out of bedding, food, etc., for the time that may have to be passed on the landing flat. Everything must be taken, even a filter, for the water of the river is invariably too turbid for drinking purposes. It is no use calculating on a supply of animal food being forthcoming from the nearest village, so one must take sufficient chickens (alive) to last over three days. During the height of the rainy season, when the floods are out,



POLING OVER INUNDATED ROADS.

the river cannot be got at by road, and there is no alternative but to hire a native boat, and pole down across the fields and high roads, which lie deep under water. An uncanny business that, punting down the same road which you have always previously had to drive along. Getting to the river during the rainy season is beset with difficulties too numerous to detail, and has often to be accomplished with the combined assistance of a buggy, a pony, an elephant, and a native boat.