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Tiger! Tiger!

TIGER! TIGER!

WILLIAM BAZE

Translated from the French by

H. M. BURTON

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Preface

A FEW years ago I wrote a book called *Just Elephants*] the present work—a study of tigers in Indo-China—is a kind of sequel.

The elephants, in their vast tropical Savannahs, provided the material for a study which was given an encouraging reception by the public; I feel that the life of the Lord of the Jungle, a life of mystery and an unending struggle for existence, deserves to be even more widely known.

I have had many a bone to pick with tigers on many a foray, hunting in the company of primitive peoples whom I was proud to call my friends. Often I sought out the enemy and tackled him at a time and place of my own choosing. He is a fine fellow and a worthy opponent, but he has been the subject of undeserved slander, and I should like to adjust the balance a little before I tackle my subject as a whole.

In the civilized world the tiger is generally considered the fiercest, the most bloodthirsty and the cruellest animal in creation. He is certainly a great killer. He will lie at the edge of a wood, hidden in long grass or crouching between two ant hills—effectively camouflaged by his tawny coat—waiting for some unsuspecting doe, some solitary ox or any other animal to pass within his range. Then he will attack fearlessly and mercilessly.

But is this just the instinct for blood? Does the tiger kill merely for the sake of killing? Speaking quite impartially, I am convinced that the suggestion is utterly false. The tiger will certainly kill his share of wild animals

—but never for any reason but grim necessity, the necessity to eat. For that matter, does not man himself kill quite a considerable number of animals that have never done any harm to a soul? Stand by the entrance to a slaughter house any day and see if you can count the cattle, the sheep, the pigs, the calves, even the horses, being driven in to be pole-axed or to have their throats slit. I have seen lambs, bleating to make your heart break, try to escape between the slaughterer's legs and being struck dead with one blow of his great hammer. I remember being terribly upset when I was a boy by the sight of an ox being cruelly struck down merely because a sprain in one of its hind legs prevented it from working out its days between the shafts of a cart. The next day the wretched animal—a loyal and tireless worker in its day—was cut up and distributed in baskets dripping with its blood. . . .

So I ask you—Which is the more bloodthirsty, tiger or man?

For myself, I have many times in the course of my years in the jungle gone out of my way to trespass on the tiger's home ground, and every time I have felt keen excitement and immense pleasure at the thought of pitting my wits against his, whether I was trying to get him into my gun-sights, or driving him into my carefully laid traps, or merely tempting him into the range of my camera. I have only to recall the many unforgettable adventures of my youth to feel the same unspeakable thrill of pleasure.

I would often receive an invitation from the chief of one of the Moi¹ villages, deep in the heart of the jungle,

¹The word 'Moi' is the general name for the 'men of the wood' who still lead a primitive existence in the heart of the forests of Indo-China. There are several different tribes of Moi, each speaking its own dialect.

to come and see him. I knew very well what was in the wind. 'Monsieur le tigre', as they respectfully call him in those parts, was going too far. He was decimating the herds and even running away with an occasional herdsman. I would arrive to execute justice and my rifle would put an end to his career of crime.

Just as one keeps pressed within the pages of a book the delicate petals of some rare flower which, even though faded, will always remind one of some well loved person or place, so I keep always in my heart the memory of the gratitude which these fine people would show me after I had come to their assistance.

But sometimes the tiger has the virtues of his defects, so to speak. The Moi themselves admit that if other animals are ravaging their crops it is often the tiger himself who steps in to execute justice. No doubt his only motive is hunger, but by getting rid of the deer or the wild boar, 'M. Tigre' has often helped to preserve a field of maize or some isolated square of mountain rice for the industrious peasants to harvest in due course.

It was an adventurous life I led in those days and I suppose I was lucky in that I possessed a pretty well developed bump of observation. Anyway, I was able now and then to lift a corner of the curtain behind which so many dramas were being played on that magnificent stage, the jungles of Indo-China. In the heart of the vast and virgin forest the great spectacle was revealed as the years rolled by, always magnificent and always changing. So remote seemed all the deceptive activity, all the squalid restlessness of civilization that life there with my Moi friends seemed to be out of this world. They were a loyal people, even if they were primitive and simple-minded, and in their company I spent the happiest hours of my life, reading in the great open book of

nature, seeking always to probe its mysteries and discover its secrets. Now I am buried deep—against my will—in the noisy whirl of a great city, and I find myself longing once more for that clean and healthy freedom of body and soul which I knew in the luxuriant forests or on the limitless savannahs where the giant crickets used to sing their discordant songs.

Is it nostalgia for the measureless tropical horizons that eats at my heart during these cold nights in Paris? Or has some mysterious forest fever turned the blood in my veins to ice?

I only know that I am always seeing, as if I were there in the flesh, the people and things I loved—my gay half-naked *Moi*, the warm, silent night, black as velvet, yet starred by the beams of my night hunter's torch and by whole constellations of glowing eyes; great bellowing herds of elephants with waving trunks and fearsome tusks. . . .

But why did I have to wait until I was swallowed up in this melancholy exile before I could learn to appreciate the exquisite sadness in the golden-yellow eyes of those tigers I used to keep for a while as pets?

If there is anything in my long career about which I am at all doubtful it is certainly not the validity of my experience—my intimate knowledge of the forests and of its inhabitants. That is why I am anxious to pass on the results of my observation. Other hunters in Indo-China have felt as I do; like me, they know how hard it is to discover the secrets of the tiger's life in the jungle. If there are gaps in this book, my earnest and sincere wish is that they will help me to fill them.

If my narrative is dull, if it is too obvious that I am more at home with a gun than with a pen, I ask for indulgence. All I claim is that I have reported simply

and faithfully what I have seen from life. I have certainly killed a lot of tigers in my time and captured or photographed a lot more, but anybody else in my shoes, given the same opportunities and equipment, could have done the same.

When I was seventeen I had charge of a herd of several hundred cattle and their feeding-grounds adjoined a region which was the haunt of great tigers. Never a week went by without the loss of at least one of my beasts, no matter what precautions I took. Naturally I would lie in wait for the tigers or set traps for them, but I am bound to confess that I let a good many escape before I had perfected my technique. Not that I could have hoped to do much better with the weapons I had at my disposal at that time—an old 16 mm. gun using black powder, a chassepot rifle and various makeshift traps. Nor did my inadequate equipment deter me from following the tracks of any animal I had wounded while they were still fresh. I would set out full of enthusiasm and inspired by the sweet self-assurance of youth.

Following wounded tigers was a dangerous game, however, and I learnt what it was to be on the alert for days on end. The Lord of the Jungle resents being hounded about in his own territory after he has been wounded.

But nothing untoward happened; my Guardian Angel looked after me too well. If, as they say, there is a deity that protects drunks, there is certainly another that watches over big-game hunters!

It struck me that I should be well advised not to make too much in these pages of my outstanding successes. Sooner or later, in the interests of honesty and truth, [might be forced to recall some of my more humiliating failures and put them in as well in order to restore the

balance. In the hostile jungle where, as nowhere else, the struggle for existence never ceases there are times when the spirit flags, when doubt and disappointment and disillusion lurk at your elbow and whisper in your ear. . . . The icy breath of failure can put out in a moment all the bright lights of victory.

I am all too conscious of the fact that I have put this book together, page by page, out of the yellowing leaves of an old note-book which I somehow managed to save from my hunting days. As I turned its pages, huddled close to a radiator one winter evening in Paris, my mind was suddenly flooded with a great rush of exciting memories and I confess that I felt almost ashamed to realize that, whether I liked it or not, my hunting days were over and I had retired to live on my memories.

Nor can I remember those mischievous and affectionate children, the *Moi*, without a certain tugging at the heart-strings. I was accepted as one of them; I could see that quite clearly as I wandered about casually among their houses. They took my hand in friendship and looked me straight in the eyes. And always they were laughing—at everything, at nothing. A happy people, indeed!

Once they were giving me a farewell party and I heard one of them whisper; 'Now the tigers will have to find somebody else to talk to⁹—they'd seen me dispose of a few in my time, and they knew only too well that my visits meant the re-stocking of their larder with venison.

Sometimes the sorcerers would organize a sacrifice. As the gongs and the tom-toms sounded, the villagers would settle down conscientiously to get drunk on their rice-spirit. On such a day it was considered more necessary than ever to keep the laughter going; their guardian spirits disapproved of long faces. Then they would squat

in front of their huts, each with his quid of tobacco, gossiping for hours on end in the warm glow from their great crackling braziers. . . . Those scenes in the great forests of Indo-China were beautiful in their very simplicity.

So once again I crave my readers' indulgence; but if I have been able to spirit him away for one brief moment from the false ideas which the thing we call civilization has imposed on the simple truths of nature, I shall count myself well rewarded. Let him leave behind the make-believe, the artificial, the bogus, and come with me into the wonderful kingdom of the tiger. There, in those incredible cathedrals of green shadow, whose pillars are colossal *dau*¹ and *bang-lang*¹ trees—every one of them hundreds of years old—there he will find truth, there he will find life itself.

¹Great trees of the tropical forest, highly prized in Indo-China for their timber. Both in height and in girth they are bigger than a fully grown oak.

CHAPTER ONE

The Tiger at Home

INDO-CHINA, with its thick and luxuriant vegetation and its savannahs stretching as far as the eye can see, provides ideal country for the tiger and a varied and never-failing food-supply for the creatures on which he lives. The number and diversity of its fauna is a measure of the richness of its virgin forests. Wild cattle and deer roam its immense spaces feeding on the tender leaves or on the seeds of its grasses, according to the season of the year.

In such a land, where wild animals of all kinds are in their element since a kindly nature renews their food supplies at regular intervals, the tiger also comes into his own. His home is in the forest, but at his very doorstep the rich pasturage supplies him with whatever tasty dish he desires.

It is a world in which the seasons regulate and control the lives of the creatures that live in it. When the grass is green the flocks and herds are to be seen there in force. When drought or fire dries up the green pastures they leave them for a time. It is indeed a seasonal migration—and the tiger keeps pace with it.

When the plains have been reduced to ashes by fire their normal inhabitants move off to higher ground until the grass has grown again. Some go farther afield than others. Deer, goats and wild boar are most easily satisfied; they just move by easy stages to the nearest forest land, where they soon find plenty to eat—berries, the

bark of certain trees, a few lianas (which they're particularly fond of) and an occasional root growirjg near the surface. The wild cattle and the gaur¹ are big eaters and more exacting in their requirements. They have to travel long distances to get the amount of food they are used to. The gaur in particular is a tireless traveller. Nothing will stop him and he crosses mountains and valleys, rough and broken plains, deep valleys and raging torrents.

Elephants need their food by the ton, so they have to know in advance where they are making for and follow their traditional migration routes. But their journey is none the less a seasonal affair. They go where they know they will find green food, plodding along at a steady single-minded trot, gleaning here and there a tender shoot or a tasty root, or some giant liana which the other animals have been unable to reach.

The wild buffalo on the other hand is faced with a different problem. He has to find fresh swamps. When the plains are bare of grass he is extremely vulnerable and he has to leave his familiar muddy feeding grounds immediately the reeds have been burnt. He eventually finds some swamp in the forest protected by brambles and spikey thorn bushes. However, like the other animals he has a definite programme which he follows down to the smallest detail.

All the wild beasts, in fact, move off as though obeying a single word of command, and there is nothing haphazard about their migration. It is just one step in the whole system of events which follow in strict chronological order and control the forces of nature as a whole,

^xA giant ox with smooth hair and magnificent horns, which somewhat resembles the aurochs. It is dark chestnut—almost black—in colour, with white 'stockings' reaching almost to the knees. Some specimens grow to a height of 6 feet or more at the withers.

just one point in the graph of a routine which is as old as time. Century after century the wild beasts have beaten down the same paths, jostling each other in a recurring procession which has never failed.

The tiger—who must follow his 'larder' wherever it goes—is less likely than any other to lose his sense of direction. His compass is his stomach, and it never leads him astray.

He is, by nature, neither a wanderer nor a squatter. If he's anything at all, he's a lazy-bones! But although few people can find much to say in favour of his habits, it must be admitted that the life he is forced to lead is not very enviable either. In all sorts of weather, hot or cold, wet or windy, he must somehow find enough to eat—and not only find it, but catch it and kill it as well. Unkind men are apt to lay in his path tempting morsels which are snares and delusions and the tiger—endowed, fortunately for him, with a highly developed sense of self-preservation—must keep an eternal vigilance against these traps, although handicapped all the time by an exceptionally voracious appetite. And then, just to make life more difficult, his 'larder' suddenly disappears. One day the limitless savannah stretches green to the horizon; the next it is an empty waste of charred and smouldering desolation.

The tiger must adapt himself to his surroundings, especially to the density of the vegetation, wherever he finds himself. He must modify his hunting technique in order to make the best of the conditions, whether for camouflage or for attack and defence. The jungle is full of giant trees, with massive trunks often rising to a most impressive height. There are parts of it where the sun has never penetrated and in these deep fastnesses one moves forward only by cutting one's way. But,

despite popular opinion to the contrary, there are often highly nourishing plants growing in some of these thickets, plants which wild deer are especially fond of. These creatures like to hide somewhere near a clearing or in some concealed hiding place, and to avoid the tiger they stay hidden until the evening. But the tiger, always keen to see what's going on, also has a habit of hanging around these clearings.

Now in the open, deers and goats have a good chance of getting away safely from a tiger. They have only to hear, or even to sense, that there is one anywhere near and off they go at a gallop, their hooves beating on the soil with a sound of drums. In the forest, however, it is a very different story.

The bigger animals, like gaurs and elephants, on the other hand, find the forest a pleasant place. They are protected by their very size and by their numbers. Not that this prevents the tiger from taking his occasional tit-bit. If he catches sight of a herd in the distance he will follow it and, like the old highwayman on the coach roads, levy his toll—usually of some careless youngster who has lagged behind.

The clearings in the jungle are places where trees of different sizes are spaced out, or grow in clumps and spinneys, more scattered than in the forest itself. Here the prickly bamboo grows, together with various creepers. The clumps of trees are usually surrounded by patches of grass, green or straw-coloured according to the season. Often, too, there are enormous ant hills, looking from a distance like so many prehistoric monuments. Some of them may be hollowed out at the base where wild animals have licked away the salty earth or where other have sharpened their horns.

In the high plateau of the Moi hinterland, lying in the

centre of Indo-China where Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos all meet, the forest clearings are always covered with pines and other conifers. In South Viet Nam, in the neighbourhood of Phanrang,¹ the general desolation of the scenery is enhanced by the fantastic bare silhouettes of stunted trees standing up gaunt in the grassy plain. This kind of country crops up again at Son Phan, an area near the border of South Annam which is very rich in game of all kinds, especially the big grey ox and the little red one. In Cambodia these clearings are often visited by the cow-prey² and in Laos by a smaller species of gaur. Deer, goats, muntjacs,³ wild boar and agoutis⁴ are usually to be found in the forest clearings; so also is the tiger, who comes here to escape from the wood-leech, elsewhere so abundant. He finds here that his protective colouring, so valuable in the forest itself, is no longer effective and he is forced to move with even more circumspection than usual. He has to watch his prey for hours on end and never lose sight of it. Either he waits in hiding behind some ant hill or some thick bush, or, if the worst comes to the worst, he follows his prey in a favourable wind and leaps upon it in some sunken path when he is least expected.

*A town near the sea and about 60 miles from the frontiers of the old Indo-China.

²A black ox found in Cambodia and Laos which is peculiar in its habit of keeping the points of its horns 'splintered'—some, in fact, seem to be wearing a bunch of feathers on their horns. This peculiarity is due to the fact that the creatures sharpen their horns by digging them into the ground, and the ground thereabouts is exceptionally hard.

³A small reddish goat which is peculiar in that it has movable horns with which it has been known to cut a dog's head clean off. The cry of the muntjac is a sort of raucous bark.

⁴A reddish-brown mammal found in America and Indo-China. The name is given also to a small deer, about the size of a wild rabbit.

Whole forests of dwarf bamboo grow in these parts, also a shrub peculiar to the 'red earth' lands of east Cochin China. Stretches of *tranh*¹ alternate with thick clumps and woods of enormous trees growing from the depths of ravines. The dwarf-bamboo forests are quite impenetrable, except on the edge of plantations, where the natives have scratched a field here and there for their crops. Wild deer and boar are plentiful in such places and sometimes steal so much of the harvest before it is gathered that the natives have to call in some hunter to rid them of their troublesome visitors.

The sparse forests of the 'red earth'⁵ lands, where the fields of *tranh* seem to stretch to infinity, are the deer's paradise; they are therefore the favourite hunting-ground of the tiger. But for the most part the wild animals seem to have their agreed territories and any infringement on another's recognized preserves leads to somewhat heated explanations.

Another feature of the landscape in Indo-China is the great Savannah, where the reeds grow as high as an elephant and are the principal crop. Every year, in January and February, the savannah is swept by great fires, from which it takes a month to recover. Of all the animals that run away to escape the flames, the roebuck is the first to return, followed by the larger deer, then the wild buffalo and the gaur. Elephants, however, wait until the rainy season is well established. Then they arrive in great herds and, in the Lagna² plains, they

¹A tall grass, sometimes called *paillotte*. The natives use it as straw for thatching their cottages.

²The great plain of eastern Cochin China, over 250 square miles in extent, crossed by the Lagna river and its many tributaries. It is the most beautiful of all the National Game Reserves, and when you fly over it you see great herds of elephants and wild buffalo, frightened by the noise of the engines, charging in all directions.

stay from July to December. In the marshes of Bi and of Plao Xieng—two great savannahs in the Moi hinterland—elephants tend to be more suspicious of their trackers—the primitive Phnom tribe—than anywhere else; at Na Kai, however, one of the best hunting areas in Laos, the wide stretches of tall grass seem to have been appropriated by the gaurs.

The tiger adapts his own hunting technique to fit the conditions; as the reeds begin to grow again after the fire, he will avoid any part of the savannah where the cover is inadequate and move to wherever it is thick enough to offer some protection. But as soon as the reeds are fully grown he haunts the paths beaten down by elephants. He creeps stealthily up to the marshland where the small deer may be feeding, then settles down in his hiding place to keep his untiring watch—not forgetting to shift his ground if the wind changes.

But the tiger is as much at home in the forest as he is on the savannah; his only real problem is how to keep in touch with his prey. The feeding habits of the herbivores vary considerably from place to place, according to the apparently casual way in which nature provides an abundance of greenstuff at one spot and nothing at all at another; and the tiger has no option but to follow his victims, wherever they may lead him.

It may seem strange to us here in Europe that every year the great savannahs should be swept bare by these fires, but it is difficult to see how else the greater part of the animal population could continue to survive. These fires, occurring at just the right moment, destroy the dead and yellowing vegetation when it is of no more use, and from its life-giving ashes the new life arises, green and appetizing. The fires start spontaneously at

the height of the dry season, but they are stopped by the general moisture of the marshland as they approach the forest areas, so that there is little danger of the great conflagrations which occur from time to time in other parts of the world.

The occasional tiger which tackles a herd of wild oxen on the march and stalks it on its way to new feeding grounds, is usually one that has itself been driven from the savannah by the fires. He might equally have picked on a herd of deer or of wild boar. If any of these creatures should cross his path the tiger will not miss the opportunity for a change of diet. Even if the herd breaks into a gallop the tiger usually succeeds in getting one or two of them. Meanwhile the rest of the herd will be putting on a spurt in their haste to reach a less vulnerable part of the forest, although they may be waylaid again before they reach it. However, nature preserves the balance and the casualties will be replaced by young ones born during the course of the year, so that the size of the herd is about the same on every migration.

A good supply of drinking water is one of the essentials for the migrating herds and will partly determine the site of both temporary and permanent settlements. If a tiger discovers an area which is rich in the kind of food he enjoys he will plan his life to get the best out of it for as long as it lasts and move off only when its stores are running low.

When he is on the move the tiger takes every possible precaution to avoid being caught unawares. For his home he likes a thick dark wood, guarded by an impenetrable screen of undergrowth, and anywhere with a narrow winding entrance is no use to him. Above all he must have peace and quiet to digest his food, so he will always provide himself from the first with every

strategic advantage and ensure a quick get-away at a moment's notice if necessary.

He drags the bodies of his victims as far as possible into the undergrowth, beyond the greedy prying eyes of the vultures; but he always keeps open an escape route in case he should be surprised while he is feeding. Naturally he is happiest if he can make his kill when he is quite near his lair.

Things are more difficult for him in the clearings. There he must cover his 'larder' with anything handy and retire—perhaps quite a considerable distance—to wherever the conditions provide a really safe hide-out. This means a good walk when he comes out at night to resume his feast, which can be inconvenient, to say the least. There is always the chance that he may return to find some uninvited guest helping himself to his dinner. Any 'temporary' lair is abandoned as soon as the corpse is all eaten, which may take several days, as the tiger is very strongly attached to his permanent quarters and uses them as his base for his foraging expeditions.

One part of the country I knew very well was Co Hen, a remote district, very rich in tigers, lying between the last of the Lagna savannahs and the first outcrops of the Annamese mountains, where the tigers were well settled in. It was a delightful spot. The forests in the dry season and the plains in the rainy season were full of roots, grasses, fruits and young shoots of all kinds. In a comparatively small area you would find wild cattle, stags, small deer and wild pig in herds anything from fifteen or twenty to a hundred or two hundred strong. I used to camp out near a Moi village and after one night's tour of inspection of the village allotments with my hunting lamp, I was able to do the people a double

service; I would save the rest of their crops and at the same time restock their larders with fresh meat.

Near Co Hen there was a special piece of forest I shall always remember. It was not very extensive but there was a clear stream running through it. Right in the middle was a magnificent natural retreat for tigers, and I never knew it to be unoccupied. As soon as I polished off the sitting tenant, so to speak—or at any rate the first tenant I had encountered on the site—an even finer specimen would appear. Having learnt somehow or other that the property was vacant he had come to take possession without worrying over much about any legal preliminaries. I would remind the newcomer—by the same reception I had accorded his predecessor—that there were certain decencies to be observed, when along would come a third squatter, anxious to take up residence without further delay. This remote and unsuspected corner, in fact, must have seemed to the tigers of the district a perfect paradise—plenty to eat, running water to drink and, until I arrived, absolute peace and quiet.

But I also had an interest in this desirable residence. . . . In the course of one year I killed six tigers, including a pair I surprised in the middle of a romance. All six of them came in turn to the bait I had set and I shot them all from the same 'hide'. The only variation was in the time: the lovers were late—or perhaps something had happened to upset my usual time-table that night.

The death of the loving couple put an end to the series, and nearly put an end to me. I had shot the male and was moving cautiously towards him. He was not quite dead and, with my finger on the trigger of my gun, I stood there waiting. The end came with a great

hoarse death-rattle—was it a cry of agony or a last appeal for help? At the same moment I heard growlings behind me. Some instinctive reflex made me turn round sharply, and there, coming straight for me with her belly close to the ground, was an angry tigress—the widow, no doubt. I gave her a charge of buckshot from a range of 5 yards, which made her rise on her hind legs to her full height like a bear. So I gave her my second charge of shot, full in the chest this time. She fell backwards and rolled over and over, while the whole forest seemed to re-echo with her roaring.

I was a bit shaken, but I reloaded my rifle with two more cartridges. However, two rounds of buck-shot at four or five yards range had taken care of the tigress. What puzzled me most at the time, in fact, was that death had not been instantaneous at so short a range. I discovered later that my cartridges were badly packed.

Since the war it has not been possible for me to go back to CoHen, much as I should have liked to. Yet I can still see, quite clearly and without any effort, the spot where I used to camp, the paths I used to and from my 'hides' and the clear flames of my brazier trembling in the cold damp air of the forest night. And still the sounds come back to me from those happy years—so recent and yet so long, long ago—of animals calling to each other through the darkness in their fear, or fleeing terror-stricken at the approach of danger. I hear the strange metallic cry of the tiger, answered by the thunderous blare of the elephants disturbed at their evening meal.

Memories come crowding in on me. Above the deep shadows of the forest the tropic sky is filled with stars; millions of fire-flies light up the dark foliage; and as I

sweep the grass with my lantern I see the unnumbered
shining eyes of the little deer as they slip silently past
to their feedings grounds.

There are the stars which are of the heavens . . .
and there are the stars which are the earth's.

CHAPTER TWO

Some Facts about the Tiger

THIS book is about the royal tiger, which is common to nearly every part of Indo-China. But there is another species in the country, related to the 'royal'³ but smaller. You will hear talk of him, especially in the country districts, when people are recalling the good old days or discussing the tiger's reputation for ferocity. He is sometimes called the 'marsh tiger', because of his fondness for wet and muddy country, and is thick-set and stocky in build, with strong short legs. Formerly prevalent in what was known as West Indo-China, he has been pushed out into other parts of the country by the extension of rice-cultivation. Old countrymen say that he was a strong swimmer and remarkably clever at catching fish.¹

Today the marsh-tiger has become extremely rare, although a few specimens have sought refuge in the marshes of the Moi hinterland and in the unexplored jungles of Central Viet Nam.

The lion has won for himself the title of 'King of the Beasts' by his haughty bearing, but physically the tiger is undeniably the perfect feline. He is built for suppleness *and* strength. He may look heavy when he is resting,

¹The tiger does not feed exclusively on game; he is equally fond of fish, and there is a wide choice in the rivers and pools of the jungle. When he feels like a little fishing he creeps up to a river bank, taking every possible precaution to avoid being seen, and sits still with his tail dangling in the water. As soon as he gets a bite he flips it swiftly out of the water and the fish lands on the ground in front of him! It's a trick which rarely fails.

but on the slightest sign of danger he pulls himself together and exhibits a most disconcerting speed off the mark. In a single bound he is away; after five or six more he is beyond the reach of his enemies.

But he is better at the long jump than the high jump — which is a good thing ! If he could clear heights the palisades around the enclosures where cattle are penned overnight could prove inadequate. (They are made of sharp stakes some nine or ten feet high.) I often used to think, when I watched a cat jump up on to the side-board apparently with the greatest of ease, that a tiger ought to be capable of a similar feat, *mutatis mutandis*; experience has convinced me that I was wrong. On two separate occasions I have set up my observation post in a fork of a tree no more than nine or ten feet from the ground, and wounded tiger has hard to dislodge me; yet despite the fact that his efforts were doubled by anger, he merely described a graceful parabola in the air, well beneath me. It only needed the evidence of these all-out efforts to convince me that, in this respect at any rate, the tiger's reputation was exaggerated.

On another occasion I remember surprising a pair of tigers when I was driving at speed early one morning along a wood running between two high embankments. The female, being the lighter of the two, leaped into the undergrowth and disappeared, but the male, who was as fat as Buffer, crouched down in the bushes to watch me, prepared to show off for the benefit of his lady-love. One shot put an end to his performance and he collapsed like a wet rag. Yet the little hillock which had apparently stopped him from attacking me was certainly no higher than I was as I stood up in my car.

Not that I was the first to observe this inability on the part of the tiger to leap quite modest heights. On the old

'Mandarin Road' and the great trunk-roads of Viet Nam there were camping grounds at regular intervals where travellers could rest after sunset and where a fire was kept burning all night. These areas were surrounded by palisades made of stakes about twelve feet high. Look-out men were stationed on platforms at each corner of the enclosures and their job was to give the alarm on gongs or tom-toms if a tiger came in sight. No tiger in living memory has ever been known to leap the stockade.

On the other hand the tiger can leap across a stream sixteen to twenty feet wide with the utmost grace and ease, although his fear of the yawning depths below will prevent his jumping that distance across a ravine. When seizing his prey he can make a leap of twenty feet and more., while from a hillock, jumping to catch a victim below him, he can cover over thirty feet. I have checked all these distances myself.

His body is long and muscular. It is a machine geared primarily for attack, with its maximum power concentrated in the chest and forelegs and its striking force in the claws and teeth. There are five retractile claws on each fore-foot, each one strong and sharp, whereas each hind foot has only four, much less fearsome.

Tiger's claws, as a matter of fact, are much sought after and were formerly supposed to have miraculous powers. They are still used to make charms, and lovers of exotic ornaments have them strung together and wear them with their watch-chain to form a St. Andrew's cross over their middle.

There are two fangs in each jaw, which are set deep in the jaw-bone; the other teeth, even the molars, are much less strong, but when the jaws are set they make quite a formidable vice.

The male is taller than the female and has a far more

massive head. In size and weight the proportion between the male and the female is approximately five to four. An adult male will measure, on the average, six feet to six feet six inches from the tip of the snout to the root of the tail; an occasional specimen may be nearly seven feet. The tail, or 'lash', varies from two feet six to nearly four feet. (This last figure, by the way, makes nonsense of the measurements 'including the tail', which are often quoted.) The height is usually around three feet to three feet six, but varies from one to another irrespective of the weight, as some are slender, others stocky. The weight itself is often exaggerated; I have heard talk of 500, 600, and even 700 pounds, but no doubt these animals were sabre-toothed tigers! The Indo-Chinese species weighs on the average, between 350 and 450 pounds; a specimen of even 500 pounds is very rare.

Of course there are exceptions; giants occur now and then among animals as among men. My biggest tiger was 3 feet 7 inches high and 7 feet 2 inches long from the tip of his nose to the root of his tail. Even his tail was exceptional at 4 feet 4 inches. He weighed over 570 pounds—the heaviest tiger I have ever seen. He was never interested in human flesh, or even the normal game, but attacked indiscriminately bangtengs,¹ gaur, and wild buffalo. He was, as a matter of fact, equally interested in the domesticated buffalo.

On the day when his unlucky star led him to me, he had just seized an outsize Indian bull which had been quietly feeding in the paddock, and had dragged the body into the wood to be consumed at his convenience. When I arrived on the scene at four o'clock in the afternoon I had the dead bull brought back to the spot

¹A kind of large wild ox, yellowish or grey, with 'stockings' reaching to the knees, like the gaur's.

where it had been killed. (The tiger's footprints, by the way, were bigger than a dessert plate.) Overlooking the field was an enormous ant-hill more than six feet high and overgrown with grass. I settled down on the top of this observation post and sent my men back to the village, keeping with me only their leader. We did not have to wait more than half an hour. The great tiger suddenly sprang from the bushes, looked straight ahead for a moment, and then began to follow our tracks. He soon discovered the corpse and had a good sniff all round it before sitting down near its rump—which was already raw in places and covered with green flies. I trained my rifle on him carefully and fired, but nothing happened. The click of the bolt as I ejected the dud cartridge and reloaded made the tiger look round. He saw me but merely made an ugly face at me and laid back his ears like an angry cat. But he made no move and I had all the time in the world to take careful aim and fire once more. This time it took him full in the heart and he rolled over without a murmur.

He was quite the coolest customer I ever had to deal with. All the Mo'i of the district were amazed at the anticlimax of his end and decided that there was something supernatural about it. At any rate they were so anxious not to annoy the spirit of such an astonishing animal that they sacrificed a young buffalo and a jar of rice-spirit to the genii of the forest.

The tiger's coat is yellow, turning orange-coloured in adolescents and in adults in good health. At its cleanest and most glossy it is the sign of perfect physical fitness, but when the tiger is old or exhausted the coat becomes dull greyish and washed out. If a tiger is sick or off its food its coat loses its colour. Although the fur as a whole is thick and short, the tiger's belly, right up to the chest,

is covered with longer hair, which is white, as is the hair around its neck and throat and on the tips of its ears.

The black stripes are broader on some tigers than on others and give place at the root of the tail to a succession of rings which get closer and closer together towards the tip. Generally speaking the stripes are more pronounced in the male than in the female.¹ Expert craftsmen make excellent rugs from tiger skins—provided the tigers are shot in the prime of life. The jaws are fixed open, glass eyes are inserted, and the whole head is made to look peculiarly life-like.

But most of the tiger-skin rugs one sees have been given false whiskers, the originals having been stolen by natives before the animal was skinned. There is a popular belief that a tiger's whiskers, treated in a certain way, make a violent poison to which there is no known antidote. A hunter who is anxious to keep his trophy intact is therefore obliged to watch it carefully if he wants to prevent this highly regrettable depilation!

Whatever the colour of his coat, the tiger is a past-master at the art of making himself more or less invisible against any natural background. This gift for camouflage is most extraordinary in the dry season, when the bamboo clumps and dead leaves seem to change colour with every hour of daylight. Even in this setting the tiger manages to slink past the most experienced watchers without being seen. In the rainy season the camouflaging art is easier. He will look white or red according to whether the local soil is clay or 'red earth'—and the

The people of Viet Nam call the broad black stripes *doc khan* (bands of silk) and the narrow stripes *la tre* (bamboo leaves) and believe that the two different types of stripes denote two different species of tiger. The odd thing is that no amount of inter-breeding has so far affected this differentiation in the size and intensity of the stripes.

colours have been deliberately applied. It is this simple form of 'make-up' which so often deceives his prey and has been known to deceive his human pursuers.

I remember one incident—one of many—which illustrated this remarkable gift of camouflage, and I saw it with my own eyes. I was in my plantation one evening before the war when some Moi' from the village of Suoi Luc¹ came to tell me that the Mayor's ceremonial horse had been taken by a tiger. The cheeky devil had dragged the corpse to the middle of a field of maize and had already eaten part of it, and, to add insult to injury, he had walked out of the forest in broad daylight to make his capture, completely indifferent to the shouts of the village people who had tried to frighten him off.

It was a heaven-sent opportunity and I knew instinctively that I should get my tiger and that I need not even worry about taking all my normal precautions. So I went straight to Suoi Luc, where I found the villagers enjoying a wedding feast with all the gaiety appropriate to such an occasion. The Mayor himself had been celebrating more freely than usual, no doubt to console himself for the loss of his steed—a noble creature on which I had often seen him cutting dignified capers, with his legs stretched solemnly out and his big toes sticking up like fans and jigging about like mad.

The remains of the corpse were already blown up by gases and smelling pretty high, and the size of the portions that were missing gave some indication of my lord's appetite. There was no tree anywhere near, and so no

A village buried in the heart of the jungle about 75 miles from Saigon. The word *suoi* by itself means a stream and is applied especially to those watercourses that wind across the plains and among the rocks of the bush-land. They are considerably swollen when the torrential rains fall every year in the mountains but return to their normal size in the dry season.

chance of building a 'hide⁵; the thin vegetation made even a simple screen impracticable. The sun was already getting low and there was no time to waste. The only building in sight was a grain-store made of laced bamboo and perched about six feet above the ground on four slender piles; it looked absolutely inadequate, but as the tiger had already seen it I thought I could safely use it as a look-out—but not until it had been strengthened somewhat. The Moi who was with me and I dared not make a sudden movement of any kind for fear of a disastrous collapse. If the tiger himself had taken it into his head to lean up against this house of cards he would have precipitated its entire contents on his head.

From the edge of the forest came the shrill crowing of the wild cocks. From the other direction came the noise of the drunks gathered together for another round of their rice-spirit and making as much noise as a battery of engines on a testing bench. In the grass a partridge called suddenly to his mate. . . . Everybody and everything, in fact, was singing.

A lean and hungry dog, with no sense whatever of the occasion, appeared from nowhere and began licking appreciatively at the rotting pieces of meat torn from the carcass.

Suddenly my companion nudged me and pointed out front. A barrel-chested tiger with an enormous head had just leapt out of the trees less than two hundred yards away. He stared at the poor dog—which calmly went on eating.

I had hardly had time to take aim when the tiger had disappeared. I looked all round but could see him nowhere. After ten agonizing minutes my companion spotted him again and pointed him out. He was now a hundred yards nearer, crawling along close to the ground

and using every inch of cover with the utmost skill. The annoying thing was that suddenly the colour of his skin had become exactly the same as the colour of his background—dried-up grass, rotting tree-stumps, shapeless ant-hills and all.

As he came nearer to the corpse he began sniffing noisily, and the sound brought the mongrel back to his senses with a start. He made off like lightning, bumping into our observation post on the way and making it shake for a moment in an alarming manner. He also roused all the dogs of the village, which started up a new kind of concert, but our tiger was not in the least perturbed. He stood up, walked calmly up to the dead horse and began pulling at it with his splendid teeth.

I had a three-quarter view of him in my sights and my shot severed the arteries of his neck and passed right through him, from one end to the other. He made a prodigious death leap which would have undoubtedly finished up in our grain-store if that frail erection had been built at a slightly different angle.

The tiger's sight is keen by day or by night, but his eyes are better adapted to darkness than to bright sunlight. At the same time he finds a bright light no more than a nuisance; he is not like an owl, which is dazzled and shuts his eyes against it. His hearing is no less acute than his sight; the tiniest sound is heard and placed immediately. This sharp hearing often upsets the calculations of inexperienced hunters, who may go on waiting for the tiger long after he has heard some unsuspected sound from them and made off. His sense of smell, however, although normally keen is often of very doubtful value as the stench of rotten flesh—his favourite food—is apt to drown every other smell in the vicinity after

he has had a meal. He will never leave a crumb behind unless he is disturbed, whether the meal is bait specially laid for him or some animal that he has killed for himself, so of course it is putrid before it is all eaten up—so much so, in fact, that his last meals from a single carcass are sometimes barely solid! But it would be a mistake to imagine that his sense of smell is normally feeble. It may not be as keen as that of the elephant, the gaur, or the wild buffalo, but it is still a good deal more powerful than any human being's.

Once, back in 1917, I had reason to appreciate the keen senses of a young tiger who had killed a milch cow the previous day. I had moved the dead cow some two or three hundred yards to a spot from which I could watch it from my look-out, which I had built in the fork of a tree. It was a desolate region, far from anywhere. Day was breaking when the tiger appeared out of the wood; when he discovered that his breakfast had been moved he stood still for a few minutes, looking all round him, and then set off on the trail, moving in short steps and sniffing the ground as he went. But it was not easy; the ground had been fouled and walked over by the cattle and it took a full half-hour of hard work on the trail before he found his prey.

He had passed my look-out unknowingly and was ten or twelve feet away from me when I decided to have a shot at him. I was out of practice at that time and made an error of judgement in not waiting until he had reached the bait. I made the slightest sound—I think my rifle touched a branch of the tree—and at the same instant the tiger turned his head. Like a flash of lightning he was gone into the long grass. I let him have it as he went, but succeeded only in breaking his left fore-leg and wounding the right, so that he was able to escape

into the jungle. With a few beaters we followed him up—not too closely. Just as we were on the point of turning back he suddenly appeared and came for me, with a great roar. One charge of buck-shot pulled him up short; a second finished him off.

But it is at night that the tiger sees best of all. He is by no means blind in daylight, as I have shown, but somehow at night time he seems more in his element, and it is certainly his favourite time for hunting. If circumstances force him to be out and about during the day—and a bush fire or a *battue* will start him off at any hour of the day or the night—he seems less sure of himself, he moves more cautiously and crawls over any open country he encounters. If he comes across some more powerful animal, like an elephant or a gaur, he will stop and debate within himself the best line to take, crouching down sometimes to watch developments. His tail sweeps the ground nervously before he withdraws, almost regretfully, stopping every now and then to look back. The size of the enemy has made him think twice and he has decided that it would be wiser not to proceed with the matter.

There seems to be a tacit agreement among the bigger wild animals which governs their attitude to each other. The deference which the tiger pays to the elephant, the gaur and the wild buffalo is after all, mutual. If they happen to run into each other they may try their luck, but they manage in principle never to pursue any chance encounter to extremes. If there is aggression, it is always on the part of the tiger, and then only if he has lost all self-control because of ravening hunger, or because he has surprised a herd at their meal and has been unable to resist the temptation offered by a mother's carelessness or a baby's disobedience to make sure of an easy

catch. This is how young gaurs or baby elephants are usually taken. Young buffalo are not so easily caught as they usually stay in the marshes and if a tiger should appear on the scene the whole herd will turn and face him.

The tiger's mating season goes on all the year round, but the first days of April and of October are the most popular dates. Some of the older hunters I have met have tried to associate these dates with the onset of the rainy season and suggest that the monsoon affects the periodic rise in the incidence of mating—a suggestion which I merely record without comment.

The choice of a mate is perfectly haphazard. A male meets a female, likes her and runs after her. They feed and sleep together, with the inevitable consequences. In the dry season you can see the signs of their love making in the marks of their claws in the hard soil; in the wet season the scratches can be seen on tree-trunks and old stumps.

A tigress who has bestowed her favours on the male of her choice will remain faithful to him for as long as he is able to retain her affections. When she is tired of her lover she makes no effort to conceal her boredom and sends him packing with a few well directed blows with tooth and claw. He, for his part, is not slow to recognize that the honeymoon is over and retires to await his next love affair.

Two males can never agree to share the charms of one mistress; on the contrary, they are quite capable of fighting each other for her favours, taking it for granted that the victor is bound to be acceptable to the lady. The loser will slink off and try his luck elsewhere, preferably where there appears no risk of another unsuccessful scrap. Whatever happens he will go on looking for his soul-mate until he finds her.

A tiger is not like a dog, ready to run after any attractive female the moment his own mate's back is turned; if he is really smitten he will never leave his partner's side for a moment; he will even stop in the middle of a meal to follow her if she starts to wander away.

But the courtship of the tiger is like that of its small cousin the cat—very noisy. When My Lord pays court to My Lady the echoes of the forest are awakened far and wide. Discretion is cast aside as the howling of one of the lovers is answered by the harsh sighs of the other, with a running accompaniment of stamping, gnashing of teeth and grinding of jaws. The symphony embraces every note in the scale, passing abruptly from the most sepulchral bass to the shrillest treble. And all over the jungle the terrified animals prick up their ears. . . .

Then suddenly all is peace and quiet. The lovers, all passion spent, gradually remember their normal everyday appetites and together they take the road and go looking for food.

The tigress carries her young for between 106 and 109 days and usually has two or three cubs at a birth—never more than four. But she rarely brings them all up. Tiger cubs die from a variety of causes and it is often impossible for the mother to protect them. Large carnivores, the bigger snakes and some birds of prey are fond of new-born tigers and although the mother, at the first sign of danger, will carry her babies in her mouth, like a cat, to a place of safety, she may sometimes return to find her den empty. If the visitor is a python she can have her revenge because after a meal the python rolls itself into a ball not far away to digest it. But she can do nothing about the other marauders, who take care not to be found anywhere near the spot. She will carry her

babies to safety in the same way in the event of a bush fire or a flood, but in such cases her enemies, always on the look-out to rob her, are human.

If there is only one cub it tends to be overfed and grows rapidly. Every attention is given to its education and every effort made to train it so that it will grow up in every way a perfect tiger. Like all mothers, the tigress with young is ever alert and aggressive. She will throw herself at the enemy in defence of her young and will even accompany them when she suspects that they are walking into a trap.

One night at Xa Nat, a rich hunting ground near the old Annam-Cochin China border, an old friend and I were out hunting deer by lantern when we were furiously and unexpectedly attacked by a tigress in search of food for her three tiny babies, which she had hidden in a hollow tree-trunk. She had gone hunting alone because her babies were too small to follow her, and we had quite inadvertently come between her and her family, hence her extreme anger with us. She came rushing towards us, growling and trying frantically to avoid the beam of my lantern. The way in which her great shining eyes moved from side to side was most disconcerting but as soon as we could see enough of her to aim at, we both fired at once. She disappeared into the darkness, still growling.

Next day, after searching cautiously for an hour, we found her body close to the tree where she had hidden her family.

Catching those cubs gave us every difficulty imaginable. From their safe corner in the tree-trunk they were able to bite and scratch unmercifully, but we succeeded in collecting the little orphans in the end. We brought them up on the bottle and they grew into most

attractive tigers, playing innocently enough with the domestic animals, especially the dogs. The cats seemed to find these near relations a little too overwhelming and not very amusing.

Young tigers will stay with their mother and accompany her on her wanderings so long as there is no rival attraction, which explains why you will sometimes see four tigers together while mating is in progress. The two youngsters will be sitting at a little distance from the adults, partly out of delicacy, perhaps, but mainly out of prudence. They will continue to follow their mother only so long as their stepfather permits. The first sign of disapproval is enough to send them off to seek their fortune single-handed, while their elders seem to part with them without the least sign of regret.

Tigers live to be about twenty. Their age is revealed most of all by the state of their teeth. An old tiger's fangs are jagged and worn and sometimes hardly visible. His muscles grow weak and gradually lose their resilience. He begins to fear the big ruminants which he would once attack on sight, and is content with small game like kids, agoutis, muntjacs and young wild boars.

I have never seen two tigers share the same prey side by side. The tiger eats, as he hunts, alone. He may occasionally have a guest, but if so his guest keeps his distance and awaits his turn. Even when the main dish is an elephant, weighing several tons, the understanding is strictly maintained, and the two tigers sit down to dinner at opposite ends of the enormous carcass. Once at Song Phan I surprised a big fat tiger sampling the hindquarters of an elephant while his more fastidious mate was enjoying the trunk. The domestic picture was completed by two cubs, perched high on the great swollen belly, who were learning the arts of the *bon*

viveur and squabbling and boxing each other at the same time.

At meal times, in fact, the tiger is instinctively unsociable. I have reared a good many cubs and found them very affectionate and gentle, keeping their claws in while playing with children or dogs. But the same animals would become dangerous when given a joint of meat. Until they had had their fill it was not safe for anybody to go near them and they would have gone for their master as readily as for their young playmates.

Of one thing I am certain; a tiger much prefers freshly killed meat to an old carcass. It is true that he will often eat flesh which is so rotten that it has started to run but that is because he would rather stay put than go in search of something fresh. He is lazy by nature, and rather than tire himself out on the trail or in ambush he will go on eating a corpse, however rotten, until he has finished it.

It was in 1926 that I first discovered this. An epidemic had hit my herds and the cattle were dying off at the rate of ten to twenty a week. At first I began by burying the heaps of dead animals, but I was unable to keep that up so I had them piled on to lorries and driven to the middle of a large plantation of giant trees surrounded by a clearing. The lorries were washed down with disinfectant after each trip.

The tigers of the district were soon on the spot, and each one helped himself to a carcass and dragged it into the bushes. That was when I discovered that, having once tasted one of the corpses the tiger would not return to it. They all preferred something a little less "off" and would wait for the arrival of another jorry-load. The old idea that tigers prefer rotten meat was clearly exaggerated.

The vultures, on the other hand, would wait until the flesh had reached a stage of complete putrefaction before they came down to it.

As for the Moi of the neighbourhood, they just decided that the opportunity of free food was too good to be missed. To carry away the spoils they organized caravans between the dump and their villages, but even the Moi seemed a little difficult to please, seeing that normally they eat almost anything—chameleons, snakes, owls, deer, wild pig, dogs and even cats.

I feel the guardian angels of the villages must have been working overtime during this epidemic.

The slaughter of cattle was appalling, but I seemed to be the only one who was not overwhelmed by it. My veterinary friends worked themselves to death to check the epidemic and in the end they succeeded. We sprinkled sand on the earth to celebrate victory—but I had lost a third of my stock in the battle.

But the tigers were not concerned with my losses; they stayed on the job to the bitter end, licking up the last sticky and maggoty remnants. When the meat was all gone they gnawed the bigger bones and greedily crunched up the little ones. Finally, when there were no more corpses for the lorries to deliver the great exodus began; every animal decided it was time to make a move, even the little scavengers—the ferrets and the civet-cats and the tiger-cats. Last of all the black clouds of vultures took wing for pastures new.

The Moi were profoundly impressed by the whole affair but their observations about my veterinary friends were not all favourable. It was obvious from their expressions that they were dumbfounded by this untimely intervention which had ended by drying up a most promising source of free food! With a shrug of resigna-

tion—almost of resentment—they concluded that if they wanted to go on eating they would have to start working again.

The Moi are like that. For them life is fun, something to be enjoyed, and to work is to suffer. Enough is enough and nobody works longer than is necessary to safeguard the immediate future. Today is all that matters; let tomorrow take care of itself. The epidemic had started up a temporary butcher's store, kept well supplied by the good Lord. Fair enough! Men and animals must make the most of it. Come and get it!

These were the unspoilt people with whom I spent the happiest days of my life. I loved them for their unaffected honesty and for their ingenuous understanding of man's simplest needs.

CHAPTER THREE

The Tiger in Search of Food

NOW and then the tiger comes across a dead animal; he may be lucky, of course, but it is more than likely that the corpse has been purposely 'planted' as bait. Apart from the odd stroke of luck of this kind, however, he lives solely by hunting. I am often asked whether he has not some special odour, peculiar to himself, which makes it easy for his victims to detect his presence and so complicates his task. It is a question on which my friends were all sharply divided. One of them once wrote that the tiger has no special smell of his own and went on to show, in fact, that if he had he would soon die of hunger since he would proclaim his presence to all the creatures he hunts for food.

I have never agreed with him, I may add. To this day my nose still remembers the characteristic strong smell that hangs around any spot where a tiger has recently been. Even if he has only been there a short time, he nevertheless leaves behind this sharp, tangy odour, reminiscent of a zoo or a menagerie. There is, in fact, a very common saying—"This place smells of tiger."

Nobody has yet decided whether it is his urine or some 'body-odour', but there is no doubt that the tiger—especially the male—does have his own special smell, just like the wild boar and the buffalo. The soil and the vegetation seem to absorb it, and every animal that happens to follow a tiger's track smells it immediately. As soon as it is strong enough to be identified, these other

animals begin to show signs of restlessness and anxiety.

I have often seen hunting-dogs turn back on the trail, although I have not myself observed the smallest sign of danger; they have caught the tiger's scent. Many a time, also, I have noticed the doubtful behaviour of my hunting elephants when I have driven them across the tiger's trail in the grassy savannah. Obviously scenting danger they would zig-zag along, stretching out their trunks with a loud report, beating the ground in front of them, and every now and then letting out a yapping sort of bark—the cry they always use when they are uneasy or when they are aware of an unwelcome scent in the neighbourhood.

Obviously, therefore, it is fairly easy in normal circumstances for the other wild animals to detect the nearness of their natural enemy, the tiger. Little animals, like the small deer, for example, do not stop for further inquiries but make off at speed; they have no means of self-defence against the tiger. On the other hand, elephants and other big animals—especially gaurs—are not so easily cowed and it is often the tiger who runs away.

One last point on this matter of the smell; there is no animal which can continue to inspire such fear after his death as the tiger does. Cattle, horses and other domestic animals will not merely keep away from any place where a tiger has been slaughtered; they will run away from it in terror. Dogs will bark furiously, with their coats standing on end, or set up a deathly howling.

How then does the tiger overcome this undoubted handicap? The answer lies in his highly skilful hunting technique. Seeing that he cannot climb trees it is all the more remarkable that he can approach his prey without his presence being suspected.

In the jungle he is soft-footed, walking through dead



Cub (brought up on the bottle) with playmate



Portrait of two friends



Reconnaissance



Midday rest at the edge of the forest

leaves and dry twigs without making the slightest sound. If he disturbs anything at all, the result is no more than the slight rustling which one would expect a weasel or a lizard to make. He is equally silent in the long grass. His practised eye can discern the slightest, almost imperceptible ripple along the top of the grass and he uses his exceptional power of camouflage to creep gradually closer to his prey. Then he watches patiently and keeps his distance, until he is in a position to leap upon the unsuspecting victim in a single bound.

This last stage of his attack—lying ready for the final spring—can take place on the bank of a river or of a pool, on the normal route taken by animals passing from their feeding grounds back to the forest, on high ground overlooking a sunken path, or anywhere on the edge of a wood. Wherever it may be, sooner or later he gets his victim.

Only when he is starving will a tiger pursue any animal that seeks safety in flight, so he is more than ever dependent on another of his gifts—the ability to exercise a strange fascination over other animals. He will keep close to his victim for quite long distances without relaxing his concentration for a moment. The operation is guaranteed to drive the wretched victim mad, but it cannot stop running. When it is completely exhausted the tiger puts on the pressure and drives his prey towards a thicket or pens it in a *cul de sac*.

On the rare occasions when one victim is being chased by a couple of tigers its fate is even worse. The wretched animal is threatened whichever way it turns and eventually loses all sense of direction and more or less gives up the struggle.

I remember once hunting wild boar in the forest, having started out after them at daybreak. I could hear

them quite distinctly in front of me, but I was puzzled at their continuous grunting. I also noticed that they were digging into the ground with their snouts while still on the run, instead of stopping to dig, as they usually do; and although they had begun by advancing in extended order they were now in single file. I hoped they would carry on till they reached the forest but they seemed determined to stay out in the open. At about ten o'clock I made up my mind to risk everything and put on a spurt until I had gone right ahead of the whole pack of them. As I crouched in the long grass waiting for them it slowly dawned on me that after all my efforts they had changed direction and were giving me the slip.

I was just trying to decide whether to give it up as a bad job or try a new plan of attack when I happened to notice a movement in the long grass a few yards ahead. Something was coming my way, completely hidden and without making a sound. It could hardly be a single boar detached from the herd, still less a sow with a youngster; either would have given itself away by a grunt or two or by making an obvious track through the long grass; it might, however, be a muntjac and, thinking that even a muntjac might be some slight compensation for my disappointment, I began to make my way towards it.

Before I could drive it into the open, let alone shoot it, it suddenly leapt into the air and just as promptly disappeared again before I could even see what sort of an animal it was. The grass was still rippling, however, and as the ripples seemed to be going in the direction of the wild boar, I decided to follow them. By this time I was getting really curious. Then I noticed that the ground under my feet was softer and that I had come to

the edge of a pool, although I could see that the trail of waving grass began again on the other side of the water. The soft earth gave me an idea, and I parted the long grass and bent down to examine the footprints of this elusive creature which announced its presence but never showed itself. To my amazement I found the footprints of a tiger. Like me, it was following the boars.

I knew it was no use going on in this long grass so I turned for home. The last time I looked back I could see where the herd was still plunging madly on in single file, but of the pursuing tiger there was no trace.

That evening, with two Moi trackers, I returned to the scene of action. After two hours' pursuit we saw an animal leave a bush and make a bee-line for the forest. Under the bush we found half of a large boar, lying in a gory heap of entrails; only a shoulder was still intact. The Moi suggested that if I was interested in the tiger I should come back and leave a bait there.

The point is that this tiger—which must have been very hungry to go hunting in broad daylight—had somehow got the better of this herd of wild boar by exerting some kind of fascination over them which crushed every idea of self-defence or opposition. The large boar that guarded the rear had paid for his devotion to duty with his life, but one of the herd had to be sacrificed to enable the others to get away.

Ten years later I had a similar experience. This time it was a stag that was being hunted by a pair of tigers. It was a noble animal and its horns could be seen above the tallest of the grasses. Its bellowing awoke all the echoes and it was plunging first one way, then the other. It seemed to be moving around in an area of a couple of acres or so.

How long had it been there, and where had it come

from ? I had my rifle trained on it when Xa Lang,¹ who was my star tracker at that time, stopped me. 'Wait,' he said; 'it looks as though his retreat has been cut off by a tiger. Let's stay here and watch.'

For a time nothing fresh happened. The stag went on bellowing pitifully and seemed to have no idea where to turn. Then I saw a tiger climb on to an ant-hill, just when the stag had turned its back, and jump down again into the grass almost immediately. The stag, which was still quite a distance from the tiger, seemed to be looking earnestly in the opposite direction. Suddenly it broke into a gallop in the direction of the forest and disappeared from sight and sound. Xa Lang and I cautiously followed, watching our steps and examining every bush on our way. Then a heart-rending cry came from the very clump of trees by which we stood whispering to each other.

'That's the end of the stag,' said Xa Lang. 'Let's go. We'll come back with reinforcements presently and explore this place.'

The sun was gilding the tree-tops when I went back with a few companions. After we had cut a way through the trees with our knives we came on the body of the unfortunate stag. According to the footprints it had been chased by two tigers hunting together, who had dragged their victim towards a ravine while we had been cutting our way in. They could not be far off, in fact, as the carcase was hardly touched. They had been starving with hunger and we had hardly given them time to start on their meal. The stag was enormous and it took the combined efforts of all our men to drag it to the nearest

Xa Lang was a Moi of a tribe called Chau Ma. He was many times injured in the hunting field, but he was fated to die in the Japanese occupation, in circumstances which have never been clearly explained.

clump of trees. There it was firmly tied to a stump with jungle creepers, and a platform was built in the three-fold fork of a large tree. After that we all retired to give the tigers the opportunity to come and devour the bait.

We discovered next day that the tigers had accepted our invitation without reserve, and had had a truly gargantuan feast. We rapidly camouflaged the look-out, and, with one Moi for company and a sufficient supply of food and drink, I settled down to await developments.

It was still daylight when the tigers returned to the banquet. The lady was the sligher of the two, but she ate first and ate greedily, her companion sitting quietly a little way off awaiting his turn. It was very gallant of him, but I fear I was not very sympathetic. I shot him dead with one shot from my rifle. His mate ran away, but a moment later she was back again; either the call of the food was too strong or she had failed to understand what had happened. When she saw the prostrate body of the male she backed away a few steps. I fired at her and she collapsed, but she got up again almost immediately and leapt with a roar into the bushes she had just left. I heard a heavy thud as she fell over again, and then the last struggle and the last choking death-rattle.

The Moi, posted at various spots in the neighbourhood, quickly answered my call. Night had fallen by now and one of them brought my electric lamp, which made it easier for us to look for the tigress. We found her about twenty yards beyond a rotten tree-trunk, her head towards the ravine she was hoping to reach when she died.

There was nothing very remarkable about the actual killing of these tigers, but the circumstances in which the stag was killed—like those leading to the death of the

wild boar ten years earlier—are highly suggestive. They show the trouble a tiger will take to drive his prey towards the jungle where he can move easily, dispatch it under cover of the trees and jide the carcass out of sight of vultures and other marauders without having to drag it very far.

Whatever hunting method the tiger uses—the surprise attack from ambush or plain pursuit—he nearly always leaps on to the ijeck of his victim, drags it down and tears open its throat with his fangs. The unevenness or the forces engaged means that there is practically no struggle. But when he is attacking a large animal—a banteng, say, a gaur, or a buffalo—he is not so certain of success and is not above a little foul play. Using teeth and claws in a combined attack he first hamstring any large opponent, but even this form of attack does not always go according to plan and he often has to make several attempts before he brings his adversary down. If he is unsuccessful in severing the tendons at the first attempt he will hang on, and the wounded animal will drag him along in his tracks, through ravines strewn with boulders and stumps, not without damage to the beautiful striped coat. Sometimes, bruised and exhausted by a particularly long haul, he is forced to let go for an instant to regain his breath, but he never gives up. The wounded animal loses a great deal of blood and gets weaker as its wounds get infected, and the tiger usually wins in the end.

So the tiger is, as necessity dictates, all sorts of assassin; he knows no law and respects no rules of fair play. Success in battle is all that matters and the end justifies the means.

When attacking one of the larger bovines he leaps on to its withers and twists its neck so as to get his cfaws either in its muzzle or somewhere near the eyes. With

one fore-foot firmly gripping the animal's shoulder, he uses the other to pull its head down viciously towards him, thus throwing his enemy off balance so that it falls heavily and buries its horns in the ground. This usually breaks its back and all the tiger has to do now is to polish it off by tearing its throat open, taking care meanwhile to keep out of the way of the helplessly thrashing feet.

But it takes a pretty big tiger to put one of the larger wild bovines out of action; an average sized tiger will attack one of them only at considerable risk. Moreover even the biggest tiger has to reckon with the team spirit of a herd of wild animals. If he tries conclusions with a gaur, for example, he may find he has taken on not one, but several extremely angry bulls. It may be even worse with wild buffalo; once these ugly creatures are roused nothing will stop them and they will hunt to the death any tiger that attacks them. These great ruminants, with their enormous horns, often as sharp as sword-blades, possess a marvellous sense of solidarity. At the least suggestion of an attack on a single member, the whole herd will instantly move into action as one.

As a general rule the tiger prefers not to try conclusions with this kind of enemy; he attacks them, in fact, only when he is desperate with hunger and must get food at any cost.

I remember in this connection a very hungry tiger which went for one of our elephants one night—the biggest hunting elephant in one of our teams. The unfortunate creature was shackled by the hind legs and was naturally handicapped, but he managed to get rid of the tiger by plunging into a thicket of prickly shrubs. He may even have got in a shrewd blow with his trunk; in any case the tiger gave up the attack. The elephant men heard bellowings and came running up. They led

their charge straight back to camp and immediately dressed the long gashes which the tiger's claws had opened along the elephant's back. Despite this prompt attention the elephant was ill for months and, in fact, nearly died. The tiger's claws were infected—no doubt by the rotten meat he had been eating—and only a very strong constitution saved the elephant from dying of blood-poisoning.

Some elephants would have retained a lasting fear of tigers after this experience, but not this fellow. From that moment he conceived a boundless hatred of them. If ever he smelt a tiger anywhere while he was out hunting he would trample on every bush in the vicinity, and if by chance he did 'flush' one he would immediately start to chase it. He didn't often catch one, but when he did there was never any doubt about the fate of the tiger. He would even flay any *dead* tiger he happened to find and if he had been left to himself he would certainly have reduced the corpse to pulp with his trunk.

The domestic buffalo which live in a half-wild state near the Moi villages can also put up a good fight against the tiger. They have powerful necks and enormous horns, and they never relax their vigilance; sometimes, in fact, if they find a tiger lurking around on the look-out, they will themselves take the initiative and attack him. Nor does he always come off best; in fact he often owes his survival to a masterly retreat.

One morning at Dong Ca, a village between Saigon and Cap Saint Jacques, I had to destroy a buffalo which had been terribly mauled. Its owner, who had asked me to put an end to its sufferings, told me the story of its fight with a tiger. It had lasted three hours. The buffalo had been attacked by surprise but had fought back pluckily and knocked the tiger over four or five times.

In the end, to save his skin, the tiger had withdrawn, in pretty bad shape. The buffalo's horns were red with his blood, but the poor creature had its head lacerated, one eye torn out, one leg broken, and vicious scratches all down its flanks. I put it out of its misery with a revolver-shot behind the ear and left its body where it was to serve as bait; but it lay there until it went rotten and the tiger never came back to inspect it. He had undoubtedly had such a drubbing from the buffalo that he was not anxious to return, even for a good dinner; in fact I never heard any more of him.

Some time later I happened to turn up one night with three friends at a Moi village just when a female buffalo, trained to haul timber, was fighting for her life against a tiger. The Moi had shut themselves in their houses, but they came out to welcome us and excitedly told us all about it. They showed us the clearing where the battle was taking place, but the tiger heard us coming and made off before we reached the spot. The buffalo stood there trembling, with blood streaming from the top of her head and into her eyes. She shook her head nervously to get the blood out of her eyes, but she seemed unable to walk. We retraced our steps to fetch a cart on which to bring her back to the village, but when we returned to her, an hour later, she was lying down. Her tail was cut through at the root and the tendons of her hind legs were torn; but tufts of yellow hair on the ends of her horns showed that the tiger, returning to the attack, had had a warm reception. This buffalo like the other, was shot and left on the spot as bait. At the end of a week there was not a sign of it left. Vultures, dogs, the smaller scavengers and lizards had cleared up every crumb. But the tiger had never reappeared. He was probably too busy licking his wounds—if, indeed, he survived at all.

Some animals which are even smaller than the buffalo can hold their own against a tiger. According to the Mo'i he will seldom attack a solitary boar if it is heavier than himself; he knows its incredible strength and is afraid of it. If they see a tiger with its skin covered with scars, the Mo'i say he has had a scrap with a boar.

One evening in the Ta Lai¹ sector, I interrupted a grim struggle between a tiger and a boar; they were kicking up a terrific fuss in a clump of dwarf bamboos. Although I could not see them I could hear their grunts and growlings, and from the disturbance among the bamboos I could see where the fight was taking place. With the aid of some Mo'i I found an ant-hill, with sufficient vegetation on top to provide cover and well placed to prevent the contestants from catching my scent, and climbed up it to watch through a gap in the bushes. They seemed set on exterminating each other but every now and then, as if by mutual agreement, they would stop to regain their breath and watch each other puffing and panting. Then they would be at it again with renewed vigour. What amazed me was that the boar was quite a match for the tiger both in the speed of his attacks and in the ability to dodge. Neither, in fact, appeared to be winning on points. But the light was failing rapidly and I decided to end the contest. My shot more or less finished off the tiger and I expected it would scare away the boar. Not a bit of it! He still went on tearing away at his opponent although he was dead. I had a shot at the boar but the light was bad and I only wounded him. He ran limping off into the bush and my Mo'i companion followed him while I went to inspect

¹A remote big-game area near the South Viet Nam area. During the Japanese occupation it was a centre of resistance similar to the French *Maquis*.

the tiger. Unfortunately the boar, beside himself with rage, attacked the Moi and tossed him high in the air; only my intervention in fact, saved his life, and he suffered a deep gash in his left thigh and many bruises.

The enemies were now reconciled in death and I sent to the near-by village for a cart to take away the corpses. I had no scales handy to weigh them, but while it took four men to lift the tiger on to the cart, we had to get two more to handle the boar. The tiger had a number of deep wounds (some of which may have been administered after it was dead) but the boar, who had taken his punishment so well, was also seriously knocked about. Among other injuries was a gaping hole in his belly from which his intestines were beginning to protrude.

I mention these details to give some idea of the bloody fights which so often occur in the jungle. But that, of course, is the law of the jungle: only by killing each other can the beasts survive. It is indeed a case of the survival of the fittest, with no holds barred. None of the combatants can afford to waste a second or to throw away an advantage. If the attempt at hamstringing, or any other low trick fails the battle is on. The woods resound with the noise of it and sometimes it ends with the death of both parties. I have seen some amazing fights in my time.

I once saw an ox which was blind, although otherwise in good health, partly eaten by a tiger which had not even bothered to kill it. One thigh was stripped to the bare bone. It was moaning in pain and next day when we helped it to its feet, it was a pitiful sight. Nothing was left of the injured leg but the red bone, with a hoof dangling at the end of it, and although it managed to stand on its other three legs it was trembling all over. We shot it, of course, and in one way it had its revenge;

we used it as bait and when the tiger came back for it he paid the penalty. He was a fine young animal with a perfect set of teeth and a beautiful coat.

The tiger is so strong that he can shift the body of a young elephant, a gaur or a wild buffalo, drag the body of a larger stag over long distances and carry quite sizeable animals in his mouth. On the other hand he is not a good stayer and seems incapable of sustained efforts on this scale.

He usually drags his victim backwards, with frequent stops to recover his breath. The victim itself is pulled by the hind quarters, apparently to prevent its horns from catching on snags and tree-trunks. The horns seem to offer less resistance to obstacles while the carcass is still fresh and supple. Usually the tiger seizes the tail in his jaws and if this gives way he drags the body by the hind leg which is nearer the ground.

He is a good swimmer and can cross a stream with a calf or a goat in his mouth. If the current carries him off course he lands farther downstream on the opposite bank, without the least sign of panic. Yet of all the tigers I have watched, I have never seen one go after an animal that has taken to the water. Many a time I have seen a wild buffalo that has had the worst of an encounter with a tiger jump into quite shallow water and lie there with only his nose showing. The tiger would wait patiently on the bank without relaxing his vigilance until the buffalo gave up the ghost.

The Moi will tell you that the tiger cries out at night when he is on the trail, but this is a myth; he would not be so foolish as to scare away all the game in the neighbourhood by advertising his presence so plainly. As a matter of fact—as I have already pointed out—his peculiar smell makes it essential for him to conceal his

presence in every possible way until his victim is practically within his grasp. However, some of the Moi say his cry sounds something like 'Kliou' and this is the onomatopoeic name they give to the tiger himself. On the other hand the Vietnamese say that the cry is 'cop'—delivered on a high note—and they call the tiger 'Ong Cop' or, in English, 'Mr. Tiger'. The odd thing about these names based on sounds so completely different from each other is that the Vietnamese language is practically based on onomatopoeia. For my part I am convinced that the tiger's cry, brief, shrill and metallic, is 'beo'—a very similar cry, incidentally, to that of the larger 'Aristotle's' deer, as many an inexperienced hunter has discovered to his cost.

In the rutting season the tiger will call his mate and he often uses his cry to lure his victims wherever he wants them to go. The victim runs away and thinks he is getting clear, but the tiger cunningly cuts it off and keeps it within sight.

When a tiger roars or growls it is a bad sign; he is either angry or uneasy. When he is caterwauling it means that he is relaxed and happy. But whatever kind of noise he makes nobody has ever found a tiger's voice pleasing to the ear and from this point of view at any rate he is one of nature's outcasts. The only creature that is ever glad to hear a tiger is his mate; she seems to like his voice. And the raucous noise that she makes is equally acceptable to her offspring; one cry from her and they come running up to snuggle against her. After all, she is their mother!

CHAPTER FOUR

Man-eaters

THE tiger is not born with a taste for human flesh. Perhaps this is as well, for if every tiger were by nature a man-eater no native would dare venture into the forests for timber or into the wide open spaces to till the land. The inhabitants of the Moi hinterland would desert their uplands if they thought they would one day be devoured by the numerous tigers who prowl round the villages at night and lie up all day watching the population, unseen and unsuspected.

It is true that an old tiger will often take to haunting the settlements of the more backward tribes in the hope of picking up one of the domestic animals now and then—horses, dogs, pigs, goats, cattle and even ducks and hens. He knows that the capture of anything bigger or wilder would be beyond his failing powers, and even if he is getting old he still has to eat. But these specimens never attack a man. On the contrary, they run away from him. For them the vertical, elongated shape of a man spells trouble.

These ageing tigers will sometimes take toll of the cattle when they are out to grass, especially if one of the herd is foolhardy enough to stay out all night instead of returning to the stable. Even then the tiger will only go for the younger animals which are not likely to put up any serious resistance. After a raid on one village they leave it alone for a spell, so that the villagers will have time to make good their losses, and pass on to another

area. They travel from one settlement to another and so make sure that their declining years are well provided for.

Sometimes these raiders, if they are very hungry, will actually break into the stables or the makeshift piggeries often found in these remote areas and help themselves. Their boldness is incredible, and nothing scares them, neither the fearful noise the watchman makes nor the shouts of the villagers, roused from their slumbers. They go away eventually, but they never go away empty-handed.

The human inhabitants of the villages, however, are never in any danger from these raiders and they just get on with their work. The women and children going to and from the river or the spring for water often meet a tiger on their way, but he never does them any harm, in fact he disappears at once.

Despite the depredations of these thieving old tigers, these villagers never take any sensible steps to get rid of them. They are not very bright, some of these Moi, and they think the best thing they can do is to call in the aid of the magicians, who are quite willing to help so long as they are given something they can sacrifice to the genii of the forest. It all ends up as a rule with a splendid feast and lashings of drink! The unfortunate farmers, already hard hit by their losses, find they are now obliged to give what little they have left to the magicians since they dare not risk offending the spirits. In fact it is a tradition among these people that they have two enemies—the tiger and the village magician. But it was the same for their ancestors and one must always do what one's ancestors did.

Man-eaters are proportionately less numerous than those who live off the land. They form a sort of gang of

toughs, specially fearsome when they are in their prime. They are far and away the fiercest of all tigers and as they come to realize the terror they inspire they soon reach the stage where they are afraid of nothing and nobody.

To begin with it is as if they are embarking on a new career of crime, driven to it in the first place partly by hunger and partly by the carelessness of man himself. After several days without food they will calmly attack a herd of cattle in the fields, without a thought for the consequences. Nothing will stop them. They are staking everything in a matter of life and death. Despair lends them additional strength and without thinking what they are doing they leap blindly at a man—that curious biped of whom they have always had an innate fear; and suddenly they find that he is not so dangerous after all, in fact he is easier to bring down than a young stag. From that moment they are committed. They have tasted human flesh and from now on they will continue to batten on the village. All that the wretched inhabitants can do is to appeal to some famous hunter or some trapper of their choice to deliver them from this terrible scourge.

But they often have to deal with old-fashioned and well-rooted traditions before they can take any such reasonable steps to protect themselves. The local magicians may see these man-eaters as unfortunate creatures haunted by departed spirits thirsting for vengeance, and if that is their view these tigers must not be hunted; they must instead be treated with every respect and consideration. The magician has been known to carry this farce to the point where the villagers have been exhorted to leave their homes altogether so as to avoid upsetting the spirits. The result has been a mass migra-



Young pair in a clearing



Puzzled by something in the distance



A recent captive beginning to accept defeat



A month's bag

tion. Whole villages have been evacuated and the poor people have left their homes, driving before them the few cattle which the tigers have spared and carrying the few miserable chattels that represented all their earthly possessions. The Moi village of Hong Do, where I have had many an interesting day's sport, is a striking illustration of the mentality of these primitive people when the decisions of the local wise men have achieved the force of law.

In 1923, this South Annamese village had become so completely terrorized by the man-eaters that it was decided to evacuate it. The tigers had appeared in the course of an exceptionally dry season and had begun by taking the domestic animals as they were feeding on the banks of the river, where the moisture had allowed a little green vegetation to survive. There were four of them altogether, a couple of adults and their two well-grown youngsters, and they helped themselves to an ox here and a buffalo there, with the utmost effrontery. The herds were diminishing visibly.

One day, in full daylight, they attacked a buffalo which, although severely wounded in the first onslaught, put up a terrific fight before it finally died. The herdsmen came running to its rescue, armed with long hunting-spears, but it was an evil hour for them. Far from being scared off, the tigers turned and faced them. Suddenly the biggest of them rushed on the men and scattered them, but not before he had seized the hindmost and killed him outright. The others reached the village half a mile away and raised the alarm. The tom-toms began their melancholy beat and soon there was a crowd outside the communal house.

In the jungle a crowd means a palaver. There was shouting, there were solemn speeches, and there was

much nodding of the head, sometimes encouraging, sometimes sceptical. This was followed by a general preparation for action. Every available weapon, everything that could conceivably be used to slit, to stun or to carve was brought out for the occasion.

Valuable time had been lost but the sun had not yet sunk below the tops of the mountains. The tigers, no doubt confident of their safety, had not left the neighbourhood as they usually do after a kill. They could be heard growling in a clump of bamboo and, to persuade them to clear off, the people had to collect a band of about fifty bright lads with the most raucous voices in the village to set up a yelling which supplied unexpected support for the ceaseless throbbing of the drums.

So it was that the first wave of the shock-troops, attacking in full voice, stumbled on the body of their fallen comrade. His head was untouched, but his chest was deeply gashed and his intestines had been torn out. There were also a few remains of arms and legs. One by one the tigers had sampled this new dish.

Somebody brought a sheet and the Moi made what was left of their friend into a pathetic little bundle. They did not appear to be particularly distressed, but the care with which they collected every tiny fragment of the body reminded me of a bunch of children picking up the fragments of a broken toy.

In the clearing the carcass of the buffalo for whom the herdsman had given his life was already blown up like a balloon. The tigers had not touched it; clearly they preferred the more delicate human flesh.

When the sad little procession reached the village the scene was most moving. The blood-stained burden was laid in the communal house of the dead and friends and relations gathered round to mourn their loss. The Chief

Magician approached, radiating a pomp and ceremony calculated to impress these simple souls with his power over all people and things, every word and deed. He crouched down and began to recite in a sing-song monotone the prayers of the jungle, mere childish incantations to the genii of the forest. From the shadows came the strangled sobbing and weeping of the dead man's nearest kin, huddled together on the bare earth. The houses were all shut up, while a few stalwart young men moved around, stoking up the braziers which lit up the whole scene with their fitful sinister flames.

Gradually and peacefully the night passed with no further sign of the tigers, and next morning the herdsman was buried.

For several nights nothing happened. At first nobody ventured into the clearing, and the buffalo lay there untouched. But as nothing was heard from the tigers the villagers gradually grew bolder and the bravest of them returned to their work in the forest. The rest soon followed their example and life resumed its normal routine. The death of the herdsman came to be regarded as nothing more than a mere accident.

But the tigers had other ideas. One evening, just at nightfall, a woman was on her way to visit a neighbour when she was seized and carried off. She could be heard screaming for help and the noise seemed to be coming from the neighbourhood of the track through the forest.

Armed to the teeth and carrying pine torches, the men of the village assembled. At the spot where they had heard the woman's last cries they found her basket of provisions. Here and there shreds of her clothing were hanging from the bushes, and a little farther on were bloodstains, gleaming fresh in the light of the torches. But that was all.

Next morning at sunrise, the search was continued. It proved the more difficult and dangerous because the tigers had taken refuge in a deep thicket through which it was necessary to hack a path with knives. But eventually they found her, terribly torn and mutilated. And hardly had they done so when they heard deep growlings, with repeated and threatening roaring, about a hundred yards off. They decided it would be unwise to pursue their investigations.

In the weeks that followed several more people were picked off in the most incredibly brazen manner. The last was a feeble old woman who was surprised in the very hut in which she was sleeping. The tigers simply broke down the bamboo walls and seized her without the slightest difficulty. All this time, of course, the herds were being attacked regularly and they were soon reduced to a mere handful.

The magicians declared the place accursed and ordered its evacuation. They advised quick action and a scorched earth policy and the villagers promptly obeyed. They crossed the river and two ravines and climbed three mountain ranges before they settled down in a fertile valley. It was here that I met these gallant people and wrote down in my old note-book the story they told me.

My brother George and I, with a trusted old hunter named Cham, went to inspect the deserted village. We followed the directions of the former inhabitants and arrived one morning towards the end of the rainy season. The countryside was green and fresh and thick curtains of creeper covered the few smoke-blackened ruins which the forest fires and the weather had spared. We camped there for a week and at night-time, as we all huddled round a brazier, the Moi, with their elaborate gestures, would describe the events of the previous year.

The country was full of game, but the Moi were without fresh meat. My friend killed, in rapid succession, two magnificent gaurs and an elephant with a fine pair of tusks. The news of these unexpected supplies spread with a speed I have never been able to understand. Moi arrived in their dozens from goodness knows where, cut themselves a few outsize steaks and departed with their baskets crammed full and dripping with blood.

The remains attracted the tigers and we killed two very fine specimens while they were tackling the gaur. A bear, which had climbed right inside the elephant, nearly bumped into us while he was backing out. He was an enormous fellow, covered with long hair. Instead of running away he drew himself up to his full height and stood there in a most threatening attitude, whereupon we peacefully withdrew. But the bear was angry and entirely failed to appreciate our forbearance. He came running after us with his lolloping stride and his wagging head, so I put an end to his curiosity with a bullet in his skull.

The night before we left my brother killed another tiger, bigger than the others but still quite young. When they discovered that his ears were nicked the Moi were so excited that there was no holding them. This, they declared, was the head of all the man-eaters of the neighbourhood and he had come to make inquiries. The sooner we packed up and cleared out, the better!

It was an evil spot, they said, because the wandering souls had the power to upset the aim of a rifle and deflect its shot. When we pointed out that we had already killed two man-eaters they replied that those were of a different breed and it would be wiser not to argue the matter any further; we had made matters worse by murdering, without warning, an honoured leader. My brother—

himself partly a Moi in temperament, at least—had no wish to go against this advice and expose himself to the vengeful anger of the spirits and quickly joined the queue for home. (His donkey was so small that his feet were touching the ground.) I followed behind him on foot with my rifle slung over my shoulder.

I was once staying in the mountains near Varella, a very wild rugged part of Central Viet Nam. It was the beginning of April and a pair of tigers were providing tasty dishes for their wedding feast at the expense of a small village deep in the jungle. The local wiseacres advised prudence. They settled me down at nightfall inside the communal house behind a spy-hole cut in the main wall. I was comfortable enough in my camp but this special kind of look-out bothered me somewhat. However, there was nothing I could do about it but wait as patiently as I could.

It was a brilliantly clear night, with a moon in its last quarter and millions of stars. Just as I was dozing off the barking of all the village dogs announced that the visitors had arrived. A moment later I heard the characteristic sniffing, followed by the sound of heavy breathing, and suddenly a beautiful tiger emerged from the darkness some twelve or fifteen yards away, to be joined almost at once by another, somewhat smaller. The pair of them stood side by side, gazing straight ahead with their flanks towards me. I stuck my gun through the spy-hole and shot the bigger of the two dead. The other, alarmed by the report, let out a blood-curdling roar and leapt into a clump of banana trees.

The excited chatter which broke out at once in the communal house was rudely interrupted by a dull growling from the tigress who was determined not to

desert her mate. In dead silence she approached the body of her lord and master and began to sniff it, but I reloaded my gun and laid her dead alongside him.

As if by magic, lights appeared in every house, and the two dead tigers were quickly surrounded by a crowd of men, women and children—some of the women with sleeping children in their arms. Naturally the magicians turned up to put *their* point of view. One of them—obviously the senior magician—was most anxious to establish his reputation on hard facts rather than on his frequent libations and incantations which had so often proved inconclusive. He shifted his cud from one cheek to the other and in a solemn voice said, 'All has happened as I prophesied. It was all fore-ordained.'

Nobody wanted to argue the matter. Fore-ordained or not, my 'hammerless' had proved a good deal more effective than his incantations, which had not been able to save the lives of four men and two children. However, the spectators said not a word, contenting themselves with the enigmatic smile which is the Moi equivalent of orthodox respect.

Two years later at Chamcar-Leu in Cambodia, two other man-eaters—a male and a female—fell to my gun, one after the other, but in different conditions and in the month of May. This couple used to come right amongst the houses every night and even rub their backs against the walls, but so far neither of them had ever broken in.

This time I did not take up my post in the middle of the village, as at Varella. I knew that they always took the same road and had dragged all three of their victims into the same clump of trees where there was a big bamboo thicket covering the entry. I had the middle of this clump of trees cleared and cut a sort of corridor into it which I could close with thorn bushes as soon as I

was safely inside. It was inside this blockhouse that I killed the tigers at point blank range. While the first was rolling over and over the other was growling a few feet away. But the second also presented himself to be killed less than five minutes later, in the very spot where I had shot his partner. I must admit that it was an easy triumph and I claim little credit for it. But at least I learnt—or rather confirmed—two lessons from it. Although the tiger is by nature both proud and savage he is inclined to neglect the most elementary rules of safety as soon as he believes he is the master. Confirmed man-eaters are capable of the most absurd carelessness in this respect once they have become conscious of their mastery.

Often they are getting on in years and beginning to lose their normal vigour, possibly as the result of old and incurable wounds. They reach the point when they must kill anything—or starve. Their instinct of self-preservation inclines them to the former alternative, even if it means fighting against the inferiority complex which is the result of their growing inability to keep themselves going by killing their normal prey.

I remember an incident which occurred at Phanrang when I was quite a child. Although it was such a long time ago I still remember it clearly. One afternoon some labourers brought a man who had been badly wounded by a tiger to my father. His shoulders had been badly bitten by the animal's fangs and his thighs gashed by his claws. Lying on an improvised stretcher, he told his story. He had been working in his field on the skirts of the forest while his son, a strapping young man of about thirty, was levelling an ant hill with a hoe. All of a sudden his oxen began screaming and bucking with terror and they had just got themselves completely tangled up in their harness when a tiger appeared.

Without a moment's hesitation it leaped upon the man, who cried out for help. His son turned round and saw what had happened, but by this time the tiger was on its way to the bushes, dragging the man quite easily in its jaws. The man was being held by the shoulder and blood was streaming from his legs.

The son ran after the tiger brandishing his hoe and the creature dropped its victim and turned to face him, whereupon the young man hit it a fearful blow with the sharp edge of his hoe, just behind the head. The blow landed on the cervical vertebrae and temporarily dazed the tiger, which abandoned its prey and staggered off into the bushes. The young man hoisted his father on to his back and carried him to the nearest hut. From there he brought him to my parents' house on a cart.

A *battue* was organized on the spot and several strong men went after the tiger and killed it with their spears. It proved to be exceedingly thin, with worn teeth and badly broken fangs. It was old, and probably ill, and it had kept going only by a miracle of will power. When, in addition, it grew crazy with hunger it had taken the risk of attacking a human being but had failed to do the job properly—as it would certainly have done in its prime.

The labourer died, unfortunately, despite the poultices of chopped herbs which the good women of the village applied to his wounds.

But a wounded tiger is capable of almost anything. Once at Suoi-Rong, in South Viet Nam, a tigress had killed a one-year-old foal about a hundred yards from the village and had not even troubled to drag the body under cover. I was informed and hastened to the spot. It was still broad daylight and every dog in the village was barking. I found the tigress calmly finishing off the

foal and shot her with my Mauser 9.3. To my amazement she merely turned and trotted off into the bush. I then discovered that the back-sight of my rifle, fixed at 200 metres, had been raised without my knowledge and my shot had passed high over the target. Naturally I was annoyed and my friends were surprised, to say the least; they were used to seeing me finish off a job like this with one shot.

When night had fallen the tigress returned to the carcass and the dogs began to bark again. This time I took my electric lantern and had no difficulty in killing the creature outright. The bullet penetrated the skull and the base of the snout and went right through the brain. She was a young animal, with perfect teeth and claws, but her left hind leg was completely atrophied and she had an open suppurating wound on her belly. According to the local inhabitants her leg had been broken in one of their traps and she had acquired the other wound when tearing herself free. As she was no longer able to hunt her usual prey she had taken to prowling near the village and terrorizing the inhabitants. All was grist that came to her mill—dogs, pigs, poultry, or calves. Then she had added to her menu various children and a couple of herdsmen, thus showing her determination to make the best of her enforced residence near the village.

Her death was not unnaturally hailed with joy by the villagers.

It is more than likely that if this tigress had retained her normal powers she would never have thought of attacking human beings, more especially as there was rich feeding in the neighbourhood for any number of the deer that were her natural prey.

Before I pass on to other incidents there is one ques-

tion which I should like to consider at this point:—Are tigers afraid of fire? Any native, or any European who knows the jungle, will not hesitate to say from experience that they are. Yet there are exceptions to the rule.

A friend of mine—a Government Inspector of Forests—used to live in an old colonial house built on stone foundations 6 feet deep and surrounded by a verandah. The men who worked for the government department were allowed to sleep on the verandah and their watchmen used to keep a fire going in the courtyard at nights, to keep themselves warm, to cook their food, and to scare away tigers.

About four o'clock one morning, seven or eight of the workmen were poking the fire preparatory to cooking their rice when a tiger leapt out of the bushes. Instead of seizing one of the men within reach he jumped over the braziers in one bound, seized a young Moi who was asleep in a corner of the verandah, and made off in the direction from which he had come, with the man in his jaws, clearing the fires once more on his way.

Had he been watching that youngster and picked him out as he lay hiding in the bushes? Or had he just given way to a sudden impulse, as animals of his kind are liable to? Nobody will ever know. But as the news of the young man's capture got around groups of frightened people gathered round the braziers and discussed it in hushed whispers. On one thing everybody was agreed. 'Our young friend's death,' they said, 'was written in the book of Fate.'

A quick muster called the bravest of the spectators together and the night was filled with the sound of guns being shot into the air to keep the tiger away until day-break. We found the young man's body about forty yards from the house where he had spent his last night on earth.

It was lying on the stomach with the feet towards us, and as we came up to it we thought at first that the head was hidden by the massive shoulders. But we soon discovered that there was no head at all; it had been completely devoured, down as far as the shoulders.

We laid the body in a coffin which somebody had brought along and then retired to a near-by eating-house for some coffee. While we sat there drawing up plans for the killing of the tiger somebody came running up to say that the tiger had returned in our absence, rolled the coffin over and removed the body. A search was organized at once which led us to a ravine, from the depths of which we could hear growling, so to shut him up we fired a few random shots in his direction, waking the echoes of this narrow ravine. Once more we recovered the dead body, this time minus the left leg. We hauled it up from the ravine and gave it a decent burial in the presence of the family, who had been called to the scene.

We left several tempting baits, but the tiger never touched theirs; but the very next week he ran off with another Moi, at almost the same time of the night and in much the same circumstances.

He was a well built animal, to judge by his footprints, and according to those who had seen him, his one outstanding peculiarity was a very short tail. The general opinion was that he had had an accident at some time. He came to an inglorious end, incidentally. He was surprised at a cross roads not far from the scene of his exploits and dazzled by the headlights of a car. He was shot dead and later identified by his tail.

In Suoi Ram I have seen tigers prowling around the perimeter of a paddock guarded by a ring of camp-fires, not in the least worried, apparently, by the crackling flames, the flying sparks, or the sharp smell of the

braziers. But whenever I camped in the jungle I always gave orders for fires to be lit in order to scare away tigers. The Moi would get on with the job with a will and so long as I was sitting up with them they would keep the fires stoked up; but as soon as I began to doze off I would hear them snoring with a noise like a blacksmith's bellows. Fortunately for me no tiger ever took advantage of their negligence, and if I ticked them off next morning they would say, 'Well, if a tiger had come he would only have taken *one* of us!'³

It was a cheerful philosophy and each one of them would have explained, if taxed, that what he meant was that he personally would be all right since it was not his fate to be devoured by a tiger. It is reasoning of this sort that keeps these childlike people happy as they move about in a land so thickly infested with tigers. Everybody who lives and works in the jungle is convinced that it is always the last one in an Indian file who is seized by a tiger, so all that is necessary is to avoid being at the end. It is not very different, after all, from the more civilized prejudice against sitting down thirteen to a table.

One evening I was told how a young woman of twenty who had brought up the rear on a march through the jungle had been carried off by a tiger. She had time to cry out but neither her husband nor her friends dared go to her assistance. This man-eater had a strange preference for the opposite sex, since in five weeks he had taken two women before this one. The magician spoke of metempsychosis. According to him this tiger was inhabited by the soul of a deceived husband. That was enough for the Moi. A wave of marital fidelity immediately swept through the village and all the married folk enjoyed, thanks to the tiger, a second honeymoon!

The misogynist man-eater met his end when he decided to change his diet and have a go at me. When we skinned him we found a wad of buck shot encysted in his left shoulder, a bullet flattened against the top of his skull and several more under the skin of his left hind foot. He was fat and well, however, and it seems more than likely that he had acquired his taste for human flesh during his convalescence after he had been wounded. There were great herds of fifty or a hundred marsh stags in the neighbourhood so there was no real reason why he should have had to resort to human flesh.

The population celebrated the death of the woman-hater by a grand carouse, in which we were expected to take part. Their rice-spirit brings courage, happiness and solace and any tiger who had decided to pay us a visit that night to revenge his comrade would have had it all his own way. I drank too much, like everybody else, so as not to give offence and I know I should have missed a deaf and dumb tiger at point blank range. The three inconsolable widowers were there, in fact they were the principal speakers. They sang the praises of their late lamented wives who had been so good at pounding the rice, at planting the maize, at marching incredible distances laden like mules and at smoking the humble pipe. These men were just like more civilized mourners; their dead were endowed with all the virtues. Their widowers recalling tender memories of their slave-wives, clasped the neck of the sacrificial wine bottle more firmly than ever: they had to wait on themselves for once instead of being waited on. Meanwhile they bent the elbow well and often to drown their sorrows.

It was a good party and everybody talked at once. Some of the more lucid of the men were discussing the number of nicks in a tiger's ear, each one standing for

one human being killed and eaten. There is a popular belief in these parts that every man-eating tiger keeps a careful record of his victims, making a nick in his ear with his longest claw every time he finishes one off. The villagers are quite convinced about this and declare that the account is kept with deadly accuracy.

But the rice-spirit made them argumentative and the subject became a matter for debate. Some admitted that the cuts in the tiger's ear did correspond with the number of his victims, but the visitors from the next village maintained that this was not so. The assembled company—at least, those who were still only slightly sozzled—were indignant that anybody should dare to accuse the tiger of being unable to keep his accounts accurately up to date. My old companion in arms, Cai Tau, poured oil on the troubled waters. One faction, he said, was quite right, but the other faction was not wrong; and everybody else was extremely wise and clever. The truth was that this man-eater we had killed had a tigress who shared all his chores and it was she who kept the accounts. All they had to do now was to kill this tigress and examine her ears. He had great hopes of satisfying everybody in this matter as he had himself seen this tigress. As soon as she had been killed they would have another party. This double promise brought general relief and complete harmony was restored.

In actual fact, of course, the old devil did not even know whether this tigress existed, but he was a cunning diplomat and he knew the Moi inside out. Knowing what they were capable of under the influence of alcohol he had intervened to stop the argument from degenerating into a free fight.

He was a queer mixture, was Cai Tau. Although in action he had courage enough and to spare, at the same

time he was extremely superstitious. He used to burn joss sticks before the little altars erected by passers by in honour of the tiger. These altars marked dangerous tracks from which unfortunate pilgrims had never returned. The European straight from his great cities never ceases to wonder at these superstitious practices; but the men who work in the jungles in constant touch with their primitive inhabitants understand them very well and even pray that the march of progress will leave them untouched.

Cai Tau would spontaneously make an offering to the spirits every time he killed a tiger which he thought might have eaten human flesh, firm in the belief that the homeless souls of the departed which had inhabited the tiger were now set free and must be appeased. I tried hard to persuade him that he had rendered these souls a good service in liberating them and it was they who owed him a debt of gratitude, but he remained unconvinced.

'You never know,' he would say, with his disarming smile,⁵ and it is better not to risk incurring the spirits' anger.'

He would carry out his propitiatory rites with full solemnity and sincerity, and with all the faith I knew was in him, like all those who have fixed their hopes on eternity. In the end he died peacefully in his bed. His last thoughts were of his beloved jungle where he was born and in which he had so often followed, at my side, the slippery slopes and muddy paths where the tiger's tireless patrol had spun the web of mystery which eternally draws the questing hunter to its secret heart.



◊ Twin brothers born in captivity



Royal tiger with pronounced 'collar'



'Happy pair'—for one season only

CHAPTER FIVE

Basic Principles of the Chase

PRACTICALLY every 'big shot' who happens to be passing through Indo-China is anxious to kill a tiger; so is every Frenchman spending his holidays there. The tiger's well-known ferocity gives him a sort of halo of mystery and romance and everybody wants not only to bag a specimen but to acquire some tangible evidence of his prowess to take home with him.

But between the ambitions of the sportsman and the achievement thereof there is a great gulf fixed.

The tiger, for his part, will go his own way in his own native jungle. He will appear in public only when he is so inclined. If you try to take him by surprise he is nowhere to be found, but he will turn up suddenly when you are least expecting him. You will never tempt him within range of your gun or lure him into your snare until you have learnt all his little ways and can match his wiles with your own. The Moi' have a phrase for him: The tiger, they say, is everywhere and nowhere.

For one thing his footprints can only be seen if the soil is muddy or dusty. A first-rate tracker can pick them up under dead leaves or in the grass but then only if they are recent and only by exercising the utmost patience and care. The tracks are seen clearly only when the tiger has been severely wounded; then he will blaze a definite trail by dragging himself through the grass, rolling it flat and covering it with his blood. In fairly open country it is easy enough to follow a wounded tiger,

but it is wiser to pack up as soon as the undergrowth thickens; there is always the risk of a sudden counter-attack which cannot be foreseen or guarded against.

With an uninjured tiger, in possession of all his faculties, there is little chance of picking up the trail once it has been lost, as there is with, say, an elephant or a bull. A tiger will easily give pursuers the slip and just vanish. This quite astounding ability to disappear in a second, combined with his extraordinary skill in using the natural camouflage of his background, makes him a dangerous customer in the bush. To advance in his direction merely by guesswork is asking for trouble; although himself unseen he is quick to see others.

For all these reasons there must be nothing haphazard or slapdash about a tiger-hunt; everything must be organized down to the last detail. Compared with less noble sports, it demands concentrated training and, above all, a cool head.

In Indo-China the nature of the country, and especially of the jungle itself, has led to the development of various techniques in tiger-hunting, some more successful than others. There is hunting by night, for example, with lanterns; or by day on elephant-back; sometimes tigers are driven into a *battue* by a crowd of beaters, or lured into traps baited with dead meat. This last method is far and away the most effective.

Occasionally one can bag a tiger caught in the headlights of a car as they sweep round a corner, or he may even be dazzled by the headlights as he is just crossing the road; but these are no more than lucky chances and have little to do with sport.

Some sportsmen have tried attacking tigers with big dogs, on the principle—open to considerable doubt, I think—that a well-trained pack of hounds will stand up

to a lion. I shall describe later one attempt at this type of tiger-hunt which ended in disaster.

The use of dead-meat bait is of sufficient importance to merit a chapter to itself. Meanwhile it might be interesting to examine some of the hunting techniques I have mentioned and to recall a few incidents connected with each of them.

Hunting by night ought theoretically to be highly successful but in fact it is so exhausting that it seldom comes up to expectations. This is how it is done.

The hunter carries an electric light on his forehead, fixed by a band round his head. He sweeps his beam around the area where the game is believed to be lurking and the animals, interrupted at their evening meal, perhaps, and startled by this unusual light, look up and are completely dazzled. They gaze steadily at the beam for a moment, look away, then turn towards it again. They seem to be completely hypnotized and can be approached quite safely and shot almost at point-blank range. This method, as a matter of fact, would soon become a massacre if there were not very strict regulations to protect various kinds of game. It can only be justified when it is necessary to safeguard crops, to restock the larder, or to single out a tiger and draw him away so that he can be shot at a more respectable range. I used the night hunting technique only for these three purposes—especially the last—at a time when I was young and conceived it my bounden duty to come to the rescue of a primitive tribe and rid them of certain tigers which were terrorizing their villages.

But my apprenticeship was by no means uneventful. One night I discovered, too late, that the eyes I had been looking into were those of a tiger, but fortunately he also was not too sure of himself and seemed bent on

giving me the slip. On another occasion, after I had taken every conceivable precaution against what I thought was a tiger it turned out to be a wild ox lying in a thicket and peacefully chewing the cud. The third 'incident' was when I made the opposite error and mistook the eyes of a tiger for those of a soft-horned deer. I was actually disabused of my error in circumstances which very nearly proved fatal.

But by the exercise of patience I gradually acquired experience on these nocturnal expeditions of mine so that today I can identify accurately at a glance any animal whose eyes I see shining in the beam of my torch. In recognizing an animal by its eyes there are many factors to be taken into consideration—the general background, whether in a hollow, on rising ground or on the level, the weather, the time of the year, whether the animal is in season or is carrying young, and so on. Even the way it walks can betray its identity. Eyes which move jerkily sideways or upwards and downwards through a wide arc belong to a deer or an ox. Eyes which move steadily from side to side, stop suddenly, then seem to dip and waver in front of you before coming straight towards you, are a tiger's. You can tell the difference between a tiger and a panther by the distance between the eyes. . . . These details are all important and, to an experienced observer, they are conclusive.

In my early days I was so enthusiastic about night-hunting that I cheerfully gave the best years of my youth to it. I seemed to enjoy it best of all in heavy rain and I could never resist the temptation to go out on the trail in stormy weather. On nights that were as black as ink you would find me following the jungle tracks—and enjoying every minute of it. I knew that the wild animals would choose the same paths as I was using, being just as

anxious as I to avoid the thick vegetation, and I was thrilled by the idea that at any moment at least one of them might suddenly appear and challenge my right of way.

In these night operations I killed only nineteen tigers all told, although I saw three times as many. Sometimes they slipped out of the beam of my lantern before they were within shooting range, but several of them did try to pick a quarrel with me and thereby signed their own death-warrants.

The net result, of course, seems trifling, especially if you count the number of sleepless nights I spent, the miles I covered and the malaria I picked up on those steamy nights in the jungle. I should add, in my own defence, that the only lantern I had, for all purposes, was an acetylene lamp from an old bicycle, which I rigged up for this particular job. Electric torches did not come into use until much later in this part of the world.

It was on 11th June, 1916, that I killed my first tiger and I remember the occasion as if it were yesterday. I had just left college and nothing I had learnt there had prepared me for the frightening encounter which I quite unintentionally brought upon myself. The rainy season was in full spate and the jungle was sodden and steaming. After dinner, beneath a sky heavy with low black clouds, I went out to try my luck at hunting from an ox-cart. I was barely seventeen at the time, an orphan earning a starvation wage on a rubber plantation. The month of June marks the beginning of the hunting season for soft-horned deer. These animals change their horns once a year and when the new ones first begin to grow again they appear as lumps of gristle which are much esteemed among the Chinese for their medicinal properties. Three

pairs of these soft horns would be enough to double my income!

On that June day, at nine o'clock in the evening, I saw two magnificent eyes glowing from a bush at the edge of the jungle. My only weapon was a 16 mm. gun which fired buck-shot. The eyes seemed to belong to a gigantic beast and I was already working out the fortune that its young horns would represent. I began to approach it as near as I could, having taken the precaution of rubbing garlic on the muzzles of my oxen, so that they were unable to smell anything else. (This was a useful tip; not only did the garlic overpower their own smell but they, for their part, would be unlikely to pick up the scent of a tiger and bolt in a panic.)

I had pulled my cart to a halt and got ready to fire when suddenly the eyes were no longer there. Without making a sound the animal had come several yards nearer and there were his eyes again, shining even more brilliantly than before. I took careful aim and let fly with my left barrel.

Immediately there was a roar like thunder. It was a tiger, and as he came bounding towards me a cold sweat ran down my back. Fortunately he was slowed down by the tall grasses and prickly bushes and I just had time to give him the other barrel right in the mouth. The oxen, of course, were by this time thoroughly scared. They had got their reins into a hopeless tangle and were right out of the shafts, head to tail. The mist combined with the black smoke from my cartridges to make an effective screen between me and my tiger, and to crown everything my lantern flickered, went out, and I was in semi-darkness.

Meanwhile I had ejected my two cartridges but the cardboard container of one of them had got torn off

and was firmly wedged in the chamber, so that I had to pick it out with my fingers. Hardly had I got the wretched gun loaded and shut again when suddenly the tiger was standing there in the uncertain half-light, barely three yards away from me, his head covered with blood. His ears were laid flat and his teeth bared; he was indeed a terrifying sight. One round fired point-blank brought him up on his hind legs and a second, full in the throat, stretched him on his back. But he managed to reach his thicket again, cursing me roundly.

With a speed which can be imagined my charioteer and his assistant had righted the oxen and immediately set out at full speed across the ant-hills. It was a mad ride while it lasted, in fact until the axle hit a stump, when the cart stopped dead and threw us all out. After emergency repairs we set off again and returned home without further incident. We could none of us stop talking of our adventure and kept telling one another exactly what had happened as though we had not all three been present and seen the whole thing. On one point we were in complete agreement; the spirits of our ancestors must have been looking after us!

Next morning I went to retrieve my prize. I sold his skin and bought myself my first rifle, a modest African Lebel, which I was very proud of. Before the month was out it had done a fine job on a tiger than came at me on a bend in a footpath. I shot him dead where he stood, a good thing for my self-confidence. As a matter of fact I needed something like that to set me up; my effort with the old 16 mm. gun had certainly been successful, but it had been a near thing and I must admit I had been somewhat shaken.

About a fortnight later something else happened which put me right on top of the world. One night I came

across two Moi chasing a tiger. They were on a buffalo and sitting back to back so as to forestall any attack from the rear. They had only one lantern between them, an old contraption which burnt peanut oil and threw a feeble flame for only a few yards at the most. Despite this primitive light, and with only one bow between them, they had managed to wound a tiger with an arrow. With my new gun I had no excuse for delaying the finishing touches. And, since the steeds of the Moi always made a bee-line for home at the first sign of danger ever since one of the buffaloes was eaten by a tiger in the open, this tiger was mine.

Hunting tigers by night on elephant-back is a sport for kings. I found it useful for studying the tiger's reactions to the beam of a strong searchlight. Seated on high, I would get as close as possible to the tiger with my lamp dimmed and then, at a distance often or twelve yards, suddenly switch my full 500-candle-power beam in his face. He would stop dead immediately and flatten himself on the ground, looking absurdly like a small boy who had been 'caught out'. The elephant, on my word of command, would let out a trumpet blast and I would then switch off the light. If I gave him time before I switched it on again he would disappear; he was not going to face that dazzling beam again if he could help it.

The sight of a tiger lit up in the darkness by a powerful torch is unique—a sight worth seeing at least once in a lifetime.

When hunting tigers on elephant-back the thing to do is to beat the hiding-places of the marsh-deer, where they like to lie up when they come back from their feeding grounds. You will probably start one or two tigers on the edge of these thickets round about April and May; they will be keeping an eye on their larder

and will resent intrusion. If driven to it they will make a break for the open meadows, where the young grass is just showing green after the recent bush fires, and despite their growlings and grumblings you can safely go after them. One or two elephants play the part of advance light infantry, so to speak, and keep the tigers on the run. Sooner or later, exhausted and discouraged, they will turn on their pursuers, prepared to sell their lives dearly. At this point, if you have had a good run and enjoyed the chase, you usually let the tiger get his breath back. To kill him then would be stupid and unsporting, and a tiger who has been reprieved in this way will usually find his way back to the cover from which he was first roused.

If an elephant presses too close on a tiger's heels he runs the risk of being attacked himself. Should this happen the rider must be prepared to shoot the tiger on the spot, or his elephant will be so terror-stricken^{gn} that he will never get over it; he will remain mulish and unco-operative and never again be of the slightest use.

The *bāttue*, with a large army of elephants, has always been regarded as an honorific occasion among Indian princes, who can afford to put on splendid displays of this kind for distinguished visitors. In Indo-China these occasions are less magnificently organized but they are still beyond the means of all but a very few.

In Southern Annam, where you can really see big game in their natural state, I have had very good sport hunting tigers by the 'decoy' method, but it is not a sport you can indulge in anywhere or at any old time. The beginning of the rainy season is the best time to lure a tiger or a panther, either in daylight or at night.

I have spent many happy and healthy hours on the right bank of the Phanrang River, between Rung Lai

and Trai Thit, and on the left bank near Ma Ti, attracting tigers by various 'calls'. One of my Moi trackers could give a perfect imitation of a young deer in distress, using a tiny 'bird-call' made from a palm leaf. By cunning modulations he could even make it sound as if the little animal was running around looking for its mother. Eight times out of ten, especially round about twilight, a tiger would come to investigate.

Sitting back to back in a bush, my tracker and I kept watch over the surrounding area and nudged each other silently if either saw the slightest movement. Usually the tiger's approach was betrayed by the sudden flight of startled birds or by the waving of the long grasses. Now and then he would appear, completely without warning, behind a curtain of leaves. He would stand there without moving for minutes on end (an accomplishment of most of the felines) and listen to the cries of the young deer which seemed to him nothing but the promise of a tasty meal. If the tracker stopped blowing his little instrument the tiger would withdraw, almost wistfully, and not without a few regretful backward glances. The deer would call again and back would come the tiger. He would stand there as if puzzled, take a good look round, then retreat. Every time the call was repeated the tiger would come back, until finally we would have him in a suitable position for my shot. Several times I was lucky enough to spot a tiger between the clumps of grass or in the bushes surrounding our hide. They would prowl around expectantly, more or less hidden, waiting for nightfall. But as soon as the light began to fail I was the one to decamp, and my withdrawal never failed to cause a good deal of grumbling.

One evening a couple of tigers appeared suddenly, although neither my tracker nor I had had the least

suspicion that there were any about. They arrived from different directions and settled down to watch us. Not a movement escaped them. They had come expecting to find a young deer and it must have been quite a shock for them to find us instead. The nearer one crawled on his belly towards us with long strides. The other, discovered quite accidentally by the tracker, was content to sit quite quietly and inspect us through a gap in the branches. A bullet between the shoulders drove the first one back on his tracks, but he was not quick enough to escape a second shot. He rolled over with a roar and struggled back to the thicket from which, a few minutes earlier, he had heard the call of a young deer. We found his dead body a few yards farther on. His less aggressive companion had disappeared at the first shot. These two tigers were not necessarily a pair and were probably hunting independently when they heard the 'crying' of the fawn.

The great disadvantage of this technique is that if a big Saumur deer happens to be anywhere near and hears the 'cry' of the distressed fawn it will come galloping straight towards the bush where the sound comes from. The only thing to do in that event is to show yourself at once and halt the charge.

The 'decoy' several times gave me the chance to shoot a panther, but once, at Nha-Trinh, it played me a dirty trick.

I had been out after game to re-stock the camp larder and was coming back after a highly successful sortie, when I suddenly thought I would try 'calling' a tiger. It was one o'clock in the morning and I had put out my acetylene lantern as the generator needed re-charging. It was a very dark night and my Moi tracker began blowing into his little instrument. I spent some time

screwing up my lantern and fixing the rubber tube, but eventually I got it going again. It spluttered a little at first but was soon giving its normal light. After I had fixed it to my cap in the usual way I began to turn round, throwing the beam in a wide circle around me, but before I was three-quarters through my circle I saw a tiger about fifteen yards away, crouching in the bracken. He had crept up under cover of the darkness and had no doubt been watching my every movement closely. We were completely at his mercy; why did he not leap upon us then and there?

I have never found a satisfactory answer to that one.

For once the tiger did not attempt to evade the search-light but merely blinked a little now and then. I waited till I could see a little more of him, took careful aim and fired. He disappeared into the bushes and at daybreak we found him dead about fifty yards away.

The *battue* is really a co-operative sort of affair. It certainly makes it possible to round up tigers at any time but it requires a considerable army of beaters. If you try it on a small scale you soon discover that it won't work; it is essential to have a sufficient number of helpers to block every possible exit. Moreover not every type of country is suitable for a *battue*. In densely-covered areas for example the tigers are at an advantage. They will even lie flat on the ground between a couple of beaters and let them pass close by without giving themselves away. In open country, of course, the tigers would be seen as they approached.

The choice of a suitable place can safely be left to the local inhabitants. In any Moi tribe it is possible to recruit trappers who know the countryside, and the habits of tigers, perfectly. Once the favourite routes of the

tigers have been found all that remains to be done is to organize a vast enveloping movement, driving the animals until they are within close range of the guns. Any hunters who are not daunted by the prospect of a little foot-slogging can join the beaters and help search the coverts. Any tigers who are reluctant to move on or who try to double back are easy game for them—but they have to be constantly on the alert.

On the day of the *battue*, provided the hunters have been lucky enough to secure the co-operation of the villagers, the volunteers are rounded up as quickly as possible. Practically every able-bodied man is there and the assortment of equipment they have mustered between them is fantastic. Some have bows and arrows, some spears, some knives; there are strings of Chinese crackers to throw into the bushes where the tiger is hiding and a whole collection of cymbals and other noisy contraptions to help frighten him out. When they add their own shouts to the already deafening noise the result is guaranteed to send cold shivers down the spine of any youngster at his first *battue*.

Every kind of wild animal is soon moving before the army of beaters, often in a wild stampede. (Strangely enough, the same animals seldom give the impression of any fear when being stalked. They amble along quietly, sometimes even stopping altogether for a short rest. It is only when beaters press close behind them that they break into this wild gallop.) The deer leap around or pause to recover their breath, their horns waving above the grasses, and the males assert their authority by nudging the more nervous does in the rump. Partly hidden by the cloud of dust raised in the general scrimmage, wild boars trot along, snorting, their snouts stretched out, surrounded by their raw-boned sows and the young

hogs with their queer striped coats. Other animals, hurrying or dawdling, according to their different natures, are swept along, obviously with no idea of where they are going or why.

The noisiest and the most conspicuous animals in the whole stampede are the elephants. They crush everything in their path and their shrill trumpeting is the dominant note in the general commotion.

As for the tiger, he just sneaks through the undergrowth with no appearance of undue haste, the hardest of them all to drive. I have seen some of them still lurking around when every other animal has been driven off. But his tendency to 'stay put' is his own undoing. The circle of beaters will gradually close in on him until, in the end, he finds himself facing a gun-barrel whichever way he turns.

The whole thing is a wonderful sight. The first round-up of animals for the Ark must have been something like this! At the last minute the tiger makes up his mind and chooses his way out. If he has taken refuge in a grassy area, his exit is revealed by a thin line of trampled grass. If he crosses a marsh, the splashing of the water gives him away to the hunter waiting for him, though he may not know it, on the other side.

Despite the many *battues* I organized at one time, the sight of a tiger retreating before the beaters never failed to thrill me. Often I would see him crossing a clearing right under my nose, pursued by a yelling crowd. He would look back at them, baring his teeth, and then set off once more, keeping a distance of fifteen to twenty yards between himself and his pursuers but obviously growing worried. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to film him just then. One morning, I remember, a tiger suddenly stopped between two little

coppices to look round at the beaters I happened to have joined, and I was lucky enough to shoot him point-blank.

If the district is known to be full of tigers it is easy enough to organize a *battue*. Everything depends on the wealth and the whims of the host and he has only to name his price. First of all, as soon as it is broad daylight, a certain number of 'baits' are placed at strategic points in the selected area. A few putrid corpses will soon attract the game. If every exit is stopped, several tigers will be found in the sportsmen's sights. The last phase of such a *battue* can be most spectacular.

All the foreign visitors whom I used to entertain before the war and the distinguished guests for whom I was asked by the government to organize hunting expeditions were astonished at the number and variety of wild animals to be seen on these occasions. The secret of my success was nothing more than detailed careful organization plus the fact that, after thirty years on the job, I had the best materials and the most highly skilled assistants at my disposal.

One night I took some Americans round the areas where we had planned a *battue* for the next day. They were amazed at the number of beasts we encountered, although I should add that bait had been put down at suitable spots over a distance of about ten miles. As we came up to each bait we left our cars and walked towards the carcass, carrying rifles and projectors. I walked in front, with my electric torch shining straight ahead, and as soon as I had fixed the eyes of a tiger in the beam I would point them out to my guests. At once the beams of several more projectors were focused on him with such effect that he stood out as boldly as if we were seeing him on a cinema screen. My American friends understood

that I was anxious only to show them a tiger by night and they refrained from shooting, saying that they really preferred to face him in broad daylight. Their patience was rewarded, for the next day they had several tigers and one lioness with a cub brought into their line of fire. One of them provided himself with a first-rate hearthrug by shooting a splendid male, but the others were quite content to film the animals and take a few snapshots.

And here's a yarn worth telling at this point, not so much as a big game story but because it is so utterly fantastic.

Some years before the last war I met a prosperous American who confided to me his intention to hunt or to capture tigers (I was never sure which) by chasing them with a pack of hounds and driving them into a *cul de sac*. According to their owner, these hounds had already shown their mettle in *battues* with lions. Despite his best endeavours to persuade me, I was never quite able to take him seriously.

I learned that these dogs had been trained in a suburb of Saigon, where the American had been able to get hold of a baby tiger. Fortunately for the tiger cub, he was behind the bars of a cage, for if the ferocity of the dogs was anything to go by he would have had very little chance. He was obviously not in the least disposed to cross swords with a pack of hounds crouching all round his cage with every claw bared.

My American assured me that lions would never stand up to his dogs and preferred to beat a hasty retreat.

But the first time they came up against tigers it was a very different story. The first mastiffs to come to grips with them were as playthings in the tiger's claws and the engagement was both brief and conclusive. Only by

breaking it off were we able to rescue the survivors, and several of the dogs were killed.

None of the techniques I have mentioned, however, even the simplest, are of any use to the city man who proposes to spend his holidays hunting tigers. They all need too detailed a knowledge of the country and everything in it, especially the animals. Without this knowledge you will never even see a tiger. If you happen to come across one at night time when you are driving your car, with headlamps blazing, and pot him as if he were a common or garden hare, the experience gives you no right to lay down the law about 'the luck of the chase.' You may drive a tidy number of miles at night without seeing a tiger!

For years I did a lot of night driving, coming home after dinner, perhaps, or setting out at about four in the morning to drive to some distant timber depot. I always drove an open tourer and I always had my gun ready to shoot any worthwhile game which got caught in my headlights. As far as I can remember I was never exactly overwhelmed by the number of animals I encountered.

My usual companions on these trips were my brother George and my old tracker, Cai Tau, and my car at that time was an old Lorraine-Dietrich, 1914-18 vintage, which, when fully loaded, weighed every bit of two tons. Its top speed was about forty. One evening we set out after a meal for a hunting-ground some seventy or eighty miles away. We had our guns with us, but as we had already had one annoying breakdown we were trying to make up for lost time and none of us had thought it worthwhile to load them.

With the best speed we could get out of her the old bone-shaker went charging through the inky black

night. On either side stretched the endless giants of the Giaray Forest. We had just passed the Vo Dat cross-roads and I was negotiating a winding downhill run when suddenly I saw three tigers bang in the middle of the road. One, a tigress to judge by her figure, was taking her ease on the tarmac stretched out full length, while a magnificent male who was obviously her suitor was gently licking her. A third, a little more than a cub by the size of him, was sitting beside the lovers watching this demonstration with studied indifference. It was undoubtedly a touching sight and nothing would have pleased me more than to pull up and watch it for a moment.

But unfortunately the brakes wouldn't work! I realized in a split second that I should either have to break up the party or land us in the ditch. I put my foot down hard and made full speed for the lovers and their bored spectator. The bumpers hit the tiger and his mate, who disappeared under the car, yelling and swearing with all the rage of interrupted lovers. The old Lorraine-Dietrich bumped and swerved violently and the bored spectator, who had taken a sharp knock from the offside wing, turned a spectacular somersault into the bushes—which gave him something quite new to be indifferent about!

Another unfortunate breakdown stopped us twenty or thirty yards farther on. My brother had loaded his rifle by then and Cai Tau had lit his lantern. The tigers were still around, grumbling and snarling. In the beam of the lantern we could see their great yellow eyes coming and going, appearing and disappearing. The car had no self-starter and I had to get out and crank her up. It was a long job. The moment I saw those eyes coming close I would leap back into the car. As soon as they

withdrew, out I would jump to wrestle once more with the starting-handle. At last the old coffee-mill began its grinding once more and I was able to retire for good. Blood stains on the road, at the site of the love scene, showed that the unfortunate beasts had been injured, but although we tried hard to trace them we failed; they had completely disappeared.

Next morning I came back to resume the search. It took me to the edge of a deep and most uninviting ravine, and I decided that honour was satisfied. I know only too well that a wounded tiger has no gentlemanly instincts whatsoever.

I realized then that I had overplayed my hand and might at any moment be attacked, killed and eaten—which would, after all, have been an end and not a means!

CHAPTER SIX

The Dead-bait Lure

PROVIDED you have the carcass of one of the larger animals, and provided it has "reached an advanced state of decomposition there is no doubt that the baited trap is easily the most efficacious method of getting the tiger where you want him. The carcass can be smelt a long way off and never fails to attract a tiger; and there is enough food there to last him sometimes as long as a whole week if he is not disturbed.

From the moment he has touched the bait the hunt is on, but only if it is dead bait. 'Live' bait in my experience often lets you down. You can tie up a cow, a horse or a buffalo—if you are sufficiently hard-hearted—and if it does happen to attract a tiger it will only be by accident; it may stay there indefinitely without being disturbed, and if the wind is in the wrong direction and the bait happens to be behind a bush, a tiger will pass within a few feet of it without suspecting its presence. I have often seen a tiger's footprints in the morning quite close to a tethered animal, although the hunters had been keeping watch all night without having seen one pass.

In 1921, I bought an ox which had dislocated a shoulder in an accident and I thought it might make an interesting bait. It was in the care of an old herdsman who led it out to have a good feed and a long drink and then took it to the spot where it was to act as bait. A look-out was made in a neighbouring tree and I was able to

watch proceedings. I sat in that tree for weeks and nothing happened. Over and over again the ox was moved but all I got from the experiment was an attack of malaria. The beast himself, tired of waiting, would lie down every evening when it got dark and chew the cud quietly until sunrise. One night while I was watching, a man hunting by lantern came past and shot the poor ox. Realizing his mistake he made off quickly, and my mobile bait, which had failed to interest a single tiger, brought joy to the hearts of the natives, who cut themselves some first-class steaks from the carcass.

The deceased was replaced by a sick buffalo, but it died after three weeks without even a formal courtesy call from a tiger. As soon as it began to go rotten however, the tiger appeared. Unfortunately this was before I knew about the powerful attraction—for a tiger—of a decaying carcass and I did not trouble to keep up my vigil after the buffalo died. Hitherto all the tigers I had killed had either been attacking my live-stock or had crossed my path at night while I was hunting deer.

But my education on this point was soon carried a stage further. In the same year, 1921, a famous hunter, Fernand Millet, developed the 'dead bait'⁵ system—of which, in fact, he was certainly the inventor. I was one of the first to use the new technique, and my bag of tigers of all sizes was pleasantly enriched as a result. It was really a revolution in big-game hunting. Fernand Millet himself, before he introduced the new method, had met with disappointment after disappointment and had spent many *units blanches* in his 'hides' watching a tethered bait. One day he discovered that when a tigejr killed his prey he would devour every scrap of the corpse whatever its state of putrefaction. He told me how he had shot an elephant in the forest and learnt

later that the great carcass had provided a tiger with meals for a week. He went to see what was left of it one evening at dusk, found the tiger there and shot it.

Once he discovered what an attraction putrid meat has for the tiger, he came to realize that so long as the tiger's meals are guaranteed he gives no thought for the morrow. Since laziness is his besetting sin, he has no objection to an existence which required no effort and he does not think of looking for a fresh victim until his reserves are completely exhausted.

The first essential for a hunter who proposes to use this technique is a detailed knowledge of his district. For one thing he must set up his watching post in such a position that the pestilential odour of the carcass will not make him sick. Secondly he must be careful to keep the approaches to the bait clear and leave adequate access for himself to and from his look-out post. The bigger the carcass the wider it will broadcast—given a favourable wind—its delectable invitation to the tiger. The 'Aristotle's'⁵ deer and the wild boar make good bait, especially if there are two or three carcasses available. Best of all are the greater oxen, gaurs and bantengs, wild buffalo and, of course, the elephant. Unfortunately these giants are not easily transported any considerable distance from the spot where they are killed to the best place for putting them down as bait. But the difficulties are not insurmountable. With a local cart and a few draught buffalo it is possible to shift large pieces of gaur or elephant and pile them up together to increase the size of the bait, although this manoeuvre is naturally more difficult in hilly country.

The best plan is to buy a buffalo from the nearest village—or, failing a buffalo, an ox or a cow—and slaughter it on the spot where it is to be used.

Ordinary deer make poor bait, partly because they are not large enough and partly because they are comparatively easy to dismember. The tiger snatches a limb or a joint and runs off with it to eat it under cover somewhere. He does this again and again, with such speed that the hunter, although he is on the look-out, seldom has time to get in a successful shot. The flesh of the larger animals is tougher and the tiger has to eat it where it lies, at the same time offering a steadier target. The flesh of the domestic buffalo is particularly tough; that of the domestic ox and of the horse less so, but still by no means tender.

Choosing a site for the bait is a matter for careful consideration. It must be somewhere in the jungle, preferably near a stream, so that the tiger can wash his food down every now and then. If you put a carcass anywhere in the open it will be cleared away in no time by vultures. Moreover in open country the tiger usually waits until nightfall before coming to dinner. If he is hiding among the trees on the plain he may approach the bait from any direction, although the watchful hunter can usually see him coming.

The ideal place for a bait is somewhere on the skirts of the forest where the tiger is known to be hiding. It is out of sight of the vultures, and the hunter can approach his look-out post from the opposite direction to the tiger's.

When the experienced hunter has selected the ideal spot he can then prepare an approach route for himself by cutting down the long grass so that he can creep up silently and surprise the tiger while eating. If he builds a protective screen about twelve or fifteen yards from the bait, the hunter will get a splendid view of the proceedings. Sometimes a tiger—startled despite the hunter's

careful precautions—will put on a noisy act and leap around in a narrow radius instead of running away, as one would expect him to. When this happens the sport becomes more interesting—but it can be a bit of an ordeal for a beginner.

A point worth watching is that the bait must not be laid in such a position that the tiger can take cover behind it. It is useless, for example, to fasten it to a big tree; the tiger will simply help himself to a joint and retire behind the tree to eat it. If it is tied very loosely to a stump it is not so bad because the tiger is bound to remain visible. The rattan cane, which grows everywhere in the forest, is ideal for tying the bait as it is very pliant and will withstand any amount of pulling and twisting where wire might tend to snap. Any kind of chain makes too much noise and arouses the tiger's suspicions.

Of the various types of 'hide' the best is a look-out in a tree, preferably behind a screen of vegetation. A professional hunter of pre-war days, M. Plas, invented a look-out built actually on the ground and had his best results with it. It was a kind of artificial bush, just big enough to allow a man to sit inside it on a very low seat. It offered little protection against rain, but it was a good idea because it provided perfect camouflage. From its depths the hunter could watch the bait through a spy-hole cut at eye-level, and in due course he would use the same hole for the barrel of his gun.

This type of look-out enabled M. Plas to bag the most suspicious tigers—those which had been shot at and wounded on some previous occasion and would abandon the bait the moment they spotted a 'hide', whether it was behind a screen or simply built in the main branches of a neighbouring tree. Over and over again I have seen

the suspicious type of tiger assuring himself that the bait is not overlooked by any possible look-out post. What is more, they have often played hide-and-seek with me for quite a while before giving me a chance to shoot. They would fix it so that they could see me without being seen and just to prove they had seen me they would always come and have a good go at the bait during my absence. But I usually knew a trick as good as theirs. Sometimes I would build a fresh look-out on the opposite side of the bait; sometimes I would build one on the ground in a big bush; sometimes I would watch for them a long way from the bait and surprise them on their favourite route to it; and sometimes I would wait at the spot I knew they would visit for a drink after their meal. Whichever way I chose, I usually got them in the end.

The most cunning of them cost me several baits before they finally stopped a shot from my rifle. Four times tigers broke through a cleverly devised ambush but were subsequently caught in a steel trap. Each time, on returning from the bait, I found the tiger firmly held by a hind foot and reduced to impotence—but not to silence. There was nothing he could do about it but roar with anger.

I tried the 'Tlas' technique three times, with complete success, but then gave it up. It is really effective at heights of three or four thousand feet above sea level, where it is reasonably cool, and Plas himself admitted that he had had the best results with it in mountain country. But in low-lying savannahs and marshes, or in the red-earth country of Eastern Cochin China, the artificial bush was useless because of the heat—which was intolerable in any case out in the open. My three experiments were conclusive, and each time the tiger was completely deceived; but when my men came to release

me—and 'release' is the operative word—I was not only running with sweat but I was covered from head to foot with wood-lice. These disgusting creatures are normally about the size and shape of the tag on a boot-lace; when gorged with blood they are at least the size of a cigarette. They flourish in rich damp vegetation and fall from the branches of trees on to the backs of horses or men and start sucking straight away.

When I add that my three experiments with the Plas system were carried out in a valley much frequented by elephants and that I would crouch in my bush and feel sure that the elephants I could hear trumpeting all round were making straight for me, it will be really understood that I decided, all things considered, to return to my old method, the 'hide' built behind a screen. It is both simple and practical. All it requires is a careful preliminary examination of the site, the making of a screen of leafy branches at the foot of a tree or a thick clump of bushes, and the building of a platform about four feet above the ground. On one side the screen faces the direction from which the tiger is expected to arrive, which can easily be seen from his footprints; on the other, it faces the track which the hunter has already cleared to make his own silent approach route. With crepe soles—and plenty of practice—I usually reached the screen without being discovered. The tiger would be eating solidly, or noisily crunching bones as I approached. If he stopped eating I would freeze in my tracks, but many a time I have frightened him off, despite my care. I like to think he had been startled by the sudden movement of a lizard, or the warning cry of a bird; but it is possible that he had seen or heard me.

Sometimes there was no doubt about it at all. A tiger once wounded at a bait knows exactly what to look out

for next time and never relaxes his vigilance, so that it becomes all the more difficult to approach him without being detected. The first time this happened to me the tiger and I were on the point of exchanging our roles, so to speak. Fortunately he was a youngster and when he suddenly appeared no more than a dozen yards away, the shock of our meeting—which was as violent for me as it was for him—sent him leaping off into the bush roaring with fright.

All the evidence suggests that if a tiger is interrupted he is careful not to return to the bait in daylight. If he comes at night, it is very difficult to get him because he disappears into the darkness at the least sound and dodges the beam of the hunter's torch before he can be spotted. It is sometimes possible to catch up with him by one or other of the methods I have mentioned, but the first thing to do is to destroy the screen and remove the ladder to the look-out post, substituting for it a rope-ladder which can be drawn up out of sight. This at least offers a chance, because if the tiger comes back he concentrates on a close scrutiny of the ground without looking upwards. A more experienced tiger will disappear without attempting a return visit. The suspicious type will notice that there is no longer a look-out post, as far as he can see, and may take some little time to make up his mind—time during which it is all the more essential for the hunter not to make the slightest sound. Once the tiger is satisfied that all is well, he will begin to feed. Even then patience is still necessary. If the tiger is allowed to get really settled in to his meal he will get more and more absorbed and his suspicions will be gradually lulled. The hunter who has bided his time will then be amply rewarded.

A tiger who survives every trick the hunter can play

may well return to the bait again and again, but if he is once wounded it is not easy to catch him again in the same place or by the same ruse.

In practice—whatever the theory—everything in this business obviously depends on details; the smallest slip can ruin everything. That is one reason why it is imperative to take every detail of the ground into consideration and to get everything working smoothly early in the proceedings. As a general rule, the screen and the look-out should be finished before the bait is laid and once this is fixed the hunter must cut down all the big tufts of grass and remove all the shrubs and tree-stumps so as to give himself an absolutely clear field of vision. This is perhaps not so important in daylight operations, but if there is a single bush or branch to break the beam of the torch at night time it can completely upset the hunter's aim or give away his position. This clearing of the field of fire is only possible where the vegetation is normally quite thick; too drastic a clearance would defeat its own end by arousing the tiger's suspicions. He is not a complete fool.

To sum up, then, one needs a fairly shady spot, with an inconspicuous approach, and the ground all round the bait should be cleared of everything which may obstruct the hunter's view. If the tiger is clearly visible from the moment he appears on the scene until the moment he begins to feed, the hunter's problems are enormously simplified. It is indeed possible to bag a tiger without taking all these precautions, but many an inexperienced hunter has come home empty-handed simply because he has not done everything he might have done to guarantee success. Others have chosen their spot well and laid out their bait but have omitted that preliminary preparation of the site which is always

such an advantage. **If** the clearing of the site and the construction of the look-out are left too late the tiger's suspicions are bound to be aroused and he will go and seek his dinner elsewhere.

Every hunter has his own ideas about a look-out. For myself I make no bones about constructing a really solid platform, with the logs well spaced to cut out all risk of creaking. It has three sections; the one at the back is protected from the rain and the one at the front is open to the sky. In the middle is a comfortable seat with a back, which allows me to sit in a normal position and not get cramp after sitting still for long periods. On my chair is a camp cushion and under it I keep a thermos, provisions, first-aid equipment and some dry clothes. The whole contraption is concealed by leaves and branches, with a number of gaps through which I can easily watch the arrival of the tiger and his subsequent movements. The platform is covered with a layer of sacks to make a thick carpet which effectively deadens the sound of my footsteps. I even have a primitive rack for my guns and a projector mounted on a branch, which my assistant operates on my instructions as soon as it is dark. So I have the choice of awaiting the tiger on the ground behind the screen, or of sitting up in my look-out to keep my vigil. I find the latter method specially welcome in wet weather.

To steal a march on a particularly nervous tiger, I often take up my position in the look-out very early and pass the time reading. I have been known to get so absorbed in my book that I have been recalled to reality by the tiger bumping into my 'hide' and making it shake before I have even realized that he has arrived. Once I remember looking up from my book absent-mindedly and suddenly seeing a tiger standing stock-still by the bait.

In the remotest parts of the jungle the tigers are not so suspicious as those whose faculties have been sharpened by contact with man. They come to the bait just when they feel like it, by day or by night; for them you need to set the bait on the skirts of a thick wood or anywhere where there is luxuriant undergrowth. I have known them come to the bait either at sunrise or at sunset, but some seem to prefer the hour of the siesta—that hottest moment of the day, when the sun is at its highest and most scorching and nature herself seems to be sleeping. The years have passed, yet I still seem to catch the atmosphere of that moment and my ears recapture the song of the crickets, sleepy, monotonous, filling the air with its endless, shrill insistency. . . .

I remember a tiger arriving on the scene one day at noon, quite calmly and with no sense of fear or hurry—rather like somebody who had just got up after a good night's sleep. He raised his head to sniff the air and then lay down at full length close to the bait. He seemed quite remote from the cares of this world as he lay there, with his eyes half closed and his nostrils quivering; and he seemed to be inspecting the carcass with the quiet confidence of a gourmet nursing his appetite before he starts to eat. On another occasion I watched a tiger settle down to his meal the moment he reached the bait and then stretch himself out lazily on the path he had come by, with his head protruding from the bushes. Yet another tiger lay like this from eleven in the morning till one o'clock in the afternoon, looking like the limp and dejected creatures one sees at the zoo. His eye was fixed on infinity and he seemed to be dreaming of some magic jungle of the imagination where whole joints of meat, just sufficiently 'high', fell right into your open jaws. . . . Then he got up and stretched, licked the carcass all

over and departed, his tail waving vigorously. Before he disappeared completely he turned back for a last look at the bait. I had been keeping this tiger for a friend to kill, but I had given instructions to my men to come and fetch me for lunch in the camp and I was afraid their arrival might upset my plans and frighten the tiger off altogether; so I had no option but to add him to my list.

When a hunter comes stealthily up to his screen and finds that no tiger has arrived as yet, it is a good idea for him to examine the surroundings carefully before approaching anywhere near the bait. If he gets there at say seven in the morning and finds that large pieces of meat have been taken from the carcass, this means that the tiger has been at it quite recently. If the carcass looks quite freshly torn he is only a few minutes too late but he may as well pack up and go home, unless he has nothing else to do. There is a chance that the tiger might return about noon, but it is much more likely that he will not come back until the evening, just before dark. If the hunter takes up his position at about four in the afternoon he should have a good chance of getting his victim.

Tigers who come to the bait only at night, do so for two reasons; either they suspect a trap or they have already had one unfortunate experience at the same place during daylight. In either case they tend to be in a great hurry. They come first when the night is really dark, between seven and eight o'clock—earlier if they happen to be more hungry than usual—and will return for two more meals, one at about midnight and the last just before daybreak. Sometimes, if there are a lot of tigers about, the hunter will hear in the darkness the sound of feeding and the sound will seem to be recurring quite frequently—certainly more frequently than once

every four hours or so. The chances are that his bait has been discovered by several tigers hunting together. As usual the feeblest will be waiting a little way off until the stronger ones have finished eating. The rules are very strictly observed. No gate-crasher will dare to start while the 'host' is still eating and even when the 'host' has finished he will stay near the carcass so that he can keep it under observation all the time. In the end the uninvited guest may have to give up hope and go away, dribbling with desire, to look for some other victim. . . . After all, we tigers are sticklers for etiquette, you know. We aren't oxen or buffalo, or elephants; at least we know how to behave at table. It isn't as though eating was just a mere formality. A good meal demands good manners and in an old established family like ours—we *are* the lords of the jungle, you know—there are certain traditions which the best tigers know how to respect.

One night in the Co Can district, near Vo-Dat, I had arranged for a friend of mine to kill a tiger. A few hours later another tiger came to the bait, obviously unaware of the body of his comrade lying there. This second visitor gave us the slip: as soon as the projector was switched on he leaped behind a bush and stayed there without budging until the beam was switched off again. Then he crept back to the bait, only to repeat the manoeuvre as soon as we lit up. In the end our light was too much for him and he disappeared altogether. A week later, however, he was caught in a trap.

The next night the same friend joined me again at the same spot and we were puzzled by a great deal of coming and going all around us in the darkness and even right underneath our look-out. We could hear rustling and snuffling and the typical grunts and growls that nearly all animals make when they come close to each

other; then presently we heard eating and crunching noises, accompanied by various disappointed grumblings, and we knew that several tigers had gathered round our bait.

The harsh light of our lantern revealed four tigers, one busy with the bait, the others sitting apart, waiting politely for their turn. My friend shot the one in possession and the report sent the other three roaring off into the darkness. It was not until then that we noticed a tiger that had been sitting just below our look-out and yet another which had been sitting a few yards behind us. In fact there were six tigers altogether at that meeting: the bait had been dragged through the forest and it had certainly been effective.

A gathering of that size might easily have ended in a fight. The reason why it did not, I think, was that it consisted of two tigresses, with their cubs, and one male. It was the male who was actually feeding and if his manners seem to have been something less than gentlemanly that was probably because he was master of the house and was not disposed to humour the women and children just then. Once he had had enough he would almost certainly have allowed the others to take his place at table—a gesture which no other male would expect of him.

That night we changed our look-out twice. As a matter of fact I had set up a whole chain of observation posts which allowed me to cover an area with a radius of at least two miles, and at every one of them I had disturbed a tiger at some time or other without getting a chance for a shot. When we returned to our original look-out that night, or rather, at daybreak, the carcass had been considerably eaten into; the tigers had come back after we had gone.

T.T.—H

I once set up a look-out in open country. Just as day was breaking I shot an elephant with a splendid pair of tusks on his way back to the forest after his feed. It had been a very dry season and the usual fires had reduced the grass almost to ashes, but there was a clump of giant reeds next to some swampy ground, which had been spared. By crawling through this clump—which covered an area hardly big enough for a four-roomed bungalow—I was able to approach my elephant and get him just where I wanted him. There was the lightest of breezes to blow away what dust I raised, and it was in my favour. (Actually I had been inspecting this piece of marsh in the hope of surprising a few deer, and you can imagine my joy when I found instead this solitary elephant.)

Every cart in the neighbourhood had been pressed into some operation or other for the Ministry of Public Works, so this three-ton mountain of elephant had to be left where it lay on the open plain. My men had left me to approach the elephant alone, but they now came up and helped me remove the tusks, dividing the trunk into three portions for themselves. By this time the sun had risen and cleared away the night mists; it was a beautiful day, with clear views right to the distant horizon.

Soon the vultures came down, in ever narrowing circles. Where had they come from? The clear blue sky was darkened by clouds of circumflex accents as the heavy black creatures gathered from all points of the compass at the mysterious summons. In no time the giant disappeared beneath the crawling, heaving cluster of these hideous scavengers. How often have I seen this miracle! Not a bird of prey to be seen, in the trees, on the ground or in the sky. A hunter kills some big animal and in a few minutes the skies are black with vultures.

Nobody knows how they get their information, yet they come from everywhere. What is this extraordinary faculty of theirs, which allows them to spot a single carcass in all the wide emptiness of the plain?

I have always been quick to take advantage of their powers, incidentally. More than once I have been able to trace a victim which I have wounded and then lost, by observing the circular flights of vultures over the body.

My men told me that despite the vultures—and the lack of cover—the tigers would soon come to visit my elephant. The vultures would go on pecking at it, plucking out its eyes and tearing off strips of flesh, but they would not be able to finish it off before it began to decay. Every prowling tiger within a radius of several hundred yards would smell that filthy odour and would know that somewhere within smelling distance a delightful meal was waiting for them.

The men were right. Seven days later I found vultures still round the carcass quarrelling over pieces of the stinking meat. I went amongst them with a stick and they flopped heavily away, almost too full to fly. The only possible place for a look-out was a clump of reeds. The bush fires had been so thorough that year that even the tallest grasses had hardly escaped. In the thickest part of the reeds I had a platform built about six feet above the ground, on four wooden piles, solidly strengthened with struts. Once installed I should be hidden by the reeds. The important thing was to prevent the tigers from discovering the look-out if they should take it into their heads to approach the carcass by way of this clump of reeds. So I collected some thorn bushes and made myself a simple little fort', about twelve feet square. If a tiger came up against this he would be forced to go round it.

I took up my position just before nightfall, with one Moi, and with one more rifle than I usually have on these occasions. The Mo'i's job was to handle the projector.

Late that night a tiger duly turned up. As I had expected he began to approach the carcass by way of the reeds—just as every tiger instinctively does—to keep under cover as far as possible while making his preliminary inspection. I could follow his progress by the quiet rustling in the grass and soon I knew he had not encountered my thorn bushes and was passing some two or three yards farther away from them. He sat down at the edge of the reeds and stayed there for a moment taking everything in. He was so still that I could hear nothing and thought he had cleared off. After several minutes of deathly silence there was a sudden burst of roaring; a second tiger had just arrived and had declined to acknowledge the first comer's rights. They fought it out in the darkness and I was just getting ready to take a hand in the fighting when the Moi quietly took the electric torch out of my hands. One of the tigers had decamped and all was silent again. Then we could hear the winner feeding, while the loser went farther and farther off, growling with disappointment at having missed a good dinner.

The victor was left to his meal and he made the most of it. We could hear his fine teeth tearing at the rotten meat and his powerful jaws champing it. Seldom have I seen a wild animal so greedy with his food. My companion whispered in my ear that this might be my chance and I put the rifle to my shoulder, nudging him to switch on the projector. Suddenly both tiger and elephant were bathed in light. The tiger had an enormous joint in his mouth and crouched down without

letting go of it. He was sideways on, in an excellent position for a shot and I hit him just below the shoulder. He gave a great leap in the air and disappeared behind the elephant, where I could hear him growling for two or three minutes. I waited till he was quiet and then went down from the look-out with my torch. There he lay, close to the elephant, quite dead.

Although I shone my torch all round I could see no sign of the other tiger, but he came back later on and roamed all round the reed thicket for the rest of the night, without daring to come near to the bait. He may well have come back again for a feed on subsequent nights but I never found out as I had other business on hand at the time which prevented my visiting the spot again.

This was not the only time that I had to wait for a tiger in open country after I had shot some animal that was too big to move. Although I did what I could to fix up some kind of an observation post, the results were usually disappointing.

In the wide open spaces it is not difficult to stalk a tiger and shoot him, but I found that to lie in wait for one in any kind of 'hide' led to a great waste of time and a disproportionate amount of discomfort, especially from mosquitos. There can be no doubt, in fact, that the use of a carcass as a bait saves the hunter a great deal of labour and reduces the risks of accident.

A number of other animals are attracted to the carcass when there is no tiger about. Panthers and bears are rare visitors, as the former have no use for putrid meat and the latter tend to despise the tiger's leavings. But I have seen bears occasionally. There was one enormous black bear with a lovely coat who paraded a minute or two in the light of my projector for my admira-

tion, and another which I shot just after he had been scrabbling about inside an elephant's chest. If wild boars find the rotting carcass of an ox they usually have a good go at it, but in this respect they are easily surpassed by wild dogs. A pack of these latter will clean up the body of a large animal in no time, right down to the bare bones.

But if the tiger returns to the carcass all the little hangers on make themselves scarce. They have no wish to argue the toss with the master of the house and soon scatter in all directions without even waiting to pass the time of day.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Shooting and Stalking

WHERE the shooting of tigers is concerned, accuracy is a matter to be taken seriously. You can prepare your campaign down to the last detail and carry out your programme with every possible precaution; but in the end your success or failure will usually depend on your first shot. The tiger must be killed outright, or at the worst must live long enough for no more than a few wild leaps. If you shoot and miss that is more or less the end of any serious hunting because you will not get a second chance. If he reappears in daylight it will be long after you have departed; and if he comes back at night he will disappear again at the least sign or sound of you. A wounded tiger on the other hand remains a constant source of danger. The hunter who goes rushing after him takes his life in his hands; in his haste to catch up with his victim he is apt to ignore the most elementary rules of safety.

It is difficult to decide which is the best weapon for shooting tigers since every hunter has his own preference based on his own experience. The best I can do is to mention, as some kind of a guide, the types I have found most satisfactory. For a long while I used a Lebel, but I must admit I chose it in the first place only because I could not afford anything better. Still, it served me well and I would often find my tiger lying dead or mortally wounded a few dozen yards from where he had been shot.

In the course of my career I tried many other types—Winchester, Browning, Savage, Mauser, Mannlicher, 'Double-Express', Rigby, and Westley-Richards 450-400. I came to the conclusion that the small bores were quite adequate, and the best thing about them was that they did not damage the tiger's skin too badly. I used expanding bullets only when I was hunting in very thick jungle country and it was more than usually urgent to kill my tiger outright first time.

The Westley-Richards 450-400, which was my constant companion during my last ten years before the war, was an all-purposes gun with which I killed elephants, gaurs, wild buffaloes and tigers with equal success, and the tigers were never messed up, as they would have been with a more powerful rifle. I always had it with me in the jungle as there was always the chance of meeting big game of some kind. It had been brought to Indo-China by an Englishman, who had sold it to an old hunting-partner of mine. He in his turn made the mistake of entrusting it to me when he went home to France on his first furlough, and when he came back he had to admit that I had quite definitely adopted it as my own. This friend and I incidentally, kept together right up to 9th March, 1945, when the three of us escaped together from the clutches of the Japanese—my friend, the old Westley-Richards and I.

At other times I had other Express rifles of larger calibre for long range work and especially for tiger hunting.

The smooth-bore shot-gun, firing buck-shot, is not to be recommended, but I did use it sometimes in some country districts where there was a risk of a stray bullet from a rifle wounding a human being. Apart from that special case, the rifle was always my first choice. You

never quite know where you are with buck-shot. I have killed tigers with it as easily as with a rifle bullet, but I have also done no more than mortally wound others and have found their decomposing bodies some time later.

One evening I was in a Moi village when fine rain was falling incessantly and I suddenly came face to face with a tiger. I let fly at him at ten yards range with two rounds of buck-shot and to my amazement he disappeared. Months later in the same village I captured a tiger and found his flesh full of buck-shot. His muscles were so tough that they had protected his vital parts when any ordinary animal would have been killed outright. Two pellets were firmly wedged in his left brow and a third in the side of his right lower jaw. He must have suffered a lot, but he had quickly recovered and on the day he put his right fore-paw on the plate of my trap he was in perfect physical condition. His case is enough to condemn the use of buck-shot except in emergencies, as when stalking a tiger in thick jungle—always a chancy business—when it may be necessary to shoot quickly on sight.

But it is one thing to have the most effective weapons; knowing where to hit the tiger with your shot is just as important. While I am only too willing to pass on the fruits of my own experience the really keen beginner should carry out a kind of post-mortem examination of his first tiger in order to learn the relative positions of the various organs.

If a tiger is on the bait and I am behind my screen, my favourite shot is fired the moment the tiger offers me a full length side-view. A bullet in the middle of the neck, as near as possible to the head, will invariably sever the cervical vertebrae and kill him outright. Even

if the bullet hits a fraction above or below the vital spot the tiger has 'had it'. The shock will stop his charge and he will soon collapse.

Another of my favourite shots was in the chest. If the tiger is broadside-on the point to aim at is the intersection of a line drawn from the withers to the front paws and a line drawn horizontally across the middle of the chest. If the aim is not quite accurate and the bullet hits a shade behind this point it will still reach the heart, while if it is a little too far forward it will almost certainly prove fatal. All these points are worth remembering.

I never had much use for the shot in the head, mainly because it is apt to fracture the skull, and a good undamaged head is the most attractive feature of a tiger-skin rug. A head-on shot is just as effective if the hunter aims at the chest, a little below the muzzle; the shot will either sever the main artery or pierce the lungs.

If you are shooting a tiger from a look-out while he is feeding and you have him head-on to you, a shot in the fore-part of the withers, where the neck joins the shoulders, cannot fail. If he has his back to you this shot is no use unless you aim at a point behind the withers. Every tiger I have shot this way has fallen dead at once. When shooting from above at a tiger standing sideways on you aim at the same spot as when you are on the same level, but make allowances for the downward trajectory of the bullet. It is on occasions like this that it is essential to know the exact positions of the heart, the lungs and the other organs.

Shooting at the shoulder-blade is not recommended unless you have a heavy large calibre rifle and wish to paralyse the tiger temporarily with a view to photographing it in its rage when it comes round. The tiger can also be paralysed by a shot in the region of the

lumbar vertebrae, if firing from above, or, if on ground level, by a shot that passes right through the tiger from the tail. The disadvantage of this latter method is that the bullet enters at the root of the tail and always damages it; when the skin is being prepared the damage has to be patched up and it is difficult to conceal the stitches.

After you have shot your tiger it is wise to make sure he is dead before you go near him. A shot tiger will sometimes lie stock still until the hunter comes along and then leap to his feet and run away—or alternatively charge. At other times, although not dead, he will only be able to raise his head, in which case the hunter will quickly put him out of his misery.

I remember once a hunter shot a tiger just about night-fall and after stirring the body two or three times with his boot went off to the village to get a cart. When he came back it was dark but the tiger had gone. He was naturally amazed and was searching all round by the light of the usual torch fixed on his forehead when the tiger suddenly leaped upon him and he was very seriously wounded.

Another friend of mine, a civil servant in Cambodia and a hunter of considerable experience, decided one Christmas holidays to try his luck in the jungle. He was fortunate enough to meet a tiger which he duly shot, but the tiger was able to crawl away into an almost impenetrable thicket. Next day my friend found him, still alive but in a very bad way. He went up close and finished off the poor beast and in doing so he received quite a gentle pat from one of his paws—hardly enough to scratch him. It was no more than a dying reflex action on the part of the tiger.

The young man was quite proud of his success but he

foolishly neglected his scratches—in fact he forgot all about them until he began to feel a throbbing pain in his leg. After a few days the pain got worse and he was admitted to hospital. But it was too late. Tetanus had set in—obviously from the tiger's claws—and he died. He was barely thirty years old.

This foolish and quite unnecessary tragedy gave me quite a shock. Some of my friends who were with the young man at the end told me that his wounds were quite insignificant and with only the slightest precautions his illness and death could have been prevented.

Sometimes a tiger which has been wounded but not in a vital spot will behave as if he had suddenly been seized by a devil. He will leap up and growl and then run round in small circles like a puppy-dog chasing its tail. Then he will roll over on his back, get up again and immediately rush straight ahead at an incredible speed. Whatever happens the hunter must never turn his back at this point. He must shoot again immediately, otherwise the tiger will either disappear altogether or hide in the bushes and leap out on the hunter when he is least expected.

An experienced hunter in a look-out can be certain of his tiger provided he takes his time and keeps his head. A beginner is often misled by the difficulty of estimating the correct range and tends to waste his shots, but the chief thing is to keep one's nerve, make no sudden or violent movement and be careful to squeeze the trigger steadily and deliberately.

A wounded tiger is a menace to people living in isolated settlements; when he recovers he finds he has lost some of his powers and cannot pursue his normal prey, so he takes to attacking human beings. To the hunter who wounded him it may be a small matter; one trophy

more or less makes little difference anyway. But the people who have to go on living in the neighbourhood may be forgiven for seeing things from a different angle. No wonder a white man is received with a certain reserve when he first comes into a Moi village, although it soon disappears once the visitor has proved himself. He has only to practice a few shots at a gourd in the daytime, or shoot a few deer in the village plantation at night, and his reputation is made. A plentiful supply of fresh venison does wonders when it comes to making friends and there's nothing like a full stomach for breaking down suspicion and seeing the best in everything and everybody.

Stalking a wounded tiger is a first-class sport, but personally I think it is wiser to keep out of his way and I have always done my best to kill my tigers outright. Yet however calm I kept, and whatever I did to make sure of getting my victim first go, there were some which let me down. I usually found that my bullet had only narrowly missed some vital part—which was why I sometimes preferred the expanding type; within limits, I could be relied on to correct slight errors of direction.

One night as we were driving home after dinner at a friend's house, I saw a tiger in the road. I was driving my Delahaye, with a young man on his holiday from college sitting on my right, and my family were a few hundred yards behind in a comfortable Panhard. We all had our headlights full on.

I stopped the car at the spot in the bushes where the tiger had disappeared and went to look for him with my projector. Suddenly my companion saw him behind a tree less than five yards away. I quickly handed the projector to him and he kept the beam shining on the tiger, while I went to switch off the engine of the car and to

get my rifle. The tiger slipped round the tree-trunk with his face towards me, blinking in the brilliant light. I aimed carefully at his neck and squeezed the trigger. The tiger let out such a roar that my family in the Panhard thought something terrible must be happening, and at the same moment leaped—a frightening, contorted yellow shape—straight for the projector, which was by now on the bonnet of the Delahaye just in front of the wind-screen. He fell head first against the spare wheel on the left mudguard and nearly knocked the car flying. Then he stumbled on to the footpath, picked himself up again and tottered away, obviously in a daze and brightly illuminated by the headlamps. After about fifteen yards he stood up on his hind legs and roared, then staggered into the undergrowth and collapsed behind the first clump of trees.

My wife and children, who had seen everything from the front seat of the Panhard, thought I was done for when that yellow thunderbolt had seemed to hurl itself upon me. Actually one or other of us would have been for it if the projector had not been put on the car bonnet. When I came to examine the corpse I found that my shot had been a little less accurate than usual, but the tiger was so strong and vigorous that he had not only had the strength to leap in the air but had even covered quite a respectable distance before dying. An expanding bullet would have killed him on the spot. His right lung was blown to bits and the shock had made his heart stop beating. But I ought really to have fired a second time when I saw that my first shot had not killed him.

If you decide to follow up a wounded tiger it is as well to examine any blood stains on the trail. Generally speaking, thin-skinned animals bleed more freely than thick-skinned and the tiger usually bleeds very freely at

first, even if his wound is not mortal. The colour of the blood varies quite noticeably according to its source. If it is from a vein it is a much deeper red and turns black as soon as it begins to congeal. This is most obvious wherever the tiger has stood still for a moment and left large clots with this unmistakable and characteristic colour. If there is blood on both sides of the track it means that the shot has almost certainly passed right through the body and is certain to prove fatal in the end, although the wretched beast may survive long enough to drag himself a mile or more, to die in some inaccessible ravine.

There are other ways in which the distribution of the blood stains shows the seriousness and the nature of the wounds. If a limb is broken the trail is continuous and the grass is smeared with blood. Blood flecked with spume shows that a lung has been punctured and the tiger will soon become exhausted and die. But it is important not to confuse blood-stained saliva from a wounded jaw with the pinkish froth from a bleeding lung; the latter is usually found in smaller clots. In time these lung-clots turn black. At first they are easily seen on the trail; then they get more and more infrequent until they stop altogether. The tiger should then be found somewhere not far off. Many a hunter, worried by the apparent disappearance of his victim, has mistakenly concluded from the absence of any more blood stains that he has given him the slip.

Blood from the mouth, unlike that from the lungs, flows more and more freely, always mixed with saliva, but the wound is not fatal—which means that stalking the victim is dangerous.

If the tiger is bleeding profusely it is usually wiser not to be in too much of a hurry. It is equally unwise to

delay if the bleeding is scanty. The colour and amount of the blood, the clots and the presence, or absence of saliva, the signs of bleeding on both sides of the trail or on one side only—all these are things which will help the hunter to catch up with his victim and, if his shooting was not hopelessly bad, to finish off the job properly.

Another kind of sign is the route which the wounded animal takes. If he avoids hills, for example, and keeps strictly to the level he is probably feeling *JLoojweak* to climb. If he jumps into a stream with steep banks and stays in the water instead of climbing the opposite bank, he is in a bad way and will not last long. If he zigzags about he is worried and distressed, trying to find his way back to his lair. Such an animal can be specially dangerous in long grass, as he is apt to change direction sharply. Anybody trying to stalk him is in danger of a flank attack, since a wounded tiger often attacks by sound. Hearing somebody near him he will charge without warning and with disconcerting speed. It is possible to move quietly under trees without making a sound and to examine every corner of the wood, step by step. But in long grass even the most skilful *Moi* trackers cannot help making rustling noises which the tiger hears immediately if he is on the alert.

If you are looking for a wounded tiger among the reeds, in tall grasses or dwarf bamboos, or in the green grass of burnt lands, the best thing to do is to make as much noise as possible, as if it were a *battue*. Men with long sticks beat each side of the track, while others shout and beat tom-toms. A string of Chinese crackers, judiciously thrown, may frighten a tiger from a thicket. In the end the din will break his spirit if it is kept up long enough and loud enough; his enemies seem too many for him and he will try to give them the slip.

The hunter who is following up a tiger he wishes to finish off must always carry his rifle at the ready. If he is charged he may have to hold it tight and shoot without having time to bring it up to his shoulder, since the charge is always from close quarters. Provided he keeps his head the hunter will have little difficulty because fortunately all these big creatures—gaurs, elephants and especially tigers—freely advertise their intention to attack by snorting and grunting.

The first accident I saw in the course of stalking a wounded tiger happened more than twenty-five years ago. At that time a certain cattle breeder had enormous pasture lands between Xuanloc and Baria, stretching as far as the eye could see and containing thousands of head of prize cattle. The tigers showed an interest in all this live stock which was, to say the least, excessive. Not a day passed without their helping themselves to one or two beasts, and every night they could be heard prowling around the cattle-sheds. Sometimes they broke down the fences and they seemed to be quite undeterred by fires or by the shouts of the watchmen. The proprietor asked me to help and I was able to teach the robbers quite a sharp lesson. One night I shot one of them in the head with my Lebel—a champion tiger at that, both for size and for courage. He picked himself up and charged the palissade of stakes behind which I was stationed. I shall never know exactly how I got out of that tight corner, but somehow I managed to fire a second shot, which fractured a hind leg, and he broke off the attack and went away growling. Visibility was poor because of mist so I did not risk a third shot. As night fell the mists got denser and the night darker. For at least an hour I could hear the complaints of the wounded tiger getting feebler and feebler as he got farther and farther away.

Next morning there were plentiful blood stains on the ground and at intervals the grass was crushed flat where the tiger had fallen down. Nevertheless he had had the strength to pick himself up every time and continue his journey. Eventually after many collapses, he had reached a clump of thick-leaved plants about three or four feet high. Nothing short of a *battue* would have dislodged him from this retreat so I went back to the house and collected about a hundred volunteers with spears and pikes. We even had to bring matchets to cut our way into the thicket.

After endless discussion the beaters spread out in a fan, and, at the word of command, they all moved inwards, beating the ground with their sticks and shouting for all they were worth. The juicy plants were flattened in broad paths and the ground was cleared. Before this part of the job was half finished we could hear sinister growlings and as the men got nearer the terrified tiger, wounded as he was, buried himself deeper in the wood. The beaters were now getting impatient and they abandoned all precautions. Rushing across the last patch of grass to reach the first of the trees, they gathered together to decide on the best tactics to follow. I advised them against any further advance as the wood was very dense and the whole operation looked too dangerous to me.

We were just turning back when we saw a solitary man coming towards us. We made signs to him to stay where he was, but he was still walking across the beaten plants when we suddenly heard a terrible roar, and there was the tiger standing erect on his hind legs in front of him. The poor man was struck down in the twinkling of an eye without making a sound. Everybody rushed forward to his assistance, my brother and I in

the lead, but the tiger hung on to his victim until the last minute and then slipped away into the long grass. We could see the almost imperceptible waves in the grass which marked his passage. I took a pot shot just ahead of the ripple and hit the tiger, who roared even louder and turned to face the little group made up of my brother and me and one or two of the men. (The others had gone to identify the dead man; he was one of the herdsmen, who was just coming to ask how the hunt was going. He had been with me the night before at my first encounter with this tiger.)

At the middle of this patch of thick-leaved plants there was a real disturbance going on where the wounded tiger seemed to be alternately flopping down and picking himself up again, then starting to stagger away. Actually he was gradually coming towards us all the time and as soon as we realized this we retreated to a spot where we had more freedom to move. He followed us, and we could hear his hoarse breathing before we eventually saw him, half-hidden by the vegetation. His fore-quarters were held up only by his left fore-leg, the right one—the one nearest us—being red with blood from top to bottom. As he watched us with a fierce look in his eye I shot him through the heart.

His death was the signal for a mad rush to see the corpse. He was a fine creature much larger than average, with a splendid set of teeth and a fine skin. My first shot of the night before had cut a fairly deep groove in the top of his skull. The second had broken his right fore-foot just above the joint and lodged in the bone. So far no vital organ had been hit. My third shot, after the death of the herdsman, although something of a speculation, had penetrated the base of the lung.

This particular tiger was no man-eater. After he had

been wounded he had tried to save himself by hiding in the thicket with a view to a further withdrawal in due course. Despite his wounds he still had the courage to stage a come-back when he thought his pursuers had come a bit too close. Why or when he left the thicket and took to the patch of thick leaved plants remains a mystery. When the unfortunate herdsman suddenly crossed his path the only thing he could do to defend himself, seeing that with his badly wounded foot he could not knock him down in the ordinary way, was to crush his head between his jaws.

It was one more example of the fact that a wounded tiger is an extremely dangerous animal, to be watched most carefully right up to the last minutes.

The old people of Indo-China tell the story of a French civil servant stationed in an Eastern province—a confirmed sportsman and an occasional hunter—who was caught by a tiger he had already wounded. He was knocked over and held down by the tiger's foot, but the animal could not maul him as he had a fractured jaw. The Frenchman was saved by his presence of mind. 'Come round on the left side,' he shouted to a friend who was with him, 'and shoot him behind the ear. He can't see that side because his left eye is done for.' He recovered from his unpleasant experience but had to have a leg amputated.

Another Frenchman, a settler well-known throughout Southern Annam for his kindness and for his social activities, was also attacked unexpectedly by a wounded tiger. He actually wrestled with the tiger and used his hunting-knife with such skill that he won the bout, although he was injured. He happened to be a man of exceptional strength—and incidentally a great hunter.

A certain infantry officer in charge of a lonely post,

although another of these very strong men, was not so lucky. He was in the habit of taking a walk by himself in the jungle and one evening he ran into an old tigress. There must have been a terrific struggle, although there was nobody there to see it, for they found him dead next day with his hands gripping the neck of the tigress, whom he had strangled! It is only fair to add that this animal had been weakened by an accident of some kind which had left her with one fore-foot wasted away and half her jaw missing.

Naturally the pursuit of a tiger whom one is determined to get at any cost offers the hunter a genuine thrill; at one time I could not have enough of it. When the fire was in me I used to imagine that I could atone for bungling my shot by proceeding to ignore the first elementary rules of safety. On the other hand it always seemed to me lazy to send your beaters to pick up a wounded tiger while you sat down with your back against a tree and just waited for them to return with the spoils. It was not, to say the least, the conduct of a sportsman. Stalking a wounded tiger, considered as a sport, has its risks and it is for the hunter to take them, not his hired servants.

After all it's the hunter who keeps the skin!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Traps and Trapping

IN Indo-China the natives living in the jungle prefer catching tigers by trapping them—using their own methods—to hunting them. Time means nothing to them and any method is bound to appeal to them if it involves the minimum of labour, carries the minimum risk, and is practically fool-proof. All that their system requires is patience.

Their favourite trap is a ditch dug on the tiger's most frequented routes and lined with sharp stakes. The ditch is camouflaged with a trellis of bamboo, lightly covered with a sprinkling of earth and dead leaves, while thorny branches are cunningly placed to guide the tiger into the trap without arousing his suspicions. Sooner or later he is bound to fall in and land with all his weight on the stakes. This type of trap is just as dangerous for strangers wandering about the locality as it is for tigers, so it is customary to mark the trees within a certain radius with an agreed sign. Despite these signs, however, it is wise to take a guide when travelling in any area where the natives are known to have dug tiger-traps.

There are other types of trap which are equally well concealed and it is impossible to be too careful in the jungle if you wish to avoid them. There is the back-breaker, which crushes its victim with a heavy baulk of timber, and the 'javelin', with its terrible power of penetration. These primitive contraptions are fixed in

position by strong ropes of liana, in such a way that the least disturbance releases the 'weapon'.

I have often seen a tiger lying at the bottom of a ditch, groaning with pain. The last time was at Tai Lai, where the natives had gathered round and were enjoying the spectacle—the more so as this particular tiger had been helping himself to their cattle at the rate of at least one a week. There was a running commentary going on all round the ditch. . . . This tiger was one of the worst. He had been so cheeky. He used to stand up to the beaters. He would certainly have become a man-eater, and so on—all interspersed with vigorous figures of speech and shouts of laughter. The wretched animal was transfixed in several places and looked like a museum exhibit stuck on a cushion. It took nearly an hour for him to die, and the end came after a series of ghastly choking noises, gradually getting lower in pitch and farther apart, for all the world as if he was being slowly strangled. When they got his body out of the ditch it was greeted with all sorts of insults, many of them quite filthy, and one man raised a cheer by piercing it with a spear.

The 'back-breaker' is most used by the Chau Ma, who live between the Lagna savannahs and the last outcrops of the Annamese mountains. It is a kind of heavy platform made by logs bound together with rattan. When in position it looks like an immense oyster, open to a height of four or five feet above the ground. The bait is fastened in the angle formed by the trap and the ground, and when the tiger gives it a tug he releases the catch and the platform falls and crushes him.

I once saw one of these traps in operation at To-Vuc. The moon was shining and it was quite a pleasant night for observation. The tiger prowled around the trap for

a long time, went away, came back, had a good sniff and then lay down and stared at the bait. He was obviously puzzled and seemed to be thinking things out. Then at the end of half-an-hour—perhaps more—he went resolutely up to it. Hardly had he touched the bait when the trap fell on him, crushing his hind-quarters and breaking his legs. We had to shoot him to put an end to his suffering.

The 'javelin' type consists of a sort of spear, very sharp, which is shot like an arrow from an enormous bow fixed firmly to a tree. The 'arrow'³ is set at a height roughly corresponding to that of the average tiger, and the bow is held taut by a catch.

So much for the height adjustment—you can estimate the height of a tiger approximately from its footprints, adjustment for direction is a more delicate affair. A string made from creeper is fixed to the catch in the bow and stretched across the path the tiger is likely to take, so that if he touches it with his foot the catch is released, the 'javelin' is shot from the bow and the tiger gets it full in the body. The natives responsible for the setting of these traps are skilled specialists and deservedly respected.

Theoretically the 'javelin' should hit the tiger in the side where it will not come up against a large bone and so will go in deep. The trap may be said to have failed if he is wounded in the leg, the shoulder or in the neck, when the wound will not be fatal but the tiger will be permanently crippled. This means that he will be unable to hunt his prey in the usual way and will almost certainly become a man-eater. If he is transfixed, the ends of the 'javelin' foul the trees and bushes on either side of him, aggravating his wounds, and he soon dies from loss of blood.

Another simple trap is the 'slip-knot'. This is easily detected by human beings and even the most inexperienced hunter can see it in time to avoid it; but the tiger seems no more suspicious of it than of any other kind.

You choose a bush near a big tree. Your bush must be tough but flexible as it has to support the whole contraption. You bend the top down towards the ground and fix your noose to this end of it. If the bait is put into a hole two or three feet deep, the noose, which is laid on the ground around the hole, must fit it exactly. Alternatively the bait can be placed in a bush almost surrounded by clumps of thorn, in which case the noose is placed across the tiger's only possible path to the bait. The rope holding the bush in its bent position is also fastened to the bait. At the least touch the bush springs back to its normal position, the noose is tightened and—theoretically—the tiger is caught by the neck and hanged. Sometimes, however, he is caught only by a foot or a leg. In either-case he fights like a devil. Naturally his struggles are soon over if the noose has caught him fair and square round the neck, but even if he is held only by a leg he is well and truly caught and his struggles are useless.

The wonder is that the bushes which the natives use, while small enough and flexible enough to be bent over to touch the ground, are yet strong enough to take the weight of the tiger without breaking. Another marvel is that the natives know exactly how to fix the noose so that the tiger, while hanging by one leg perhaps, is still not close enough to reach the trunk of the bush and bite through it with his teeth.

Another popular type of trap consists of a sort of mouse-trap shaped like a letter V lying on its side. It is made of stakes driven deep into the ground and the V

is about twelve to fifteen feet long, about one foot six inches wide and three feet high. One end—the end where the bait is set—is closed and the other end is sealed by a falling panel as soon as the bait is touched. The tiger is imprisoned and the trap is too small to allow room for any violent movement.

This simple device is sometimes quite unexpectedly successful. An old friend of mine in Chua-Chua once caught seven beautiful tigers in a year with it. He had the traps reinforced with strong steel bars and sold the tigers to zoos and menageries. Any qualms he may have felt were soon silenced by the fact that one of them, which he was unable to place straight away, cost him the best part of his profits to feed for three months. Some of the others died in captivity on the way to Marseilles.

It was on this mouse-trap idea, and the principle of a ferret-cage much used in Viet Nam, that I based my invention of a rectangular mobile tiger-trap. It was a simple cage, about fifteen feet long and not very high. At one end—the closed end—was a small compartment in which I would place the bait—dead bait if I was after a tiger, live bait for a panther. The other end was closed by a vertical sliding panel. The whole contraption could easily be moved about on the chassis of a cart and transferred from the cart to a lorry.

When I was out to capture live animals for sale I used to set it up wherever I wanted it. Arrived at the site I would send the cart some distance away while I placed the trap in the bushes and effectively camouflaged it. Two men were detailed to inspect it daily, but they never had to go right up to it: a trapped tiger can be heard at quite an appreciable distance.

At first my invention was not a success. The tiger I was after had killed a stag in the forest about a hundred

yards from a roadmen's camp. The carcass had already been partly eaten when I had it placed in the compartment of my trap which was designed to hold the bait. Several nights running the tiger came and prowled round the trap. From the outside he gnawed the bars against which the carcass was lying but he was careful not to enter the trap. It was obvious from the footprints he left all round the entrance that he had been terribly tempted, but he was an unusually suspicious type and this unfamiliar contraption, with its door standing up vertically above the entrance, was clearly worrying him.

After this had happened twice I realized that my invention needed some adjustment, if only in its general principles. Obviously, if it was to succeed, the cage had to be set up and camouflaged and the bait fixed in position, before the tiger had had a chance to see it. He had to find nothing in any way strange or abnormal when he came to inspect the bait—and this trap looked like a sort of jungle pig-sty! To capture a tiger using bait that he had himself killed—as was the case with my first unsuccessful experiment—the best thing is to set up the trap on the route which the tiger normally uses without disturbing his 'kill'. He will go on eating for some days but meanwhile you have placed a new bait in the trap. Eventually this latter bait will tempt him and by this time he will have got used to seeing the cage.

Not that all these precautions are always necessary. Wherever human beings are rare visitors tigers are unbelievably daring. They will take no notice of a trap even if it is completely unhidden by camouflage, provided it is baited with meat they have themselves killed and begun to eat.

My second attempt with this patent trap, installed in a district which was full of tigers, was an advance on

the first. For my third I set up the trap about two hundred yards from the spot where the tiger had left the remains of an ox he had killed the night before. When he looked for his food—which I had taken to bait my trap—and could not find it, he began to scour the area and soon tracked it down. The delicious smell of the rotten meat stole through the interstices in the sides of the trap and was too much for him. Greed overcame discretion.

When I visited my trap next morning I was greeted with a broadside of abuse. I fastened the sliding door of the cage with a bolt, and with the aid of a jack my assistants loaded the whole cage on to a farm-cart—a job which seemed to encourage the tiger to still louder objections. Buffaloes were then hitched up and the strange procession set off over hill and dale for the main road. There the load was transferred to a lorry, since the journey would have taken too long by buffalo. Every time there was the slightest confusion on the road—every time the brakes were applied, in fact—our distinguished passenger registered his complaint and there was no need to use the klaxon. On the whole the Lord of the Jungle seemed hardly to appreciate the ride.

By the time we reached our destination he had been still further upset by the gaping crowds and a simple tap on the walls of his cage was enough to let loose a thunderous roar. But twenty-four hours of captivity calmed him down. His outbursts of rage came less frequently and, as he grew more and more resigned, they gave way to low grunts and growls of despair.

The transfer of the tiger from the trap to the metal cage in which he travels is done by placing them end to end. If necessary the tiger is threatened with a lance to keep him at a safe distance, or Chinese crackers are thrown down under his nose. At first he is surprised to

find himself in a new cage and he may be frightened by the glare or by the crowd of spectators all round him, so he lets out a few more growls before he accepts his fate.

Soon he gets tired of his role of imprisoned savage and settles down on his belly, with his two front paws stretched out close together in front of him, like the sphinx. He stays like this for hours without moving, his yellow-gold eyes, tinged with sadness now, lost in the far distance, as though he is dreaming of his jungle and lording it, as ever, over man and beast.

With my rectangular trap I caught two tigers and one panther in one week and on the same spot.

As a rule a tiger loses his appetite once he is in the trap, however hungry he may have been before, and refuses to touch the bait. I only knew two exceptions to this rule. Each time my prisoner settled down to a good square meal, then grunted with satisfaction, as much as to say 'Well, that's something to the good, anyway!'

Once my patent trap is in position there is nothing to be done but sit back and wait. Whichever way the tiger comes he will be caught in the end, the steel trap, as we shall see, is only effective when the tiger approaches the bait by the route mapped out for him by the trapper and then puts his foot down on the required spot. This is a simple gin with jaws, such as is used in Europe for trapping wolves, but on a larger scale and with stronger springs to cope with the larger animals. The best traps of this kind I bought before the war came from Malaya.

The whole art of trapping is a matter of patience, and it cannot be acquired overnight. It is usually the smaller carnivores that upset things, like iguanas and wild boar. If there are plenty of these about they are apt to anticipate the arrival of the tiger and release the spring before he comes.

Although I tried the steel spring trap over a long period it was always letting me down. I would come to inspect it, all keyed up with excitement, and find some completely unexpected animal caught in its jaws. One day the whole contraption had disappeared. I found it in the forest not far away with a boar caught in its jaws, half eaten by a tiger. I had omitted to fasten the trap to a tree and the tiger had carried it off, complete with boar.

After these failures, I had to find some way of making sure that my traps would catch tigers instead of all these insignificant little busy-bodies that *would* come sniffing round the bait. I can honestly say that from that moment not a single tiger who came near my steel trap got away scot free. This is how I did it.

I put down my bait under the bushes, preferably in the shade, then surrounded it with a screen of thorn-bushes high enough to discourage the tiger from leaping over it at one bound. (I took this precaution after I had discovered my sixth tiger calmly sitting on the carcas of an ox which I had intended to use for bait, enjoying a hearty meal.) At one side I cut an approach route about six feet long and wide enough to take a full-sized tiger. The bait was set out as enticingly as possible at the end of this 'corridor'—and if it was an ox I would split open its hind-quarters to charm the eye of my guest and give him a better appetite. All round the bait and along the path leading to it there were gaps in the thorn bushes which allowed the smaller animals to get to the bait in the absence of the tiger and provided bolt-holes for them to escape through when they heard him coming. These gaps were not big enough, however, to let a tiger through.

In the middle of the 'approach road' the trap was

placed, buried deep enough to enable the upper jaw to catch the tiger as high up the leg as possible. The earth dug up to make the hole was scattered far and wide.

When the trap was laid flat in its hole it was surrounded by a little circle of stakes about a foot high, hammered well in and disguised by a network of brambles. These stakes were then covered with a light hurdle of bamboo over which was sprinkled a thin layer of earth and dead leaves.

So there it was—a pleasant path for the tiger leading straight to the centre of attraction—the bait. If the smaller carnivores or other trespassers made use of the path prepared for the tiger, they would come up against the screen of thorns and break to left or to right, escaping through the gaps especially left for them. The tiger, anxious not to damage his fine coat in the thorns, would keep to the narrow path until he reached the bait. As soon as he put a foot on what he thought was just earth and dead leaves, his weight would release the catch and the strong springs of the trap would snap its jaws together. A terrible roaring would immediately wake the echoes of the forest.

The first tigers I captured with this trap were caught by some part or other of the fore-paw. One got away—permanently lamed, of course. Another had to be shot just as he was gathering himself to leap on one of my men—which meant that I got a perfect skin at least, for if he *had* leaped he would undoubtedly have damaged his fore-leg badly.

As an additional precaution I had added extra jaws with smaller teeth made of better steel added to the original ones, so that no animal once caught had the least hope of getting free.

At first, in order to control my captives and also to

give them the impression that they could run away if they wanted to, I had my steel traps attached to about six feet of chain, with a sort of four-pronged anchor weighing about 120 pounds at the other end. The tiger dragged his anchor with him, but obviously it was a bit of a handicap; apart from its weight, it would catch in bushes and rocks and every irregularity of the ground and would leave a trail plain enough to make an inexperienced hunter jump for joy. This worked quite well until the day when a tigress came back on her tracks and nearly finished me. I shot her in the middle of her spring and she fell almost on the muzzle of my rifle. I confess that I was sweating with fear! But I still continued with the same system until a second incident made me think again and I finally adopted the method of fastening the trap to a tree or a stump with a long chain.

The tiger I mentioned as having escaped with a damaged foot must have struggled madly from the moment the jaws of the trap had shut. He had left bleeding fragments of flesh in the teeth of the trap.

With the idea of minimizing the damage to its coat and its limbs which a tiger is likely to cause when struggling to free itself, I fixed up an arrangement with coiled springs, one end fastened by a chain to a tree-trunk and the other by another chain to the trap. Every time the tiger tried to drag himself free, the spring pulled him back smoothly and easily and this helped to discourage him as well as lessening the shock.

Some people may think all these safeguards were exaggerated—and certainly I captured a good many tigers without them. But that was in 'easy'⁵ areas, where the tigers allowed themselves to be caught almost stupidly and there were no little gate-crashers to release the springs of the traps too soon. In the 'harder' areas I had

come up against difficulties which is why I had found it necessary to improve my techniques.

The placing of the steel-trap, then, is a matter of judgement. You must take into account the nature of the country, the habits of the tigers, and the prevalence of the little uninvited guests that may be attracted by the bait.

One last point for beginners. Unless the tiger is to be kept for photographing next day it should be killed as quickly as possible after being caught in a trap, otherwise it may become hopelessly and fatally injured. The tiger's jaws are incredibly strong and he will go on trying to bite through the steel until he has broken his own teeth. I have seen tigers after they have been shot, with their teeth worn down to tiny stumps in bleeding gums. A tigress that had been caught in the Lagna area had not only broken all her teeth but had fractured her lower jaw through trying to bite through her bars. She had also tried unsuccessfully to bite off her foot. Although she had also put a shoulder out of joint by turning suddenly in the cage she had succeeded in getting right down to the bare bones of her foot in her efforts to sever it.

When I went up to her to give her the *coup de grace* she still had the strength and spirit to spring at me before I could shoot her. With her jaws toothless and gaping and with blood all over her she was a hideous and frightening spectacle. Even with her last breath she was trying in vain to bite the chain that held her. She was indeed a gallant fighter. I have seen in my time intractable tigers, unconquerable tigers, but this one beat all records. Even in death her eyes seemed fixed on me in unutterable, and let us admit from her own point of view completely justified, hatred.

There was a tiger at Tra Cu, on the edge of the Lagna savannah, which I had tried to shoot unsuccessfully, both by day and by night; I caught him in my steel trap in less than an hour. At nine o'clock in the evening I was in my look-out and every time I turned on the projector I heard growling and caught a glimpse of the tiger leaping back into the trees. I called my men together and explained that it would be a waste of time to carry on with this hopeless vigil. I set up my trap as best I could in the half light and then went back to the village determined to have the last word.

I had a tiger skin at home which had the moth in it, and this fellow seemed about the right size to replace it. As I had no faith in the effectiveness of a trap set up in a hurry I had made up my mind to come back next day and do the job properly. This was a suspicious animal and I should have to use every trick I knew.

Just as I was thinking along these lines the forest was suddenly full of the most frightful roaring.

'This is it!' my trackers shouted. 'We've got him!'⁵

I retraced my steps at once and the nearer I got to the tiger the more angry he sounded. As I reached the track leading to my look-out I could see a pair of eyes glaring at me from a spot at least six feet above the ground. I was completely at a loss and, as the batteries of my projector were nearly run down, they threw very little light on the mystery. The eyes vanished, only to reappear a moment later, this time at ground level. The roars were certainly those of the tiger I had disturbed several times during the night, but whose were the eyes?

The characteristic sound of a chain suddenly pulled tight was reassuring. I knew I had nothing to fear now; whatever strange animal I had to deal with, I could tell from the rattling and jerking of the chain that he was a

prisoner. My first impulse was to rush forward, but the feebleness of my lamp made me cautious. Should I wait till the morning or should I get it over there and then? I decided on the latter, especially as the eyes suddenly appeared again in the darkness, but a little higher up this time. Without further delay I took careful aim and squeezed the trigger.

There was no sound from the tiger, not even a shudder; only the dull thud of a heavy body falling. A moment later I heard a gasp, followed by a rattling in the throat; then silence.

The Moi chattered together excitedly. Was it a tiger? If so, what were those eyes doing so high above the ground?

After a quarter of an hour I crept up cautiously. My lantern seemed brighter under the dark canopy of the forest and I could see more clearly. An enormous tiger lay there, apparently dead. We threw stones at him but he never moved. My shot had gone right between his eyes and broken his skull.

The mystery was explained. The tiger had come back to the bait after I had left and somehow or other had been caught in the trap by the hind leg. He had got tangled up with the chain and for some reason had backed up against a tree-trunk, against which he had then drawn himself up to his full height, as though to sharpen his claws, although he had not taken his eyes off me. Only once or twice in my life have I ever seen anything quite like it.

The skin of this tiger was one of the finest I ever set eyes on and I could not help thinking how fortunate it was that I had not given him up as a bad job—as I had thought of doing at one time.

The different types of trap I have been discussing

illustrate the tricks the tiger gets up to, as well as those of the trapper, but it would be a pity to end this chapter without mentioning nets. When I was young these nets were used a great deal in Central Viet Nam. When the people in a particular area could no longer put up with the depredations of a local thief they used to find his lair and surround it with a hedge made of brambles, leaving an exit here and there but covering each of these exits with a net. I have counted as many as twenty nets round one tiger's hide-out. Each net was about twelve yards long and six feet high, with a fairly small mesh. They were steeped in a vegetable oil which made them both tough and supple. They were stretched like hammocks from tree to tree and well camouflaged.

On the appointed day hundreds of beaters from a number of villages surrounded the tiger's lair and drove him towards the ring of nets. Everything possible was done to create a terrific din, as at a *battue*, and the banging of Chinese crackers was added to the yells of the beaters. As the circle steadily closed in the tiger was driven towards one of the exits, ran into one of the nets and immediately became so tangled up in it that he was more or less tied up. A beater with a spear would then come up and kill him.

I once saw two tigers caught in the same circle of netting in the same day, and to my knowledge no tiger caught this way has ever been known to get away.

Killing tigers was not a sport for these Moi; it was quite definitely a matter of self-preservation, to destroy the thieves that were decimating their crops and occasionally even attacking human beings. Certainly this was the sole object of these *battues* with the nets, and it was an object which was invariably achieved.

CHAPTER NINE

Some Useful Tricks for the Hunter

THE only way of attracting a tiger to the bait at night is by using an electric torch, but this involves a technique which takes time to acquire and before I mastered it I had to spend many weary hours on the watch. After I had adjusted my torch and fastened it round my head in the usual way, I then had to be extra careful not to make the smallest unnecessary move so as to avoid giving myself away to the wary tiger. It was a slow and difficult job and I remember how one night I reached the end of my patience. I had fixed the torch on the cork helmet and settled down in my look-out post with the helmet within easy reach of my hand. As soon as I heard a tiger at the bait I switched on the light but in the few second it took to adjust the helmet on my head the tiger saw his chance and slipped away. One tiger came back to the bait five times running and made off every time as soon as the beam was switched on.

Obviously my technique was at fault; I suppose I could have sat night after night with my head permanently encased in the cork helmet, but that did not appeal to me in the least. So I suddenly had the idea of getting one of my men to take charge of the lighting arrangements. The first experiment was encouraging. All I required in the look-out was a six-volt accumulator and a loo-candle-power lamp with a reflector. At a pre-arranged signal my assistant switched on the light

and there was the tiger, surprised at his meal and lit up like day—a perfect target. At the same time the system seemed to me to eliminate the sporting element because the tiger was so dazzled by the sudden light that he stayed more or less stock still. Also it was not always easy to manhandle the accumulator through the jungle and my assistants often ill-treated it. Another drawback was that if the tiger was not immediately caught in the beam he had time to get away before it could be focused on him; but the worst snag of all was that you cannot keep a *Moi'* quiet. Whatever you say to him you will never stop him from sniffing, coughing or even snoring, usually at the critical moment.

In the end I used the projector—plus accumulator only for showing my friends the rare spectacle of a tiger surprised in the jungle at night. Sometimes we were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of several tigers together, standing around the bait and awaiting their turn in accordance with the ceremonial procedure I have already described.

Two of my friends and I once saw a very amusing incident. It was a very stuffy night in April and the heat had hastened the decay of the carcass, so that the gentle breeze bore the stench for some distance among the trees. It was also the mating season. We knew by the recent footprints that there were two tigers in the neighbourhood, a male and a female, but as soon as night fell we heard an extraordinary hustle and bustle all round us. We could tell from the typical grunts and growls that there were several tigers talking to each other but keeping a respectable distance apart. The question was, how many? Was it a tiger and a tigress with a youngster at foot, or two pairs, or a number of very hungry cubs awaiting their parents' permission to start eating?

For a moment I had a feeling that all these, and more, were sitting down there by the bait, looking up at the 'hide'. I switched on and the 500-candle-power beam flooded the scene with its brightness. A medium sized tiger—or more likely a tigress—was quite close to the bait. A couple of yards behind her sat a splendid male—the husband, no doubt—admiring his lady and sweeping the ground with his tail. To the right of them stood a smaller, rather skinny, female, gazing earnestly at the bait and obviously at an age when she was no longer of any interest to the opposite sex. A little farther off to the left another male, a handsome creature, lay full length, nonchalantly looking on.

The sudden light had immobilized them all and they were like statues, except for the blinking of their eyes. One of my friends was so struck that he could not keep silent.

'What a wonderful sight!' he exclaimed.

That was all that was needed. The statues came to life and the tableau melted away. There was a wild stampede, a blind panic-stricken dash for safety. The husband forgot his conjugal patience and leaped over the old dowager sending her rolling head-over-heels like a common hare. She picked herself up and slipped away, not without a grumble at the unmannerly lout who had knocked her over. The lovely bride took a flying leap and landed at the feet of the beautiful onlooker; then the two of them rushed towards our look-out and disappeared, growling, into the darkness. Silence reigned.

A few minutes later we heard low murmurings: no doubt they were congratulating each other on a narrow escape. Then from farther and farther away came more harsh roaring. That was all . . . But the bait was not touched that night. They had had an unmistakable

warning and neither the lovers nor the old lady had any appetite left for our bait.

This method of illumination once helped me to win a wager. A friend of mine once bet me that he would come down from the look-out at the moment when the beam of the projector first shone direct on to a tiger. One night I showed him two—one of them a particularly fine specimen. But he decided after all not to go down the ladder and preferred to buy me an excellent meal, with champagne, at one of the best restaurants in Saigon.

I found from experience that when I was in the look-out at night, using dead bait, an ordinary lamp with three dry batteries gave the best results. I wore it on my forehead or fixed it to the end of my rifle. During my long night sessions waiting for the tiger to turn up, I had plenty of time to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of the various techniques. I had tried fixing the torch to the barrel of my rifle, just above the back-sight, carrying the batteries in my pocket. Then I tried a three-battery torch fastened by two rings to the stock of my rifle. This was fine. I could shoulder the gun in the darkness, switch on the torch, and there was the tiger right in my line of fire. At first I was enthusiastic; as I looked along my rifle I looked straight into the eyes of the tiger and he was at my mercy. One night, however, a tiger was inconsiderate enough to turn his head so that I could no longer see his eyes shining in the light of my torch; in fact, he became quite invisible against his background. I had to lower my rifle to look for him—and by that time he had got away.

From that day I began to look for a more practical method and I fixed the torch about two inches to the right of the barrel, at about the level of the back-sight, with the batteries under the stock and the switch within

reach of my left index-finger. I could now see the tiger as a whole, instead of just his eyes, and the light dazzled me less than before. Also it was easier to follow his movements and choose my moment to shoot him. On my Westley-Richards the torch was fixed by a single screw, with a scale by which I could adjust it to suit myself. In the look-out I could put it within arm's reach and even have a little nap if I felt so inclined. At the slightest sound of life from the bait I could bring my rifle to my shoulder in a moment, all ready to switch on the light and shoot.

For long-range shooting in the dark, night-glasses are useful, especially with a powerful projector. I have killed a tiger at over two hundred yards with these, but it is a branch of the sport which has never appealed to me. Some night-glasses are so good that an object seems to be lit up as bright as by daylight, but if they are used with a precision rifle they must be as light as possible in weight.

Although it is undoubtedly a great thing to be able to go up into a look-out at night feeling reasonably certain that one will be able to bag any tiger that comes within range, I must admit that the sport is more exciting when tigers visit the bait in the day-time. This is how I set about persuading them to accept my invitation.

After laying my bait in the jungle, setting up my look-out and prepciring my field of fire as usual, I used to choose a spot a certain distance to the other side of the bait from my look-out and build a sort of enclosure of logs, very strong and well sheltered from the weather. As soon as a tiger had first discovered the bait I would put a team of four natives in my enclosure, with a good supply of food and drink. Their job was to prevent the tiger from having another meal off the bait for the next

twenty-four hours. They could burn pine torches or acetylene lamps, or they could set up a brazier outside their enclosure. I was careful to choose incurable talkers for the job who would keep it up all night, often all talking at once. The combined effect of the night, the rice wine and the gift of the gab was delightful. Sometimes it was punctuated by sudden shouts or bursts of laughter: I could ask for nothing more.

The tiger was suspicious, to say the least. He would prowl all round the bait, licking his chops but never daring to come any closer. Like a puppy dog in the kitchen, his mouth watering at the delicious smells, he would hang around hopefully for a chance to nip in and help himself.

At seven o'clock in the morning I would send the Moi home and they would demolish their enclosure before leaving. Then my brother and I would go up into the look-out. After about twenty minutes or half an hour the tiger would arrive, cautiously inspect the neighbourhood, walk underneath our look-out and follow the tracks of the Moi right to the edge of the wood to satisfy himself that the last of them had finally gone. Back at the carcass he would cast a suspicious eye at the dismantled enclosure and then take a liberal helping of decayed meat. The food was obviously to his satisfaction because although he usually had his back towards us we could see his spine wriggling with pleasure, until a well directed bullet put an end to his enjoyment.

Many is the time I have killed a tiger in exactly those circumstances. Before the war I used the same set-up to make a documentary film.

This time I had set a steel trap. The tiger arrived at daybreak, just after I had sent home the Moi who had kept him away from his food all night. The carcass

which had been exposed during the night was now covered with a camouflage of leaves, which puzzled the tiger, who sat down to consider it carefully. He took a turn round the bait, peeped at it suspiciously through one of the gaps, had a good sniff, and then came to a halt just by one of the little 'entrances' specially devised for him. He bent his head comically from left to right several times and then settled down majestically opposite the bait. His flanks rose and fell more and more rapidly and his tail swept the ground. Never was tiger more obviously torn between fear and temptation.

Up in the look-out my heart was beating pretty fast, too—for fear that he might make up his mind to go away. But after a minute which seemed to me an age he got to his feet and resolutely strode down the little corridor that led to the bait. I watched him with mounting excitement. His left paw rested in front of the bed of thorns in front of the trap; then he raised his right paw and set it squarely on the 'platform'. Immediately the jaws of the trap sprang together and he let out a terrible yell. His great striped body stretched out to his full six feet and he fell back into the bushes. Heedless of the thorns, he rolled over and over and bit furiously at the steel trap. Then suddenly he leaped straight ahead, but the coiled spring pulled him back before he had got very far. At this moment he caught sight of me standing in the look-out and greeted me with a volley of noisy threats from his bleeding jaws. Then he leaped towards me, but once again the 'sandow' contraption pulled him back—which naturally made him angrier than ever.

I waited until his fury had died down a little and then went as quickly as I could to fetch my wife, who was more skilful than I in all matters concerned with photography and filming. It turned out to be one of her best efforts

with the film camera. The grass was high enough to hide the trap and the chain, and the tiger's behaviour was so natural that everybody who saw the film was amazed. They used to ask how my wife had been able to film an apparently free and wild tiger in broad daylight.

This reel gave me various promising ideas for the future and a month later we successfully filmed a panther in the same way.

I ought perhaps to explain why I put the party of Moi who had to scare away the tiger at night into this enclosure, protected as they were, instead of in a look-out built high above ground. My decision was based on considerable experience.

At first I put them in a look-out facing my own, on the other side of the bait. I gave them a stove made of baked clay in which they could light a fire to keep themselves warm and keep off the mosquitoes, and stocked up the shelter with plenty of food, rice-spirit and water to taste. As far as they were concerned, this was the life.

How right they were! Apparently it all began with a wager as to who could drink the most. That night they drank deep! At first the spirit merely loosened their tongues, but gradually they began to mutter nothing but unintelligible noises. Eventually it became such a complete orgy that the competitors no longer tried to speak but expressed themselves in fine sweeping gestures. The look-out began to sway.

No tiger dared come anywhere near such a glorious party. The word went round the jungle and they all kept clear.

Soon the look-out had become too small and frail for such a noisy and vigorous gathering. Drunks, provisions, jars and stove all fell together from a height of over ten feet. They felt their limbs gingerly and began to pick

up the pieces; they even managed to put out the beginnings of a fire.

But when I visited the spot next morning there were all my Moi lying higgledy-piggledy at the foot of the look-out, snoring like the blessed souls in the vineyards of the Lord. I had a hard job to wake them up and it took them a good ten minutes to realize what had happened. After they had counted themselves and found nobody missing they had a good laugh. They tapped their stomachs—the seat of all reason among the Moi—no doubt in the hope of getting their ideas sorted out, and the leader advised me, in strict confidence, of course, to get up into my look-out.

'We've fixed it for you,' he said, with complete conviction. 'It's all ready now for the tiger to come.'

But I was in no mood for the look-out and led my team ingloriously back to the village.

The tiger did indeed come and eat up the bait, but when? According to the Moi it was immediately after I had left. They assured me this was so with their last spirit-laden hiccups and went away, laughing as usual. After that I did what I could to prevent a recurrence of this kind of accident and put my watchers in a more solid shelter, at ground level. It was safe for them and less terrifying for the tigers.

Another trick is to attract several tigers to the one bait. As with everything else I developed this trick only after careful observations spread over a long period.

Although dead bait is most successful, both for observation from a look-out and for trapping, it is only effective within a comparatively restricted radius, beyond which the tiger cannot smell the carcass and may walk right on without even suspecting its existence. The only certain way of attracting him is to find out his

usual haunts and to put the bait down somewhere near his most popular 'beat'.

As I watched the tigers following the trail of some carcass which had been moved from the place where it had been killed and noted the way they set about finding it again, I thought I would try and extend the area over which the scent was effective. I decided to use the domestic elephants which were employed in the jungle for hauling logs. So one day I mounted one of my elephants with a dead—and decaying—buffalo in tow, and rode him through the jungle, crossing the familiar tracks of the tigers as often as possible. My mahout was tickled to death with the whole procedure, which he christened 'The Corpse Parade'—a name which I immediately adopted. From the point chosen for the bait we would proceed for nearly a mile in one direction, then fork left or right for a few hundred yards and come back to our starting point. The route was then covered again in the opposite direction. In the end we had marked out the spokes of an immense wheel on the ground, with the site for the kill at the hub. As the corpse bumped up against stumps and trees it would burst open and blaze a trail all along our route with shreds and lumps of stinking meat. At the end of the Corpse Parade what was left of the bait was duly set in its place and I would climb up into my look-out.

My mahout, still vastly amused and not very convinced, took the elephant away, saying that as soon as he got home he would burn a few sticks of incense to appease the genii of the jungle who, he assured me, must have been outraged by this malodorous innovation.

The following night I shot a tigress at eight o'clock and a young male at midnight and only just missed a

third as it was getting light. When the mahout returned with the elephant to fetch me home in the morning he was full of admiration.

After this first experiment, which exceeded my wildest hopes, I always used the Corpse Parade and it always worked, especially in the savannahs of the Lagna, where the flat country and thick vegetation were particularly favourable. Here it was most effective in April, May and June, both in the woodlands and on the open fields. There are many tigers in this part of the country and they hunt at night, and we always managed to drag our corpse across their favourite tracks. The smell that arose from the grass we had fouled with it was a thing of irresistible charm for the tigers, who followed it with their noses to the ground, straight to their death. All I had to do was to sit and wait for them. The time of their arrival naturally varied with the distance they had to cover, but they also came from different points of the compass. When they met at the banqueting hall there were sometimes scenes. It was each for himself, with a growl and a showing of teeth for every newcomer. Every tiger regarded every other tiger as a gate-crasher and you could almost hear them asking, 'Now who the devil invited *him*?' The strongest had first go and gave way to the next only when he had had his fill. The weakest often had to go away with an empty belly, after sitting to one side dribbling with envy but not daring to go near the bully in possession.

At one of my first receptions something went wrong. My guests arrived after dark and I had to welcome them by electric light. This quite upset them. I managed to kill one of them but the others scattered into the forest. They came back again later, but were again frightened away by my torch. It was much better when they all

arrived at different times; then they had no reasons to suspect my presence.

One evening a young male came to be killed at about eight o'clock. When they heard the shot my Moi assistants came running up and removed the body by the light of their flares. At midnight a tigress arrived and met with the same reception. As I was dozing in my look-out at four o'clock in the morning I was aroused by a third guest, whose appetite knew no bounds. He was eating noisily down there in the darkness and the sound of his gnawing the bones was enough to wake the dead. My searchlight took him by surprise but I served him up a 9.3 bullet as entree and he died with his head resting on a filthy piece of joint that was crawling with maggots. A fourth victim very nearly fell beside him but this one remembered his manners, nipped off rapidly and howled his thanks back at me when he was safely out of range. Actually he was the greediest of the lot and helped himself liberally to the meat after I had gone.

When several tigers discover the bait things become more interesting if it is in a shady position rather than out in the open. A tiger will come and eat at any hour of the day so long as he is not interrupted by one of his fellows. When there are a number of them they spy on each other from behind one bush after another. If a youngster tries to break the rules he is at once sternly rebuked by one of his elders to recall him to a sense of the proprieties.

A hunter with the patience to stay in his look-out for twenty-four hours without a break—in reasonable comfort, of course, and with guaranteed relays of fresh provisions—usually gets good results. I was hoping to do it myself the day after I shot the three tigers but unfor-

unately I had other engagements. But later on, thanks to the Corpse Parade, I watched a tigress come to feed at the bait with her family. The cubs were so young that I decided not to shoot the mother.

My brother George—who was a professional big-game hunter before the war—often bagged two or even three tigers at the same bait on the same day. But good as the system undoubtedly is if you are out to kill, it is no use for trapping.

One day I set the traps at the same bait, approachable from opposite directions by the usual tracks specially cut for tigers. After one tiger had been caught his reactions were so violent that he quickly stirred up a wonderful mixture of bits of rotten meat and thorns and ended up by setting off the second trap. I therefore tried the experiment again, this time with the traps farther apart and the chains so fixed that the tigers would leap backwards instead of forwards when they were caught. One tigress was trapped, with her escort beside her, but she was so angry at being caught that she turned on him and bit him so furiously that he ran away. It was a youngster of barely eighty pounds who was eventually caught in the other trap at the side of his mother. In fact I never did catch two tigers at the same bait at the same time, although I have caught three separately within seventy-two hours. In the Lagna savannahs one dry season I caught two in the same night, but then my traps were about three miles apart.

It would probably have been very rewarding if I had taken the trouble to set a whole chain of traps at fixed points, with a number of different baits, keeping the traps re-stocked as necessary. In the same way it is a good idea, in country where tigers abound, to have a number of look-outs. They can be quite a good distance

apart provided they are all reasonably accessible by car. As soon as you have shot one tiger you move off to watch from another look-out and if you have a companion you can spend a night quite amusingly making the round of your look-outs and getting some splendid views of tigers in different surroundings. If the baits are all treated with strychnine this is also a quick way of getting rid of a plague of tigers which have been decimating the flocks and herds in some remote and lonely village. Nobody would dream of calling this method 'sport' but the villagers are forced to adopt it if they are not to see their animals vanish more or less before their eyes.

The strychnine is wasted, of course, if the tiger doesn't happen to swallow a portion of meat which has been treated, so if a whole carcass is being used for bait it has to be doped in a number of places. Alternatively a single joint is used instead of a whole carcass, as it can be more thoroughly infected with the poison. The watchers hear the tiger yelling with pain after it has eaten the poisoned meat and come running up to kill it. The animal is usually found near a stream or a spring as the poison makes him terribly thirsty.

The first tiger I found which had been poisoned with strychnine had killed an ox early that same afternoon. At seven o'clock he had returned to his kill for a good meal, but he was out of luck; his food had been 'treated'. Never have I heard an animal howl so mournfully as that tiger. He had dragged himself to the stream which served the village and then made for the forest, vomiting all the way and rolling over and over every now and then—all of which made it easy to follow his tracks. The village hunters were held up by a dense thicket of succulent grasses and wild arums. Before trying to penetrate this thicket they walked around it, but as they could

see no spoor coming away from it they decided that the tiger must be somewhere inside, dead or alive. They threw stones, lumps of wood and even Chinese crackers into the thicket, but with no result. Then I ordered an advance on the thicket, in extended order with myself in the lead, beating the undergrowth with long rods as we advanced. Suddenly the men scattered in alarm. One of them had hit the tiger. He was lying dead in the grass in an extraordinary attitude, with his teeth sunk deep into his own hind leg. His skin, by the way, although treated exactly like any other, deteriorated after only a few months, the hair falling out in great patches. This has happened to the skins of the few other tigers I have killed by strychnine poison.

Poisoning is not a method I would recommend in normal circumstances but there are occasions, when everything else has failed, when I think it can be justified. I once killed one this way which had been doing considerable damage in two villages, visiting them alternately. He refused every bait I put down, never came near a trap and kept out of the beams of my projector. I had to find his lair and poison the carcass of his latest kill—an ox. One dose in the thick of the thigh, close to where he had already bitten into it, was enough to put an end to his career of crime.

I have spoken in this chapter of the three most popular 'tricks'.

1. The fitting of a torch close to the rifle for night shooting, and the use of a powerful projector to throw a sudden beam on the bait;
2. The use of a team of watchers installed in an enclosure near the look-out, to annoy the tiger by night so that he is forced to come back at daylight, after the watchers have gone; and

3. Dragging the bait around the neighbourhood to extend the area in which the scent of the bait is effective and so collecting tigers from a wider area.

Between them, these three techniques cover quite a wide range and may, I think, be regarded as part of the genuine sport of big-game hunting.

It is by no means essential to kill your animal every time. It has always seemed much more interesting to me, at least, to catch them at night in their natural state, just when they have arrived to sample the bait, and to sit and admire them. And what more pleasing picture could you ask for than a family of tigers sitting down to a meal according to the habits and customs of the 'clan', as Kipling would have said?

Finally, let me say that these various techniques will always be successful provided you observe the rules strictly. In any case—even if you do not kill or capture your tiger—you will have been amply compensated for your pains by your glimpse of the Lord of the Jungle in his own green kingdom.

CHAPTER TEN

Some Casual Partnerships

THE tiger's life is not always exactly as I have suggested so far in these pages: there are exceptions, as with all living creatures.

For example, the tiger normally lives alone for most of his life and is only accompanied by a female at the mating season and she sometimes has with her a youngster of her own by a previous marriage. But now and then a number of tigers find themselves sharing a quite small territory. There are three possible reasons for this.

When an area has been ravaged by the seasonal fires the tigers naturally desert it and fall back on a neighbouring area where the vegetation is still thick enough to offer a reasonable cover. At the same time the animals they live on, driven by the same instinct of self-preservation, also leave the scorched areas for richer pastures. Again in time of flood the tigers are forced back on to islands standing out of the water, to which the wild deer and oxen have also retreated, and they all live there in close quarters which become more and more cramped as the floods rise.

A typical example of this communal living was to be found at the caves of Pou Na Khlong in the heart of the jungle. When the seasonal fires were sweeping the plains the primeval forest of Tra Hou also remained a green oasis in a desert of arid desolation. Similarly, when the annual floods drowned the valley of the Lagna river, the little islands of Bau Dien, refuge of all the terrified

animals of the whole region, were spared even in the worst of times.

Somewhere about 1927 news reached me that a group of caves at Pou Na Khlong, in the heart of the jungle, were being used as the headquarters of the local tigers. I passed the information on to a friend of mine, a man who normally was condemned to a sedentary job in the local government office of a peaceful French village—where he still lives, incidentally. To investigate the truth of the report we organized a real expedition. First we had to check the statements of the Moi about these mysterious caves, but the very precise details which they trotted out for our benefit finally convinced us. They were so completely convinced themselves that we had not the heart to doubt their word. So we decided to pay a visit to this famous stronghold and set out one morning with all the necessary equipment.

The journey was slow, difficult and painful and we had to cut our way step by step through the lush vegetation. The Moi carved out a path through the creepers and the brambles by brute strength, and our pack elephants widened it with sweeping blows of their trunks, putting all their enormous strength into the job and breaking off the branches in our way. Even so, our rate of progress was little more than one mile an hour. It seemed as though we were groping along almost without any real sense of direction. The guides prophesied that we should not reach the caves before nightfall and we might even have to change our route.

Their prophecies proved all too correct. As night began to close in on us the jungle became more and more impenetrable and we had to retrace our steps.

When we were gathered round a brazier, which glowed bright in the wind, I mentioned to the Moi my

surprise that the tigers had chosen this kind of country for their headquarters. The vegetation which we had had to cut our way through so painfully could have provided only the most meagre subsistence for the type of game that the tigers preferred and it seemed most unlikely that they would have regarded it as their idea of a happy hunting ground. As always with the Moi when any question of doubt or difficulty arises, my remarks started a heated discussion, illustrated with drawings scratched in the sand and reinforced with vigorous gestures. My suggestion that the country was completely devoid of any animal that would be of the slightest interest to a tiger cast a chill over the gathering. One of the guides made himself the spokesman of the most voluble group.

'You're mistaken,' he said. 'This district is very rich in game. The undergrowth which we've been cutting our way through is only a comparatively narrow belt, a sort of green rampart protecting the caves. There are ways through it which are useless for man and which you have not even noticed, but our Mr. Tiger threads his way through them quite easily to reach the surrounding meadows. When we get up there'—and he pointed to a rock we had been making for—'you will see for yourself.'

Next morning the laborious hacking began again. The vegetation was so thick that we began to lose heart and I wondered how or when we should ever come to the end of it. Towards midday it began to clear and we could see enormous trees growing in a beautiful setting. Our speed quickened and soon we reached the banks of a river. The elephants drank long and deep before filling their trunks and giving themselves a shower; and the men—as far as they were able—copied the elephants: we were all very hot and thirsty.

One of the men had a good look at the banks and showed us some prints in the mud at a spot where the slope was not very steep. A number of tigers had obviously passed this way at various times and the track was in places crowded with their footprints.

After this came a mile or so of open forest, followed by a belt of bush as dense as before, this time with thorns as an additional obstacle. After an hour of slow, toilsome progress we came to a magnificent clearing, covered quite evenly with grass and set with little spinneys and copses open on all sides. In the distance the mountains rose in stages to meet the clouds and closed in the horizon with a bluish screen. Our speed increased.

'The caves are over there on the right,' one of the guides said, 'in that wooded peak you can see from here. We may as well go on till we get a bit closer to them, but it's getting dark and it would be wiser just to find the entrance and then wait till the morning. We shall have all day tomorrow to get after the gentlemen inside.'

The Moi had said 'the gentlemen', without mentioning the tigers, for a reason. The hunters knew whom he meant, but the tigers—who can hear unkind words even from a great distance—must not be upset.

Before us lay a great jumble of rocks surmounted by an immense bare plateau. An astonishing labyrinth, born of one of nature's wildest dreams, was split into innumerable cracks and heaped into fantastic blocks of incredible shapes and sizes. Here and there the rocks were banded together with clay, but for the most part it was a colossal jumble of loose boulders and great yawning chasms. In several places the rock face was hollowed into shallow caves, reached by steep rocky little tracks which could possibly be used by a tiger; one of them, bigger than the rest, looked as though it might be the 'main entrance'

to the caves. The earth all round was clear of all grass and had no doubt been worn smooth by the tigers⁵ feet. Twenty or thirty feet higher was a range of smaller caves inaccessible to the tigers; these were the home of a whole tribe of monkeys. Tough plants and tree creepers gave access from these upper caves to the tops of the trees and provided them with a marvellous playground.

They were delightful little fellows, black with white collars, and they seemed quite undisturbed by our presence. Those nearest to us would hang on to the thick creepers and make comic faces at us while they shook them as if they were trying to shake apples down from the trees, and others performed incredible balancing feats for our delight. A mother was playing slides with her red-coated baby while an old male was stroking his little beard with one hand and making indelicate advances to a young female with the other.

The estate was also inhabited by innumerable birds.

I made a rapid inspection of the layout of the place and decided to go back the way we had come. The sun was rapidly sinking behind the crest of the mountains and we should only just have time to reach our camp before dark.

The real adventure began the following morning when we reached the main cave early and made ready to pay it a visit. The monkeys greeted us with their shrill morning laughter and leaped from tree to tree, hanging by their incredible long arms and making faces at us as we passed by. We raised our voices to warn the tigers of our approach, but nothing happened. My friend suggested that I might fire a shot into the principal cave and the sound of my shot awoke every echo in this stone-walled enclosure. In the trees and among the creepers the monkeys flew about excitedly, grimacing

and chattering for all they were worth. Hundreds of birds flew away in alarm. But there was no sight or sound of a tiger.

A second shot brought exactly the same result and we began to wonder if the Moi' had been pulling our legs after all. I threw a string of Chinese crackers into the main cave; still no result.

We decided to explore the whole of the rocky platform that ran along in front of the caves. Our elephants were nervous and whistled as they always do when they scent danger, beating the ground with their trunks. But we continued our exploration and after half an hour of it we heard a quiet grumbling which was certainly a tiger's. He had seen us but the size of our party had no doubt alarmed him and he had not ventured out. We decided that there was no other exit from the cave, since the tiger showed no inclination to move, so I took my stand at the edge of the platform with my back to the sun ready for anything. My friend tried to drive the tiger out and his mahout helped by making the elephant bellow his loudest. Every now and then we could hear mutterings from the tigers, but they grew fainter and fainter, as though they were retreating into the heart of the labyrinth.

By this time the monkeys were not the only occupants of the trees; at the first sounds from the tigers they had been joined by the Moi. Wherever a sizeable branch hung down over the entrance of one of the caves it was crowded with my men, shouting at the top of their voices. One of them, who had climbed higher than the rest, made an astounding suggestion—and made it, moreover, in a highly aggressive tone of voice, accompanied by most expressive gestures—which was immediately hailed with approval by all his colleagues.

'If the white hunters go inside the caves,' he shouted, 'we shall have dress-circle seats for their fight with the tigers.'

I have always made a point of not contradicting these delightful children.

'Good idea!' I called out. 'Now come down, all of you, and we'll investigate the caves together.'

This suggestion was greeted with a burst of laughter and the Mo'i climbed higher into the trees. My friend and I put our heads together in the hope of thinking out a plan of attack. Whatever precautions we might take there was no doubt that it would be dangerous to force our way into the caves. We decided not to press on for the present but to go back and get a supply of smoke bombs. Our plan was not exactly popular with the Mo'i who feared that the tigers would exact a fearful revenge for the indignity they had already suffered in being defied in their own homes.

We promised they should have an elephant to protect them and they were slightly mollified.

We were away for ten days—four days getting out of Pou-Na-Khlong, finding our transport and getting back to Saigon, two days shopping in the town, and four days getting back. The villagers went wild with joy as soon as they saw our elephants, and when we made the people a present of two large jars of rice-spirit their joy was complete. But we were serious and thoughtful enough by the time we came to move up to the caves. The monkeys had returned in force during our absence and the birds were singing cheerfully. The Mo'i took up their observation posts in the trees and I also found somewhere safe where I could keep an eye on the proceedings. My friend had the job of throwing the smoke-bombs, and did it very accurately. One burst at the

opening of the main cave and two others at the tradesman's entrances, so to speak. The effect was quite unexpected. The caves were obviously occupied because we heard growlings of protest which grew stronger and stronger.

The first animal we actually saw was an average-sized tigress, who plunged into a clump of reeds, obviously dazzled by the flash of the bomb and by the sunlight, and lay there without moving. She was presently joined by two well-grown cubs who came mewling after their mother and tumbled into the reeds. All three had come from the main entrance. They lay there for some little time getting over the shock and then went leaping off towards the jungle. We had plenty of time to shoot them if we had wanted to but we had better targets in mind.

All of a sudden an enormous male came bounding out from one of the side entrances, having to bend his backbone before he could get out as he was so tall. He stood there in a daze, peering around like a blind thing and roaring defiance to the heavens. He presented a perfect target, which my friend was unable to resist. He collapsed with a bullet through the heart and rolled over and over, ending up at the foot of one of the little tracks which he had no doubt used in his comings and goings to and from the caves.

We stood stock still on the defensive, expecting further sorties, but there were no more for the present. We began throwing smoke-bombs again, this time into the furthest caves. Two fully-grown tigers appeared from the shadows; I shot one of them as he came walking towards me quite unsuspectingly; my friend missed the other. His shot hit the ground under the tiger's nose, which at any rate speeded up its progress somewhat.

The last fugitive to leave the caves was a colossal

python. The Moi' shouted to me to kill it, and knowing their fondness for python steaks I was happy to oblige.

It was hopeless to try to explore the caves as there was an absolute maze of passages and openings and the air was too foul to breath, so we contented ourselves with blocking them up. We knew we were fairly safe for the next day but we were anxious to prevent other tigers from getting into the caves at night and surprising us the day after. The Moi stopped up every entry with great bramble bushes.

The main cavern—which we examined with our torches—was roomy and quite lofty. There were a number of smaller annexes opening out of it, each with its own sharp 'menagerie' smell and the tell-tale piles of bones which showed that the tigers had brought their food here, either to consume at leisure themselves or to feed their cubs. This main cavern had several smaller openings on to the outside world but in its depths it disappeared into the heart of the mountain in dark narrow passages which were so small that we could have only explored them on all fours. The smaller caves appeared to have no connexion with the main cavern.

The colony of tigers had been thrown together in this fastness quite by chance and incidentally, without the smoke-bombs I doubt if we should ever have dislodged them. In one of the winding passages, where the stench of the animals' droppings vied with that of rotten flesh, we came across a cub hardly any bigger than a cat. He was lying dead on his side and was probably the single offspring of the tigress my friend had missed. Actually there was only one complete family living here—the tigress, her cubs, and the big tiger my friend shot. Another tiger—the one I accounted for—lived by himself in a separate apartment, and the last tigress lived in

another *cul-de-sac* with the baby whose body we found. The maize of caverns and passages provided a safe retreat, sheltered from bad weather, and they would sally forth separately at night to scour the countryside, keeping as far as possible out of one another's way.

When I came back some months later I found from footprints all round the site that the caves were once again occupied. This time I intended to move some of the thickest bushes and prune some of the trees, so as to give a clear field for photographing and filming the tigers in their natural state.

The Pou-Na-Khlong caves and the green island of Tra-Hou offered the same attractions to tigers. In the caves they found a safe spot to rest in at night after their hunting expeditions, by way of contrast to the surrounding plains, where there was inadequate cover. At Tra-Hou likewise they had a retreat which was protected by the surrounding forest when the clearings had all been stripped by the seasonal fires. Tra-Hou was used only in the dry season as the deer, which tigers are so greedy for, left as soon as the surrounding country began to grow green again. The caves, on the other hand, were an all-the-year-round residence.

At Tra-Hou the tigers gathered all along the ravine which bordered the village on the west and in the basin of the Song Voi, a tributary of the Phan Rang, where their territory was a strip of country about a mile and a quarter wide. One seldom saw more than an occasional couple, or a mother with her cubs. The ravine, like the banks of the Song Voi, was thickly wooded, both on its slopes and in the hollow, but the vegetation alternated with patches of rock-strewn scree which made it almost inaccessible. It was an ideal retreat for the tigers. Sometimes they could see each other across the river without

being able to meet unless they used a ford which the Moi knew as well as the tigers did.

The smaller game, fleeing from the fires, had no alternative but to walk, all unknowing, right into the tiger's territory. There were berries and roots under the trees in this green island which were plentiful enough to keep them alive until the grass grew again on the savannah. But the biggest nuisances at Tra-Hou were the elephants. Their continual trumpeting and the general racket they kept up made life unbearable.

One evening I set a steel trap a couple of hundred yards from the village. I remember thinking what a nuisance the elephants were, with their continual blaring. They fancied themselves as the lords of creation and had invaded the outskirts of the forest although they had not had a chance to pillage the crops because of the army of Moi perched in the trees shouting and waving torches. But the tigers took no notice of the elephants. They even used their tracks on their way to steal the village goats, pigs, and dogs.

About eight o'clock in the evening the usual din broke out; a tiger was caught in the trap. What followed was, to say the least, unexpected. All round the little clearing where the tiger was trapped was a ring of elephants, standing shoulder to shoulder, providing a deafening chorus of bellowing punctuated by sudden shrill blasts. Although the tiger seemed unimpressed by this pastoral symphony the elephants kept it up until the first light of dawn. Then at last, after the cyclopean orchestra had withdrawn, I was able to approach my trap, to find a very muddy tiger caught by a fore-foot, with a smooth circle of earth all round him with a radius equal to the length of his chain. Broken branches and trampled grass showed that four or five of the elephants had come within

a few feet of him and tried to frighten him, or perhaps even to crush him to death. Why they had not actually done so remains a mystery.

According to their tracks there must have been at least thirty elephants in the herd.

Unlike other tigers caught in the steel trap this one had not worn down his teeth trying to bite through his fetters; no doubt he had been too busy keeping the elephants at bay. I shot him at point-blank range with a long 22 rifle.

Two years later the whole scene was re-enacted on the same spot and at the same time. The blaring elephants kept it up all night, their noise rising and falling with their rage and almost drowning the noise of the tiger. This time I actually tried to get at my trap but the elephants forced me back. My projector made them angrier than ever and the noise of breaking branches and sepulchral grumblings was terrifying. Altogether it was enough to dissuade me from trying to get any closer. To this day I am not in the least ashamed to admit that I was scared.

The Moi knew the elephants' habits and as soon as the alert had been sounded from the communal house they began to make a noise like all Hell let loose. There was not a family that didn't take part. Some beat on bronze gongs as hard as they knew how, some on buffalo-skin tom-toms, some on hollowed-out tree-trunks or on the bamboos which the night watchers used. Everybody shouted as loud as he could, and all the while the braziers were lighting the scene with their fitful smoky flames. The elephants kept up their racket around the tiger and the general atmosphere was to say the least sinister. I felt we were back in the mysterious savage days of the mammoth.

But there was more to come.

At about three o'clock in the morning the roaring of the tiger suddenly took on a more raucous and threatening note, as if he had decided to take the offensive. The elephants changed to their 'call'⁵ note—like a series of shrill yappings—and set off without undue haste back to the jungle. A different kind of roaring could be heard off to the right, where at least two more tigers were calling to each other in the darkness.

As soon as it was light, my Mo'i and I went to look at the trap. The elephants had not come near the place again, but we saw from their prints that there had been fifty or more of them. According to the Moi they had decamped when they heard those extra tigers in the neighbourhood. Here and there these tigers' footprints were mingled with those of the elephants. They had been prospecting the area, each on his own account, in the usual way when they had accidentally come near enough to hear the trapped tiger roaring with pain and anger, and they had added their own protests. Apparently in every large herd of elephants there are usually ten or a dozen young ones and as their mothers had thought it safer to keep out of the tiger's way the whole herd had moved off.

The explanation seemed reasonable to me. However as there were a lot of tigers about I suggested a big *battue* for the end of that week. The Moi agreed—the prospect of restocking their larders with venison decided them—and they summoned reinforcements from the next village, about two hours' journey away. The area to be beaten was quite well-defined: the slopes of the ravine and the banks of the Song Voi.

The game we started was plentiful and various. Six times we saw a tiger, but each time it leaped back at

once into the forest, startled by the bright light and worried by the inadequate cover. We could not even be sure that it was a different tiger every time. All but one fled to the ravine, only the sixth making for the river. Towards the end of the *battue* two tiger cubs came out into the open and ran straight on, without seeking cover.

Two months later we had another *battue*, this time on the suggestion of the Moi, who were attracted by the prospect of more venison. The savannah was green again as far as the eye could see, and the clumps of trees and bushes had all grown up again. We put up less game this time, but the three tigers we disturbed made little effort to run away. They were fully grown and about the same size and they moved in Indian file through the grass, taking what chances they could find to camouflage themselves against their background. They had clearly been caught unawares and were trying to get away quietly from the beaters, but they were not very fierce and it would have been quite easy to make a film of them. They seemed quite sorry to leave us—almost as if they were saying *au revoir* rather than good-bye.

In short, these tigers of Tra-Hou were all living together in the same sector of the forest because they had no option, but they did their best to keep clear of each other when they were out hunting. Each would return to his own kingdom and set up his own headquarters as soon as he could. If by chance they all smelt the same bait they followed their noses, without undue haste, and even sat around the bait for quite a long time out of sheer politeness before starting to eat. I should like to have made films of them in these unusual circumstances, to catch them in their most natural attitude and when they were free from the usual restraints and fears, but

at that period I had neither the time nor the means for such a luxury.

Looking back over the years I find there is another thing which I regret. I should like to have recorded the *sounds* of the jungle for all men and women to hear—especially the moment when the elephants and tigers first shatter the hot tropical night with their thunderous chorus and the half-naked Mo'i add their ear-splitting accompaniment. It is a savage and uncivilized uproar, but it seems to me the voice of nature, saner, nearer to the truth than so many of the doubtful recordings that the great European public prefers.

Year after year, for several decades, I used to watch the tigers on the little islands of Bau Dien during the flood season. They were an even more interesting case of the 'chance community' than those I have been describing.

Every year in July or August the Lagna overflows its banks and spreads over the savannahs. Millions of hectares are flooded to a depth of anything from thirty inches to several yards, and where you walk dry-shod in the dry season you must now go by boat. The crocodiles, of course, had nothing to complain about. They would leave the strongly-flowing river and laze around on their bellies waiting for their prey. Even the fish found new worlds to explore.

The suddenness of the floods usually caught the various animals by surprise and they would instinctively make for high ground. As the floods rose the tigers, panthers, wild boar, stags and little deer would take refuge in the islands left standing in the floods. The grass was tender, especially in the clearings and the undergrowth rich in plants which would at least keep them alive. For the tigers of course, it was heaven; they had an inexhaustible

larder within arms' length and could wait for the waters to recede, with full tummies and dry feet.

I would descend on these islands like a figure of retribution, arriving in a canoe and landing wherever it looked as though I should be able to set up my headquarters. It would be pouring with rain nearly all day and all night and I would sally forth only in the rare intervals of fine weather. With my rifle loaded and my finger on the trigger I would wander about the island and rouse all sorts of game. Usually they would hide in the grass until I had passed before running away and I identified them only by their cry. The tigers were no exception and my precautions were fully justified. I have often seen them quite clearly a few yards away, trying to slip off without being seen. If they stopped to look at me, I would do the same; and if they were too close I would wait until they had withdrawn some distance before shooting. Every time the gun went off there was an indescribable commotion, with the grunts of angry tigers punctuated by the heavy thudding of galloping feet.

The smallest of the islands of Bau Dien was only about a hundred acres in extent; the largest five hundred or more. One year we had a proper *battue* on one of the large islands. The people of three neighbouring villages turned out and between them caught forty small deer in their nets. I had the greatest difficulty in persuading them to free twenty of them, the simple folk being quite convinced that they would keep them all at home and slaughter them as required. It was what they had always done and they failed to understand why I should want to protect animals which, according to them, had no function in life except to provide food for the Moi. 'Better us than the tigers,' they grumbled. It was a

logical point of view, I suppose, and I was not unaware of the necessity for keeping on the right side of them if I wanted their help in killing off the tigers on the island. They admitted they had seen several in the course of the *battue* and had wisely kept quiet and let them go by. They were not interested in tiger-skins, still less in the actual skinning in damp muggy weather. All they wanted was to lay up a good store of meat, especially marsh-deer meat.

One morning, under a grey and lowering sky, I began a *battue* specially for tigers and killed one just when he was breaking through the line of beaters. They shouted to stop him and when I came running up they pointed to a thick clump of bushes in the middle of a fairly empty clearing. 'He's in here!' they shouted.

I fired a shot in the direction of the bushes which brought out a very angry tiger who, seeing he was discovered, stopped to greet us with a few well-chosen swear words. I easily put a stop to that.

But to everybody's amazement another and a bigger tiger slipped away from the other side of the bushes and made for the shore. My men rushed after him, kicking up a simply deafening shindy. When he reached the water he turned once in a threatening attitude, then changed his mind, leaped in and began swimming straight ahead, just as if he were in a lake. From our vantage point on dry land we watched to see what he would do. We could easily have gone after him in a canoe but I was anxious to see how he would finally get out of the fix he had got himself into.

It was soon over. He tired rapidly and began swimming back to the island, where we were lying hidden and awaiting his return. When I finally shot him he was waist high in the water, completely bewildered and lost.

That tiger was driven to take to the water by the noise the Moi were making. Normally he would never have risked the crowds of crocodiles which swim around these flooded areas.

I paid innumerable visits to Bau Dien in the course of my hunting career but never once did I find a single island with no animals on it. Sometimes I have lain in my camp at night listening to tigers fighting. These chance communities inevitably come to blows especially when one tiger meets a rival trailing the same victim. Following the usual custom of the jungle, the weaker would give way to the stronger and go to look for some other prey.

That day when I killed two tigers—the second of them in the water—I might have had a chance to make a census of all the tigers on the island. Not only did I have all the beaters to help me, but I had given several of them sporting guns to defend themselves with if a tiger happened to turn on them. But as luck would have it the rain came down so heavily that we could not go out in it, and when it stopped everything was so sodden that there would have been no fun in carrying on. The Moi' declared that on the bigger islands it was not unusual to find ten or a dozen tigers in a single *battue* and from what I knew of Bau Dien I was inclined to believe them.

In the middle of the rainy season, for about a fortnight at the end of July and the beginning of August, there is a break in the weather which the old bush-rangers of South Indo-China call 'the little dry season' and in which the sun is as hot as in high summer. I always used to dream of taking advantage of this break to organize a monster *battue* in which all the tigers would be driven into one small area where a camera man, hidden behind

the bushes, could film them. This was only one part of a plan to which I gave a great deal of thought and which I would have put into action if the events of September 1945 had not upset the whole of Indo-China and deprived me personally of my job. My only hope now is that if I am never able to carry out my project myself somebody else will take it over where I left it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Taming and Training

MOST wild animals can be trained—to some extent, at least. I am often asked whether it is possible to train tigers. I find it difficult to answer the question with any confidence because I have never tried the job professionally and my amateur efforts have varied. Some have been discouraging, others more promising. I should no doubt have been more successful had I possessed more patience.

For example I once had a tiger which I was very fond of and which I brought up on my estate. When I bought him from a local trapper he was little bigger than a cat. He was reared on the bottle and made a fuss of, and as he grew up he became so tame and so gentle that he used to play with the dogs without hurting them. My men were very firm with him, however, and during the first few months he had many a thrashing which sent him running under the furniture out of their way. Even when he was nearly fully grown, with a quite impressive set of teeth, he still went everywhere with me like a dog and nobody had any reason to be afraid of him. We would often see him lying in the yard dozing or watching the children play, and if it was unusually hot we would come across him in a cool spot on the verandah, or even in a corner of a room indoors. If I had to go away I would lock him up in the house, and I need hardly add that the house was then safe from intruders.

Then one night when I came home about one o'clock

in the morning I heard him growl as I turned the key in the lock. I called his name at once and he was quiet for a moment but then started to growl again. When I came near him, with my hunting lamp on my forehead as usual, I expected him to come and rub himself against my legs like a cat, as he always did, but this time he ran away.

At that time I was living in a big colonial type house built of wood, with each room opening out of the next. I followed him from room to room, calling him by his name and using various familiar words to calm him down, thinking he was suffering from some purely temporary upset. But when I reached the last of the rooms, which was a *cul de sac*, he sprang at me with a roar and with his teeth bared. I still went on speaking to him, a little louder, perhaps, but to no effect.

I just managed to avoid his first attack by stepping back smartly, but this retreat encouraged him and he became really threatening. I had visions of being killed and eaten in my own house by the very tiger I had made such a friend of. My servants, who had been awakened by the noise, were outside and shouted that the tiger had gone mad. I learned later that they had discovered this in the course of the evening and had intended to warn me in time but had not heard me come in.

In my retreat my rifle had fallen from my hand and by the time I had recovered it the tiger was standing on his hind legs with his forepaws on my shoulders and his slobbering jaws within a few inches of my face.

I realized that the time for gentle remonstrance was past and when he happened to look away for a moment I brought my knee up hard into his belly, which made him step back. I then tried to keep him off with the rifle, but he continued to roar at me and gathered his

forces for a spring. I had no alternative but to shoot him point blank in the face, and the next moment I was rolling over with him on top of me. He was not quite dead and tried to wriggle away but he only got a few feet before he collapsed.

My hunting lamp had gone out in the struggle and the dramatic little episode was enacted by the sinister light of an oil lamp hanging from the ceiling.

I have often wondered what a professional trainer would have done in my place, and I have never found out what caused this sudden outburst. He had been perfectly normal when I left home and nobody could have come in and upset him during my absence. Several tamers I have since consulted on the matter have given me their explanations. According to them it all went to show that man can only impose his will on a tiger, by rule of fear, up to a certain point; beyond that point his savage instincts will return sooner or later. Thenceforward he will no longer obey, although it always seems possible to make him go through various exercises which he seems not to enjoy very much. The tiger that leaps through a burning hoop at the circus is a common enough sight but these tricks are not easily taught. Tigers are unco-operative animals and their trainers have to be very strict and insist from the very first on implicit and immediate obedience. At the first sign of rebellion they must be brought to heel and forced to toe the line. If the tiger detects the smallest sign of diffidence in his trainer he gets bolder and will not hesitate to attack him when least expected.

Most of the 'accidents' which occur from time to time in the ring are due to the fact that the tigers have gradually got the upper hand; they never take their eyes off their tamer and one split second of slackness or inatten-

tion on his part is usually enough. That is why tigers with a reputation for good behaviour are said to have gone mad all of a sudden. Actually they have been nursing their grievance even while apparently quite docile. This sort of thing happens most frequently if the act includes a large number of tigers; they give each other moral support.

But my tiger had never tried to intimidate me or to wear me down. On the contrary, I had always felt that my authority over him was—unless I was completely mistaken—absolute and unquestioned.

One evening before the war I saw a really well-trained tiger in a circus in Paris. A friend of mine, whom I had introduced to big-game hunting in Indo-China, took me to see it and especially to admire the high-light of the performance—a tiger riding on a horse. Sure enough, a beautiful roan with splendid leather harness and a magnificent side-saddle came prancing into the ring, followed by a superb tiger. They stood side by side in the centre of the ring, the horse kneeling down to make its bow and the tiger sniffing the horse's nostrils. The trainer, a neat little figure in black, also bowed to the thunderous applause. Then he cracked his whip and the horse began to gallop round the ring. At a guttural word of command the tiger sprang up into the saddle like a yellow and black arrow and sat there perfectly at ease while the horse went round and round. It even bent its knees grotesquely, following the movements of its steed, in time with the music. I had never seen anything like it.

Then the attendants fixed bars across the ring for the horse to run underneath and every time they came to one the tiger jumped over it, landing faultlessly on the horse's back again. Next he dived, head down, through paper hoops. Finally, every time the horse passed by a

platform at the side of the ring, the tamer shouted a word of command and the tiger leaped up to the platform, jumping nonchalantly down into the saddle again next time the horse came round.

The crowd went mad with delight.

It was, after all, only a circus act, but it illustrated one of the less obvious triumphs of training. In the jungle the horse and the tiger would have been natural enemies, yet the horse showed no fear and did not even flinch under the tiger's weight. Nor, as far as I could see, had the tiger any temptation to sink his teeth into the tempting piece of horse-flesh right under his nose. There were no scratches on the saddle so it looked as though the tiger had not even unsheathed his claws. The whole thing was thought up, managed and controlled by the smallest and least powerful of the three characters in the ring.

I could not help thinking of the patience it must have required to bring this turn to such perfection and wondering how long it had taken. Unfortunately I had to leave next day for the country and was unable to postpone my departure for twenty-four hours to give me a chance to see the show again. I have certainly never seen another tiger so intelligent—or so well trained.

Some of the older people of Indo-China will remember a tiger trained by a certain dignitary before the first World War at the time when he occupied high office in Northern Viet Nam. He was a fully grown animal and had the freedom of the house just the same as the dogs, with whom he was on the best of terms. Visitors were naturally afraid of him and would sit tight in their chairs when this tiger came sweeping into the drawing-room in front of his mistress, just like a dog. He would sit down, take a good look round at the company, lick his chops and purr like a cat.

One day this tiger, who often used to make a friendly call on the neighbours, decided to visit the dormitory of the Christian Brothers Boys' school. There was something like a panic until a servant came to look for him and took him home on a lead no stronger than an ordinary dog's lead. The most extraordinary thing about this tiger—which became quite a legend in North Viet Nam—was that his most constant friend and playmate was the son of the house, a little boy of six. They spent nearly all day together with nobody watching them and the child would even get the tiger to open his jaws wide so that he could put his head in his mouth.

When his master was transferred to another post and had to move with his family to South Viet Nam he was unable to take the tiger with him and handed him over to the Hanoi Medical School, where he pined so much for his little friend that he went into a state of neurasthenia and eventually died of hunger.

All this is completely true, however improbable it may seem. Never before or since have I come across a tiger quite like it—gentle and faithful as a dog. Inevitably, when it died the locals began to spread stories of metempsychosis. This unusual tiger, it was said, had been the reincarnation of a saint who had not yet reached his state of perfection.

But I have told his story here as that of an exceptional case. He certainly ended his days without ever having failed in his devotion to his masters, but a single exception proves nothing and certainly does not affect the suspicion I was never able to shake off after my experience with the tiger that I had trained to look after my house, the one which had been so suddenly overpowered by his natural instincts and been ready to bite the hand that had fed him since he was a baby.

There were other tigers, captured very young, which I had the chance to bring up during the course of my experience in the jungle. Honesty compels me to admit that I had to get rid of them all when they grew up and their instincts turned them into wild animals which no longer recognized me and which became a constant danger to everybody around me. Twenty-five years ago I brought from Cambodia two cubs whose mother I had killed, not knowing that she had a family. After I had shot her I noticed that her breasts were full of milk so I searched everywhere for the cubs. As I could not find them I went back to my camp to collect a team of assistants to move the corpse of the tigress and on my return I was amazed to find the two cubs lying at her side, not much bigger than kittens and just as clumsy. Where they had been in hiding remains a mystery.

It was easy enough to capture them, although they showed us their sharp little teeth when we detached them from their mother's body. Two Mo'i took them by the scruff of the neck and threw them into a basket. I put them in a cage when we got them home and by the next day they allowed us to stroke them. At first I had great difficulty in keeping them alive and for months I was expecting them to die. But with meat juice and a little phosphate they gradually pulled through.

They were a most attractive pair and very popular with everybody. All day long they played with the cats and the dogs and every now and then one of the dogs would administer a little necessary discipline. Several times the big mastiff nearly strangled them, although a few months later the roles were reversed and the tigers were attacking the mastiff and squabbling over their victim. But they apparently patched up their quarrel

because when I got back I found that between them they had eaten the poor dog.

One evening the larger of the two refused to go back into his cage and neither persuasion nor firmness would change his mind. The keeper was getting ready to put on his collar to chain him up when the tiger turned on him and he was lucky to escape with his life—and with his clothes torn to ribbons. His rapid retreat merely encouraged the young rip. As I called his name he just flew at me, instead of coming affectionately up to me in his usual way. I stepped back a pace expecting that this was a passing fit which would soon be over but his rage was obviously getting more violent every minute. I shot him in the eye from very close range and he fell dead. All night long his brother was looking for him and growling until he too began to get bad-tempered, so I sold him to a travelling menagerie at Saigon.

The steady deterioration of these two tigers seemed to me all too characteristic. One baby I brought up went wild at an even more tender age; he was out of hand before he weighed 100 pounds. Another reverted to nature as he was going past a wounded ox: the smell and sight of blood were too much for him.

Even the one I kept longest of all gave me many anxious moments. Every time he rebelled I corrected him sternly. The inferiority complex which I have already described was in my favour but the young tiger developed rapidly. Once his primitive instincts were aroused in the middle of a dog-fight and he took a lump out of the shoulder of the friend he had just been playing with. This tiger died suddenly with violent stomach pains which made him roll about on the ground in agony. I have always assumed that he had been poisoned.

A planter friend of mine and his wife had the same troubles with two young tigers they were trying to bring up. When one of the tigers got too wild they offered him to the Zoo at Saigon.

These planters were living at the time in a neat little wooden house, like those we all had in those days. They had no children and showered all their affection on 'Fou-Fou', the baby tiger, who was growing visibly as a result of their loving care. Fou-Fou was always the first to receive visitors and those who had not been warned found this welcome a little alarming. By the time he was nearly full-grown he had taken to prowling around the table at meal-times. At night he slept on the verandah—but slept with one eye open. It was constantly surveying the neighbouring jungle, as if he was wondering what lucky—or unlucky—chance had condemned him to this life rather than a life of hunting in the fields and forests.

If the moon was shining he would go on growling after the planter had locked him up in his cage on the verandah. Everything seemed to recall instinctively the jungle life he had never known—the sharp smells, so much keener at night, the shadows and the yellow eyes that glowed from their depths.

One evening Fou-Fou, who had been howling piteously all through the previous night, was let into his master's bedroom. During the night the planter got up in the dark and happened to bump into the settee where the tiger was sleeping. There was a terrible roar and when the planter struck a match to light the oil lamp, there was Fou-Fou beside himself with rage, grinding his teeth and showing his fangs. The planter's wife kept her head, she opened the door and, brandishing a stick, told Fou-Fou to get out—quick—which he did, growling

all the while. Then she shut the door and they went back to bed. A board partition which did not reach up to the ceiling separated them from the tiger.

After breakfast next morning Fou-Fou stole a duck and was about to start eating it when his mistress interrupted him and tried to take it away. He got up on his hind legs, pinned her against the wall and scratched her shoulder. Once again the young woman kept her head, called Fou-Fou sternly by his name and looked him straight in the eyes. Despite the sight and smell of blood on his mistress's dress the tiger gave way and slunk back sheepishly to his cage.

But these outbursts of disobedience and rebellion grew more and more frequent. The Director of the Saigon Zoo was summoned by telephone and took the tiger away to taste the joys of life behind prison bars. The departure of Fou-Fou was a sad blow for the planter and his wife, who had come to regard him almost as a member of the family, but the neighbours did not share their regrets; they had begun to be a little apprehensive over Fou-Fou's escapades.

Every time the planter and his wife went to Saigon they used to go and see their old friend, who would immediately recognize them and come to the bars of his cage to be stroked. With his back arched like a cat's he would express his pleasure at seeing them by little grunts of joy—much to the surprise of the onlookers. When they had to leave he would give vent to protracted cries which were quite distressing to hear. Then the planters went home to France on a year's leave. Fou-Fou was fully grown and magnificent when they returned, but he no longer knew them. They spoke to him, they made affectionate signs, but all in vain. Fou-Fou had completely forgotten, and merely made threatening faces at

them. They decided not to press their old friendship any further.

Fou-Fou's case was quite common, in fact all tigers behave like that in captivity. They can be amusing and even affectionate while they are young but as they grow up they yield inevitably to their natural instincts. One day These instincts get the upper hand and they rebel against those who are robbing them of their freedom. My brother had the same experience as I did. As a matter of fact the tiger begins to change even before it is grown up. If you come near it while it is eating it growls with real anger, and if you try to take its food away it raises its paw and shows its claws. And this is with cooked or prepared food. The first piece of raw meat you give it is just the deciding factor in its development.

I remember a tigress—to quote one more example—belonging to a colonial friend of mine, which was captured in the lair where her mother had been shot. She was very tame, and her rebellion came very late in life. Even when she was grown up she would sit like a cat to wait for her joint of meat and take it almost gently. (There was no question of offering it to her at arm's length because she would have bitten your hand—quite unintentionally.) As soon as she had it she would run out in the garden and eat it up in some private retreat, heard but no longer seen. The servants were afraid*of her but she had never hurt a soul. The last time I saw her she was nearly adult but still liked to be stroked and made a fuss of. She had ears like a big mastiff's and one of them had been partially amputated after an accident. Her owner had had the other cut to the same shape in the interests of symmetry! The operation had given her a less aggressive appearance since she

could no longer prick up her ears like a cat when she was annoyed.

When she was in season she was jumpy and unsociable and one day she disappeared. The only news her owner received was that some wood-cutters had seen her running with her head down, looking both happy and miserable at the same time. My friend had hopes of seeing her back after she had mated and even had visions of himself fondling a litter of cubs. But the jungle had swallowed her up.

The rainy season came and went. Then, with the return of the dry season, reports reached me from several neighbouring villages of a tiger that was creating havoc and displaying quite exceptional boldness. It was stealing cattle from the pasture at all hours and seemed quite unaffected by the usual shouts, beating of gongs and letting off of crackers. It did not even trouble to drag its victims away to eat them, like other self-respecting tigers, but consumed them on the spot, right out in the open. Never in living memory had the Moi seen a tiger so little afraid of human beings.

The local magicians were opposed to any attempt to catch or kill the intruder, fearing some awful retribution since this was clearly an exceptional creature. None the less, the villagers decided to drive it away by a great *battue* which duly took place with the assistance of every able-bodied man and every contrivance imaginable for making the maximum noise.

They soon found their tiger, which got up, stretched and arched its back like a great cat and trotted away at a leisurely pace. It seemed completely indifferent to the noise and the numbers and showed not the slightest hostility. However they eventually drove it into a ravine where it gave no further sign of life. The beaters went

home more mystified than ever and nobody would volunteer for the next *battue*.

The tiger showed no signs of reform. It continued to levy its toll from each of the villages in turn. When it was bored with cattle it took to visiting the pig-sties and the poultry-runs. It easily broke down the thin walls, chose its victim carefully, took it unhurriedly and returned the way it had come, making no attempt at concealment. It would often meet some of the villagers on these expeditions—men at work or women and children on their way to and from the river with water. It just sat back a little way off the path and watched them go by before carrying on. But the villagers had little reason to be grateful because the magicians were more and more convinced that there was something supernatural about the tiger and merely redoubled their sacrifices in the hope that the Spirits of the Jungle would order it elsewhere.

And then a friend of mine heard all the stories that were circulating and decided to investigate them for himself. Hearing of the latest ox to be killed he went to its owner who hastened to whisper in his ear: 'Don't say I was the one who sent for you, whatever you do. The Spirits will accuse me of being an accomplice and I shall have to clear out.' Everybody in the village spoke in riddles; they hinted that it would be pleasant to be free of their incubus but they were clearly anxious not to offend the Spirits. The result was that my friend had to do everything for himself. He took his rifle and his torch and searched the neighbourhood until he found the ox with the tiger at its side. He was able to walk quite close to it and the tiger merely lowered its head when the light of the torch got a little too strong for its eyes. When my friend shot it, in the hollow below the shoulder, it

leaped into a clump of banana trees with a terrible roar and a moment later a hoarse rattle in the throat announced that all was over.

It was a fine healthy tigress in the prime of life, but what amazed my friend was the shape of its ears. The settler who had brought up a tigress and trimmed her ears for the sake of symmetry immediately recognized his old friend. Living with human beings during her childhood, she had acquired a certain tameness and complaisance which had proved a disadvantage when she returned to her normal existence. She had lost—or rather, never learned—all that mistrust which her mother would have taught her had she remained free and wild.

The magicians, of course, were not to be put off with any such simple explanation. They organized an elaborate ceremony to appease the spirit of the dead tigress and everybody did honour to the occasion, bending the elbow energetically and loudly proclaiming the dawn of a new era.

This particular animal seemed to have retained to an unusual degree the memories of her captivity, but in most cases a tiger which escapes from a period of taming and recovers its liberty soon forgets the past completely. Obviously character and personality differ from one individual to another, as with human beings. It is the same when dealing with sick or injured tigers. Some cubs I have reared have had to be forcibly held down before anyone could apply the simplest dressing to an injured foot; yet I have seen a tiger with a badly infected wound in the shoulder submit quietly to treatment, merely making inarticulate little cries of pain. He even seemed to look forward impatiently to the vet's visit every morning. For my part, I confess I have never tried to treat a sick tiger without first making quite sure

that it was immobilized by some means or other, including occasionally a regulation anaesthetic. Once I remember a loo-pound tiger which never came out of the anaesthetic, which must have been too strong.

A few words about castrated tigers may not be out of place in this chapter. The first I ever saw belonged to an old Mandarin of the court of Annam, who was very proud of it. He would sit at his desk receiving visitors with his tiger lying at his feet and consider himself most distinguished—as indeed he was. It was a middle-sized animal, rather fat and short-winded and lacking in that springiness ortrea^;N^rcEr every feline should show. It was so fat that it seemed to roll over rather than to lie down and was so extremely complaisant that it never even growled at anybody who came too near while it was eating.

The normal hazards of life took me away from the company of this Mandarin for ten years or more and I was unable to observe the development of his pet, but I was told that the older it grew, the tamer it became until towards the end, when it knew it had not long-to-live, it used to complain every time its master went out and left it.

Another friend of mine—a hunter after my own heart—once talked to me about the castration of tigers. He had had some experience, having performed the operation on four of them. He told me that a tiger, once gelded, loses its vitality but as far as he knew none of his four subjects had gone flabby. His opinion was that successful castration has little physical effect on the tiger; it merely makes It tamer and more amenable, as it does horses and bullocks. The tiger puts on weight and gets lazy but also becomes very even-tempered. My Moi vet was certainly not very lucky in his attempts. He usually killed his patients and then went to great pains to explain that it was not his fault they died. But his last operation

was crowned with success. The tiger developed normally at first then began to get fatter and fatter, and was finally quite pot-bellied by the time he sold it to a foreign tourist.

I must say my hunting friend's arguments failed to convince me. I could never approve of the idea because to me a castrated tiger is no longer a tiger but a limp sort of creature, unable to spring or generally to react like a Lord of the Jungle. As for trying to train one, you might just as well train a fat pig.

Let me repeat what I have said so often before: I loved hunting and trapping. Later, when my wife was there to help me, I grew to love photographing and filming wild animals in their natural surroundings. Training tigers has never been more than a passing whim for me, and then only because the circumstances have happened to be favourable at the moment. I was certainly interested in training elephants because that was partly my job, but any experiments I happened to try with other animals—tigers, panthers, bears, etc.—were merely spare-time hobbies.

I remember a professional trainer being most amused when he called on me once at my place in the jungle and found me with the six-ounce gloves on, fighting hammer and tongs with a tame young tiger, whose aggressiveness, I had discovered, could only be kept down by this kind of treatment (which was good enough for me as I used to be quite an amateur boxer myself). My visitor wanted me to sell him my sparring-partner but I could see he was hard up so I asked him in for a drink and made him forget all about it. No doubt he found my training methods unorthodox, to say the least.

That particular tiger, like so many others, also ended his days honourably in a zoo.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Film of my Dreams

THERE have been plenty of films about wild animals, some of them documentaries, some romances. The public have had the chance of seeing all kinds of animals, and the lion in particular has become a commonplace on the screen. But there is still a great deal about the secret life of the jungle which has not been revealed.

This is particularly true of the tiger for the simple reason that his life and habits have not so far been extensively filmed. The art of the cine-camera has made enormous progress in the last few years but nobody has so far managed to photograph the striped Lord of the Jungle in his own dominion. The main reason for this is that the most famous big-game hunters, in Indo-China at least, always followed the sport for their personal satisfaction and enjoyment. They penetrated the mysteries of the jungle out of their private love of nature and never even considered the possibility of sharing their discoveries with outsiders. In their day, of course, the cine-camera was a rare luxury, used only by a very few professional photographers, but, as a humble successor of those pioneers, I was able to make use of it myself somewhat later in my career with the help of my wife. She took some amateur films of big-game hunting—for gaur, elephants, and tigers—and her results opened up all sorts of unexpected horizons for me.

When the Japanese occupied Indo-China they con-

fiscated and destroyed my entire collection of films.

Had it not been for the 'troubles' I should certainly have carried out the plan I had envisaged, having already arranged for the materials and for the cameramen. The trickiest part of the job, the actual organization, I had kept for myself as I wanted to leave nothing to chance and I knew I could draw on my intimate knowledge of the languages and customs of the people, and on my long experience of the larger animals.

Let me outline a couple of sequences, put together from nothing, which would require the services of a script-writer to give them a filmable shape but which may give some indication of the nature and content of my unpublished film. Even though I may never be in a position to make the vast documentary I dream about, my labour may not be altogether in vain.

I have already pointed out that although the tiger is not a particularly good high-jumper his long-jump is prodigious. Whenever I have had the chance to measure the distance a tiger can spring when alarmed I have been astonished. As I was anxious to check my impressions on this point—which is of course related also to the tiger's power of attack I tried, some twenty years ago, an experiment which may seem a little cruel but was certainly conclusive.

A tiger had killed a draught ox for me the night before—one which had been lagging behind when they were moving to their pasture and had paid for his slowness with his life. The tiger had dragged the carcass into a thicket and eaten half of one thigh. After such a meal, we thought, he would not come back in the day-time, especially as it was quite near the village, but he would certainly return later in the evening.

This was my chance. I distributed the beef among my

men and started working hard on the set-up. At the edge of a thicket there was a tufted tree with an ideal fork in its branches for a look-out about thirteen or fourteen feet above the ground. The place suited my plans admirably, so I got my men to build me an almost luxurious platform, fixed to the tree with nine-inch nails and wire, with a branch of the same tree at the front for camouflage, a mattress on the floor to deafen all sound, and a rope ladder.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon, a great Indian bull, a very powerful beast and so bad-tempered that everybody in the neighbourhood was afraid of it, was tethered at the exact spot where the draught ox had been partially devoured. A six-foot chain gave it sufficient freedom of movement to enable it to defend itself if it was attacked and the ground was cleared all round it for a radius of twenty yards or so. With my brother George and a Vietnamese hunter for company I went up into the look-out, expecting to see a terrific fight between the bull and the tiger and resolved not to put a stop to it until the last possible moment.

As I had foreseen, the tiger appeared well before nightfall. The sun was just beginning to sink behind the crests of the mountains and visibility was excellent. Suddenly the bull began to paw the ground and sniff noisily. He looked a picture of brute strength, waving his horns menacingly, never still for a moment, advancing a few steps and then coming back with his chain at full stretch, lowing and snorting with excitement. Obviously he had seen the tiger and was thirsting for a fight; in similar circumstances I have seen other bulls trembling in every limb.

However hard we looked we could see nothing suspicious in the thicket, except perhaps a slight movement

among the leaves. Yes, there was something there, moving stealthily through the thick vegetation. Five minutes later the rustling came from another quarter and the bull had turned about to face it. The tiger—for it could only be he—was waiting for the right moment to attack, and the bull was ready.

I was annoyed to see that the tiger's circular tour of inspection looked like being indefinitely prolonged, and the night was rapidly getting darker. I was just asking myself what would be the best thing to do next when there was a slight noise from the edge of the wood which made the bull turn round sharply. It was a couple of civet-cats chasing each other. I saw them—and so, unfortunately for him, did the bull. The moment his attention was distracted the tiger was on him like a flash of lightning. He landed on his withers, with the claws of his left fore-foot in the bull's throat, and gripped the bull's face just above the muzzle with his right fore-foot. At the same time he bit deep into the bull's neck. His left hind foot was on the ground supporting his weight and his right was tearing at the bull's flank, which was bleeding profusely.

As luck would have it the tiger was so placed that we could see him without his suspecting our presence. All the while he was trying to pull the bull down he was facing towards the trees opposite our look-out. The bull was roaring with pain and anger and snatching at the ground with his hoofs, staggering backwards and forwards but unable to turn round. The tiger was controlling the bull's movements and steadying himself with the one foot he had left free.

The struggle was over in three or four short minutes. Every movement the bull tried to make was fruitless and finally it fell to its knees and then rolled over, bringing

the tiger down with it. In a flash the tiger had rolled it over, twisting its neck with a violent jerk, sinking his fangs in its throat and shaking the great head like a dog shaking a rat. The bull's horns had got stuck into the ground and further hampered its frantic efforts to escape. Soon the enormous animal collapsed and lay still. The tiger withdrew to his corner of the ring and sat down panting to behold his defeated enemy. He had his back towards me and I was able to pay him back in his own coin, since he had attacked the bull from behind. He fell dead over the body of his victim.

I arranged this scene several times afterwards, with different actors in the star parts, but the victims were too feeble and offered no resistance at all. On the last occasion I used a particularly ill-tempered buffalo, but the whole effect was ruined by an unexpected development. The buffalo uprooted the tree-stump to which he was chained. The tiger ran away, although I could easily have shot him; perhaps I should have done, as he had killed a foal and returned next day to finish off the remains. When he found the buffalo instead he must have decided he had had enough since he disappeared from the district altogether.

Before this, however, three other tigers had behaved exactly like the one that killed the Indian bull, taking advantage of a momentary lapse of caution on the part of their victims to attack them and giving them no real chance to defend themselves. They sprang upon them with the speed of an arrow, in a flying leap with the legs stretched out before and behind the body in one long line. The first made one prodigious leap, which I measured: 22 feet from the bush he started from to the point where he landed. I have noticed the same accuracy and length of spring when a tiger has attacked smaller prey.

That is the first of my 'sequences'. With the least possible trouble I could have filmed all these amazing sights. Now for the second 'sequence'. In 1938, as in every other year, I had been making the most of the last months of the dry season tracking tigers in the Lagna savannahs. I had been introduced to an Englishman on his way through Saigon and he had confided to me his ambition to see wild animals at liberty in the jungle, so I invited him to come with me on one of my expeditions. He thus had a chance to see buffaloes, wild elephants, gaur, bang-teng and every species of deer. He was much impressed also, I remember, by a panther in a tree, several boars and three wild dogs. In a fortnight we covered a remarkable number of miles and my guest declared himself overwhelmed. This Englishman was the best type of sportsman, always ready to pay his whack, tireless on the march and unfailingly tactful. I never heard from him again—but of course the war broke out a year later. We could only talk to each other by signs but we understood each other perfectly.

One evening about three miles from Vo Dat, I found that my bait had been sampled by several tigers—at least one female with her youngster and a male who was no doubt courting her. I had already surprised this family at daybreak and withdrawn without their noticing me. So I got my Moi to watch the bait for me and in due course took up my position in the look-out, together with the Englishman and my brother George. There were three spy-holes in our look-out and we settled down quite comfortably to await developments. We were not there to kill tigers but to watch them about their business in their normal surroundings. We would only shoot in an extreme emergency.

The forest was as quiet as anyone could wish. The bait,

previously fixed to a tree-trunk, lay clearly in view at the centre of a shady circle, overlooked by thick foliage and giant trees. The surrounding jungle was quite dense. In front of us, beyond the bait, a clear stream about six Feet wide danced in its rocky bed. The Englishman was charmed. Everything, he thought, was fascinating. He pointed to his watch and asked, with some impatience but always in sign language, what time I had fixed for our date with the tigers. Five o'clock, I replied (with my hands). Then we settled back in our comfortable seats.

Somewhere close at hand the peacocks were disturbing the night with their hideous cries and being answered at regular intervals by the wild cocks. The sun was going down and its long slanting rays were shining through the trees. All was quiet and peaceful, and all eyes were on the bait.

The first we heard of the tigers was their characteristic sniffing and snorting. My guest looked at his watch. It was still not five o'clock and he smiled with satisfaction, putting his finger on his lip to enjoin silence, as if our roles were reversed.

Soon a tigress appeared on the opposite bank of the stream, followed closely by her lover. They were a fine pair, in the prime of life and of medium size, with the male only slightly bigger than his mate. The two cubs, already quite big, were frisking about like kittens as they walked. When she reached the stream the tigress crossed it at a bound, apparently without effort. She landed gently on her feet like a big velvet toy and turned round, lashing the air with her tail. The male jumped across as easily as she had done and the lovers licked each other affectionately for a moment before turning towards the bait. She had hardly touched her food when she turned round and gave the tiger a peremptory smack

in the face with her paw and recalled him to a sense of the proprieties with a growl. Anxious, no doubt, not to offend his lady he meekly turned away and allowed her to eat alone in accordance with the custom. Her appetite was enormous and she swallowed great joints of meat without even chewing them.

The tiger, full length on the grass, rolled over from time to time, apparently quite content to wait.

Meanwhile the two cubs, sitting on the other side of the stream, had no doubt got bored, so they jumped in side by side and landed facing each other in the water. There they sat, up to their middles, and had a glorious game splashing each other thoroughly. When they tired of this they clambered out and ran to their mother, snuffling comically as they ran. She, for her part, went on eating—a trifle less greedily perhaps.

The tiger stood on his hind legs against a big tree near by, looking much larger in this attitude. He tore at the bark with his claws and then suddenly stopped short, his eyes turned in the direction of our look-out. Peeping through our spy-holes we had the impression that he had seen us, in fact I felt certain that his steely eyes had met mine. I held my breath, hoping that the little scene was not to be broken up. But the tiger was apparently reassured and calmly went on sharpening his claws; then he arched his back and stretched like a cat.

At last the tigress was satisfied. She went up to her mate and licked him affectionately, but he was too anxious to get at the meat to appreciate her attentions. He furiously attacked the haunches, which were already three parts consumed, and his table manners were even worse than his mate's. The sound of his champing jaws was disgusting and was interrupted every now and then by a bad-tempered growl at the youngsters who kept

prowling around him. The latter soon gave it up as a bad job and went to sit by their mother who was lying completely relaxed on her side, her enormous white belly swollen with food.

The male had soon finished eating, no doubt afraid that his companion might leave him in the lurch, as the female's sexual appetite tends to disappear when her hunger is satisfied, especially during the rutting season. This was the youngsters' opportunity and they seized it with alacrity. But each one wanted the carcass to himself and there was a short little passage of arms before they reached an understanding. Finally the young rascals drowned their differences in a long drink from the stream. There they were joined by the tiger and tigress. For the last time the family gathered round the carcass—of which there was still plenty left—before turning round and marching off with the tiger bringing up the rear.

Meanwhile the sun was hidden behind the mountains and it was already past six o'clock. My brother wanted to take advantage of the last of the light to add another tiger to his bag—a proposal which the Englishman was happy to second. The tigress and her cubs were already out of sight but the male presented a three-quarters target, sharply defined against the dark background of the forest. The range was rather long but my brother, a first-class shot, raised his rifle and shot the tiger full in the neck. He leapt into the thicket and we could hear him growling a moment before a great hiccup announced his death.

The Englishman stood up and signified his congratulations.

We decided not to delay any longer. After finding the body of the tiger we returned to camp in semi-darkness. We got back in time for dinner and sent some Mo'i with

a cart to bring back the tiger as quickly as possible. There was no point in leaving it to the great black ants, who make short work of a dead body, and in any case the least sign of decay can ruin a skin.

When I returned to the bait that night with my men I several times saw the eyes of the tigress and the two youngsters shining in the light of my torch. They had never left their lord and master and they scattered only on our approach. I could have shot the tigress but frankly I hadn't the heart to . . .

So we come back to the question of cine-photography. Each of the scenes I have described in some detail would have made an excellent film. You can attract tigers to a given place, judiciously arranged to show them leaping great distances to attack a bull or any other animal; or you can attract several tigers to one spot by using dead bait; but your success will depend on the extent to which your cameraman is given satisfactory conditions for his job.¹

But I must repeat that, if he is accompanied by an experienced hunter, he should have nothing to do but fix the necessary technical details and then start turning the handle.

If a film is to be popular and—let's face it—profitable it need not necessarily be a documentary. There would always be the risk that it would prove dull and boring, with strings of wild animals duly presented to the audience by an announcer, or by sub-titles. This sort of

An interesting and attractive film can be made of a tiger standing on his hind legs. You wait till he has sampled the bait, then before his next visit you hang it in a tree about six feet above the ground. To collect a number of tigers to one spot you use the 'Corpse Parade' I have already described. The result, seen from the look-out, can be very entertaining. The tigers strictly observe the rules of precedence sitting or lying down to wait their turn at the gymnastic exercises.

film could be made in the National Parks of Africa but is no longer possible in Asia. But a romantic film, with the jungle as background, is a tricky business. I have seen jungle films which ran for at least two hours but which would not have been widely acceptable to western audiences. A few improbabilities will make the public suspicious of the authenticity of the film as a whole, and the trouble is that everything concerned with the jungle, however remotely, can be ruined if it is mixed with fantasy. I have often sat through an American film in beautiful technicolour and with everything on a grandiose scale. But as an old hunter I have sat there groaning at sequences which were puerile, to say the least, and which have in my opinion utterly ruined a film that must have cost enormous sums to make and was worthy of better treatment. The most obvious mistake was the introduction into a scene of savage grandeur of a bevy of women—admittedly most attractive—who were far too pale and far too immaculate to be playing in such a setting. They clashed with the whole atmosphere of the film and I took a violent dislike to whoever had been responsible for such a ridiculous mistake.

These two factors—on the one hand the possible dullness of documentary, on the other the absurdity of many of the existing jungle 'romances'—led me to my plan for presenting to the public a film which would show the wild life of the animals of this wonderful land of Indo-China, the primitive land of my birth, which is so little known and understood, alas, by the western world. I should like to have shown on the screen some of the animals which are practically unknown in the west, simply because, in the absence of Game Reserves like those in Africa, it has never been possible to photograph them in their natural surroundings. My plan had

a three-fold aim: it would have allowed me to live over again my life as a hunter and trapper; it would have shown something of the immense resources of a country half as big again as France herself; and it would have given me a job to do in the country I love.

Knowing the public taste, I wanted to make a film which was neither strictly documentary nor highly-coloured romance, but a film with the imprint of truth in every foot, with joy and sadness, with triumphs and dramatic situations—in short, a film of nature itself. The essential theme would have been the capturing of wild elephants, which would have involved long tracking expeditions in the great green immensities of the savannahs and forests. In the pursuit of elephants I should naturally have wandered into the kingdom of the tigers and into the bush where the other wild animals live—gaur, buffalo, bang-teng, wild-cattle, boars, reptiles. I would have shown the fish in the lakes and the varied and many-coloured world of the birds.

The audience would have come with me into the most remote regions where civilization, as we know it, has never yet dawned and the people still retain the ideas and customs of mankind in his earliest beginnings. My scenario would have begun with the selection of propitious and unpropitious days for hunting—a matter for the all-important native sorcerers—and the sacrifice of a buffalo; then would follow the so called 'Mass of St. Hubert' on the night before the expedition in the great clearing of the forest, mysteriously lit by enormous smoking braziers. At a signal from the chief sorcerer the darkness would be broken by little points of light as the natives lit their little red candles and placed them on the tusks of their elephants, drawn up before the ancestral altar with its smouldering incense. Then would come the

procession of the elephants, with all its magical ceremonial, as the great beasts knelt in turn to the trackers, the hunters, the mahouts and their assistants in the strict hierarchical order.

I would show the elephants and tigers in the jungle and on the plains, the former nervous and jumpy, the latter fierce and aggressive, all their normal unrehearsed attitudes, natural and unselfconscious. In the evening, waiting for the hunt to be resumed next morning, the audience would see tigers drawn to shrewdly-placed baits and surprised in their natural surroundings, singly or in groups. An interesting side-line would be a sequence devoted to the use of the steel-trap in some makeshift camp or isolated settlement.

Then would come the crisis—the fury of a herd of angry elephants, the flight of the gaurs on the approach of a human being and the less precipitate flight of the buffaloes waving their enormous horns. This would be followed by the return with the captured elephants and their training for the pack saddle or the yoke, the selection of teams for the next expedition.

All the 'actors' in this film would be going about their normal daily business or making their usual sacrifices to their tribal deities and the spirits of the jungle. I had a neat but authentic love story ready to knit into the jungle sequences. Some of the Moi women with faces like goddesses carved in wood as well as with perfect figures would have been fascinating heroines, no less than some of the men, handsome and with a natural dignity, lovely heroes.

By dint of sheer hard work I had saved quite a tidy sum by the time the Second World War broke out. I had intended to use all my own equipment to make this film and to recruit my own professional assistants whom I

was prepared to pay well. With my own herds of domestic elephants and this equipment, and the help of my professional staff and my many friends in the jungle, I was in a position to make a really authentic film. I knew the shady glens where tigers congregated—and where they could be filmed in broad daylight. I knew the clearings where the gaur could be found in herds of twenty to thirty at a time, the marshes where the wild buffaloes flourished in even larger numbers. For some shots I should have used a telephoto lens, in others the noise of a dashing stream or of a waterfall would have drowned the clicking of the camera. (The waterfall at Poun-Gour, for example, over two hundred yards wide with a drop of over three hundred feet, is so deafening that I killed a tiger there one morning just after my assistant had had an ill-timed fit of coughing. The tons of water crashing down all day long on to enormous rocks make such a din that it is quite impossible to carry on a conversation anywhere near it.)

And then, in 1940, came the war, the Japanese invasion, and all the destruction which followed in its train. By the liberation, in 1945, all I had left was the bitter-sweet memory of my lost estates. The dreams of thirty years had gone down into the void. As for my film—my ship had gone down in harbour and I no longer had the wherewithal to start again from nothing.

But although war kills so many hopes it cannot destroy my store of memories or the fruits of my many years' experience. So I have cherished my plan in the hope that it may yet see the light. Perhaps somebody else will come to my rescue one day and help this ideal, conceived and nourished in the jungle, to take shape.

That is why I have unearthed it, with all its imperfections, from the dust and ashes of the years,

