

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

Grant Allen

Table of Contents

<u>THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH</u>	1
<u>Grant Allen</u>	1

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OUR arrival at Bombay was a triumphal entry. We were received like royalty. Indeed, to tell you the truth, Elsie and I were beginning to get just a leetle bit spoiled. It struck us now that our casual connection with the Ashurst family in its various branches had succeeded in saddling us like the Lady of Burleigh, 'with the burden of an honour unto which we were not born.' We were everywhere treated as persons of importance; and, oh dear, by dint of such treatment we began to feel at last almost as if we had been raised in the purple. I felt that when we got back to England we should turn up our noses at plain bread and butter.

Yes, life has been kind to me. Have your researches into English literature ever chanced to lead you into reading Horace Walpole, I wonder? That polite trifler is fond of a word which he coined himself 'Serendipity.' It derives from the name of a certain happy Indian Prince Serendip, whom he unearthed (or invented) in some obscure Oriental story; a prince for whom the fairies or the genii always managed to make everything pleasant. It implies the faculty, which a few of us possess, of finding whatever we want turn up accidentally at the exact right moment. Well, I believe I must have been born with serendipity in my mouth, in place of the proverbial silver spoon, for wherever I go, all things seem to come out exactly right for me.

The *Jumna*, for example, had hardly heaved to in Bombay Harbour when we noticed on the quay a very distinguished-looking Oriental potentate, in a large, white turban with a particularly big diamond stuck ostentatiously in its front. He stalked on board with a martial air, as soon as we stopped, and made inquiries from our captain after someone he expected. The captain received him with that odd mixture of respect for rank and wealth, combined with true British contempt for the inferior black-man, which is universal among his class in their dealings with native Indian nobility. The Oriental potentate, however, who was accompanied by a gorgeous suite like that of the Wise Men in Italian pictures, seemed satisfied with his information, and moved over with his stately glide in our direction. Elsie and I were standing near the gangway among our rugs and bundles, in the hopeless helplessness of disembarkation. He approached us respectfully, and, bowing with extended hands and a deferential air, asked, in excellent English, 'May I venture to inquire which of you two ladies is Miss Lois Cayley?'

'I am,' I replied, my breath taken away by this unexpected greeting. 'May I venture to inquire in return how you came to know I was arriving by this steamer?'

He held out his hand, with a courteous inclination. 'I am the Maharajah of Moozuffernuggar,' he answered in an impressive tone, as if everybody knew of the Maharajah of Moozuffernuggar as familiarly as they knew of the Duke of Cambridge. 'Moozuffernuggar in Rajputana *not* the one in the Doab. You must have heard my name from Mr. Harold Tillington.' I had not; but I dissembled, so as to salve his pride. 'Mr. Tillington's friends are *our* friends,' I answered, sententiously.

'And Mr. Tillington's friends are *my* friends,' the Maharajah retorted, with a low bow to Elsie. 'This is no doubt, Miss Petheridge. I have heard of your expected arrival, as you will guess, from Tillington. He and I were at Oxford together; I am a Merton man. It was Tillington who first taught me all I know of cricket. He took me to

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

stop at his father's place in Dumfriesshire. I owe much to his friendship; and when he wrote me that friends of his were arriving by the *Jumna*, why, I made haste to run down to Bombay to greet them.'

The episode was one of those topsy-turvy mixtures of all places and ages which only this jumbled century of ours has witnessed; it impressed me deeply. Here was this Indian prince, a feudal Rajput chief, living practically among his vassals in the Middle Ages when at home in India; yet he said 'I am a Merton man,' as Harold himself might have said it; and he talked about cricket as naturally as Lord Southminster talked about the noble quadruped. The oddest part of it all was, we alone felt the incongruity; to the Maharajah, the change from Moozuffernuggar to Oxford and from Oxford back again to Moozuffernuggar seemed perfectly natural. They were but two alternative phases in a modern Indian gentleman's education and experience.

Still, what were we to do with him? If Harold had presented me with a white elephant I could hardly have been more embarrassed than I was at the apparition of this urbane and magnificent Hindoo prince. He was young; he was handsome; he was slim, for a rajah; he wore European costume, save for the huge white turban with its obtrusive diamond; and he spoke English much better than a great many Englishmen. Yet what place could he fill in my life and Elsie's? For once, I felt almost angry with Harold. Why couldn't he have allowed us to go quietly through India, two simple unofficial journalistic pilgrims, in our native obscurity?

His Highness of Moozuffernuggar, however, had his own views on this question. With a courteous wave of one dusky hand, he motioned us gracefully into somebody else's deck chairs and then sat down on another beside us, while the gorgeous suite stood by in respectful silence unctuous gentlemen in pink-and-gold brocade forming a court all round us. Elsie and I, unaccustomed to be so observed, grew conscious of our hands, our skirts, our postures. But the Maharajah posed himself with perfect unconcern, like one well used to the fierce light of royalty. 'I have come,' he said, with simple dignity, 'to superintend the preparations for your reception.'

'Gracious heavens!' I exclaimed. 'Our reception, Maharajah? I think you misunderstand. We are two ordinary English ladies of the proletariat, accustomed to the level plain of professional society. We expect no reception.'

He bowed again, with stately Eastern deference. 'Friends of Tillington's,' he said shortly, 'are persons of distinction. Besides, I have heard of you from Lady Georgina Fawley.'

'Lady Georgina is too good,' I answered, though inwardly I raged against her. Why couldn't she leave us alone, to feed in peace on dak-bungalow chicken, instead of sending this regal-mannered heathen to bother us?

'So I have come down to Bombay to make sure that you are met in the style that befits your importance in society,' he went on, waving his suite away with one careless hand, for he saw it fussed us. 'I mentioned you to His Honour the Acting-Governor, who had not heard you were coming. His Honour's aide-de-camp will follow shortly with an invitation to Government House while you remain in Bombay which will not be many days, I don't doubt, for there is nothing in this city of plague to stop for. Later on, during your progress up country, I do myself the honour to hope that you will stay as my guests for as long as you choose at Moozuffernuggar.'

My first impulse was to answer: 'Impossible, Maharajah; we couldn't dream of accepting your kind invitation.' But on second thoughts, I remembered my duty to my proprietor. Journalism first; inclination afterwards! My letter from Egypt on the rescue of the Englishwoman who escaped from Khartoum had brought me great éclat as a special correspondent, and the *Daily Telephone* now billed my name in big letters on its placards, so Mr. Elworthy wrote me. Here was another noble chance; must I not strive to rise to it? Two English ladies at a native court in Rajputana! that ought to afford scope for some rattling journalism!

'It is extremely kind of you,' I said, hesitating, 'and it would give us great pleasure, were it feasible, to accept your friendly offer. But English ideas, you know, prince! Two unprotected women! I hardly see how we could come alone to Moozuffernuggar, unchaperoned.'

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

The Maharajah's face lighted up; he was evidently flattered that we should even thus dubiously entertain his proposal. 'Oh, I've thought about that, too,' he answered, growing more colloquial in tone. 'I've been some days in Bombay, making inquiries and preparations. You see, you had not informed the authorities of your intended visit, so that you were travelling *incognito* or should it be *incognita*? and if Tillington hadn't written to let me know your movements, you might have arrived at this port without anybody's knowing it, and have been compelled to take refuge in an hotel on landing.' He spoke as if we had been accustomed all our lives long to be received with red cloth by the Mayor and Corporation, and presented with illuminated addresses and the freedom of the city in a gold snuff-box. 'But I have seen to all that. The Acting-Governor's aide-de-camp will be down before long, and I have arranged that if you consent a little later to honour my humble roof in Rajputana with your august presence, Major Balmossie and his wife will accompany you and chaperon you. I have lived in England: of course I understand that two English ladies of your rank and position cannot travel alone as if you were Americans. But Mrs. Balmossie is a nice little soul, of unblemished character' that sweet touch charmed me 'received at Government House' he had learned the respect due to Mrs. Grundy 'so that if you will accept my invitation, you may rest assured that everything will be done with the utmost regard to the the unaccountable prejudices of Europeans.'

His thoughtfulness took me aback. I thanked him warmly. He unbent at my thanks. 'And I am obliged to you in return,' he said. 'It gives me real pleasure to be able through you, to repay Harold Tillington part of the debt I owe him. He was so good to me at Oxford. Miss Cayley, you are new to India, and therefore as yet no doubt unprejudiced. You treat a native gentleman, I see, like a human being. I hope you will not stop long enough in our country to get over that stage as happens to most of your countrymen and countrywomen. In England, a man like myself is an Indian prince; in India, to ninety-nine out of a hundred Europeans, he is just "a damned nigger."' "

I smiled sympathetically. 'I think,' I said, venturing under these circumstances on a harmless little swear-word of course, in quotation marks 'you may trust me never to reach "damn-nigger" point.'

'So I believe,' he answered, 'if you are a friend of Harold Tillington's. Ebony or ivory, he never forgot we were two men together.'

Five minutes later, when the Maharajah had gone to inquire about our luggage, Lord Southminster strolled up. 'Oh, I say, Miss Cayley,' he burst out, 'I'm off now ; ta-ta: but remembah, that offah's always open. By the way, who is your black friend? I couldn't help laughing at the airs the fellah gave himself. To see a niggah sitting theah, with his suite all round him, waving his hands and sunning his rings, and behaving for all the world as if he were a gentleman; it's reahly too ridiculous. Harold Tillington picked up with a fellah-like that at Oxford doosid good cricketer too, wondah if this is the same one?'

'Good-bye, Lord Southminster,' I said, quietly, with a stiff little bow. 'Remember, on your side, that your "offer" was rejected once for all last night. Yes, the Indian prince *is* Harold Tillington's friend, the Maharajah of Moozuffernuggar whose ancestors were princes while ours were dressed in woad and oak-leaves. But you were right about one thing; he behaves like a gentleman.'

'Oh, I say,' the pea-green young man ejaculated, drawing back; 'that's anothah in the eye for me. You're a good 'un at facers. You gave me one for a welcome, and you give me one now for a parting shot. Nevah mind though, I can wait; you're backing the wrong fellah but you're not the Ethels, and you're well worth waiting for.' He waved his hand. 'So-long! See yah again in London.'

And he retired, with that fatuous smile still absorbing his features.

Our three days in Bombay were uneventful; we merely waited to get rid of the roll of the ship, which continued to haunt us for hours after we landed the floor of our bed-rooms having acquired an ugly trick of rising in long undulations, as if Bombay were suffering from chronic earth-quake. We made the acquaintance of His Honour

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

the Acting Governor, and His Honour's consort. We were also introduced to Mrs. Balmossie, the lady who was to chaperon us to Moozuffernuggar. Her husband was a soldierly Scotchman from Forfarshire, but she herself was English a flighty little body with a perpetual giggle. She giggled so much over the idea of the Maharajah's inviting us to his palace that I wondered why on earth she accepted his invitation. At this she seemed surprised. 'Why, it's one of the jolliest places in Rajputana,' she answered, with a bland Simla smile; 'so picturesque he, he, he and so delightful. Simpkin flows like water Simpkin's baboo English for champagne, you know he, he, he; and though of course the Maharajah's only a native like the rest of them he, he, he still, he's been educated at Oxford, and has mixed with Europeans, and he knows how to make one he, he, he well, thoroughly comfortable.'

'But what shall we eat?' I asked. 'Rice, ghee, and chupatties?'

'Oh dear no he, he, he Europe food, every bit of it. Foie gras, and York ham, and wine *ad lib*. His hospitality's massive. If it weren't for that, of course, one wouldn't dream of going there. But Archie hopes some day to be made Resident, don't you know; and it will do him no harm he, he, he with the Foreign Office, to have cultivated friendly relations beforehand with His Highness of Moozuffernuggar. These natives he, he, he so absurdly sensitive!'

For myself, the Maharajah interested me, and I rather liked him. Besides, he was Harold's friend, and that was in itself sufficient recommendation. So I determined to push straight into the heart of native India first, and only afterwards to do the regulation tourist round of Agra and Delhi, the Taj and the mosques, Benares and Allahabad, leaving the English and Calcutta for the tail-end of my journey. It was better journalism; as I thought that thought, I began to fear that Mr. Elworthy was right after all, and that I was a born journalist.

On the day fixed for our leaving Bombay, whom should I meet but Lord Southminster with the Maharajah at the railway station!

He lounged up to me with that eternal smile still vaguely pervading his empty features. 'Well, we shall have a jolly party, I gathah,' he said. 'They tell me this niggah is famous for his tigahs.'

I gazed at him, positively taken aback. 'You mean to tell me,' I cried, 'you actually propose to accept the Maharajah's hospitality?'

His smile absorbed him. 'Yaas,' he answered, twirling his yellow moustache, and gazing across at the unconscious prince, who was engaged in overlooking the arrangements for our saloon carriage. 'The black fellah discovered I was a cousin of Harold's, so he came to call upon me at the club, of which some Johnnies heah made me an honorary membah. He's offahed me the run of his place while I'm in Indiah; and, of course, I've accepted. Eccentric sort of chap; can't make him out myself: says anyone connected with Harold Tillington is always deah to him. Rum start, isn't it?'

'He is a mere Oriental,' I answered, 'unused to the ways of civilised life. He cherishes the superannuated virtue of gratitude.'

'Yaas; no doubt so I'm coming along with you.'

I drew back, horrified. 'Now? While I am there? After what I told you last week on the steamer?'

'Oh, that's all right. I bear yah no malice. If I want any fun, of course I must go while *you're* at Moozuffernuggar.'

'Why so?'

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

'Yah see, this black boundah means to get up some big things at his place in your honah; and one naturally goes to stop with anyone who has big things to offah. Hang it all, what does it mattah who a fellah is if he can give yah good shooting? It's shooting, don't yah know, that keeps society in England togethah!'

'And therefore you propose to stop in the same house with me!' I exclaimed, 'in spite of what I have told you! Well, Lord Southminster, I should have thought there were limits which even *your* taste "

He cut me short with an inane grin. 'There you make your blooming little erraw,' he answered, airily. 'I told yah, I keep my offah still open; and, hang it all, I don't mean to lose sight of yah in a hurry. Some other fellah might come along and pick you up when I wasn't looking; and I don't want to miss yah. In point of fact, I don't mind telling yah, I back myself still for a couple of thou' soonah or latah to marry yah. It's dogged as does it; faint heart, they say nevah won fair lady!'

If it had not been that I could not bear to disappoint my Indian prince, I think, when I heard this, I should have turned back then and there at the station.

The journey up country was uneventful, but dusty. The Mofussil appears to consist mainly of dust; indeed, I can now recall nothing of it but one pervading white cloud which has blotted from my memory all its other components. The dust clung to my hair after many washings, and was never really beaten out of my travelling clothes; I believe part of it thus went round the world with me to England. When at last we reached Moozuffernuggar, after two days' and a night's hard travelling, we were met by a crowd of local grandees; who looked as if they had spent the greater part of their lives in brushing back their whiskers, and we drove up at once, in European carriages, to the Maharajah's palace. The look of it astonished me. It was a strange and rambling old Hindoo hill-fort, high perched on a scarp'd crag, like Edinburgh Castle, and accessible only on one side, up a gigantic staircase, guarded on either hand by sculptured elephants cut in the living sandstone. Below clustered the town, an intricate mass of tangled alleys. I had never seen anything so picturesque or so dirty in my life; as for Elsie, she was divided between admiration for its beauty and terror at the big-whiskered and white-turbaned attendants.

'What sort of rooms shall we have?' I whispered to our moral guarantee, Mrs. Balmossie.

'Oh, beautiful, dear,' the little lady smirked back. 'Furnished throughout he, he, he by Liberty. The Maharajah wants to do honour to his European guests he,he, he he fancies, poor man, he's quite European. That's what comes of sending these creatures to Oxford! So he's had suites of rooms furnished for any white visitors who may chance to come his way. Ridiculous, isn't it? *And* champagne oh, gallons of it! He's quite proud of his rooms, he, he, he he's always asking people to come and occupy them; he thinks he's done them up in the best style of decoration.'

He had reason, for they were as tasteful as they were dainty and comfortable. And I could not for the life of me make out why his hospitable inclination should be voted 'ridiculous.' But Mrs. Balmossie appeared to find all natives alike a huge joke together. She never even spoke of them without a condescending smile of distant compassion. Indeed, most Anglo-Indians seem first to do their best to Anglicise the Hindoo, and then to laugh at him for aping the Englishman.

After we had been three days at the palace and had spent hours in the wonderful temples and ruins, the Maharajah announced with considerable pride at breakfast one morning that he had got up a tiger-hunt in our special honour.

Lord Southminster rubbed his hands.

'Ha, that's right, Maharaj,' he said, briskly. 'I do love big game. To tell yah the truth, old man, that's just what I came heah for.'

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

'You do me too much honour,' the Hindoo answered, with quiet sarcasm. 'My town and palace may have little to offer that is worth your attention; but I am glad that my big game, at least, has been lucky enough to attract you.'

The remark was thrown away on the pea-green young man. He had described his host to me as 'a black boundah.' Out of his own mouth I condemned him he supplied the very word he was himself nothing more than a born bounder.

During the next few days, the preparations for the tiger-hunt occupied all the Maharajah's energies. 'You know, Miss Cayley,' he said to me, as we stood upon the big stairs, looking down on the Hindoo city, 'a tiger-hunt is not a thing to be got up lightly. Our people themselves don't like killing a tiger. They reverence it too much. They're afraid its spirit might haunt them afterwards and bring them bad luck. That's one of our superstitions.'

'You do not share it yourself, then?' I asked. He drew himself up and opened his palms, with a twinkling of pendant emeralds. 'I am royal,' he answered, with naive dignity, 'and the tiger is a royal beast. Kings know the ways of kings. If a king kills what is kingly, it owes him no grudge for it. But if a common man or a low caste man were to kill a tiger who can say what might happen?'

I saw he was not himself quite free from the superstition.

'Our peasants,' he went on, fixing me with his great black eyes, 'won't even mention the tiger by name, for fear of offending him: they believe him to be the dwelling-place of a powerful spirit. If they wish to speak of him, they say, "the great beast," or "my lord, the striped one." Some think the spirit is immortal except at the hands of a king. But they have no objection to see him destroyed by others. They will even point out his whereabouts, and rejoice over his death; for it relieves the village of a serious enemy, and they believe the spirit will only haunt the huts of those who actually kill him.'

'Then you know where each tiger lives?' I asked.

'As well as your gamekeepers in England know which covert may be drawn for foxes. Yes; 'tis a royal sport, and we keep it for Maharajahs. I myself never hunt a tiger till some European visitor of distinction comes to Moozuffernuggar, that I may show him good sport. This tiger we shall hunt to-morrow, for example, he is a bad old hand. He has carried off the buffaloes of my villagers over yonder for years and years, and of late he has also become a man-eater. He once ate a whole family at a meal a man, his wife, and his three children. The people at Janwargurh have been pestering me for weeks to come and shoot him; and each week he has eaten somebody a child or a woman; the last was yesterday but I waited till you came, because I thought it would be something to show you that you would not be likely to see elsewhere.

'And you let the poor people go on being eaten that we might enjoy this sport!' I cried.

He shrugged his shoulders, and opened his hands. 'They were villagers, you know ryots: mere tillers of the soil poor naked peasants. I have thousands of them to spare. If a tiger eats ten of them, they only say, "It was written upon their foreheads." One woman more or less, who would notice her at Moozuffernuggar?'

Then I perceived that the Maharajah was but still a barbarian.

The eventful morning arrived at last, and we started, all agog, for the jungle where the tiger was known to live. Elsie excused herself. She remarked to me the night before as I brushed her back hair for her, that she had 'half a mind' not to go. 'My dear,' I answered, giving the brush a good dash, 'for a higher mathematician, that phrase lacks accuracy. If you were to say 'seven-eighths of a mind' it would be nearer the mark. In point of fact, if you ask my opinion, your inclination to go is a vanishing quantity.'

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

She admitted the impeachment with an accusing blush. 'You're quite right, Brownie; to tell you the truth, I am afraid of it.'

'So am I, dear; horribly afraid. Between ourselves I'm in a deadly funk of it. But "the brave man is not one that feels no fear"; and I believe the same principle applies almost equally to the brave woman. I mean "that **** subdue" as far as I am able. The Maharajah's guest shall be the first girl who has ever gone tiger-hunting. I am frightened out of my life. I never held a gun in my born days before. But, Elsie, recollect, this is splendid *journalism*. I intend to go through with it.' 'You offer yourself on the altar, Brownie.'

'I do, dear; I propose to die in the cause. I expect the proprietor to carve on my tomb, "Sacred to the memory of the martyr of journalism. She was killed, in the act of taking shorthand notes, by a Bengal tiger.'"

We started at early dawn, a motley mixture. My short cycling skirt did beautifully for tiger-hunting. There was a vast company of native swells, nawabs and ranas, in gorgeous costumes, whose precise names and titles I do not pretend to remember; there were also Major Balmossie, Lord Southminster, the Maharajah, and myself all mounted on gaily-parisoned elephants. We had likewise, on foot, a miserable crowd of wretched beaters, with dirty white loin-cloths. We were all very brave of course demonstratively brave and we talked a great deal at the start about the exhilaration given by 'the spice of danger.' But it somehow truck me that the poor beaters on foot had the majority of the danger and extremely little exhilaration. Each of us great folks was mounted on his own elephant, which carried a light basket-work howdah in two compartments: the front one intended for the noble sportsman, the back one for a servant with extra guns and ammunition. I pretended to like it, but I fear I trembled visibly. Our mahouts sat on the giants' necks, each armed with a pointed goad, to whose admonition the huge beasts answered like clock-work. A good journalist always pretends to know everything before hand, so I speak carelessly of the 'mahout,' as if he were a dear acquaintance. But I don't mind telling you aside, in confidence, that I had only just learnt the word that morning.

The Maharajah protested at first against my taking part in the actual hunt, but I believe he was proud that the first lady tiger-hunter should have joined his party.

Dusty and shadeless, the road from Moozuffernuggar fares straight across the plain towards the crumbling mountains. Behind, in the heat mist, the castle and palace on their steeply-scarped crag, with the squalid town that clustered at their feet, reminded me once more most strangely of Edinburgh, where I used to spend my vacations from Girton. But the pitiless sun differed greatly from the gray haar of the northern metropolis. It warmed into intense white the little temples of the wayside, and beat on our heads with tropical garishness.

I am bound to admit also that tiger-hunting is not quite all it is cracked up to be. In my fancy I had pictured the gallant and bloodthirsty beast rushing out upon us full pelt from some grass-grown nullah at the first sniff of our presence and fiercely attacking both men and elephants. Instead of that, I will confess the whole truth: frightened as at least one of us was of the tiger, the tiger was still more desperately frightened of his human assailants. I could see clearly that so far from rushing out of his own accord to attack us, his one desire was to be let alone. He was horribly afraid; he skulked in the jungle like a wary old fox in a trusty spinney. There was no nullah (whatever a nullah may be), there was only a waste of dusty cane-brake. We encircled the tall grass patch where he lurked, forming a big round with a ring-fence of elephants. The beaters on foot, advancing, half naked, with a caution with which I could fully sympathise, endeavoured by loud shouts and gesticulations to rouse the royal beast to a sense of his position. Not a bit of it; the royal beast declined to be drawn; he preferred retirement. The Maharajah, whose elephant was stationed next to mine, even apologised for the resolute cowardice with which he clung to his ignoble lurking-place.

The beaters drew in: the elephants, raising their trunks in air and sniffing suspicion, moved slowly inward. We had girt him round now with a perfect ring, through which he could not possibly break without attacking somebody. The Maharajah kept a fixed eye on my personal safety. But still the royal animal crouched and

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

skulked, and still the black beaters shrieked, howled, and gesticulated. At last, among the tall perpendicular lights and shadows of the big grasses and bamboos, I seemed to see something move something striped like the stems, yet passing slowly, slowly, slowly between them. It moved in a stealthy undulating line. No one could believe till he saw it how the bright flame-coloured bands of vivid orange-yellow on the monster's flanks, and the interspersed black stripes, could fade away and harmonise, in their native surroundings, with the lights and shades of the upright jungle. It was a marvel of mimicry. 'Look there!' I cried to the Maharajah, pointing one eager hand. 'What is that thing there, moving?'

He stared where I pointed. 'By Jove,' he cried, raising his rifle with a sportsman's quickness, 'you have spotted him first! The tiger!'

The terrified beast stole slowly and cautiously through the tall grasses, his lithe, silken side gliding in and out snakewise, and only his fierce eyes burning bright with gleaming flashes between the gloom of the jungle. Once I had seen him, I could follow with ease his sinuous path among the tangled bamboos, a waving line of beauty in perpetual motion. The Maharajah followed him too, with his keen eyes, and pointed his rifle hastily. But, quick as he was, Lord Southminster was before him. I had half expected to find the pea-green young man turn coward at the last moment; but in that I was mistaken: I will do him the justice to say, whatever else he was, he was a born sportsman. The gleam of joy in his leaden eye when he caught sight of the tiger, the flush of excitement on his pasty face, the eagerness of his alert attitude, were things to see and remember. That moment almost ennobled him. In sight of danger, the best instincts of the savage seemed to revive within him. In civilised life he was a poor creature; face to face with a wild beast he became a mighty shikari. Perhaps that was why he was so fond of big-game shooting. He may have felt it raised him in the scale of being.

He lifted his rifle and fired. He was a cool shot, and he wounded the beast upon its left shoulder. I could see the great crimson stream gush out all at once across the shapely sides, staining the flame-coloured stripes and reddening the black shadows. The tiger drew back, gave a low, fierce growl, and then crouched among the jungle. I saw he was going to leap; he bent his huge backbone into a strong downward curve, took in a deep breath, and stood at bay, glaring at us. Which elephant would he attack? That was what he was now debating. Next moment, with a frightful R'-r'-r'-r', he had straightened out his muscles, and, like a bolt from a bow, had launched his huge bulk forward.

I never saw his charge. I never knew he had leapt upon me. I only felt my elephant rock from side to side like a ship in a storm. He was trumpeting, shaking, roaring with rage and pain, for the tiger was on his flanks, its claws buried deep in the skin of his forehead. I could not keep my seat; I felt myself tossed about in the frail howdah like a pill in a pill-box. The elephant, in a death grapple, was trying to shake off his ghastly enemy. For a minute or two, I was conscious of nothing save this swinging movement. Then, opening my eyes for a second, I saw the tiger, in all his terrible beauty, clinging to the elephant's head by the claws of his fore paws, and struggling for a foothold on its trunk with his mighty hind legs, in a wounded agony of despair and vengeance. He would sell his life dear; he would have one or other of us. Lord Southminster raised his rifle again; but the Maharajah shouted aloud in an angry voice: 'Don't fire! Don't fire! You will kill the lady! You can't aim at him like that. The beast is rocking so that no one can say where a shot will take effect. Down with your gun, sir, instantly!'

My mahout, unable to keep his seat with the rocking, now dropped off his cushion among the scrub below. He could speak a few words of English. 'Shoot, Mem Sahib, shoot!' he cried, flinging his hands up. But I was tossed to and fro, from side to side, with my rifle under my arm. It was impossible to aim. Yet in sheer terror I tried to draw the trigger. I failed; but somehow I caught my rifle against the side of my cage. Something snapped in it somewhere. It went off unexpectedly, without my aiming or firing. I shut my eyes. When I opened them again, I saw a swimming picture of the great sullen beast, loosing his hold on the elephant. I saw his brindled face; I saw his white tusks. But his gleaming pupils burned bright no longer. His jaw was full towards me: I had shot him between the eyes. He fell, slowly, with blood streaming from his nostrils, and his tongue lolling out. His muscles relaxed; his huge limbs grew limp. In a minute, he lay stretched at full length on the ground, with his head on one

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

side, a grand, terrible picture.

My mahout flung up his hands in wonder and amazement. 'My father!' he cried aloud. 'Truly, the Mem Sahib is a great shikari!'

The Maharajah stretched across to me. 'That was a wonderful shot!' he exclaimed. 'I could never have believed a woman could show such nerve and coolness.'

Nerve and coolness, indeed! I was trembling all over like an Italian greyhound, every limb a jelly; and I had not even fired: the rifle went off of itself without me. I am innocent of having ever endangered the life of a haycock. But once more I dissembled. 'Yes, it *was* a difficult shot,' I said jauntily, as if I rather liked tiger-hunting. 'I didn't think I'd hit him.' Still the effect of my speech was somewhat marred, I fear, by the tears that in spite of me rolled down my cheek silently.

"Pon honah, I nevah saw a finah piece of shooting in my life," Lord Southminster drawled out. Then he added aside, in an undertone, 'Makes a fellow moah determined to annex her than evah!'

I sat in my howdah, half dazed. I hardly heard what they were saying. My heart danced like the elephant. Then it stood still within me. I was only aware of a feeling of faintness. Luckily for my reputation as a mighty sportswoman, however, I just managed to keep up, and did not actually faint, as I was more than half inclined to do.

Next followed the native pæan. The beaters crowded round the fallen beast in a chorus of congratulation. Many of the villagers also ran out, with prayers and ejaculations, to swell our triumph. It was all like a dream. They hustled round me and salaamed to me. A woman had shot him! Wonderful! A babel of voices resounded in my ears. I was aware that pure accident had elevated me into a heroine.

'Put the beast on a pad elephant,' the Maharajah called out.

The beaters tied ropes round his body and raised him with difficulty.

The Maharajah's face grew stern. 'Where are the whiskers?' he asked, fiercely, in his own tongue, which Major Balmossie interpreted for me.

The beaters and the villagers, bowing low and expanding their hands, made profuse expressions of ignorance and innocence. But the fact was patent the grand face had been mangled. While they had crowded in a dense group round the fallen carcass, somebody had cut off the lips and whiskers and secreted them. 'They have ruined the skin!' the Maharajah cried out in angry tones. 'I intended it for the lady. I shall have them all searched, and the man who has done this thing '

He broke off, and looked around him. His silence was more terrible by far than the fiercest threat. I saw him now the Oriental despot. All the natives drew back, awestruck.

'The voice of a king is the voice of a great god,' my mahout murmured, in a solemn whisper. Then nobody else said anything.

'Why do they want the whiskers?' I asked, just to set things straight again. 'They seem to have been in a precious hurry to take them!'

The Maharajah's brow cleared. He turned to me once more with his European manner. 'A tiger's body has wonderful power after his death,' he answered. 'His fangs and his claws are very potent charms. His heart gives

THE ADVENTURES OF THE MAGNIFICENT MAHARAJAH

courage. Whoever eats of it will never know fear. His liver preserves against death and pestilence. But the highest virtue of all exists in his whiskers. They are mighty talismans. Chopped up in food, they act as a slow poison, which no doctor can detect, no antidote guard against. They are also a sovereign remedy against magic or the evil eye. And administered to women, they make an irresistible philtre, a puissant love-potion. They secure you the heart of whoever drinks them.'

'I'd give a couple of monkeys for those whiskahs,' Lord Southminster murmured, half unnoticed.

We began to move again. 'We'll go on to where we know there is another tiger,' the Maharajah said, lightly, as if tigers were partridges. 'Miss Cayley, you will come with us?'

I rested on my laurels. (I was quivering still from head to foot.) 'No, thank you, Maharajah,' as unconcernedly as I could; 'I've had quite enough sport for my first day's tiger-hunting. I think I'll go back now, and write a newspaper account of this little adventure.'

'You have had luck,' he put in. 'Not everyone kills a tiger his first day out. This will make good reading.' 'I wouldn't have missed it for a hundred pounds,' I answered.

'Then try another.'

'I wouldn't try another for a thousand,' I cried, fervently.

That evening, at the palace, I was the heroine of the day. They toasted me in a bumper of Heidsieck's dry monopole. The men made speeches. Everybody talked gushingly of my splendid courage and my steadiness of hand. It was a brilliant shot, under such difficult circumstances. For myself, I said nothing. I pretended to look modest. I dared not confess the truth that I never fired at all. And from that day to this I have never confessed it, till I write it down now in these confiding memoirs.

One episode cast a gloom over my ill-deserved triumph. In the course of the evening, a telegram arrived for the pea-green young man by a white-turbaned messenger. He read it, and crumpled it up carelessly in his hand. I looked inquiry. 'Yaas,' he answered, nodding. 'You're quite right. It's that! Pooah old Marmy has gone, aftah all! Ezekiel and Habakkuk have carried off his sixteen stone at last! And I don't mind telling yah now though it was a neah thing it's *I* who am the winnah!'