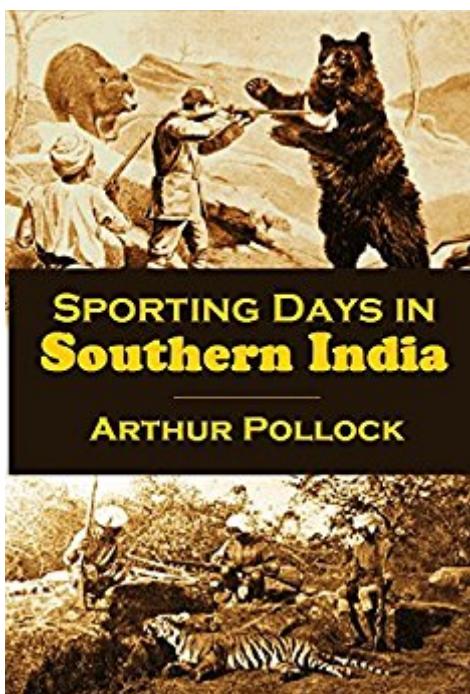


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Sporting Days In Southern India: Being Reminiscences Of Twenty Trips In Pursuit Of Big Game (1894)



Synopsis

Arthur John Osborne Pollock (18?? -1901) joined the Royal Scots Fusiliers in 1866, and saw active service in the Ashanti war of 1873-74 as well as India, retiring with the rank of colonel in 1898. In 1894 he published his book "Sporting Days in Southern India" in which he describes in vivid detail the hunting of big game of India including bear, panther, bison, tiger, elephant, various deer species, antelope and ibex, mainly in the Madras state. There is in addition sound advice on travel, camping and how to prepare for the monsoon rainy season. To the sympathetic imagination, moreover, the book will open entrancing vistas into that sportsman's paradise whose coverts are unpathed forests, measured by miles not acres, whose demesne walls are the mountain-ranges, whose ground game are the tiger, the panther, and the bear, with the great Indian bison and the monarch of the wild things of the earth, the stately tusker. In describing a tiger attack, Pollock writes: "The tiger • towards the end of a long beat • came down a rocky slope near the tree, which was in open ground near the foot of the slope, my friend and his shikari, being perched on the stump in a very conspicuous position. On being fired at the tiger charged towards them, and, leaping up, clawed the shikari to the ground . . ." Though sportsmen have been killed by wounded bears in India (Lord Edward St. Maur, for instance), Pollock plainly shows them to be much safer sport for the tiger than tiger, panther, or elephant. His account of a "Moon Bear" attack is as follows: "I at length found myself within ten yards of it with both cartridges jammed, and the shikari with my second gun thirty yards behind me. At this juncture the bear turned round and charged. I bolted like a redshank, so did the shikari, who had the start of, and soon distanced me, but pulled up when he saw the brute gaining on me, and handed me the second gun. . ." With elephants Pollock had some capital sport, and considers this the most risky shooting in India; and certainly, to be chased by a rogue elephant must be one of those adventures which are more appreciated in the telling than in the experience. Here we may observe that Pollock is not without the finer feelings, as well as the courage, of the true sportsman. He estimates the charm of a sport by its danger. "There is no sport that can be compared to tackling a solitary tusker, except, perhaps, following up a wounded tiger on foot." Pollock also describes how his friend "had fired at and wounded a tusker, which, although severely hit, charged, and chased him through some bamboo jungle. Unfortunately the elephant had his wind, and, although several times blinded by clumps of bamboos, the animal invariably found him out again, and finally was on the point of catching him, when he managed to double round a big bamboo, but his further flight was barred by a rock, alongside which the tree was growing. He now jammed himself into a corner, but the tusker scented him out . . ." With panther Pollock had sufficiently exciting encounters, and the most

original and dangerous form of the sport—riding after panthers, and spearing them in the open—is well described. He suggested the use of tennis-shoes for panther-shooting, as making no noise and giving a good foothold on rocks. Pollock's anecdotes of encounters with wild beasts would furnish splendid material to a Rider Haggard who would do for India what the author of King Solomon's Mines has done for Africa. In India, indeed, the English sportsman of the right sort is a modern St. George, hailed as a deliverer by the timid and ill-armed inhabitants of tiger-haunted villages, and having splendid opportunities for the exercise and development of self-reliance and daring in conflict with the cunning and strength of man-eating wild beasts, whether tiger or panther or bear; while the consciousness that he is doing a good work adds a zest of self-approval.

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