A GOOD GEESE AND DUCK SHOOT.

By COLONEL C. E. NICHOL, D.S.O.

In February last I had the good luck to fall in for a very enjoyable three days' shoot under somewhat exceptional circumstances, and in a part of India which no officers of the Corps ever get the chance of seeing. Whilst carrying out my annual tour of inspection of the various stations in Assam, I got a friendly note from Captain G. Burke, I.M.S., the medical officer in charge of the regiment stationed at Imphal, the capital of the Manipur State, to the effect that if I chose to double up three of my marches to Manipur, I should arrive just in time for a duck shoot to be given by H.H. the Rajah of Manipur, on the celebrated Logtak Lake, and to which I was to be invited if I arrived in time. Needless to say I did not require any other hint, and arranged my onward journey accordingly.

Imphal, the capital of the Manipur State, is distant 134 miles from the nearest railway station, Dimapur, on the Bengal-Assam railway, and is reached by an excellent cart road in twelve marches. There are inspection bungalows built every 10 or 13 miles en route. These are free to all gazetted officers of Government travelling on duty. They are of infinitely superior build, and much more comfortable than the ordinary dak bungalow in India, and are completely fitted up with furniture and crockery, but are in charge of a chaukidar only, so one has always to take along a cook and bearer-khitmagar.

Kohima, the capital of the Naga Hills, is reached in five marches. Here, in addition to a battalion of military police, are stationed two companies of the regiment, whose headquarters are at Imphal. The road throughout is a picturesque one, the early marches being through dense bamboo jungle; after getting well into the Naga Hills, the elevation of which is from 4,000 to 5,000 ft., the growth is not so thick, and rolling hills covered with more or less open scrub jungle take the place of the former luxuriant vegetation. Many of the highest hills, however, are covered with dense forest up to their summits. During these marches one first comes across the Nagas, the inhabitants of these hills and adjacent country. On looking at the map, the tract known as the Naga Hills, lies to the south of the districts of Sibsagar and Nowgong, and north of the
Manipur State, on the south of which again lie the Chin and Lushai Hills. The north-easterly portion of this tract marked "Naga tribes" has on its southern border the Patkai Range separating it from the unknown territory which lies north of the upper portion of the Chindwin River. The actual district under our administration comprises an area of just over 3,000 square miles, with a population of a little over 100,000, included within two subdivisions, Kohima and Mokochung. This district by no means, however, embraces all the so-called Naga tribes. About two years ago I had the pleasure of voyaging down the upper part of the Chindwin River with the Deputy Commissioner of those parts. He was a very keen and ardent anthropologist, and had made an exhaustive study of the wild tribes in those districts, and he told me there were several tribes of Nagas actually located within the Burma border.

The Nagas are a peculiar and turbulent lot. They are constantly giving trouble in the independent territorities which lie adjacent to our administered tracts, and, as I write this article, intimation has just come in of a severe engagement to the North of Mokochung, between the military police and Nagas living outside our border. Like the rest of the Assamese tribes, they belong to the Tibeto-Burman family, and are noted especially for their independent spirit, and their indifference to the sanctity of human life. On my return journey through Manipur territory I came on the corpse of an unfortunate Manipuri lying close to the road who had undoubtedly been the victim of foul play about three days previously. He was lying naked, and had three severe dao wounds, two across the back of his neck and one through the left buttock, passing down to the hip joint. I reported the circumstances to the political officer of the Manipur State, but it is extremely doubtful if his murderer or murderers will ever be caught. They were probably Nagas. The Nagas are short and sturdy of stature. Some wear very little clothing, but they are all very fond of bright coloured beads, and wear extensive necklaces and ear-rings. At certain of their tamashas the men wear an elaborate dress, a loin cloth of a dark blue or black colour ornamented with a pattern of white seeds, a chest piece something like a Highlander's sporran hung round their neck, which is composed of black human hair and goat's hair dyed scarlet and ornamented profusely with cowries, ear-rings, composed of beetles' wings and hair dyed the same brilliant red, gauntlet and cuffs ditto, and gaiters of plaited straw with a design in red; over their heads a ring of black bearskin,
and the whole costume completed by a formidable spear and shield which they carry, the spear ornamented with red hair and touches of yellow in it. When dressed like this, they resemble more the warlike tribes of African savages than any of the aboriginal tribes one comes across in other parts of India. Some of the tribes have their heads shaved at either side, which gives them a very grotesque appearance.

They eat with equal relish pigs, dogs, bison, big lizards, pythons and snakes, in fact, game of any sort, and the “gamier” it is the more they like it. Even if absolutely putrid, they eat it just the same. They appear to have a great partiality for the ordinary pariah dog, many of which I have seen being led off to be fattened and eaten. Their morals appear to be nil, and a writer in the *Imperial Gazetteer* graphically sums up the situation thus, “A Naga bride who is entitled to wear the orange blossom of virginity is said to be extremely rare.”

The weapons used by all the tribes are spears, shields and daws, and they have a great craving for human heads, and it is in pursuit of this pleasing pastime that the tribes in independent territory are always getting into trouble with those who have come under our subjection and civilization. Head hunting is still vigorously prosecuted amongst the many tribes situated outside our borders in the whole of the extensive “no man’s land” beyond our frontiers, where, also, it is said they offer up human sacrifices yearly to ensure a good rice harvest.

I received my invitation card to the shoot shortly after my arrival at Imphal, which is a pretty little cantonment where one regiment of the Indian Army is always stationed, and where also resides His Highness, the Rajah, and the Political Agent of the State.

February 19 saw us all *en route* for the camp. The party consisted of ten guns: H.H. Prince Chura Chand Singh, Rajah of Manipur; Mr. H. C. Higgins, I.C.S., Vice-President of the Durbar, and officer in charge of the Naga hill tribes in the Manipur State; Mr. Blackie, private secretary to the Rajah; Mr. Platts, an engineer engaged in the construction of the new water supply for Imphal; Lieutenant-Colonel Tytler; Captains Fagan and Henderson; Mr. Condon, of the 17th Infantry (The Loyal Regiment), at present stationed at Imphal; Captain Burke, I.M.S., and myself. We covered the journey in various ways. The Logtak Lake is situated in the Manipur Valley, twenty-nine miles from Imphal, in a south-westerly direction. On leaving the cantonment the road becomes a “kutcha” one, very much so in parts.
The Rajah motored out in his car, taking Colonel Tytler with him. Mr. Platts went out on his motor "bike;" Captain Burke on his bicycle, as he had some vaccination to do in some of the villages en route. The remainder of us drove out in traps, a "dak" of ponies having been laid out for each. The last two miles to the camp we accomplished on Manipuri "tats," or on an elephant, there being only a bridle way, with swampy ground on either side.

There was nothing very interesting to be seen on the way except that I saw for the first time that curious specimen of the bovine tribe, the mithum (Bos frontalis), which is confined to certain parts of Assam. He was a fine bull, being led along by some wild-looking Nagas who were transporting him from one village in the hills to another, and he seemed to feel the heat of the valley very much. We all reached camp about four or five o'clock, having made an early start from Imphal.

The Logtak Lake is about six miles long and about three miles broad, of an irregular oval shape, and in the rainy season extends to quite double this size. It is situated in the Manipur Valley between two ranges of hills, one of which is close to the lake, the other runs
in a parallel direction about fifteen miles off. The lake is intersected by a chain of hilly islands which rise abruptly to a height of about 400 ft. above its surface; some of these adjoin each other, others are completely solitary, all are covered with a thick dense scrub jungle which, I understand, holds both wild boar and Kalig pheasant. I am not a geologist I am sorry to say, but certainly the geological formation of these islands appears very remarkable. They all have separate names and at the base of several of them are scattered villages, the entire population of which are fisher folk who systematically fish the lake.

Between the lake and the far range of hills are miles of swampy ground, and beyond the swamp again miles of coarse high grass, the home of the Manipur stag (Panolia eldii). This is the same animal as the thamin, or Burmese brow-antlered deer, but which has adapted itself to a different environment. Those of us who have shot thamin in Upper Burma know that this beautiful stag is confined to the scrub jungle of the dry zone, where water is certainly scarce, and where his favourite food is a prickly shrub which bears a small red berry. It is a species of wild plum of which he is excessively fond. In Manipur he feeds entirely in this swampy morass, retiring into the adjacent high grass in the heat of the day. Here his hoof is splay-footed to enable him easily to cover this ground, whilst in Burma he presents the ordinary hoof of the deer tribe. The horns of the Burmese animal are certainly finer and thicker, and form a more handsome trophy than any of the specimens I have been shown of the Manipur variety. Our camp was pitched in a most picturesque spot on the ridge of one of these hilly islands. Looking down, one could see the whole extent of the lake, and right across the valley between the two ranges of high hills previously mentioned. On the left at our feet lay the lake covered with innumerable artificial floating islands of green grass made by the fishermen. The latter throw in coarse green grass, and bind and stake it round carefully in a circle with stout bamboo. The fish presumably like the shade and cover of this, and congregate in it. When fishing, the men beat the water in a wide circle with bamboo, making a great noise. This drives all the fish into the shelter of this floating grass. They then put down a net all round, and inside this let down another net, and so make their haul. The size of these floating islands varied—some would be about 20 yards in circumference, others were much bigger. I understand they let for a sum of Rs. 25 each for the season, and as there are hundreds of them this must prove a profitable source of
of income to the State. The fishermen's life here is a hard one—they appear to fish by night as well as by day. The species of fish I could not identify. He is of very ugly shape, blackish colour, the size of a small trout, but proved to be excellent eating. In addition to the above artificial floating islands made by the fishermen, there were a few small natural ones, on which one could land, and from some of these the best bags were subsequently made by simply sitting under cover of the high grass and shooting the birds as they flighted over. The rest of the lake was practically clear sheets of water, with no cover except the dense swamp with high grass

which surrounded it for miles on all sides. With our binoculars we could distinguish hundreds of geese, duck, and teal sitting and flighting over the lake in all directions, which promised well for our "shikar" on the morrow.

The camp was a most comfortable and luxurious one, and consisted of several extremely well-built bamboo huts called "bashas." Colonel Tytler had one to himself, so had I, while in others, two of the party doubled up together. We had in addition one very large one, for our dining and anteroom combined, but screened off from each other. I was told this latter wonderful erection had been made by thirty men in three days.
Our afternoon tea and well-earned tub was followed by a very cheery evening. The Rajah joined us after dinner and we had a selling sweep on the first day’s bag, as also one on the best individual bag. Both these sweeps, as is usual in such cases, provided no end of surprises, as there was more than one “dark horse” in the party. Afterwards the inevitable rubber of auction bridge, and then early to bed. We had the benefit of a full moon, and the view of the lake to those of us who looked down at it before turning in was indescribably beautiful, but what appealed perhaps more to our sporting instincts was the constant “music” of the geese flitting to and fro overhead. There was other music later on, but that is another story as Rudyard Kipling says!

We were all early astir next morning and on the lake just before break of dawn. Each sportsman was provided with two boats, the ordinary “dug-out” paddled by two boatmen, and we had a third man who acted as “shikari.” The second boat hovered round one, picking up dead and wounded birds and had frequently to pursue a wounded goose or duck, which was often only retrieved after a long and stern chase.

The ordinary dug-out is not easy to shoot from, unless one has
A Good Geese and Duck Shoot

had some practice at it. This was my first attempt, and my bag was a correspondingly poor one compared with those guns who had been at the game before. One has to shoot sitting the whole time, which is rather wearisome, and you cannot swing round to a bird crossing to the right. If you attempt to stand up, probably the whole “caboodle” will upset and you will find yourself, gun, and boatmen in the soup! Then again, on the Logtak, a stiff breeze often unexpectedly springs up, when the situation becomes exciting, not to say dangerous; you have then to make tracks for the lee side of one of the floating islands, and will be lucky to escape getting soaked through in the effort.

Distant View of the Camp on the Lake.

And now “let us get on to the hosses,” in other words, our bag. We shot for two and a half days, the first two days the whole ten guns, the third half day only five guns.

The total bag was 774 head. First day, 327; second day, 311; third day, 136, and was made up as follows:—

Geese, grey leg, 207; barred headed, 1; duck and teal, spot bill, 35; pintail, 44; gadwell, 47; shoveller, 38; widgeon, 4; common pochard, 52; white-eyed pochard, 28; tufted pochard, 105; common teal, 61; blue-winged teal, 50; whistling teal, 24; cotton teal, 4; snipe, 5.
As regards geese, never have I seen them so plentiful; they were present literally in hundreds and hundreds, but only about twenty of the barred-headed variety were seen by the whole party. I think most sportsmen in India will agree with me in saying it is generally the barred-headed goose one sees in the majority. No “nukta” were seen, and only one solitary mallard. Both of these ducks are rare visitors to this lake I am told, as also is the red-crested pochard, none of which was seen. This is remarkable as the latter bird is spread over such a wide area in other parts of India and is almost always to be found in the bag. Our excellent sport may be put down to the following causes: No one ever shoots this lake without the knowledge or permission of the Rajah, and no visitor can enter Manipur territory without his presence being known to the authorities, so there is no chance of any wandering individuals or parties coming from other parts of India to shoot here. Then again it is only shot about twice in the season, and had not had a gun on it for the past two months.

In conclusion, a word or two in praise of our charming host, H.H. Prince Chura Chand Singh of Manipur. He is aged about 27, shoots straight and rides well, and is devoted to Manipur
polo. Players of the game all the world over know that it owes its origin to the Manipuris. The Rajah is a thorough sportsman of quite the right sort, was educated at the Ajmere College, and passed through the Imperial Cadet Corps. We have to thank him for a first-rate shoot, all the arrangements of which were perfect; his hospitality and kindness to us all was unbounded, and not least he is the proud possessor of that rara avis, a first-rate chef!

For my snapshots I have to thank Mr. Platt and Mr. Condon, both of whom are as successful in "pressing the button" as in pressing the trigger!

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**Lecture.**

**A LECTURE ON PHYSICAL TRAINING.**

*By Captain A. C. Amy.*

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Much of what I have to say is really an embodiment of my personal opinions on the subject of physical training. You are therefore at liberty to agree or disagree with me as you please; but in the latter event I would ask you to remember that I am forced to leave a great deal unsaid, for it is quite impossible to elaborate on this big question in the short space of time at my disposal.

It is a curious thing that the subject of physical training should give rise to so much controversy among officers of the British Army. One might naturally conclude that the principles of physical training in our nation were as fixed as the laws of the Modes and Persians. But the reverse is the case. All sorts of weird fads and fancies and hopelessly divergent views are noised abroad, just as much by experts as by the man in the street. I retain vivid recollections of examples of this state of affairs during an eighteen months' tour of duty at the head-quarters gymnasium in Aldershot, when the Swedish system was being introduced. At that struggling period we were alternately enlivened and depressed by the visitations and discussions of all sorts and conditions of practical and theoretical physical trainers. At one time an ex-inspector of Army Gymnasia looked in to see what new-fangled ideas we were playing with, and because none of the men under instruction could perform a "grand circle" on the horizontal bar, he went off in disgust with the remark, "All silly nonsense!" Those were not his exact words, but they sufficiently convey his meaning in a modified form.

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1 Delivered to the officers of the garrison, Ranikhet, U. P., India, July, 1912.