A FEW DAYS' SPORT IN PATIALA.

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A few months ago I was the lucky recipient of an invitation to form one of a cricket team going, as the guests of His Highness the Maharajah of Patiala, to play against his well-known Eleven. As we all had such a cheery time and the tour was so full of incident perhaps a short account may be of interest to readers of the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Patiala, as is well known, is a wealthy Native State of the Punjab, and its rulers have usually been notable for their sporting tastes. The present Maharajah is no exception, being, among other things, a very keen cricketer and himself an excellent bat. His Eleven is a very powerful combination, containing, as it does, during the cold weather those well-known Middlesex county players, Tarrant and Mignon. Our match commenced on a Thursday, and was to be a three-day one. The team was skippered by Mr. Bosworth Smith, of the I.C.S., an old Oxford Harlequin player, and our star performers were Mr. R. St. L. Fowler, a former Etonian Captain, and Mr. H. Moore Gwynn, of the Rifle Brigade. Thanks to some excellent batting in both innings by these three, and good bowling by Fowler and Mr. E. H. Puckle, I.C.S., of Lahore, the match ended in a victory for us on Saturday by five wickets. The Maharajah had been unfortunate, as he failed in both innings to do himself justice. The conditions under which the match was played were delightful, ground in perfect condition, and on each afternoon His Highness' band of highly trained musicians played selections from the latest musical successes. Our win was a very creditable one, as it was the first time the Patiala team had been beaten on their own ground, and the first time they had lost a match for four years. Tarrant is, of course, responsible for the team's excellence, as he has trained them all. This thorough sportsman sets them a splendid example of keenness and keeps them all trying up to the last ball. He is most deservedly popular and of very considerable influence. The winter out here, he says, suits him. His daily practice at the nets and a three-day match at least once a week, instead of making him stale, keeps him well in form. That he now tops the English
county averages justifies his view, and that he may remain so is the sincere wish of all our team. The team were put up in the State Guest House, where we were treated with unbounded hospitality and lived in most palatial quarters, and as we discovered amongst our members a musical genius with an extensive repertoire the evenings passed in a very cheery fashion. On Friday morning three of us, on whom the hopes of the side were certainly not centred, accepted the offer of His Highness' A.D.C., who promised to send us round ponies for a morning gallop. As we soon marked down a herd of about half a dozen black buck the ride developed into an exciting hunt. Circling round till about sixty yards off we charged and away we went, to each man a buck. Mine gave me a capital run of about two or three miles, but I must regretfully admit proved too fleet-footed and escaped. This I rather think would be the result in most cases, in spite of the tales with which my fellow-huntsmen regaled the breakfast table—where we met later—of how they had ridden their respective quarries to a standstill, and until "they lay down and panted for mercy." Patiala State abounds in buck, which are preserved by the Maharajah's orders. Being an excellent shot he is very fond of
buck-shooting, though his method is somewhat original, for, chasing them across country he shoots them from a motor-car. As may be imagined, to hit a rapidly moving black buck from a rapidly moving car being driven across cultivated land is no light feat of marksmanship, but he brings them down with the greatest regularity. On Friday evening we, most of us, forgathered in the club. This is a very Westernized building, with English papers, billiard-rooms, card-rooms, and American bar. Here I had the pleasure of meeting old General Chanda Singh. This splendid old Sikh gentleman, though about 60 years old, thanks to a life spent in the saddle, pig-sticking, and playing polo, even now possesses an Indian polo handicap of 11, which a few years ago was 10. Speaking English fluently, and with the most polished and courtly manners, he has played polo all over the world, having been the guest on occasions of the King of Spain. He it was who kindly promised to arrange a pig-sticking meet for us on Sunday if anyone cared to stay. Eight of us accepted greedily, but the others had to return to their various cantonments. On Saturday morning cars were sent round to take those who cared to go to visit the city and fort. The chief objects of interest there were the museum and the
State jewels. The former is crowded with all the State carriages, howdahs, etc. (several being of solid silver), and various other specimens of Indian art. We spent about half an hour wandering about admiring these, and incidentally speculating on how many return passages from Bombay could be purchased by the sale of an apparently unused dressing-case with silver and gold fittings. The State jewels were also laid out for our inspection and admiration. Seven trusted retainers are responsible for their safe-keeping, each of whom possesses a key to one of seven different locks. The seven

had all been warned the night before and were on parade with their valuable charge. I forget how many lakhs of rupees we were told was the value of one magnificent pearl necklace. In the fort the middle area is bounded by a high and forbidding wall, at the gate through which was stationed a guard armed with rifles. They seemed uneasy until we had passed, when it was explained to us that in this centre building the wives of the late Maharajah, between 400 and 500 in number, had all been incarcerated on his death. When leaving for home as the car seemed rather empty we concluded someone was missing, so one sportsman undertook to count the company. Having omitted to include himself he reported two
absent, but on a recount the numbers were reduced to one. Grave fears were being entertained that this officer's inquisitiveness and his camera had led him into conflict with the guard. Having kept us waiting for about ten minutes he, however, turned up smiling, and explained that he had only been taking photos from the roof.

The cricket match finished that afternoon, after which there was polo for anyone who cared to play, of which kind offer full advantage was taken. On Sunday morning two cars were at the Guest House to take us to the pig-sticking meet. The drive out was most exciting, both to us and to several sleepy natives, who several times had to display considerable agility at very short notice. We travelled the last few miles across country, when as the speed did not appreciably diminish the man in the middle on the back seat got a poor time. The “bandabast” for the hunt was a magnificent affair, as we found that old General Chanda Singh had turned out eight State elephants, a half squadron of cavalry, and a company of infantry to beat the jungle, three or four camels to bring in the pigs, and three mounts for each of us. We were in two heats and once the pigs began to break cover were galloping hard all the morning. We got nine pigs before lunch, and several big boars escaped. About 2 o'clock we were taken in to lunch, expecting to find just drinks and a few light catables. To our surprise we discovered two large marqueen tents pitched in a nice shady spot. Here in the middle of the jungle a magnificent spread met our hungry eyes, and pints of foaming “shandy” were poured down our thirsty throats. No wonder we all got to speech-making afterwards, and toasted our hosts for the most delightful four days any of us could ever wish to have. The photos were very kindly sent me by Fowler, and show: (1) The meet; (2) some of the kill; (3) four of our hosts.