

**IN TENT AND
BUNGALOW**

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In Tent and Bungalow by Edith E. Cuthell

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EDITH E. CUTHELL

**IN TENT AND
BUNGALOW**

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Cuthell, Edith E.]
IN TENT AND BUNGALOW

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"INDIAN IDYLLS."

Methuen & Co.

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IN TENT AND BUNGALOW.

Too Clever by Half;

OR,

A MAUVAIS QUART D'HEURE ON AN ELEPHANT.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

—:—:—

6

HE somehow looked rather different to the elephant of my childish days, associated with the fearful joy of a jolting along the gravel walk at the Zoo, or the wild excitement of the yearly advent of the wild-beast show into the market-place. Perhaps it was his surroundings. As I stood and gazed up at him, he seemed framed in a setting of delicate green bamboo jungle, with a patch of sun-baked earth for the foreground, and a great, towering, dark bunch of the Himalayas for the distance. He did not appear to object to my admiring scrutiny, for he looked at me knowingly out of the corner of his little eye, the while toying with his trunk a piece of sugar-cane, a kind of a dessert his *mahout* was proffering him. He had previously partaken of

an excellent meal of great, flat *chuppatties*—cakes of flour and clarified butter.

“He’s a fine old chap, isn’t he?” said Bob’s voice behind me. “You should only have seen him two months ago, when he was *bobbery* (vicious). We had to chain him to a tree in the compound, and he shook it in his rage! He burst the ropes—we had to chain him!”

I regarded Rajah—that was the elephant’s name—with increased respect, and involuntarily increased the distance between myself and him, as I inquired,—

“He’s quite good again now, is he?”

“Quiet as a lamb!” was Bob’s expressive, if inappropriate, metaphor. “But we can always manage the Rajah, even when he is *bobbery*. He’s mortally afraid of horses—don’t know why, but he is. We collected all we could, and rode round him, forming a circle, and gradually closing upon him, and he was regularly quailed. The *mahouts* got the chains on him in a twinkling!” And Bob called to a native to bring him a piece of burning wood from the camp-fire, and lit a cigar, the man holding the red-hot ember the while between his horny fingers.

Bob is my elder brother. Bob has been an officer in the Indian Forest Department since I

was a boy in petticoats. I am a subaltern in the Twenty-Oneth now, but never did I feel more of a *griff*, or Bob more of an elder brother, than that morning, as I stood in the middle of his camp admiring his elephants.

Bob has kindly offered me, in my innocence and inexperience of the country, a few days tiger-shooting in his district. Bob appears to be the arbitrary ruler over a country as large as an English county. True, his subjects are not many in number, for that strip of the Terai, lying between the Himalayas and the plains—a marshy, jungly land, seamed with rocky ravines, and traversed by refractory rivers that will *not* adhere to their beds—is malarious to a degree. At certain times of the year even the natives flee with their cattle to the lower Himalayas, and Bob betakes himself to Simla. In the cold weather, however, Bob makes royal progresses through his domain, followed by a vast retinue of servants and camp-followers, investigating the condition of these precious forests, on whose existence much of the rainfall so necessary to this parched land of India depends.

It is a solitary existence, for Bob does not meet another European for weeks together; but it has its bright side. Bob is a gamekeeper on

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a vast scale. All the beasts of the forest are his. Globe-trotting princelets and peers, who are being shown India, are given a few days' shooting in Bob's district, as a *bonne-bouche*. The Terai is one vast game-preserve, from the Suwaliks to Nepaul. No wonder all my brother officers in the Twenty-Oneth were green with envy when I told them of Bob's invitation.

I was much impressed with Bob's imposing surroundings—his white tents, so luxurious within, and two sets of them, one always sent on ahead to be ready for him at the end, or rather the middle, of his day's march, for the ground was got over in the cool hours; the troops of obsequious headmen of the villages, to whom Bob's nod was law; his horses and ponies of many kinds; his elaborate repasts of four courses, all cooked in a little iron stove in the open air, by an idiotic-looking old man in a white petticoat, who sat crooning over his cooking-pots; and, lastly, but certainly not least, by his elephants.

There were ten of them; for a civil engineer in camp not far off, engaged—and not for the first time—in trying to bridge one of the refractory rivers, had joined forces with him for a big shoot, when the gladsome intelligence was brought to us two days before that a cow had