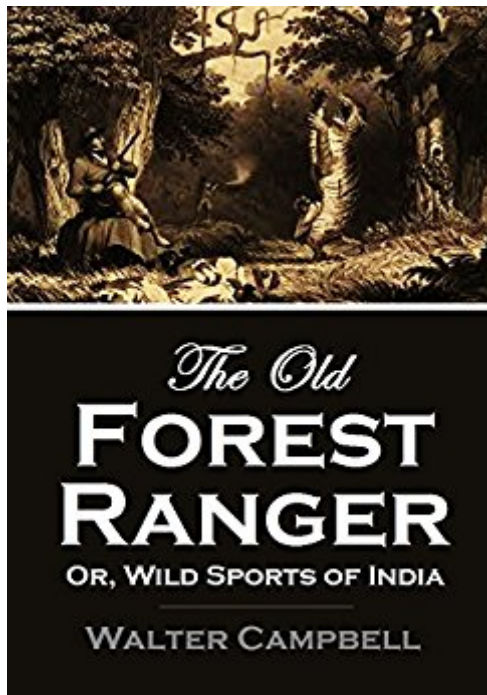




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The Old Forest Ranger; Or, Wild Sports Of India On The Neilgherry Hills, In The Jungles And On The Plains (1842) (Active Table Of Contents)



Synopsis

"...A low rustling sound was heard among the long grass, as if the tiger were creeping cautiously forward, so as to bring himself within a springing distance of his victims. It was a moment of fearful suspense; but Mansfield never altered a muscle of his countenanceâhis courage appeared to rise as the danger became more imminent. The rustling sound ceased, and the ominous switching of his tail was again heard...." British Captain Walter Campbell, of the 7th Royal Fusiliers was stationed for several years, in a remote part of India, adjoining the Mysore frontier, and in the immediate vicinity of the great chain of Western Ghats. Given the Regimental nick-name "Jungle Wallah"â"A Jungle Man, or Wild Man of the Woods, Campbell wrote of his experiences hunting in this jungle region in his famous 1842 book "The Old Forest Ranger; Or, Wild Sports of India on the Neilgherry Hills, in the Jungles and on the Plains." Nothing on the Neilgherries as they once were has ever surpassed in spirit and vivid presentation "The Old Forest Ranger." The subject is the field-sports of Hindostanâ"deer-stalking, tiger, bear, elephant, boar, and bison hunting. Campbell was thoroughly master of his subject: that subject is various, full of matter and stirring incident, and well diversified by the rugged scenery of the Neilgherries, the gorgeous magnificence of the Tropical vegetation in the Plains, the atmospheric phaenomena of Hindostan, and the native characters with whom the sportsmen are naturally brought in contact. Campbell's book is full of spirit-stirring adventures and attractive descriptions. Campbell must have been a mighty hunter; but although his hand appears to have been against every wild member of the feline tribes, found in forest jungle, nullah, or mountain chain, yet a more humane gentleman, we dare to say, does not breathe, or one who would speed further and faster to aid his fellow-creature. Indeed his sentiments and sympathies are frequently too tender, at least in the mode of expression for a Nimrod or a patron and practitioner of the deadly tube. But still he has a genius for magnificent and perilous sports; and appears to be as cool as he is intrepid in the extremest moments. Campbell states:"My object in writing the following pages was to present my Readers with a faithful sketch of some of the more exciting Field Sports of India; and, to insure my doing so, I confined myself almost exclusively to the description of such scenes and adventures as either my Brother, or I, or both of usâ"for we hunted in couples occasionallyâ"have witnessed. The few exceptions which occur to this general rule, are anecdotes which I have had from men, on whose word I could place implicit reliance."However, in order to give a zest to his sporting adventures in the Nilghiri hills of Madras, Campbell worked them up into the form of an adventure, with a pretty heroine and a youthful hero:"My Characters are purely fictitious, and are merely introduced, like the subordinate performers in Van Amburg's exhibitions, to serve as foils to the wild beasts, and to avoid the repetition of that eternal egotistical I, which is so disagreeable in a

personal narrative." For example, in describing a real-life run-in with an elephant, Campbell, replacing his own name with the fictitious "Doctor" writes:"...The Doctor, seeing his advantage, began, with all diligence, to climb the tree behind which he had sheltered himself. He was already several feet from the ground, and his arm was outstretched to grasp a branch which would have raised him to a place of safety, when the Elephant, catching a hasty glimpse of him, dashed forward with redoubled fury, twisted his trunk round his legs, hurled him to the ground ..."Campbell was amongst the first to make books on the sports of India as fashionable as they have now become. Moreover, his tales and scenes on the plains, hills and in the jungle read as fresh as when they first saw type.

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