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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Recd. DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. 73	Press
B.P. No.	Mis.
Dated 11. 8. 1963	196 .

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 92. Read the following letter from R. F. PHILLIPS, Esq., to the Hon. W. HUDLESTON, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated Kotagherry, 30th June 1873:—

I have the honour to submit, for the approval of the Madras Government, a simple and, at the same time, an efficacious method of destroying tigers and cheetahs, which I firmly believe might be adopted by the ryots of this Presidency to the saving of human life and property.

2. Before describing the invention, upon which I have bestowed much labour and expense, I request permission briefly to describe the traps and means now used for the destruction of tigers, and to state wherein (from personal experience) I have proved them to be more or less failures.

3. Having lived for the past ten years on the eastern slopes of the Neilgherries, and witnessed the *weekly* loss of cattle sustained by Todas and Badagas, and occasional loss of human life, I naturally embraced every opportunity that presented itself of shooting and otherwise destroying tigers and cheetahs.

4. I have tried all the native traps, and improved upon some of them, but without any great measure of success, experience having taught me the extreme difficulty of trapping these animals, especially the tiger, who is by far the more wary of the two.

5. The traps and means I have experimented with are as follow:—

No. 1.—The so-called "*Cheetah-trap*," baited with a goat every night (it has a falling door), the cheetah is caught alive, then shot, or otherwise killed in the trap.

I have built these traps by tiger paths inside dense forests, and, though I have caught several cheetahs, I find they are *useless* for tigers, as the latter will never enter a trap from which there is *no exit*. Another great objection is the cost and labour of erecting a substantial trap strong enough to hold a cheetah, the necessity of tying a goat in it every night, and the impossibility of removing the trap to another site, owing to the expense of so doing and the rotting of the jungle-wood, of which it is constructed.

Some years ago, I improved upon this trap by building one with *two* doors, so that there was a clear path through it, and to it I added a strong pen in which I tied a bullock every night.

This answered to a certain extent; a tiger came, and failing to force an entrance through the door of the cattle pen, walked through the apparently open trap and was caught, *both* doors falling simultaneously and shutting him in. I cannot, however, recommend this trap for general use; it is too expensive and complicated, cannot be removed, and requires to be baited every night, which are conditions that would not permit of its use except by Europeans.

No. 2.—This is a falling trap composed of heavy poles weighted with stones, under which the remains of beasts killed by tigers are placed. This trap kills by falling upon and crushing the animal.

I have built and set these traps frequently over the carcasses of buffaloes, and do not approve of them for the following reasons:—They are expensive, and must be built immediately after the buffalo's partially-eaten remains are found; eight men must combine and procure the poles and rope from the nearest jungle;

moreover, it frequently happens that the owner of the dead cow cannot gain the cooperation of his villagers at the time, or fails through ignorance of how to set the trap properly.

I have set these traps frequently and have proved them failures, for if a jackal or even a vulture precedes the tiger, the trap falls, is more or less smashed, and cannot be reset without considerable labour and trouble.

When setting these traps I usually paid the owner of the cow to watch till dusk to keep off jackals and vultures, but no sooner does he return to his village than a jackal comes to feed and is killed.

No. 3. *Spring guns* (or guns so set as to cause the tiger to shoot himself).—I have tried for years past and consider them unsuitable in many ways. They require very careful setting, and should rain or even mist fall during the night the chances are that the guns hang fire.

Then, again, a vulture will alight upon the carcass, and touching the blackened twine by which the gun is discharged anticipates the tiger, while the latter hearing the report abandons that carcass, and probably kills another beast the same night elsewhere.

Having set these guns over forty or fifty carcasses I never once bagged a tiger; frequently I have found jackals and vultures lying dead, shot when they came to feed while tigers (occasionally wounded) have escaped. In fact, though I invariably set two guns, I never met with any success; consequently I do not consider the spring gun as suitable for the ordinary ryot, who would probably injure himself in his attempts at setting the gun.

Having once sent a servant to set my guns over a carcass, he nearly shot himself, the bullet passing through his cloth, though he had frequently seen me set them.

No. 4, *Poison*.—I have tried strychnine frequently, and with but occasional success; the result generally being a dead jackal or vulture, which animals or birds invariably attack the carcass first; while here, on the Neilgherries, there is the danger of poisoning the Kotas who, like the vultures, hasten to the carrion.

Once, after much trouble, I found (near the mouth of the Orange Valley) the remains of a Badaga who was killed and carried off by a tigress while herding his buffaloes. I prevailed upon the deceased's brother, who accompanied my search, to allow me to poison the uneaten remains, but the next morning I secured a vulture only, the tigress and cubs who had feasted the previous day escaping in safety. Another time I put double quantities of strychnine into a carcass, sufficient, as I hoped, for both the tiger and the jackals. The tiger, in that instance, however, ate up every portion, and owing to the over-dose of poison recovered after violent vomiting.

No. 5.—The difficulty of beating out tigers is well-known, and during my residence in the jungles I have only twice succeeded in forcing the brutes from their dense jungles and shooting them. But this plan is not, of course, suitable to the poorer ryots and native owners of cattle.

6. A few years ago the late Commissioner of the Neilgherries requested me to explain my method of destroying animals by means of spring guns, as he knew I

used a rat-trap as a means of discharging them *instantaneously*, while Captain Rogers (of Bengal), whose printed circular was sent for my information, used a wooden lever instead. I notice by the *Home News* of the 30th of May last that

Wild Beasts in India.—On May 26th an important paper was read at the rooms of the Social Science Society, by Captain Rogers, on the "Destruction of Human Life and Property in India by Noxious Wild Animals." The facts made public by Captain Rogers, though familiar to our Eastern readers, were quite astounding to English ears. Captain Rogers exhibited an ingenious self-acting spring gun for the destruction of tigers. An animated discussion followed, in which Lord Napier and Ettrick, K.T., the Chairman of the Meeting, and other gentlemen connected with India, including natives, took part. Various remedies were proposed. Among them Mr. Frank Buckland suggested an organized destruction of the tiger cubs in the breeding season, and the attraction of full-grown tigers to traps, pit-falls, and other devices, by means of a drug of valerian, of which tigers (which are only gigantic cats) are exceedingly fond. He defended English sportsmen against the imputation of ever conniving at the preservation of tigers for sport at the expense of the lives of men, women, and children in India. Finally, a Committee of the Society was appointed, with a view of calling the attention of the Duke of Argyll and the Government to the necessity of organizing some means of killing tigers in India. Lady Mayo was present, and expressed to the officers of the Society her approbation of the proposed anti-tiger movement.

this officer has been calling the attention of the Social Science Society to the "Destruction of Human Life and Property in India by Noxious Wild Animals," and that this meeting, attended by Lord Napier and Ettrick, Mr. Frank Buckland, and other gentlemen, appointed a Committee of the Society "to call the attention of the Duke of Argyll and the Government to the necessity of organizing some means of killing tigers in India."

7. Hence I have now the honour to state, for the information of Government, that I have succeeded in inventing a trap which I believe to be suitable in every way for the destruction of tigers and cheetahs. The chief advantages I claim for it are—

Firstly.—*Portability*, for a trap could be kept in every large village, and carried by two men to the place where the cow was killed, and set in half an hour.

Secondly.—Though jackals and vultures preceded the tiger they would feed and escape, while the tiger or cheetah, whenever he returned to feed, would be killed (as it is undesirable to catch the brute alive where unarmed ryots have charge of the trap).

Thirdly.—The setting of this trap is extremely simple, its cost small, and the material of which it is constructed being iron, it will last for a very long time; moreover, when not required for a tiger it could be used *with advantage* as an agricultural implement.

8. I think that if the villagers of the Sattiamungalam Taluq in the Coimbatore District (where a well-known man-eater has long been troublesome) were in possession of a trap, such as I have contrived, the tiger would be killed and human life saved, for I know that the tiger I allude to has evaded every attempt hitherto made by well-known sportsmen to drive it from its cover, who would easily have shot the brute if they could but have seen him.

9. If the Government of Madras desire further information regarding my trap, I shall be happy to supply it, and should the Government wish it I will take down my trap to the Sattiamungalam Taluq, and show and explain the same to the heads of the villages.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,

26th July 1873.

No. 93.

ORDER THEREON, 26th July 1873, No. 782.

Ordered to be communicated to the Board of Revenue, through the Revenue Department, and to the Collector of Coimbatore, who has been already requested to afford Mr. Phillips every assistance in trying his invention in the Sattiamungalum Taluq, Mr. Phillips having personally explained the method to the Chief Secretary before receipt of his letter.

2. The Governor in Council will be glad to hear from Mr. Phillips, in due course, the result of the trial.

(True Extract.)

Sturrock
for Chief Secretary.

To the Collector of Coimbatore.

„ Revenue Department.

To R. F. Phillips, Esq., Kotagerry.

No. 73
Comm. to the Board of Revenue
by the Chief Secy.

11 Aug. 73

Exd. J. Wright.

reparatus
sent to Madras office

Notice *Sect-*
Govt. of 18731 *Madras.*

PUBLIC.
To *No 2404*
THE COLLECTOR OF COIMBATORE,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated July, 26th.

Recd. Aug 1/9

End.

G. O., 26th July 1873, No. 782.

L. M. M.

JULY.
Nos. 92-93.

To B. P. M. 15/8

Wild Animals.—A letter from Mr. R. F. Phillips, of Kotagcherry, regarding his invention for killing tigers, communicated to the Board of Revenue and to the Collector of Coimbatore, and the latter Officer directed to afford Mr. Phillips every assistance in trying his invention in the Sathiamangalam Taluk. Mr. Phillips requested to report the result in due course.

Handwritten:
9d-11 Aug 1/73 No 73