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THE VAST SUDAN

BY

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"Camera Adventures in the African Wilds"

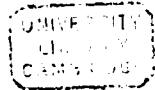
"The Romance of the Newfoundland Caribou"

"The Romance of the Beaver"

etc. etc.



*Arabs of the Nuba Mountain Province wearing chain armour
believed to have been taken from the Crusaders.*



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THE VAST SUDAN

dusk in search of grass and other vegetable food. Farmers have a very natural dislike for them owing to their fondness for young crops. A large field of maize or other "mealies" will be destroyed completely in a single night. Curiously enough, the natives do not take the trouble to build fences round their crops, as they do not realise how small a fence will prove an effective barrier to these great creatures. The roar of the hippo is one of the strangest sounds to be heard on the Nile; it consists of one mighty roar followed by several grunts, and the stranger to the country is likely to believe it to be a lion's roar. There is much diversity of opinion as to whether or not the crocodile is an enemy of the hippo. From my own observations I am inclined to believe that the young are attacked, sometimes with fatal results, if the mother does not happen to be present, for she is very solicitous for the welfare of her offspring and will immediately attack any enemy. I have found young hippo with wounds which had evidently been inflicted by crocodile, though I have never actually seen one killed. The footprint of the hippo is easily distinguished from that of the rhinoceros by having four toes instead of three.

BLACK RHINOCEROS

Black rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros bicornis*).—In the Sudan these are found only in the province of Mongalla on the east bank of the White Nile. They are very scarce and are carefully protected. These unfortunate creatures are likely to be among the first of the larger animals to be exterminated owing to their stupidity. It requires neither skill nor courage to shoot them. Their poor eyesight makes stalking them easy, even to the inexperienced hunter, and as they keep to a small area of country for a long time they can be found without difficulty. Their hearing is only fairly keen, but they have a remarkably well-developed sense of smell. This is equally a protection and a menace to them, because they have a bad habit of rushing blindly towards where they scent the human being, thereby giving the impression that they are charging, and consequently giving colour to the excuse for shooting in self-defence. Speaking from a very considerable experience with these strangely stupid creatures, I have found that the "charge" is little more than an exhibition of nervousness, caused apparently by their lack of good eyesight. This has been true in nearly every instance except in one district in Kenya, where almost every rhino I saw that was within reasonable range did deliberately charge. When two or three

THE VAST SUDAN

came together shooting was unfortunately really necessary, but this only happened on two or three occasions. As a rule the rhino can be driven off without difficulty. I have had them come into my camp at night, and have chased them away by running after them in my pyjamas and throwing stones. At other times I have stalked them in open country to within thirty yards or so and made photographs, and on no occasion have I myself had to fire at them. If they do charge they *may* be dodged, that is if there is only one ; but the dodging requires a certain amount of coolness, as no move must be made until they come to within two or three yards, at which distance the head is lowered so that they cannot see the object of their attack. At the critical moment it is necessary to give a quick jump sideways. This part of the performance is easy enough, the difficult part is trying to stand still while the huge beast is coming. A full-grown one stands up to about 5 feet 8 inches at the shoulder and weighs in the neighbourhood of two tons. The skin, which is very tough, is in the thickest parts fully half an inch thick, and when cut into strips can be used for sticks or whips ; its clear amber colour when polished is much like that of the hippo skin when treated in a similar manner. The African black

BLACK RHINOCEROS

rhino has two horns composed of compressed fibre or bristles and is not actually attached to the skull, as a rule the front horn is longer than the second one. Unfortunately, these horns have a commercial value, most of them going to China, where they find a ready sale for medicinal purposes. If there was a law absolutely prohibiting the export of these horns it would do a great deal towards preventing the destruction of the rhino. The tracks of these animals are easily distinguished by the three toes. The black rhino has a well-developed upper lip which is more or less prehensile, and is evidently of use in feeding, for the animal browses chiefly on the leaves of small plants. I have seen no evidence of their eating grass. A great deal has been written about the rhinoceros birds (*Buphaga*) which are usually found on the animal, particularly those that live in open country, and the common belief is that they are sentries and give warning of approaching danger. To dispute this is to court trouble, but I venture to say that though they do at times make a disturbance when man approaches, and so perhaps cause the rhino to look out for danger, their main reason for staying on the animal is to eat the parasites which the coarse skin harbours. We see starlings on sheep and cattle at home, and

THE VAST SUDAN

certainly no one would suggest that they are doing sentry duty. As a sporting trophy few animals are less interesting than the rhino, and certainly few large animals are less interesting to shoot. For the camera hunter they make splendid subjects, interesting and amusing, and there is just enough danger in stalking them to within close range to add the necessary spice of excitement. It is to be hoped that they will be given adequate protection, otherwise in a very few years their present limited habitat will know them no longer. They are practically extinct in South Africa, and are decreasing rapidly in their last stronghold, Kenya and Tanganyika.

White rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros simus*).—The only part of the Sudan in which they are found is in the country to the west of the White Nile in the provinces of Mongalla and the Bahr el Ghazal, probably most numerous in the neighbourhood of the rivers Yei and Meridi. The total number is, however, very small, and these are protected, at least so far as the shooting of them by white men is concerned, but unfortunately the native still continues to kill them whenever opportunity offers, and unless vigorous steps are taken to prevent this continuing it will be but a very few

WHITE RHINOCEROS

years before they vanish altogether. They are easily killed, being if anything even more stupid than their black cousins. They are also far less dangerous. Their eyesight is small protection, as they cannot apparently distinguish clearly anything over about forty yards away. Both their hearing and sense of smell are remarkably good. Next to the elephant they are the largest of the quadrupeds, attaining a height of over six feet and a half; like the black rhinoceros they carry two horns, but of much greater length and more slender in proportion, the front one being, I believe, invariably the longer. The horns of the males seldom if ever exceed 40 inches in length, while those of the female have been known to reach 62½ inches. A noticeable feature of the white rhino is the square nose and elongated slit-shaped nostrils. Of all large creatures they are perhaps the least beautiful, owing to the curiously ungainly shape of the head. In disposition they differ from the black species in being less nervous, though the idea that some writers have given of their being lethargic is only true when the animal has no suspicion of danger; but when once they get scent of man they become greatly excited, and move off without the slightest hesitation and at incredible

THE VAST SUDAN

speed, galloping for some distance before breaking into a fast trot, which continues for many miles. They feed chiefly at night, and though it has been stated that they eat nothing but grass, I have reason to believe that this is open to doubt. During the heat of the day they like to wallow in mud-holes, and in so doing they render the water almost useless to men and even to other animals. Their name is most misleading, as they are not white but rather a dull ash grey, considerably lighter in colour than the black variety.

Buffalo (*Bos caffer æquinoctialis*) are found in the provinces of Fung, Upper Nile, Mongalla, Bahr el Ghazal and Kordofan, their range being about the same as that of the elephant. The buffalo of the Sudan seldom carry as fine horns as those of Kenya and Tanganyika; especially is this true of those in the region of the Blue Nile, and for this reason they have been regarded as a sub-species and given the name of *B. c. æquinoctialis*. It is a great question whether these local races of a species should be named separately, particularly as the horns, which in most cases form the basis of identification and consequent separation, are seldom constant in form and size. In the case of the Sudan buffalo the horns are, on the

BUFFALO

average, of smaller size, but then one of the largest pair of horns on record, 53 inches (outside span) and 47½ inches from tip to tip, was shot in Uganda, which borders on the Sudan. Few animals are more deceptive in size than the buffalo, their massive build giving them the appearance of being far taller than they are; as a matter of fact, they stand only a trifle over five feet at the shoulder. It is difficult to give accurate information as to their habits, as these have changed so much in the last thirty-five years. Before the rhinderpest swept over the country in 1890 the buffalo habitually stayed in the open and fed during the day. In those days they were perhaps the most numerous of all the animals in Africa, but the terrible disease very nearly exterminated them in certain parts of the country. For many years after this the few animals that remained forsook the open during the daytime, retiring to the forests and dense swamps while the sun was up and at dusk coming out to feed and drink. In 1910 this still continued, but during the past few years they appear to have returned to their former habits in many parts of their range, and have increased enormously in number. In the Sudan the few herds that I saw spent the greater part of the day between ten in the