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AFRICAN JUNGLE LIFE

BY

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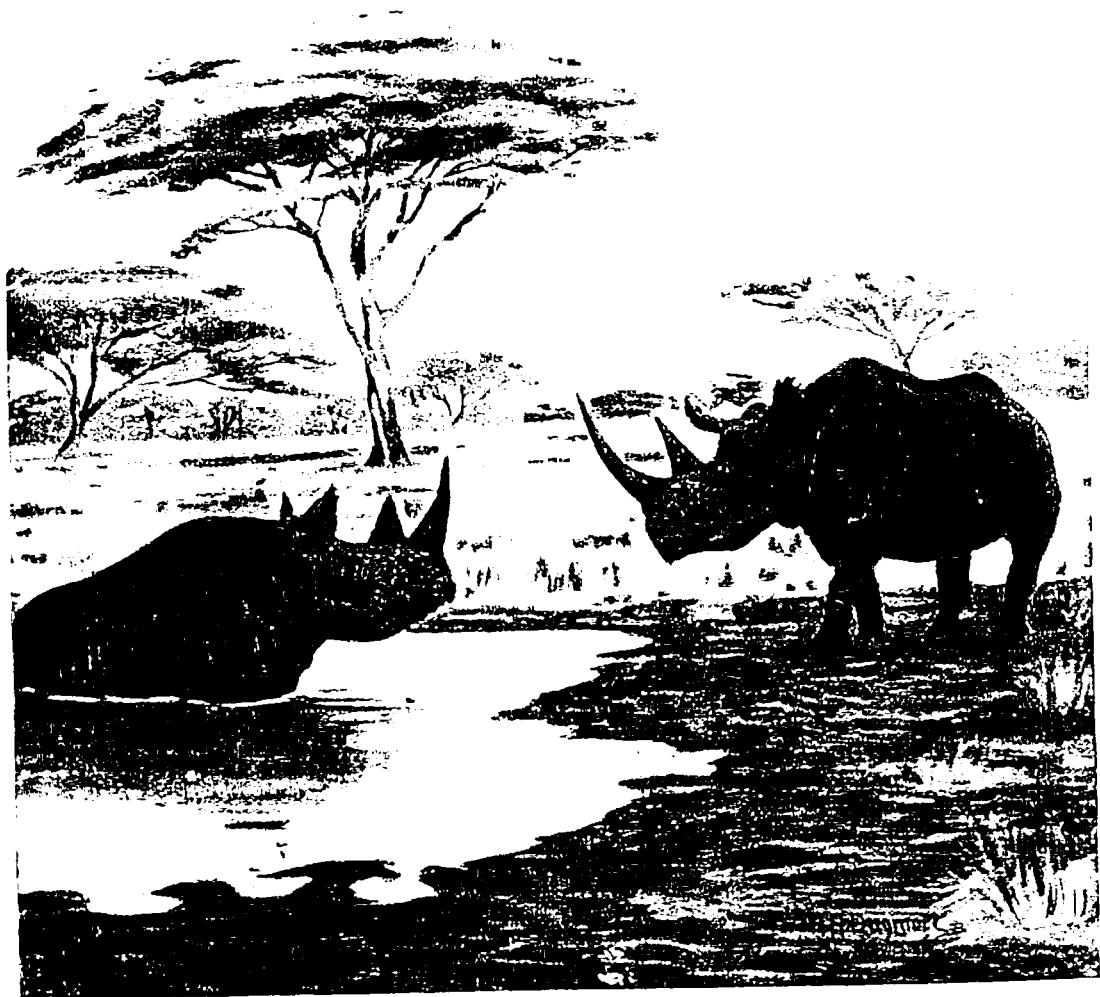
"THE WONDERLAND OF BIG GAME," "THE VAST SUDAN"
"THE ROMANCE OF THE BEAVER," "THE ROMANCE OF THE CARIBOU," ETC.



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"ON ARRIVING AT THE POOL SHE FOUND THAT IT WAS ALREADY OCCUPIED BY ANOTHER OF HER KIND."

KIFARU, THE RHINOCEROS

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UNDER the thin shade of a wide-spreading, flat-topped thorn tree a large rhino lay asleep, for the sun was high and the heat intense. The daily breeze blew across the parched grass of the rolling plains and it carried the invisible information that there were men in the vicinity. This unwelcome scent disturbed the sleeping rhino, for though an animal's body sleeps the nose and ears are always alert. Kifaru, as we shall call the rhino, raised her head, sniffed the air, twitched her ragged ears and considered things in general and the fearsome scent in particular. Then she pushed her front legs forward and with a great heave lifted her body and assumed a standing position.

She was a mighty beast whose age was unknown, and she was ugly; not even her best friend could have found anything beautiful in her long, queer, wrinkled face, her small pig-like eyes, her high forehead and torn ears, and nature, as though anxious to make her more completely absurd, had planted two long, thick, pointed horns lengthways along her face. One, the longer, protruded forward above the pointed nose;

it was perhaps thirty inches or more in length. The second, which was thicker and not quite so long, rose straight and was placed between the forehead and the front horn slightly forward of the eyes, and neither of these horns was attached to the skull according to the customary habits of animal's horns. They grew like strange excrescences out of the skin and were composed of a mass of closely compressed hair which formed a horn-like substance that was hard and highly polished towards the points.

Kifaru's body weighed about two tons and at the highest point of the shoulder stood over five feet six inches from the ground. Unlike her Indian cousin, who, by the way, is an inferior beast, having but one horn, she wore a fairly well-fitting skin. There were a few conspicuous wrinkles, it is true; on the neck and over the front legs were the worst ones, but then when a skin is nearly an inch thick it is no easy matter to make it fit snugly. The Indian rhino is an example of how badly a skin can fit. Kifaru was a well-built creature, even though fortune had dealt unkindly with her face, and as she stood beneath the thorn tree she gave the impression of great strength. She also gave the impression of having a bad temper, which was not to be wondered at. To be disturbed out of a sound sleep never improves tempers, even though they may be habitually good, and hers was not.

She stood for a long time sniffing the air, but having very poor eyesight she could not discover the actual presence of any enemy. Leaving the shade of the tree she moved forward in an up-wind direction, and as she walked the scent became more and more distinct and annoying. Being irritable by nature, she decided to hurry things up. Walking was too slow, so she trotted, always towards the increasingly strong scent. As she trotted she raised her short tufted tail—her danger signal, which meant that she was quite willing to meet trouble half-way, or in fact that she would have no objection to going the whole way to meet it.

Instead of keeping in a straight line she zigzagged in a curious manner, perhaps with the idea of covering more ground in the search for the disturbers of her sleep. Suddenly, in coming over the brow of a low hill, she discovered a long line of moving objects only a short distance away; scent, sight and hearing all went to prove that these slow-moving creatures were men, who, on seeing the great beast appear as though from nowhere, changed with lightning speed from slow to very rapid movement.

The line of porters, for that is what they were, flung their loads down in every direction with a happy disregard for their contents and immediately scattered themselves over the near-by landscape. Trees were

scarce and small, but within an incredibly short time every available one was occupied by the half-naked men who crowded the branches to a point that was positively dangerous. Many of the frightened negroes, unable to secure a foothold on the trees, rushed about as though pursued by a swarm of African wasps, and there are few things that produce greater consternation. Next to trees the most popular refuges were large ant-hills, which were fairly numerous and afforded good shelter so long as they were not hit too hard, and it happened that Kifaru, after taking in the situation, decided to stir up as much trouble as conditions would allow, and, moving about from side to side, with tail erect and snorting defiance to all and sundry, she trotted rapidly first towards one of the frightened men and then to another, and at last concentrated on a large ant-hill full eight feet in height on which three men were crowded. She took one good look at the wretched fellows and without more ado charged. Now an ant-hill may be very solidly made, or it may be largely honeycombed with passages, and this one by evil chance was of the latter variety. The consequence was that when the two tons of rhino struck at high velocity the mound of dry sandy earth crumbled as though hit by a shell, and the three men had scarcely time to jump clear. Two of them fell and for a few moments nothing could be seen but a dense cloud

of reddish dust, out of which eventually emerged a snorting red rhino and two equally red men, who tried their best to beat the world's record for the two hundred yards run. The third man, having jumped clear, went off in the opposite direction with a start of several seconds.

Kifaru, half blinded by the dust, scarcely knew what to do. The scent and sound of human beings came from every quarter, but for a time she could see nothing; but still that did not prevent her rushing about first one way and then another in the hope of finding something on which to vent her temper. The first object to be encountered was one of the discarded loads, which happened to be a box containing whisky. This was promptly impaled on her front horn and tossed in the air, needless to say with highly disastrous results to the whisky, which sprinkled itself all over the dusty rhino and, streaming down, caused the red dust to form a strange assortment of stripes. A couple of other loads were found and tossed, both of which contained *posho* (maize meal, which is the porters' food), and this made a white cloud which deposited itself unevenly on the old beast and added greatly to the general effect and produced a most peculiar colour-scheme. A rhino's colour is normally dark grey, but Kifaru came out of the fray a tri-coloured animal painted red, white and grey, much

to the amusement of the porters, whose roars of laughter were heard in every direction.

The bewildered animal came to the conclusion that there were too many men and far too much strange dust and queer-smelling liquid, and that the sooner she got away the better, so, after rushing about in an aimless sort of way for several minutes, she made off at a rapid gallop, slowing down after a time to a trot which was continued for nearly half an hour. By this time she was far away from the interrupted *safari*. Incidentally it may be remarked that the white leaders of the porters had foolishly gone on ahead to find a suitable camping-ground and had seen the whole affair from a hill some distance away. Their remarks upon the subject of whisky and rhino must be left to the reader's imagination.

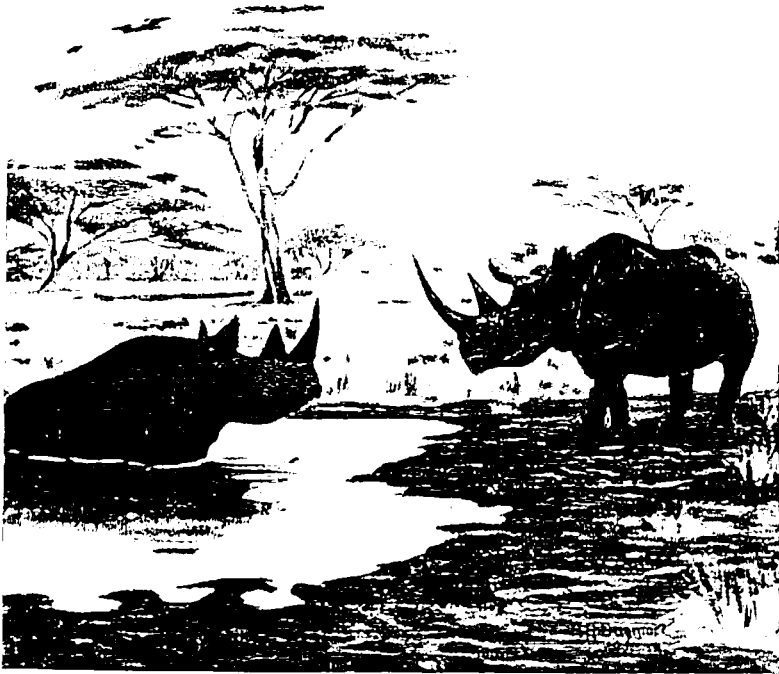
Kifaru, having covered several miles across country, felt that she was safe from any chance of pursuit. She was hot after her run, and finding a large tree she sought its welcome shade, and after standing for some time to make sure that no enemy was in the vicinity, she lay down and finished her interrupted sleep.

Late in the afternoon, when the sun was sinking behind the western hills, she awoke and decided that her toilet needed serious attention. There was a water-hole not far away where she could have a "wash and brush up", so she walked slowly towards it, stopping

now and then to eat the small plants that formed her favourite food. On arriving at the pool she found that it was already occupied by another of her kind; however, there was room for them both and she entered the muddy water and lay down in it. There she remained for nearly an hour soaking off the various coloured dusts with which her body had been covered. In the meantime her bathing companion, having washed to his satisfaction, moved away without paying any attention to Kifaru, who at the end of the time came out thoroughly refreshed, and having rolled in the dust until quite dry, got up, shook herself and considered her toilet completed to her liking.

She was some little distance from her regular home, and rhino are usually inclined to stay in an area of a few square miles for weeks at a time, unless disturbed, in which case they may travel a long distance before taking up a new abode. They are curiously regular in their habits, a fact that is known to those who would hunt them and is one of the reasons that they are vanishing so rapidly.

When Kifaru left the bathing-pool the light of day had almost gone, and the country was hiding itself in the quickly fading twilight. She did not go directly back to her own district, for some reason difficult to discover; perhaps her mind was uneasy as to the whereabouts of the *safari* party and she



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considered it the part of wisdom to make a large circle on the chance of finding out where they were, or perhaps it was that a certain spring of unusually good water attracted her; but whatever the reason she walked slowly along, feeding as she went and always keeping more or less towards the gentle breeze, which like a soft, cool breath drifted over the plains, carrying the sweet scent of the thorn tree, whose pale yellow flowers were now in full bloom.

Kifaru passed many other animals in the course of her walk, chiefly antelope of several kinds and the ubiquitous zebra, but none of them paid any attention to the big creature, who in turn showed no interest in them, for the rhino is a solitary and exclusive beast who mixes only with his own kind, and even with them he can scarcely be considered gregarious. More often than not he lives his life alone or with one or two others and only rarely are they seen in parties of four or five. About an hour or so after Kifaru had left the waterhole the moon rose and in the soft, cold light the rhino's great body, covered with the grey dust in which she had rolled, looked ghostly white. Her progress was slow, as she fed as she walked, and it was several hours before she came to the neighbourhood of the spring. When a slight change in the direction of the breeze brought the scent of man, feeding operations ceased immediately, and all the humiliations of

the day came to her slow-working mind. Perhaps these were the very people who had laughed at her when she had changed her colour; if so, this would be a good opportunity to teach them a lesson. With head raised she came forward at a fast walk, stopping now and then to investigate, for the scent of man was mixed with the smell of fire. One was as bad as the other and for a time she hesitated, as though not sure that the plan of revenge was wise.

A closer examination was necessary before making up her mind, so she approached somewhat carefully until at last, not far from the spring, she saw the glow of fires reflected on the trees. A little closer and she could distinguish two pale green tents and several small white ones, and near the fire a man sat, apparently fast asleep.

Kifaru came still closer, without making a sound. It was a wonderful opportunity to create a really good disturbance, and for a long time she stood still trying to make up her mind what to charge. One of the larger tents, which was a little to the side of the fires, looked like a good target, so finally she determined to launch the attack. As a preliminary, a couple of petulant snorts seemed quite in order; coming as they did out of the perfect stillness of the night they produced a most gratifying effect. It was as though a bomb had exploded in the midst of the sleeping camp.

The *askari* who was supposed to be on watch very nearly tumbled into the fire, and in his struggle to recover himself loosed off his old army rifle (they usually refuse to shoot, which accounts for the small percentage of accidents in *safaris*!), which, fortunately, only tore some bark off the trunk of a near-by tree. Those who had not been aroused by the snort responded to this deafening noise, and everyone turned out of their various sleeping quarters with remarkable speed. This, according to Kifaru's idea, was the psychological moment for action, so, after one more frightening snort, she rushed full speed past the bewildered men straight at the tent, and just as the white hunter came out of the open flap she charged completely through the canvas side, which ripped through as though it were paper, across the mosquito-netted bed and out the other side. A most thoroughly satisfactory smash-up; she even thought of turning her attention to the second large tent, but decided against it as a shot whizzed past unpleasantly close to her head; so she promptly turned and trotted off into the darkness with a smile on her ugly face at the thought of the consternation she had wrought in the peaceful, slumbering camp.

Of course she did not realise that such acts are highly foolish, as they give people the impression that rhino are dangerous, consequently the wretched beasts

are shot on the slightest provocation, and all because their sense of humour is developed along lines which do not appeal to mankind. It may be very funny to break up a line of heavily laden porters or charge through a tent, but the fun is all, or at least chiefly, on the rhino's side, and has resulted in man's dislike for him and his foolish habits. Certainly no other animal is so foolish as to hunt for trouble when it could be so easily avoided.

Kifaru had failed to get the drink of cool spring water, but she had had her revenge, and now that she knew where the camp was situated she would return, free from the fear of man, to her own particular district, where there were waterholes, plenty of food and enough shade trees, so that she could always find one for her noonday rest. The waterholes were in the bed of an otherwise dry river, and were, unfortunately, visited by so many animals that the water was nearly always more or less muddy. However, when she craved a good clean drink there was always the spring which was not more than four or five miles away.

About a week after the experiences with the *safari* and the camp, Kifaru gave birth to a baby, and a fine baby he was, weighing several hundred pounds and looking much like his mother, except for the horns, which were merely slightly raised bumps. He was a lazy little fellow and spent most of the time asleep,

after the manner of babies; and like other babies he considered food to be a most important feature of life. For this reason his sleep was interrupted with great frequency in order that he might satisfy his perpetual hunger. The moment he had partaken of nourishment he would lie down almost immediately. Only when his mother visited the waterholes did he indulge in any real exercise, as of course he would not be left alone. Indeed, he was seldom more than forty or fifty yards from her, and that was when she was searching for food. She was particular what she ate, seldom touching grass unless driven to it by the lack of the small and inconspicuous plant whose leaves furnished her with the food she wanted. It seems curious that so large an animal can extract enough substance from such small plants to nourish their enormous bodies. Evidently they do not expend much nervous energy in the ordinary course of their lives, otherwise they would have to devote far more time to feeding, for actually it would seem that they sleep about as many hours as they feed, perhaps even more, and yet they always appear to be thoroughly nourished.

Kifaru watched over her youngster with the same solicitude for their offspring that is displayed by most wild animals. When alone she had kept an indifferent look-out, but now she was constantly alert, and at the slightest sound or suspicious scent she would become

very much excited and search in every direction to find its origin. One day she happened to be lying in some fairly high grass with her youngster close by her side, when she noticed the scent of man. Instantly she was on her feet. Instead of going away from the source of this smell, that is to say, in a down-wind direction, she trotted out of the grass into the more open country towards where the danger must be. She had not gone far, accompanied as usual by the little fellow, when she saw a figure moving. A rhino's eyesight is not good, and anything over fifty yards must appear to him as a blur; movement, of course, attracts attention, especially if the figure is against the skyline, and this figure, which was dark, showed clearly against a background of short yellow sunlit grass. Without waiting for any further provocation than the odour of man, Kifaru rushed towards the figure; whether with the idea of doing damage or simply to investigate it would be hard to say, but having her young one with her the chances are she meant mischief. Anyhow, whatever the motive, she trotted rapidly forward, and on getting within two or three yards, without change of speed she lowered her head, so that the front horn was almost parallel with the ground, and thought to strike the man. He, as chance would have it, was of the Massai, a tribe that is not addicted to fear; neither do they go in for

hunting wild beasts except on certain occasions, as they seldom eat the meat of any but domestic animals. This man was armed with a long sharp spear, a long sword-like knife and a cleverly painted buffalo-skin shield, but none of these did he use. He simply stood his ground, and as the rhino came to within a few feet he jumped very quickly to one side, and as she passed he gave the old beast a dig in the flank with his spear just to teach her manners. Instead of turning, as one might have expected her to do, she kept on as she was going, except that after feeling the spear-point she changed from a fast trot to a gallop, and the youngster had all he could do to keep up with her. On they went against the wind for a mile or so, and then stopped, and after looking about in every direction to see that all was safe, Kifaru began feeding. The young one also got a meal from his mother and then, tired by the long run, settled himself down beneath a small bush and was soon fast asleep.

With the coming of the rainy season the two rhino left the flat country, which was very wet; the prevalence of the black cotton soil made walking difficult, for this curious earth, which is so light and friable when dry, develops into a sort of morass which gives no foothold and is soft and slippery as soon as the rains begin. It is even worse when it begins to dry between spells of rain, as it then sticks to the feet and walking

becomes almost impossibly difficult. On this account Kifaru led the way to a range of hills some thirty miles distant. These hills were rough and rocky, with shaded valleys where good food was to be found and there was shelter from the cool winds which blow during the wet season. Throughout the five or six weeks of the rains the weather is a succession of sunshine and showers and this is followed, in the higher altitudes of East Africa, that is to say over four thousand feet, by a cloudy, cold period which lasts a month or more. The country then is wonderfully green and flowers are in full bloom. After this the sun once more takes possession of the land, and in a short time all vegetable life matures and before long the plains become once more a golden colour as the grasses dry. Animals become fat, for there is food everywhere and waterholes are abundant, so that long treks are unnecessary.

Kifaru left the hills and returned to the open plains once more soon after the rains. But the peaceful life she expected to find was doomed to be destroyed by hunting parties. Scarcely had she made up her mind to settle in a stretch of country which proved very much to her liking than a large party of white men and porters appeared. Twice she narrowly missed trouble when men stalked her. They were men who knew what they were about, and they came

up-wind; each time it was the youngster who saw the hunters approaching; by this time he had grown to be quite a good size, but being still young his eyesight was better than his parent's and he gave the alarm and saved the situation. Another time when they were both asleep under a thorn tree they were saved by the tick birds.¹ Whether it was the actual noise made by the birds or whether at that moment they scented human beings it is difficult to say. Whatever the cause, the two rhino became instantly alert, and, rising, they moved away from the shelter of the tree just as a shot rang out. Kifaru felt a sharp pain in her shoulder as a bullet glanced off the hard skin,

¹ These birds are the friends of the rhino; they live most of the time on the backs of the animals and eat the various insects which are harboured in the rough skin. To a certain extent they also act as sentries, though not nearly so much as people generally imagine. Still at times they will fly up when men are seen in the vicinity and make a harsh call, which is frequently spoken of as the warning note. Having done this, they will as often as not return to the animals and continue their industrious search for insects. How much this proves it is very difficult to say. It is indeed doubtful whether it proves anything, as this habit of flying up suddenly is not confined to such times as the approach of human beings. It seems to take place periodically when there is no apparent reason for alarm, and the rhino on these occasions pays no attention to their movements. Many a time I have watched rhino from a place of hiding some distance away and with field-glasses have seen the birds come and go when there was no reason for the disturbance. Starlings will behave in exactly the same way with sheep and cattle, and yet no one suggests that they are doing sentry duty. A rhino will sometimes have his special tick-birds on his back while he is actually charging. It is therefore more reasonable to suppose that when the birds fly up as man is stalking a rhino, it is only a coincidence, and not a deliberate warning on the part of the birds. Our imaginative minds run wild with very little provocation, and we like to find motives for the behaviour of beasts and birds that appeal to our fancy, and a theory once advanced is quickly spread and very difficult to discredit.—AURION.

and without waiting to investigate the cause she trotted away with her youngster and so escaped disaster.

Scarcely a week passed before she was disturbed again by the scent of man and this decided her to leave the locality, which was proving altogether too dangerous for her liking. Without having any definite idea of where she was going she headed in a north-westerly direction. For several days, or rather nights, for she generally rested during the greater part of the day, she made her way over more or less open country; water was somewhat scarce and of poor quality, but at last she came to a large lake and thought that the water problem was solved. A closer examination revealed the sad fact that the water was so strongly saline that it was undrinkable and was not even fit for bathing. This was disappointing, as the country near the lake was otherwise most satisfactory. The only waterhole in the neighbourhood was occupied by natives and their cattle, so Kifaru determined to continue until better conditions were found. Instead of improving, the country became more and more unsuitable; food was scarce and there was no water, so that both the mother and her young one suffered. When daylight came after a hard and unsatisfactory night's search, Kifaru considered it wiser to keep on for several hours in the hope of finding more desirable country, and towards noon she came to a broad marsh through

which ran a river of clear, cool water shaded by bushes and tall fever trees (the tall acacia trees usually found near water) whose bright lemon-coloured trunks stood out with such startling clearness against the dark background. Here at least was water, but food such as the rhino needed was scarce. Still, for the rest of the day she would stay here, for the place was more than welcome after the intense heat of the morning's walk across the sun-scorched, arid plains. Towards evening the journey to a land of peace and plenty was renewed.

Kifaru thought that by following the river towards its source she would be likely to reach suitable country, but the stream suddenly left the flat land when a waterfall, some hundred feet or more in height, fell from the mountain-side. The plains were bordered by a great escarpment which seemed to tower almost to the clouds. Kifaru, with her defective eyesight, could not see this; all she saw was a steep slope which rose like a wall and was covered with a dense growth of large trees. After looking about she found an old trail, made apparently by rhino or buffalo, which led in a zigzag way up the side of the mountain, and she and her youngster started the long climb which eventually brought them to a tableland some thousands of feet above the plains. It had been a wonderful journey, chiefly through forests, dark and damp,

where the sun was shut out almost completely by the dense foliage. Here and there were open stretches of grass and low bush and countless flowers, and in these places the two rhino spent many days enjoying the peace and the abundant food. The nights were cold but otherwise the country was perfect. Trails were found through the forest, but no other animals were encountered save a few wild pigs and an occasional bushbuck. But on the open plateau were antelope of several kinds, eland, hartebeest and Grant's gazelle, and also some rhino. Kifaru paid them a visit but received little encouragement to join their party, so she moved on across the undulating high plain which was surrounded by high cloud-enveloped mountain peaks.

The spirit of adventure had come to Kifaru and she thought that she would see what lay beyond this cold wind-swept district. After going for a few miles the trail she was following led to the edge of a steep decline, at the bottom of which was an immense circular flat area entirely surrounded by a steep wall over a thousand feet high. Kifaru could not see this, but she felt the warmer air blow across the low plains and up the side where she stood, and also she smelt the odour of many animals, and so she continued along the trail which wound its way down the steep slope until at last she came to the bottom of the great

crater. For it was an old crater, relic of the days when all this region was a turmoil of raging volcanoes which tore up the country and by fire and molten lava laid waste to many hundreds of square miles. To-day this district is quiet, and except for a few still smouldering volcanic peaks there is nothing but the formation of the mountains and the occasional craters to show what the past had been; and the rhino, with his strange prehistoric appearance, seems to have belonged to the period of long ago, when nature was so unrestful and curious forms of life existed.

Kifaru, as she walked about on the smooth and nearly level floor of the crater, thought that at last she had discovered the sort of home she had hoped to find. Everywhere food was lavishly abundant and streams were numerous, also swamps and waterholes. A lake of considerable size covered one end of the crater, but the water was somewhat salty. Countless thousands of wildebeest and zebra roamed over this strange place, also hartebeest, impala, Grant's gazelle in lesser numbers and here and there a group of stately ostrich. It was a land more wonderful than Kifaru had ever known, and so far there was no taint of man to mar the prevailing peace. Here life would be easy and happy and the young rhino could grow up in safety.

It was late afternoon when Kifaru had entered this

paradise, so she had not time to do much investigating before darkness settled on the country; with the darkness the temperature fell rapidly, until by early morning, when the crater was hidden by mist it became so cold that Kifaru wondered whether after all the place was as perfect as she had first believed it to be. But the sun, when it rose above the surrounding mountains, soon drove the mist away and bathed the land with its welcome warmth. The cold was quickly forgotten and once more it became a paradise of the wild. Kifaru fed till she could eat no more, and her youngster, though still dependent on his mother for most of his nourishment, nibbled at the tempting clover¹ and other plants that grew in such endless profusion; and then they wandered about and explored their new home. They noted that on one side of the lake there was a large grove of tall thorn trees which offered shade for the noon sleep. Through this grove a small stream of clear, cool water wound its way; it was bordered by high reeds, so that they could bathe here in perfect seclusion, for even if men should chance to visit this remote place they would never venture into this tangled swamp. In every direction near the lake broad hippo paths cut through the grass. How these short-legged creatures ever

¹ Clover is one of the strange features of this wonderful crater, though how it got there is a mystery which I do not think has yet been solved.—AURION.

found their way over the mountains to this remote lake it is difficult to say. On the southern side of the lake the country was more or less open, grass-covered and in parts rocky with patches of forest and many scattered trees and bushes, among which were baboons in their hundreds. Here they fed, fought, and played and made hideous noises after the manner of their kind. In the lake and on its shores thousands of birds added to the beauty of the scene—egrets, herons, ducks, geese, spoonbills, terns, storks and others too numerous to mention. Kifaru followed along the edge of the lake to the western side of the crater and, skirting the foot of steep slopes, came to where a large colony of lions had their dens. Several of the great tawny beasts were lying about enjoying a sun-bath, and with them were four cubs playing about like kittens. This was an unpleasant discovery, as it meant that she must keep a look-out at all times, for lions are fond of rhino meat and will, if opportunity offers, attack a young one. But in a country where other and more easily and safely killed game exists in such abundance there would not be very much to fear. All things considered, the place was as perfect as anything could be, and Kifaru settled down to enjoy life and forget men and their death-inflicting rifles and spears.

With the passing of time her young one grew,

slowly but surely, and became more and more independent; it was not, however, until he was about half the size of his mother, and must have weighed nearly three-quarters of a ton, that he gave up taking nourishment from her. It seemed absurd to see this large creature, whose horns were well developed, coming to his mother for milk. Had he been left alone, the chances are that he would have been able to live without his mother within a year of his birth, but as long as she was with him he relied on her, to a gradually lessening degree, until he was probably two or three years old.

For many years the pair of rhino lived undisturbed in the crater. Occasionally during the heavy rains they made their way up to the rolling plateaux above, where the ground was drier, but never for long were they away from their favourite country. On one of these occasions they met an old bull, a fine animal with immense horns, thicker, but not so long as Kifaru's, and with the peculiarity that the front horn was fully six inches shorter than the back one. Apparently he was lonely, for he had lived a long time alone in and near the bamboo forests which clothed one of the mountains above the crater. The old fellow took quite a fancy to Kifaru, but objected strongly to her son, who was now a well-grown animal. The result of this objection was that the old bull

made it so plain that two was company and three a crowd, that the younger one was forced by somewhat vigorous methods of persuasion to start life for himself or do whatever he liked, so long as he made himself scarce. Being a sensible animal, he accepted the situation with true philosophy, after having felt the points of the old bull's sturdy horns, backed by a couple of tons weight, and off he went to roam the country and perhaps find a mate for himself. Such is the way of wild creatures. Kifaru and the old bull returned to the crater after the end of the rainy season and together lived a peaceful life for about a year; then the family was increased by one, a small imitation of his large parents. This little fellow nearly met with an untimely end before he was two weeks old. He was sleeping peacefully late one afternoon when a pair of lionesses desirous of enjoying a change of diet thought the baby rhino would prove a toothsome morsel. With great care they stalked the little fellow, but, as luck would have it, Kifaru got wind of the hunters just as they were about to rush forward, and, with a speed and agility surprising in an animal of her size and weight, she went for them with such vigour that they narrowly escaped being impaled on her long horn. Her mate, seeing what was taking place, came to her help and chased the pair away, while the mother, who had been almost tempted to leave her youngster,

came quickly to him and stood by in case the lions returned. It has been said that lions will occasionally attract a mother animal's attention and coax her away and then double back and seize the helpless young. Whether there is any truth in this, it is difficult to say, but their cleverness is so remarkable that one can believe almost anything of them, and the most far-fetched stories may be true.¹

The long period of peace which Kifaru had enjoyed in the crater was finally ended by the advent of man, whose very presence in most cases seems to be a disturbance to the lives of wild animals. In this instance the abnormal conditions caused by the Great War were responsible for what happened. Food had become a great problem for those who were fighting in Africa. All sources of supply had to be tapped, and among these sources were the vast herds of wildebeest which thronged the crater. In order to collect and dry the meat, many men took up their abode in the vicinity, and porters who carried out these supplies

¹ It is never safe to discredit even the strangest tales; for example, we have always been told that lions will invariably fight desperately for their cubs regardless of the odds against them. In general this is probably true, yet I have held a cub scarcely as large as a small spaniel in the hope of having the parents come near enough to allow me to photograph them. They both heard the cries of the little fellow, who fought like a demon, and came several times to see what was going on. Yet they refused to approach closer than about a hundred and fifty yards. Several times they appeared, but never made any effort to rescue their young one. This story is against all that we have been taught and sounds fantastic, yet it is absolutely true.—AUTHOR.

had to be fed. *Posho* of all kinds was difficult to obtain; the result was that an animal as large as a rhino was a prize much sought after. Kifaru and her mate were greatly concerned when they became aware of the unwelcome visitors, and for several days hoped in vain that their stay would not be for long. To avoid the risk of encountering their enemies the rhino abandoned the open feeding-grounds during the day-time and kept in or near the swamp which bordered the eastern part of the lake. Many shots disturbed the quiet of the crater during those days, and at nights when out feeding the air was filled with the odour of death and fire, to say nothing of men. Evidently the place was no longer a land of peace and happiness and the sooner they escaped the better. Thus it happened that within two weeks after man's invasion of the neighbourhood the rhino family, under cover of darkness, made their way with reluctance up the steep slopes of the south-western part of the great crater. The trail they followed led through a dense primeval forest and then across a large open space of rolling grass-covered country on towards where the bamboo forest clothed the mountain-side. For a day or two they remained there, but the sound of long lines of men passing near by was so disconcerting that they determined to strike out through the bamboos and across a region of rocks and rough hills until at last

they came to a vast tract of forest where they seemed safe from their enemy. Buffalo and elephant had their home in this region, where food and water were abundant. Here they lived, wandering about in a restless way before settling on a particular locality for their home. In the course of these wanderings they came upon the tracks of natives, but for a long time they were free from the actual scent of man. It was while making their way along an animal trail to a waterhole where they expected to enjoy a refreshing wallow that trouble came to the trio. Usually Kifaru led the way with her calf close behind her and the old bull following, but, as ill luck would have it, on this particular day the calf was walking ahead as the older ones stopped repeatedly to browse; suddenly the ground gave way beneath the little fellow's feet and he fell with a sickening thud into a deep game-pit, the bottom of which was planted with strong, sharply pointed stakes. The sound of the fall and the groan of pain as the stakes cut through the skin and entered the body of the wretched creature aroused Kifaru, who came quickly to see where her young one had gone, and stopped abruptly on the edge of the pit, in which she saw the wretched calf struggling vainly to free himself from the cruel spikes. She rushed about in a hopeless manner, accompanied by her mate, but there was nothing she could do, and after several hours of

impotent rage and distress she stood by while her calf died. After that she seemed unable to tear herself away and wandered about, returning each time to the scene of the tragedy. Early the following morning, while she and her mate were still there, the sound of voices broke the death-like stillness of the forest. Instantly Kifaru was alert. Instinctively she backed into the cover of the bushes with the old bull by her side, and together they waited and watched. Soon a party of partly naked natives came in sight. The very sight of men aroused Kifaru to a pitch of uncontrollable anger. Without a moment's hesitation she launched her attack directly at the oncoming men, whose surprise was so great that they scarcely knew what to do, and before they had made up their minds Kifaru, followed closely by the bull, dashed among the bewildered natives, knocking some down, throwing others aside and tossing one unfortunate fellow in the air. All was confusion for the space of a few seconds, but the two rhino, who were little the worse for a few slight spear wounds, apparently content with the havoc they had wrought, did not stop to continue the fight, but turned off the trail and were soon lost in the shadows of the forest, while the natives were left to take care of themselves as best they could. Enough of them were uninjured to haul the young rhino out of the pit, but in spite of the feast they were to have, it was a sadder

if not wiser party of men that left for their village, which was a dozen miles or more away. For many years after this event, when the country was once more in peace, Kifaru remained alone in the forest, as her mate had been shot by a white hunter, and she developed a temper that made her a terror to all who visited the neighbourhood. She was known as the "rhino that charged", and wise men left her severely alone whenever they could; but she had a habit of hiding herself in the dense bushes near a trail and suddenly rushing at any passer-by without the least warning. Some hardy sportsmen, thinking themselves clever, tried to get her, but she was too cunning for even the best of them, and it was no uncommon thing for them to return with sad stories of their misfortunes. The old creature had had her life embittered by disaster and she bore a grudge against mankind in general. No longer would she trust herself in open country where her enemy would have the advantage; the densest forest was her home, and though not truly a forest rhino,¹ she became one by force of circumstances. Adversity and persecution form the habits of animals.

¹ There are two varieties of the black rhino which, though similar in form, are distinct in habits: those of the plains or open country and those of the forest. Of the two the latter are by far the more dangerous. With the increased persecution to which these rather stupid creatures are subjected, it is more than likely that within a few years the only ones that will survive will be those who abandon the plains and make their homes in the dense forest. How long even they will continue to exist is a matter of speculation.—
AUTHOR.

They learn by experience, though sometimes not quickly enough to save the species from extermination. Kifaru had learned her lesson, dearly enough it is true, but still she had learned it, and so she continued to live her solitary life in the virgin forest, far from man, where other great beasts such as the buffalo and elephant seek seclusion and safety. How many years she will continue to roam the dark, shaded trails no one can tell, for her allotted span of life is still unknown to us. The end will come when one day Kifaru will lie down and not be able to rise, and her body will live again in the trees and bushes which gave her shelter and sanctuary during the last years of her long life.

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