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Hunting In Many Lands

The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club

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Hunting in East Africa

In the month of July, 1889, I was encamped in the Taveta forest, 250 miles from the east coast, and at the eastern foot of Mt. Kili-manjaro. I was accompanied by my servant, George Galvin, an American lad seventeen years old, and had a following of 130 Zanzi-baris. My battery consisted of the following weapons: one 8-bore smooth, using a cartridge loaded with 10 drams of powder and a 2-ounce spherical ball; one .577 and one .450 Express rifle, and one 12-bore Paradox. All these were made by Messrs. Holland & Holland. My servant carried an old 12-bore rifle made by Lang (intended to shoot $4\frac{1}{2}$ drams of powder, but whose cartridges he recklessly loaded with more than 7) and a .45-90 Winchester of the model of 1886.

Taveta forest has been often described by pens far abler than mine, so I will not attempt to do this. It is inhabited by a most friendly tribe of savages, who at the time of my visit

Hunting in Many Lands

and the sun blazing hot, I returned to camp. I awoke the next day feeling anything but energetic; nevertheless, I set out to see what game the land held ready for the hunter, dissatisfied with his experiences on water. The country on the eastern side of Lake Jipé is almost flat, but is dotted here and there with low steep gneiss hills, stretching in an indefinite line parallel to the lake and some three miles distant from it. I made my way toward these hills. On the way I put up some very small antelope, which ran in such an irregular manner that they presented no mark to my unskilled arm.

We reached the hills, and I climbed one and scanned the horizon with my glasses. Far to the northwest I spied two black spots in a grassy plain. I gave the glasses to my gun-bearer and he at once said, "Rhinoceros!" I had never seen these beasts except in a menagerie, and the mention of the name brought me to my feet eager to come to a closer acquaintance with them. The wind blew toward me and the game was too far for the need of caution, so I walked rapidly in their direction. When I got to within 250 yards, I could quite easily distinguish the appearance of my quarry. They

Hunting in East Africa

were lying down and apparently oblivious to my approach—perhaps asleep. My gun-bearer (a Swahili) now began to show an anxiety to turn back. This desire is, in many cases, the distinguishing trait of this race. On we went, but now cautiously and silently. The grass was about two feet high, so that by crawling on hands and knees, one could conceal most of his body. But this position is not a pleasant one with a blazing sun on the back, rough soil under the knees and a thirteen-pound rifle in the hand.

We got to within fifty yards. I looked back for the negro with my .577. He was lying flat on his stomach fifty yards to the rear. I stood up to beckon him, but he did not move. The rhinos did, and my attention was recalled to them by hearing loud snorts, and, turning my head, I saw the two beasts on their feet facing me. I had never shot an 8-bore in my life before, so it is not to be wondered at that the shock of the recoil placed me on my back. The animals were off before I could recover my feet, and my second barrel was not discharged. I ran after them, but the pace of a rhino is much faster than it looks, and I soon found pursuit useless. I returned to the place

Hunting in Many Lands

where they had lain, and on looking about found traces of fresh blood. My gun-bearer, as an explanation for his behavior, said that rhinos were devils, and were not to be approached closely. He said I must be possessed of miraculous power, or they would have charged and slain me. The next day, fever laid me low, and, though the attack was slight, some days elapsed before I could muster strength to take me back to Taveta.

After a few days' rest in camp—strengthened by good food and spurred to fresh exertion by the barren result of my first effort—I set out again, accompanied by more men and in a different direction.

My faith in myself received a pleasant encouragement the day before my departure. My head man came to me and said trade was at a standstill, and that the natives could not be induced to bring food to sell. On asking him why, I learned that the Taveta people had found three dead hippos in Lake Jipé and one rhino near its shores. Meat—a rare treat to them, even when not quite fresh—filled their minds and bodies, and they were proof even against the most tempting beads and the brightest cloths. I cannot say that I shared my

Hunting in East Africa

head man's anxiety. The fact that I had not labored altogether in vain, even though others reaped the benefit of my efforts, filled me with a certain satisfaction.

A day's march from Taveta brought me to the banks of an almost stagnant brook, where I made camp. The country round about was a plain studded with low hills, here thinly thatched with short grass, and there shrouded with thick bush, above which every now and then rose a giant acacia. The morning after my arrival, I set out from camp with my 8-bore in my hands and hope in my heart. Not 200 yards from my tent, I was startled by a snort and then by the sight of two rhinos dashing across my path some fifty yards away. This time I did not succumb to my gun's recoil, but had the doubtful satisfaction of seeing, from a standing position, the animals disappear in the bush. I made after them and found, to my delight, a clear trail of fresh blood. Eagerly pressing on, I was somewhat suddenly checked in my career by almost stumbling over a rhino apparently asleep on its side, with its head toward me. Bang! went the 8-bore and down I went. I was the only creature disturbed by the shot, as the rhino had been dead some

Hunting in Many Lands

minutes—slain by my first shot; and my satisfaction was complete when I found the hole made by my bullet. My men shouted and sang over this, the first fruits of my expedition, and even at this late day I forgive myself for the feeling of pride I then experienced. I have a table at home made of a piece of this animal's hide, and supported in part by one of its horns.

The next day I made an early start and worked till 4 o'clock P. M., with no result. Then, being some eight miles from camp, I turned my face toward home. I had not gone far, and had reached the outskirts of an almost treeless savanna, when my gun-bearer brought me to a halt by the word *mbogo*. This I knew meant buffalo. I adjusted my glass and followed the direction of my man's finger. There, 500 yards away, I saw a solitary buffalo feeding slowly along toward two low bushes, but on the further side of them. I did not think what rifle I held (it was a .450), but dashed forward at once. My gun-bearer was more thoughtful and brought with him my 577. We actually ran. When within eighty or ninety yards of the two bushes behind which the beast was now hidden, I slackened pace and approached

Hunting in East Africa

more cautiously. My heart was beating and my hands trembling with the exertion of running when I reached the nearest bush, and my nerves were not exactly steadied by meeting the vicious gaze of a large buffalo, who stood not thirty feet on the other side. My gun-bearer in an instant forced the .577 into my hands, and I took aim at the shoulder of the brute and fired, without knowing exactly what I was doing. The smoke cleared, and there, almost in his tracks, lay my first buffalo. His ignorance of my noisy and careless approach was apparently accounted for by his great age. His hide was almost hairless and his horns worn blunt with many encounters. He must have been quite deaf and almost blind, or his behavior cannot be accounted for. The noise made by our approach, even with the favorable wind, was sufficient to frighten any animal, or at least put it on its guard.

My men, who were dreadfully afraid of big game of all sorts, when they saw the buffalo lying dead, danced with joy and exultation. They kicked the dead body and shouted curses at it. Camp was distant a good two hours' march, and the day was drawing to a close. The hungry howl of the hyenas warned me