

FAIR GAME

THE OPEN AIR OF FOUR CONTINENTS

By

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"Unforgiving Minutes," etc.



UNIVERSITY
OF
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KING OF BEASTS

[*Captain Keith Caldwell*]

Frontispiece

X1,274

LONDON

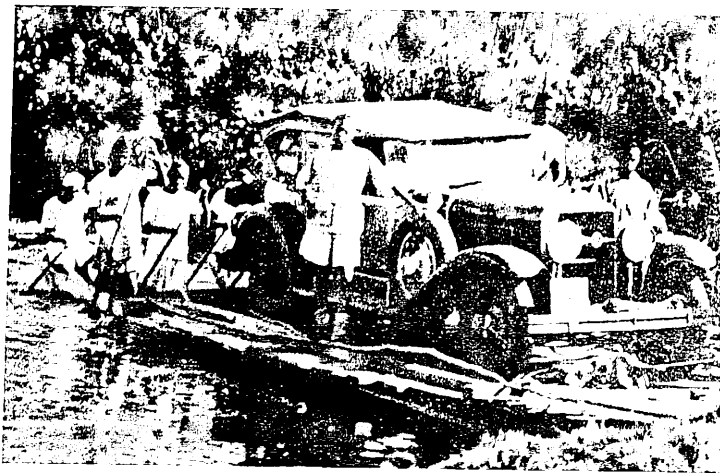
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1936

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

There is one more sort of photograph which it is very difficult to detect. The picture of a wounded animal which is passed off as a genuine photograph—the animal being either at bay or unable to make off. Of course, nobody ought to take or publish such photographs, but these things do happen. Personally, whenever I see a peculiarly good close-up of a beast normally difficult to photograph, kudu, say, or sambhur or roan, I always scan it very closely in case it fall into this category. Certainly there can be no more barbarous practice than to prolong the suffering of a beast that one should have hoped to kill outright, or to wish for any memorial of its death agony. I remember once attending a continental exhibition of big-game photographs—30 per cent. of the exhibits were nude African women—and there were several specimens of this type of picture which evoked considerable applause. I was able to plead my lack of knowledge of Ruritanian, and to pass no comment.

And, yet, less than a year ago I was nearly tempted to do the same thing myself, so who am I to pass judgment? It was on the trip already mentioned when I went out to shoot with Samaki Salmon in Uganda. We had gone up to Karamoja for a rhino shoot. We camped in an old and very pleasant government camp at Rom, and here we were greeted by Angelico, a well-mannered but spineless youth, who, as the proud possessor of some K.A.R. underclothes, becomes the official ciccone to visitors. He had been told to locate a rhino; the whole country, he said, swarmed with them—hundreds and hundreds.



CROSSING THE NILE



TWO KARAMAJONS (WITH THEIR BABY) AND THE RHINO

A GRUMPY RHINO

“Cross-examined”—as they say in the police reports—he couldn’t put a finger on even one. He was cast forth with much genealogical detail. There then appeared an elderly Karamajong gentleman, very grumpy, and wearing some ostrich feathers behind his ears—no more and no less. We called him Mercury. “Faru?” He said “Faru.” Yes, he knew where there were Faru. It was very hot and the whole proceeding struck him as ridiculous, yet as five shillings had been mentioned, he’d go. He departed, grumbling. Two hours later he returned grumpier than ever. “Come on,” he said. We came. Was he a fraud? He took us off, still muttering, for about an hour. “The rhino’s 200 yards from here,” he said. “The rhino’s in that bush.” We approached. It was. Slowly we circled round. The rhino—a cow—was making up her mind which way to exit. I was trying to make up my mind which way to shoot. She exited and I shot. The rhino went on. I knew, however, that she was hit, and we followed. She circled, and after about half a mile turned back into some high grass. She was facing away, snorting indignantly. I gave her two barrels of my D.B. .450 Holland, and I knew that they were there or thereabouts. She gave a grunt and made off at a rate of knots, tail heavenwards. It seemed incredible. We pursued. Soon we reached the edge of the thick stuff and there she was legging it across Africa, about 300 yards ahead. Hounds came out of covert with the proverbial blanket over them. The pace quickened. Members of the pack who had previously been rather *cœur-de-*

beef plunged forward heroically over the open plain. The rhino disappeared into a thicket, but as the pack drove forward she broke away on the other side. We came through that thicket like the Quorn passing through Ranksborough Gorse on a breast-high scent. The poor old beast was slowing up, and we were gaining. When I was about a hundred yards off I stopped, got my breath and gave her both barrels of my D.B. .450. They were both good shots and must have been very near the heart. She turned and faced me, a magnificent picture of courage; she took a few steps towards me, wheezing with rage. I had fired my two cartridges as well as the extra two that I carry in my pocket just in case. I turned to Musia for two more. (Musia was my gun-bearer, of whom much more later in the book.) He was panting up a hundred yards behind with the rest of the pack. Behind me was the individual with the camera, less heavily laden and so more fleet of foot. There was the old rhino fifty yards or less away, the setting sun gilding her back, a fine heroic sight. It would have been a splendid photograph. The attendant—he knew his part—proffered the camera. Almost I fell for him. After all I *couldn't* shoot, and nobody would ever know. . . . And then I thought of Ruritania, and those pictures of crippled lions and the crowds in the corner where those studies of nude black women were exciting animated speculation and comment. I waved my attendant away, and waited for Musia. I still feel it was a gesture!

My own efforts—and the perspicacious reader will feel he has long perceived that this has been coming

—have almost invariably been crowned with failure. I have come to the conclusion that one may be a photographer or a shooter, but one cannot combine the two. One must be a photographer *or* a big-game shot. In the former case the rifle will be a necessary accompaniment in the event of one's wishing to take close-ups of elephant or rhino; in the latter, the camera or cine-kodak will provide one with some pleasant pictures of camp, of one's servants, and, if one is so minded, of oneself, rampant upon a dead animal. "Alone I did it." They also provide one with the ability to "Live your holiday over again. Let the kiddies enjoy it, too."

I, personally, have never unshipped my camera till I have shot my head, and then there is usually no time left for extensive photography. I got some marvellous photographs of water-buck down on the Aiugi River last year in Uganda. Unfortunately, the rain descended on the porter carrying my camera and lunch-basket in unfailling torrents. Hoping to gain the favour of the *bwana* my minion thrust the lunch-basket containing the remnants of a packet of sandwiches and an uneaten hard-boiled egg under my water-proof for their greater shelter, but left the camera exposed to the full force of the downpour. The result was that its insides, of which I understand about as much as I do of what is under the bonnet of my car, completely seized up, and the photographs were destroyed.

Then there was the famous mountain goat episode. On our journey home to Banff from the Palliser Valley, Frank Philipps and I spied a couple of moun-

the way except the parasites on his servants George could not make out. One thing, however, was clear. Peter had carried out the most difficult part of his contract, and it now remained for them to find him the "big four" of dangerous game. Buffalo and elephant would be easy. Rhino and lion more difficult. The auguries, however, proved good. A week after Peter arrived one of George's scouts came back with tidings of Mr. Faru. George kept a number of semi-paid retainers whose province it was to bring news of produce for his bow and spear. Peter with a prospect of much gold and, what was to him a far more potent allure, the chance of showing that he wasn't quite the idiot they took him for, sprang from his bed regardless of a badly swollen foot. They hurried out.

Two miles, four miles, six miles they went down the narrow track that lead into the foothills in the West. "He's not taking us back to Kano, I hope," said Peter; but George answered him not, for there was their guide bending down over the most unmistakable rhino track. It led into a clump of bushes, and somewhere beyond they could hear the old gentleman at work. Suddenly he paused. "He's got our wind," hissed George. Peter pushed forward his safety-catch with every appearance of nonchalance. There was a noise in the bushes as of an approaching express train. The bushes parted, and Mr. Faru came charging down the path. He had not seen them, but he had got their wind. He did not know what was there, but he knew well enough that it was something whose nasty smell had spoilt his evening

stroll, and what with anger and inquisitiveness he offered an easy shot, and Peter did not fail. His neck shot could not have been better placed by Karamoja Bell, who had, incidentally, only just left Uganda. The first scene of the second act had reached its curtain entirely according to plan.

The next item proved more exciting. Nobody minds a buffalo much when he is unwounded. A wounded buffalo is considered by many to be one of the most unpleasant things on the face of the earth. George was busy attending to that correspondence which keeps the British officer so busily engaged in peace time, accounting for chevrons of rank, changes of religion, and unexpired portions of yesterday's—or is it to-day's?—rations. Peter arrived, a little ruffled, but still as outwardly unconcerned as ever. "I've come to borrow your rifle," he said. "I want a second one for Abdullah. I've wounded a buffalo." You will observe he did not say I want you to come and help me, because Peter never asked aid of any man. George girt up his loins and went. Three miles out they came to an unmistakable blood-track, where Abdullah was waiting, quite a subdued Abdullah. "He was just under that tree—the big one, eighty yards away down there, and I gave him it behind the shoulder. He was only ten yards away from the high grass and he was in it before I could reload."—"Hell. You should have had the double-barrel. Magazines are very little use on this game."—"I was a bloody fool really to take the shot with the high grass so close, but time's getting on and I wanted him."—"Does