

# SCOUTING FOR STANLEY

IN

## EAST AFRICA

BY

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*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

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Thomas Stevens

charging the caravan if she saw us, I decided to go and have it out with her in advance.

Followed by a gun-bearer carrying Dr. Abbott's double-barreled eight-bore, I succeeded in gaining the shelter of the mimosas without awakening her suspicions. A few minutes careful stalking brought us within fifty yards; but by this time our game was all attention, having scented danger in the air. Not quite certain which way the hidden enemy was, however, she stood sniffing the air, when, with a roar like a small canon from the eight-bore, I planted a bullet behind her shoulder. The rhino trotted off up the wind, snorting violently, and as she passed by, I gave her the contents of the second barrel at thirty paces. Even this failed to bring her down, however, and she disappeared over a swell of the plain.

Hastily reloading we gave chase, but on the top of the ridge discovered her bulky form stretched full-length on the ground. The men of the caravan had seen her fall and were now racing, helter-skelter, to get first chances at the meat. Ismael Nasib, the gun-bearer, reached her first, and, standing on her neck, essayed to cut her throat in orthodox Moslem fashion, so that no reproach might result to him and his brother Mohammedans by eating the meat without first drawing off the blood. (These people have no hesitation about eating an animal that dies from your bullet, but if you, an infidel, cut its throat, they will not touch it. It must be a Mussulman who slits its jugular.)

The rhinoceros, however, notwithstanding the five ounces of lead in her vitals, had no idea of meekly pandering to Moslem tomfoolery, as practised by Swa-

hili porters, and so at the first thrust of Ismael Nasib's keen blade, the old lady gallantly scrambled to her knees and dumped that worthy all of a heap on the ground. At the same time several others, who had just run up, turned sharply about and took to their heels. But, the effort was too much for the stricken rhino; she rolled over again, and a minute later Ismael Nasib had taken his revenge by half severing her head from her body, while fifty black butchers, with formidable knives, were hacking and slashing at her carcass in gory rivalry over the choicest cuts.

It is one of the sights of Africa to see a crowd of porters struggling over the carcass of an animal you have shot. A pack of wolves would hardly make the same amount of clamor, nor could their behavior be a whit less violent and savage. They swarm over the defunct animal like a pack of dogs, hacking it to pieces in a surprizingly short time. Hands are often slashed, all get covered with blood, and squabbles over pieces of meat are the rule. The liver and parts of the entrails are very much coveted. There are always wrangles, sometimes fights, over these choice tit-bits; and you may see one porter racing away with the liver, and others giving chase, altogether like animals. When the squabble is over the men tie the chunks of meat to their loads, and proceed on their way, a gory and happy crew, rejoicing in the contemplation of an evening's feast.

Several times, on that and succeeding days, were we annoyed by the tendency of these big, stupid brutes to charge the caravan on sight. The rhinoceros in his native wilds is an animal of a curious disposition.

After you come to understand him, from experience, you can tell, almost to a turn of his big body, just how he will act under certain circumstances. If he scents you without seeing you, and is not feeling particularly pugnacious at the time, he invariably runs away up the wind. This often brings him uncomfortably near you as he passes by, but at the same time enables you to pour a broadside into him if you are properly weaponed at the moment for game of his size.

Your gun, for rhino, ought not to be smaller than a double-barreled rifle of eight-bore calibre, carrying ten drams of powder and two and one-half ounces of lead. The gun should be provided with a rubber pad at the butt to protect the shoulder. A good first shot is to take him squarely through the shoulder; this will bring him to a halt and enable you to finish him with your second ball through the heart. One shot, unless through his most vital parts, rarely brings a rhinoceros to the ground; a second shot is necessary, even with a gun of the size and power mentioned above. He may run a mile with a two-ounce bullet through his lungs, and where game is so plentiful as in the region I am writing about, that distance seems too great to follow even a wounded rhinoceros, unless you know him to be mortally stricken.

If the rhinoceros sees his enemy without scenting him, he almost always charges him; your best chance then is to dodge out of sight behind a bush or quietly drop down in the grass; or this failing you, a shot in the most vulnerable part presented will, in nine cases out of ten, cause him to think better of it and sheer off. Fortunately for you if you happen to become



DR. ABBOTT'S TRIUMPH.

the hunted, he is anything but keen of sight, and when he charges, it is usually sufficient for you to drop down in the grass and remain motionless. In adopting this course, there is certainly the danger of being stepped on as he blunders by; but between lying down and running away, if the ground is open, the chances of escape are ten to one in favor of the former.

Our plan when we saw rhinos ahead, near the road, was to go forward in advance of the main body of the caravan, and try to drive them off. We had no wish to kill them, in fact had compunctions against doing so, unless the caravan happened to be short of meat, or now and then, when one carried an exceptionally fine pair of horns (the African rhino is two-horned); and still more senseless did it seem to us to inflict unnecessary wounds. In many cases, however, it was absolutely necessary for our own safety to bring the pugnacious brutes to their senses with a bullet.

Not more than two miles from where I shot the cow rhinoceros we came upon another pair. Walking up to within a hundred yards of them, Abbott and I shouted and whistled and flaunted our hats to try and get them to clear off. The rhinos pricked up their stumpy little ears, and thrusting their great horns aloft, sniffed the air and looked toward us in the most belligerent manner.

Hi-ih! whoop! ya-ah! whistle! and wave hats, ya-ah! Ah, the stupid brutes!—here they come; it's no use to study their safety, because they are too pig-headed to act for their own good.

On they came toward us with their steady, ponderous trot, which always suggested to the writer's mind a locomotive. Waiting till they were near enough for

a sure shot, Abbott's bone-crusher smashed into one, and my twelve-bore into the other. Simultaneously with the thud of the bullets on their bodies, they both did what we had been trying our best to get them to do before harm should overtake them, and striking off at right angles, sought safety in flight. "You stupid brutes, why couldn't you run away just as easily before being wounded, as after?" After running a few miles they would lie down and bleed to death, or fall prey to lions that very night.

What a shame it seemed, and certainly was; and we determined then and there that we would try an experiment on the next ones that crossed our path. Instead of crashing into them with a heavy rifle, why wouldn't it answer the purpose just as well to merely prick them through their thick armor of hide, with a ball from a Winchester carbine? Happy thought! and all in the interest of humanity, too. Surely we ought to be kindly remembered by the S. P. C. A.

An opportunity for the experiment was not long in presenting itself, for our friends with the horns on their noses were exceedingly plenty. This interview was with a happy family party of three—a bull, a cow and a half-grown youngster. The whole caravan was in plain view, but the rhinos had neither seen or scented us yet.

Our men laughed as I called up Kilimbili, the second head man, and took from him the little 44 cal. Winchester carbine he carried; and all predicted that my attempt to drive away the kifarus with it, would be "hyfie" (a failure). Abbott, with his eight-bore, and a gun-bearer with my twelve, were to form a reserve to stand by and defend the caravan, should my attack

turn out abortive, and the rhinos charge past or over me. This arranged, and all being ready, I crept cautiously toward the enemy, who were already sniffing suspiciously in our direction. Coming to within seventy-five yards, I stood up in plain view, took careful aim at the paterfamilias, and fired. "Spat!" went the little conical messenger spitefully against his armor-like skin, but whether to flatten out against some horny fold, or to puncture it, was the question.

Anyhow it sufficed to wake him up and kindle his belligerent spirit to action. Instead of turning tail he elevated his ugly proboscis and charged the all too well-meaning author of the assault on his person and his repose.

"You impudent clown, you!" his actions seemed to say, as he trotted threateningly in my direction. "I'll teach you to play your measly little practical jokes on a creature of my size and importance—snort!"

In this indignant resolve the old fellow was most heartily supported by his wife, and small but equally offensive-looking son, both of whom trotted doggedly by his side, and like him, bent on avenging the common insult. They seemed to regard it as a family matter throughout. I already began to feel sorry for what I had done, though there was no philanthropy in my thoughts this time.

I had a full magazine to the Winchester, and rattled away at them as they came on, the balls pattering against their solid fronts as against a rock, and apparently doing as little damage in one case as they would in the other. So far as stopping them was concerned, I might as well have been peppering away at a locomo-

tive. Finding my bullets and my philanthropic efforts of no avail, I dodged out of sight behind a friendly bush, and as the rhinos thundered on to charge the caravan, Abbott's big gun roared, and in a twinkling all three were showing us their heels. "A great pity," we said again; for with two ounces and a half of lead in him, the old bull would surely fall a prey to lions that very night; but we could do no more than we had done to try and save him from the reward of his own uncalled-for pugnacity.

On the plains of Lytokitok, too, we had many curious adventures with rhinoceroses, which were as numerous and combative here as at any place we visited. At one point we had a regular stampede, the only occasion during the expedition that we didn't manage to kill or turn the course of a charging rhino. Luckily nobody got hurt. The whole affair was laughable in the extreme, and afforded the men amusement for days. We had just crossed a nullah and resumed our march across the plain, when, with an excited snort, which had become a very familiar sound in our ears by this time, a cow rhinoceros issued from behind a clump of bushes and charged the caravan.

Abbott and I were in the lead, and we had passed the rhino without seeing her or attracting her attention; we had no time to use our guns to prevent a charge, nor could we have used them, anyhow, without danger of hitting the men. There was a scrambling scatterment of the porters, who dropped their loads and incontinently fled. Pursuing her headlong career, the rhino made a pass with her horn at a wicker hamper containing our tableware, which lay in her path. And now we

were treated to the ridiculous spectacle of the big, excited brute, blundering along, with the hamper impaled on her sharp horn, while tea-pot, enameled cups and saucers, pots, pans and what-not, littered the ground in her wake. As soon as she had passed well clear of the caravan and out of the range of the men, we blazed away at her, causing her to spin furiously round and round. She shook the basket off her horn, and made her escape with one, perhaps two, bullets in her hide.

Another encounter on the same day was of a rather exciting, though quite different, character. Sighting an old bull rhino ahead of us, who, if left alone, would be pretty sure to charge, we halted the caravan and went ahead to drive him off. We succeeded in this, but saw two others half a mile ahead. We both carried our heavy rifles, but no extra cartridges. These animals turned out to be pugnacious, refusing to clear out, or to cease their belligerent charging hither and thither in search of the mysterious foe who was shouting at them, until we had given them a taste of lead.

This left us with one cartridge apiece; and to our astonishment, yet another pair of the big, ugly brutes were in our track ahead! There was nothing for it but to tackle these also. They, too, were decidedly on the war-path. To all our shouting and whistling efforts to frighten them off, they replied by assuming a most offensive front, and by sniffing the air and trotting excitedly this way and that, endeavoring to find us. At length my companion fired at the bull and broke his back. The cow, as is always the case when her lord is stricken down, became terribly excited. She

ran here and there, circled about her wounded mate, snorting violently and raging like a demon. The bull dragged himself about with his fore-legs, trailing his hind quarters on the ground, and in his rage and pain rooting up earth and bushes with his horn. The cow hovered and charged about him, refusing to run away.

We were crouching behind a small bush, but half concealed, not twenty yards away, viewing, not without apprehension, this formidable tableau of brute rage and ferocity, having but one cartridge left in my gun. This must be kept in reserve, for fear of discovery and a charge from the enraged cow, while more ammunition could be got up. With extreme caution my companion crawled away and shouted to the gun-bearers to bring more cartridges.

While these were coming up, my position, as may be supposed, was of absorbing interest. The wounded monster, dragging himself about, tearing up bushes and digging his long horn viciously into the ground, while his faithful old wife fussed about him in prodigious excitement, snorting and charging this way and that, in search of the enemy, was a sight to behold, I assure you. And here was I, the very culprit the angry old dame was so anxious to interview, crouching behind a flimsy bush, almost within her reach. In a few minutes my bold boy Alfred came running up with cartridges. Alfred advanced fearlessly until the wild tableau of animal passion, as described, burst upon his startled senses, when he wheeled about and as fearlessly took to his heels. I was afraid to shout after him for fear of attracting the infuriated enemy to my hiding-place. So I had to crouch low until Abbott came up

with replenished rifle, and with a couple of shots from his eight-bore bone-crusher, sent the cow away to die within an hour, and turned up the toes of the gallant old bull.

Rhinos are seldom seen more than two together, though I have stalked families of four full-grown animals. One day I stalked a pair, with the idea of securing a remarkably fine horn possessed by the male. (The females have the longest horns, the males the thickest.) Taking but one gun-bearer and keeping to leeward, I found no difficulty in creeping up to within a dozen yards of where the fussy-looking old couple stood cogitating on their domestic affairs and crouching behind the only available bush, waited for the big-horned bull to present a vulnerable point.

He seemed determined to stand head on, however. I whistled, coughed, and in various ways within the limits of discretion endeavored to arouse his dormant suspicions, without exposing myself to view and attack, but all in vain. The most he would do was to prick up his stumpy ears and sniff the air in an indifferent sort of way. Perched along his spine and scrambling all over his big body and head, in search of ticks, were a number of rhinoceros-birds, which—in the school-books and the imaginations of certain old African sportsmen—are the rhinos's guardian angels, and should have notified him of the nearness of danger.

After waiting patiently for some time, and as the rhino refused to turn broadside on, I decided to risk a shot behind the ear, as he slightly turned his head to protest against the actions of his wife, who was scratching her rump against his shoulder. It was not without a sharp twinge of compunction, however, that I raised

my gun to destroy the happiness of this affectionate old couple. At any rate, let us say, it must have been this prick of conscience that caused me to hit the old chap an inch higher up than I intended, and to flatten my bullet on the neck bone, instead of putting it into the hollow behind his ear.

Down he dropped, however, like a pole-axed steer. In her excitement and rage, the old cow was terrible. She charged madly about and came near smashing into the bush that only half-concealed the author of this gross outrage, and she fussed and fumed around her stricken lord at such a prodigious rate that prudence compelled me to hide as best I could. I felt small indeed in the presence of her mighty rage.

The rhino scrambled to his feet in a few moments, and as though conscious that the source of the mischief lay behind my solitary bush, the cow shielded him with her own bulky form and away they went, helter-skelter around a knoll and out of sight. Not wishing to wound the cow, I let them get off without a second shot.

On stepping to the spot where the bull had stood, there, on the ground, lay a rhinoceros-bird. I picked the little fellow up and examined him, and found not so much as a feather ruffled, and he, moreover, immediately began to revive in my hand. He was sitting on the head of his big friend, foraging for insects, when I fired, and the concussion of bullet against bone had simply stunned him.

And in connection with this little incident allow me to say that the pretty little fiction about the rhinoceros-bird warning the rhinoceros of approaching danger,

evolved from the imaginative brain of the Munchausen sportsman who wrote it. There is not a pencil-stroke of truth in the picture, though it is pretty enough to deserve to be true, and not at all a congenial task to deny it. Time and again, however, has the writer crept, gun in hand, to within twenty paces of a rhinoceros, on which dozens of these birds have been picking about for insects, and never once did I see any attempt on their part to notify the rhinoceros of his danger.

While on the subject of rhinoceroses, I remember seeing one morning, in a patch of timber, one of these bulky animals jump over a dead log, that I measured and found fully five feet above the ground. I was rooted to the spot with astonishment at the sight. I couldn't see whether he touched his fore feet to the obstacle, or whether it was a square steeple-chaser; but it gave me a new idea of the nimbleness of these huge quadrupeds.

On these hunting excursions I sometimes used to take my detective camera, and attempt a little stalking with that. One morning I spotted a rhino standing beside a bush; another small bush stood about twenty yards from him. Creeping up to the latter, camera in hand, I gently moved from behind cover and took four instantaneous photographs of him, without exciting his suspicions. Such feats can only be performed with a detective camera. I also succeeded in stalking a herd of zebra with the camera, and got near enough to secure a very good picture. Probably these feats in photography have often been accomplished before, however, by sportsmen whose duties did not embrace the responsibilities of a scribe, and consequent



public announcement of the facts. But if so, it has never been my fortune to hear of them.

Before leaving the subject of the rhinoceros, my companion will, I know, pardon me if the temptation to relate a certain little tableau of wild and exciting adventure, in which he figured as the "heavy villain" pursued by outraged innocence—an adventure that often formed the theme of conversation between us—prove too great.

One day the Doctor was ungallant enough to knock over a cow rhinoceros, because she sported a particularly long horn, regardless of the fact that a youthful edition of his father ran joyously by her side. Having laid his victim low, Abbott walked up and endeavored to shoo away the aforesaid youth by shouting and waving his arms at him. But the young kifaru, though no higher than a table, refused to "shoo." He looked at his mother's destroyer in an enquiring sort of way, then assumed the offensive and charged him. The tall M.D. "shoo'd" and menaced him a moment, then seeing that the pugnacious young avenger meant business, took to his heels. He hadn't a single cartridge left in his Winchester, and would probably have been too astonished at the temerity of his assailant, if he had, to have used it. His astonishment at the youngster's pugnacity, however, was quickly overshadowed by his still greater astonishment at his speed.

My friend is six feet two in his socks, and active; but the bumptious young kifaru hustled along in the culprit's wake with his eager snort, perilously near where the latter's coat-tails would have been had any such garment been worn, as pursued and pursuer rushed

along through the tall grass. "Whoo!" grunted the savage young brute as he reached the object of his wrath, and, with a vicious upward prod of his undeveloped horn, essayed to lift the Doctor from the ground. Abbott had the disadvantage of having to break a road through the grass, otherwise, he says, he could easily have outstripped his pursuer. But as it was, he was badly handicapped in the race, and felt singularly uncomfortable, as the warm, snorting breath of the pursuer pierced his trousers, and an avenging, rooting sort of lift now and then accelerated his pace. After chasing him about three hundred yards, the young rhinoceros returned to its mother; while the Doctor sat down to recover his wind, and collect his thoughts. One of the first thoughts that came home to him, now that the perils of the situation were over, was that he had all the time had a big six-shooter full of cartridges at his hip.