

# WILD LIFE

*AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY*

Edited By DOUGLAS ENGLISH



**THE WHITE RHINOCEROS**

---

# WILD LIFE

## AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY

Edited by DOUGLAS ENGLISH

---

VOL. IV. No. 4.                      CONTENTS                      AUGUST, 1914.                      PRICE, 2/6  
NETT.

---

	PAGES
EDITORIAL . . . . .	iii-iv
NOTES ON SOME AFRICAN BIG GAME	
II. THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT ( <i>continued</i> )	
THE WHITE RHINOCEROS - Fred Russell Roberts	169-181
ON THE SPANISH MARISMAS	
I. A HERON NURSERY - - - - Bentley Beetham	182-198
II. A HERONRY IN SOUTHERN SPAIN - - Wm. Farren	200-215
THE SUPER-INSECT - - - - - Ethel Rolt-Wheeler	216-220
NOTES FROM	
THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS - - - - E. G. Boulenger	221-224
REVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE - - - - -	v-xii
INDEX - - - - -	xiii-xiv

And numerous illustrations by Douglas English, C. W. R. Knight, and D. Seth-Smith.

---

EDITORIAL NOTICES: Letters, etc., intended for the Editor should be addressed to 55 Barch Buildings, Kingsway, London.  
The Editor will be glad to consider contributions on Natural History subjects with or without photographic illustrations. Only photographic illustrations will be employed in "Wild Life."  
The Editor cannot be held responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, though every endeavour will be made to return rejected manuscripts when stamped addressed envelopes are enclosed.  
Every photographic print submitted must have clearly written on the back, the name of the owner of the copyright, his or her full address, and the title of the picture.  
It will be sufficient for the Editor's purpose if the photographs submitted in the first instance are rough contact prints.  
In no case can unsolicited photographic prints be returned. Any which are likely to be useful, will be filed for reference, and if used, paid for; the remainder will be destroyed.  
Subject to these conditions the Editor will be glad to consider photographs unaccompanied by letterpress.

---

## NOTES ON SOME AFRICAN BIG GAME

### II. The African Elephant (*continued*). The White Rhinoceros.

**I**N the expedition previously referred to I came across a very curious trait in the African Elephant which I had never before heard of. This was the fact of the mother providing its very young calf with a nurse, a male nurse, probably an elder brother, and herself going off out of sight, but not out of sound. In the plate facing p. 170, and on p. 173, will be seen some Elephants with small calves crossing a stream. The main herd had all crossed and had disappeared in the bush beyond, when a calf came along accompanied by a young male, perhaps seven feet high. The young male, who was obviously doing nursemaid, crossed and stood waiting for the baby. The baby, knowing the former was not its own mother, but a person set in disputable authority over it, took its time bathing in the stream, squirting water over its back in the most approved elephantine manner. In fact it was obviously keeping its nurse waiting out of childish cussedness. I thought this would make a charming picture, so I crawled up the rocks, which are seen on the left of the photograph, on p. 170, to within about fifteen yards of the young calf. I was just going to bob up and take a snapshot, when it discovered me, whether by sight, sound, or smell, I cannot say. But it uttered a squeal, and at once the nurse, with every expression of anger, put out its ears and dashed headlong into the water to the side of its charge. At this juncture, Mama suddenly appeared from nowhere in particular, sailing down a picture of fury, with her huge ears outspread, looking like a full rigged ship. Photography was off, and so were we, covering a mile to the minute in the finest Olympic style, or so it seemed.

We had to run away with, at any rate, the upper parts of us in full view; we were within thirty yards of these infuriated animals, who were thirsting for somebody's blood; and yet they never saw us. However, we did not pause to consider until we had put some distance between ourselves and the outraged family party.

They stayed in mid stream with ears out and trunks uplifted, to try to catch the wind of the intruder, but without success. Finally, after about three minutes, they decided that the danger was either imaginary or past, and Mama set forth to join her friends and contemporaries, leaving baby once more to the nurse's charge. In the picture, which I ran back to take at this moment, the latter can be seen still searching the wind for possible enemies.

I had with me, as on many occasions when I went near Elephants, my gunboy, who had been with me on many trips, and on whom I placed the utmost reliance. He was a Wakamba, and until the British rule became effective in his country, quite a few years ago, was an Elephant poacher there. He had killed several Elephants with bow and poisoned arrows. He was full of stories of the habits of Elephants, and though some were probably fables handed down from father to son, yet some were quite interesting. He showed great concern on this occasion, and did all he could to prevent my going back to take a photograph, saying that if the calf gave a certain sort of squeal, denoting real fright, the whole herd, male and female, of whom there were about two hundred in the bush near by, would



THE MOTHER ELEPHANT LEAVING HER BABY IN CHARGE  
OF A MALE NURSE. PROBABLY AN ELDER BROTHER (p. 169).

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts



HERD OF ELEPHANTS WITH CALVES CROSSING A STREAM (p. 169).

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts



MOVING.



RESTING.

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts

inevitably come bald-headed for us. In spite of his having killed Elephants with bow and arrow, this boy was infinitely more respectful towards them than he was towards either Buffalo or Lion. He also had rather a dislike to a Rhino, a very common trait in plucky natives, which is the more surprising as they can much more easily dodge the latter. In this case he estimated the age of the calf at less than a month. I am unable to say if this was correct. It was about three feet six inches high.

In certain parts where the Elephants acquire regular habits by reason of their immunity from danger and the suitability of the country, they get absurdly indifferent to the presence of natives. I have seen the tracks of a herd of Elephants, which had fed on the stubble of the native corn, within twenty yards of the native huts. And this apparently they did constantly. One would have thought that the ordinarily timid natives would have been worried by these visits, but they had not even made a fence round the village. On another occasion, the natives were hulloing at a herd, trying to drive them away, with no result. Elephants are said to hate fire, and there would appear to be a risk of their attacking a camp if they come across one with large fires burning. Not being anxious to experience this, I have usually fallen in with the natives' expressed desire to put fires out when retiring, and chance the Lions: but I have never heard of such a contretemps as an attack actually occurring.

The age to which Elephants live is a matter of constant speculation. Some say that they live to two hundred years. Certainly a great longevity seems the most obvious way to account for tusks up to 200 lbs. weight each, considering how slow the growth of them must have been.

The size of Elephants, and their tusks, varies, however, in a most mysterious manner in different localities. Taking an average big bull in German East Africa, or Rhodesia, a 60 lb. tusk would apparently correspond with a 100 lb. tusk in Uganda and the White Nile, where they grow larger than anywhere. One would expect that tusks would be equally good on the Blue Nile, but this is not the case, and the further east one goes the poorer they become, the Somali elephants carrying very small ivory.

I think the largest bulls I saw there could not have had ivory of more than 10 lbs. each tusk. On the west coast eighty pounders are to be got as far west as Sierra Leone; but when one gets further north to the Senegal, where the same conditions prevail as in Somaliland, the Elephants themselves and their tusks also are very small. I think there is no doubt that in poor and waterless countries Elephants grow very much smaller tusks than in places where water and vegetation are plentiful.

Tuskless bulls are not common, and are reputed to be extra savage. I do not think an old bull is any more dangerous than a younger one, but almost any Elephant may attack.

The following case happened whilst I was in North Eastern Rhodesia some years ago. A missionary was travelling in a hammock, when his boys saw an Elephant on ahead. The missionary, having never seen an Elephant, thought he would like to have a look at one at close quarters. Unfortunately, the Elephant discovered him, and, without the slightest provocation, killed him. But this was, I think, an exceptional case. As a rule, they will go off when alarmed like any other animal, except in the case of females with young, who are always extremely dangerous.



HERD OF ELEPHANTS WITH YOUNG CALVES WHO HAVE JUST CROSSED A STREAM (p. 169).

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts



To turn now to the two African species of Rhinoceros. The WHITE RHINOCEROS, *Rhinoceros simus*, alias Burchell's, or the Square-mouthed Rhino, is next to the Elephant, the largest existing land mammal. A big male stands well over six feet, nearly a foot higher than its black cousin.

Its appearance is even more absurd and prehistoric than that of the Black Rhino (*R. bicornis*)—the difference between them being easily seen in the photographs on p. 175, which shew the two species in practically the same attitudes. The black Rhino has had a mud-bath, and is liberally coated with it; in this state he looks quite light-coloured, and could in respect of colour have easily posed as a White Rhino. The head of *R. simus* differs considerably from that of *R. bicornis*, being absurdly long, and with parallel sides. It ends abruptly in a mouth resembling that of a hippopotamus. The lips protrude further than in the case of *R. bicornis*, but this does not prevent the horn getting worn in front by constant rubbing against the ground.

*R. simus*, being exclusively a grass feeder, has acquired a stoop, and keeps his nose to the ground. Even when he is running away, he carries his head low, in contrast to *R. bicornis*, who carries *his* in the air. The immense size of the head suggests that its weight is beyond his powers of lifting. His body is almost equally misshapen. What seem to be the withers, instead of being where other animals have theirs, are placed just behind the ears, and are in reality only an excrescence at the back of the neck, and not part of the body. This peculiarity is not sufficiently emphasized in the otherwise admirably mounted specimen in the South Kensington Museum. The horns of the White Rhino grow to a much greater length than those of *R. bicornis*, some of over five feet being known. They can usually be distinguished by the flatness of the anterior surface, which is reasonably attributed to the constant rubbing against the ground when feeding; for, when one considers that the grass is burnt off practically everywhere during the dry season, the closest grazing must be necessary to enable such a stupendous beast to get a meal at all. Indeed, it seems little short of marvellous that they manage to exist during this season, as the country is then nearly as bare as a London pavement.

The colour of the "White" Rhinoceros, is a matter on which opinions and experiences differ much. In a private letter to me on the subject, which he has kindly permitted me to quote from, Mr. F. C. Selous writes: "As to the colour of the White and Black Rhinos in South Africa, I can now only speak from memory, which is of very little value; but I do remember that when hunting in Mahumaland in 1878, with George Wood, Alfred Cross, and Matthew Clarkson, the names given to the two species of African Rhinoceroses—black and white—and why these names had been given, was often the subject of discussion amongst us. At that time we were seeing specimens of both species, almost every day, and I well remember one day there being two large slabs of rhinoceros hide (one cut from a white, and the other from a black one) lying on the ground side by side, in our camp, near the Umfuli River, and judging from these two large slabs of hide, we all came to the conclusion that there really was practically no difference between the colour of the two, the hide of the Black Rhino being very far from black, and that of the white one being equally far from white; both being, in fact, dark grey. However, Mr. Roosevelt supports your view that in the Lado, the colour of the square-mouthed Rhinoceros is distinctly lighter than that of the black species. On this point he says in "African Game Animals," page 670, "The skin of the



THE WHITE RHINOCEROS.

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts



THE BLACK RHINOCEROS (p. 174).



THE WHITE RHINOCEROS (p. 174).  
THE DIFFERENCE IN FORM BETWEEN THE TWO  
SPECIES IS WELL SHOWN. BOTH WERE PHOTO-  
GRAPHED AT ABOUT TWENTY YARDS' RANGE.

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts

White Rhinoceros cannot under the most lenient consideration be classed as white. They are, however, distinctly lighter than those of the black species and may on this account be allowed to retain their popular designation of white. . . . Their true colour is smoke-grey."

Coryndon says he sees no difference in colour, and thinks *R. simus* the darker. Major Powell-Cotton tells me he thinks perhaps *R. simus* is lighter. My own impression is that the ones I saw were at least sufficiently 'white' to account for the name, if not actually to deserve it. They were putty-coloured, and their paleness struck me the moment I saw them. Now the colour of Rhino, Elephant, Warthog, and such-like animals often depends on the local soil. They are much addicted to rolling in anything approaching a mud-bath, and their apparent colour is often that of the mud sticking to them. In the Lado, however, where I saw these white Rhino, what mud there was, was red, so that this theory does not seem to account for their pallor in that locality.

The height of the Nile White Rhino is probably less than that of the South African one. Having never shot one, I have not had the opportunity of measuring the beast. Major Powell-Cotton gives the height of one killed in the Lado as five feet six inches. Mr. Selous tells me that he considers the height measurements given by the earlier writers, and generally accepted, to have been exaggerated estimates. These were given as six feet six inches up to six feet nine inches. He says in a letter to me: "I did measure one big bull White Rhino, which I shot near the Victoria Falls in 1874, and made him just six feet at the shoulder, and I believe that was about the average height of a big bull."

There are two striking peculiarities in the habits of the two African species, which distinguish them one from the other. The young of *R. simus*, when disturbed, run in front, whilst those of *R. bicornis* follow their mothers. I make this statement on the authority of Selous and Coryndon, both of whom noticed the fact, but I have also seen it myself, though only on one occasion, small calves being apparently out of season where I was. Selous says:—"When a small calf accompanies its mother, it always runs in front, and she appears to guide it by holding the point of her horn upon the little animal's rump, and it is perfectly wonderful to note how in all sudden changes of pace, from a trot to a gallop, and *vice versa*, the same position is always exactly maintained." The other peculiarity is that whilst *R. bicornis* ploughs up the ground all around its droppings, scattering them in all directions, *R. simus* leaves them all intact and often returns to dung on the same heap again.

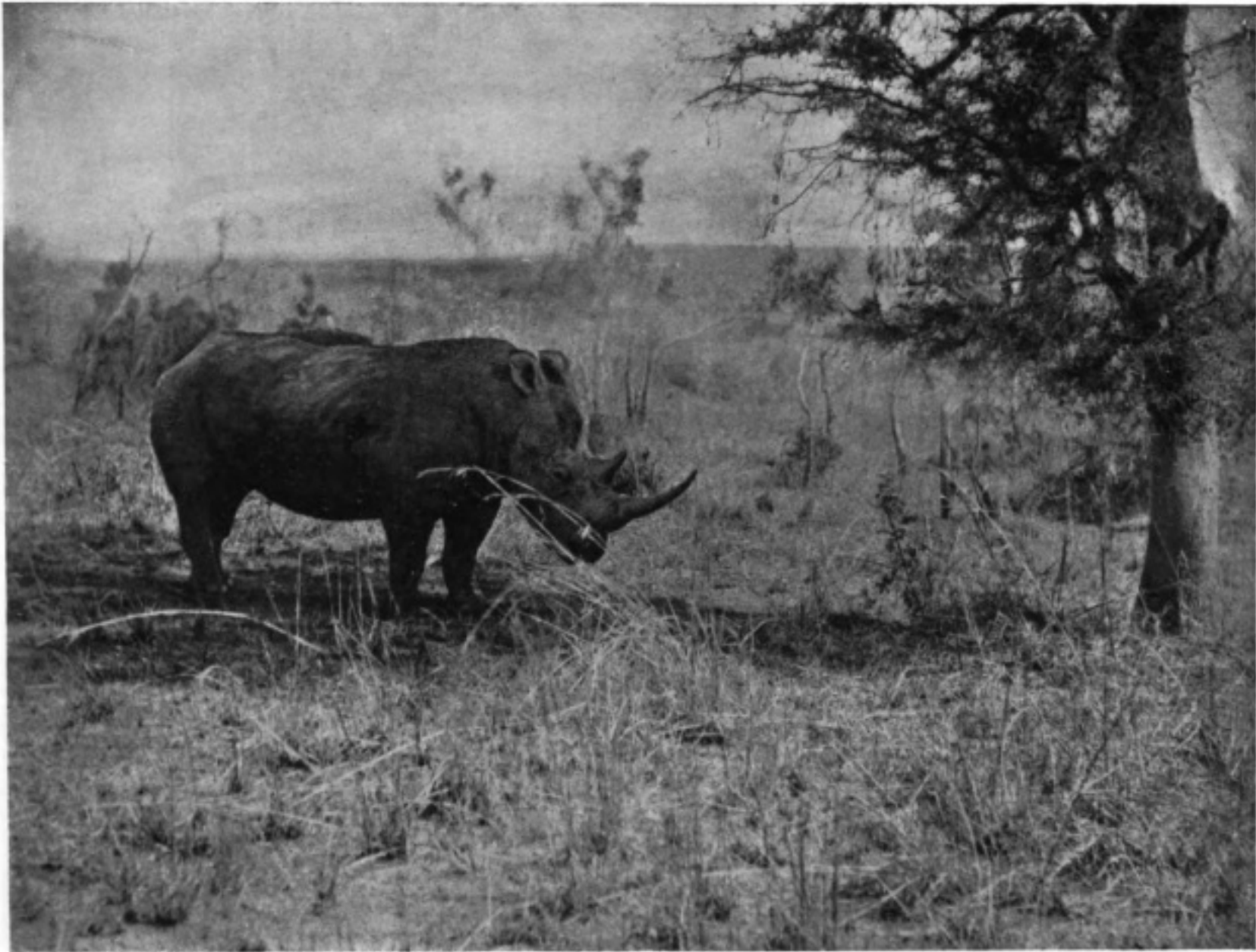
The tracks are fairly easily distinguishable, one from the other, though in the parts I have visited, the habitat of each was so clearly separated that there would be no likelihood of finding the two in the same locality. The tracks of *R. simus* are very much larger, and, as it is herbivorous, its dung is composed of grass, and of a dark colour. *R. bicornis* on the other hand, eats shrubs, roots, and even twigs, which give the droppings an entirely different appearance.

The different requirements of the two species makes them choose different country; the White Rhino being dependent on grass, requires open country, whilst the Black Rhino can find a living anywhere. Selous found that the range of the White Rhino was abruptly limited by the rugged hills which run along the south bank of the Zambesi and extend as much as 100 miles inland. Lacking the grazing required for *R. simus*, they were yet well provided with scrub suitable for *R. bicornis*. It is not surprising, therefore, that *R. simus* was soon shot out in South



WHITE RHINOCEROS COW WITH YOUNG.  
SUSPICION IS SHOWN BY THE TWO FACING  
IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts



"INCONCEIVABLY STUPID."  
THIS BULL, AFTER ALLOWING MR. ROBERTS  
TO TAKE A NUMBER OF PICTURES, WENT TO  
SLEEP CLOSE BESIDE HIM UNDER THE TREE  
ON THE RIGHT.

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts



TWO TELEPHOTOGRAPHS  
OF THE  
WHITE RHINOCEROS

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts





WHITE RHINOCEROS COW WITH YOUNG.

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts



Africa; for, living in the open, he could not fail to be sighted sooner or later. He was the easiest beast to shoot, and supplied the most meat and fat. Now *R. bicornis*, though in parts of East Africa a plain loving animal, is found in any sort of bush, even in the densest and most impenetrable forest. Selous found White Rhino very easy to shoot from horse back, as they would hold their course when headed, and come straight past giving a broad side shot, whereas *R. bicornis* would swerve away.

In character the White Rhino appears to be a very much less truculent beast than the Black. It is not nearly so suspicious, or inquisitive, and is a sound sleeper. In fact its stupidity is inconceivable. But inoffensive as *R. simus* appears to be, and generally is, it would be unwise to place entire confidence in his amiability. For it was a White Rhino which sent Cotton-Oswell, horse and all, into the air, killing the horse and damaging its rider. Selous, too, quotes several instances of hunters being charged and hurt by them. Personally I have had no cause of complaint of any signs of incivility, for which I must be grateful, as when taking the picture on page 175. I had no gun with me, and should have been sorely put to it if the great beast had been ill-tempered. On this occasion we were going down the Nile in a small boat, and were camping for the night. I had walked out with my camera, but as the few men we had were busy putting up tents, I had no one to carry a gun for me. This, of course, proved to be the occasion of my running into a fine White Rhino, and, fearing I should never see another, I felt bound, against my better judgment, to try for a picture. One shown here was taken at about 20 yards. He fed towards, and though he heard the click of the camera at this range, he continued to graze, being apparently wholly indifferent to such unusual sounds. The following day I came on nine within a short distance of each other, four being in one batch. I imagine that they are much more gregarious than the Black Rhino, who are seldom found with more than the actual members of the family together. Of this collection of nine, four were mothers, each with a big young one. Some of these figure in the illustrations. The single bull was alone, but only a couple of hundred yards away. He showed little suspicion, and I was able to sit on an ant-heap, without the slightest cover, taking photograph after photograph, and changing slides, whilst the huge beast was quite close to me. Once he walked straight towards my ant-heap, but quite unsuspectingly, so close, in fact, that I exchanged my camera for a rifle. Yet the movement entailed by this operation never attracted his attention, though he was well within 20 yards of me. I finally walked away quite openly and in full view without disturbing him, and left him dozing under a tree not more than 25 yards from the ant-heap. They seem very timid, as a rule, and run at the first suspicion, not stopping to look for the cause, as the Black Rhino always does. In fact they are too stupid even to be inquisitive.

On another occasion, I stalked up to within about 12 yards of a cow with a small calf. They had just lain down to sleep, and I was preparing to mount an ant-heap to take a picture, when the cow suddenly became aware of my presence. I think a Black Rhino would inevitably have charged under the circumstances, but she thought of nothing but flight. On several occasions they heard the click of my camera, but they merely looked up to see if they could see anything, and settled down to feed or doze again at once.

When a cow is with a good-sized calf, and they begin to grow suspicious, they stand facing in opposite directions, so as to have a better chance of locating danger. This is the nearest approach to intelligence I have noticed in them.

They are still fairly numerous in the Lado on the White Nile, and now that they are efficiently protected, there should be no difficulty in keeping them from extinction.

There are also a few still left in the country between Salisbury and the Portuguese boundary, and possibly towards Southern Angola.

FRED RUSSELL ROBERTS.



WHITE RHINOCEROS AMID TYPICAL SURROUNDINGS.  
RANGE ABOUT SEVENTY YARDS.

Copyright, Fred Russell Roberts