



Model by James L. Clark

Above is a model of Ngorongoro, in British East Africa—greatest of all the world's extinct craters



This gigantic bowl twelve miles across (left) is a natural zoo for thousands of birds and animals

THE NGORONGORO ANIMAL EDEN

An Extinct, Time-Eroded African Volcano That Serves as a Vast Natural Zoo

By JAMES L. CLARK

FOR years East African *safaris* have been leaving Nairobi, in the present Kenya Colony, and traveling in many directions, making their way occasionally into regions that have rarely been visited but usually going back and forth across districts long since considerably shot up. They have been shooting and reshooting over the same ground. They are now, however, trekking far north in search of newer and less disturbed fields. Yet one magnificent spot in Tanganyika Territory, formerly part of German East Africa, has remained almost untouched—safe, for the time at least, from the onslaughts of the sportsman. This district, which is, in my opinion, the most remarkable in all the world for the number and diversity of its animal inhabitants, had been visited very seldom before my wife and I made our way to it, and not at all, so far as I am aware, by Americans.

Why information concerning it had never come to the ears of the professional hunters and guides of British East Africa I do not know; for as early as 1894 there appeared in Germany a publication by Dr. Oscar Baumann

in which reference is made to it, and in 1906–1907 it was thoroughly explored by Dr. Fritz Jaeger, who gave it its name—*Das Hochland der Riesenkrater*, or “The Highland of the Great Craters.” Furthermore, it has no natural barrier. The vast Athi plains roll south, almost to the foot of the greatest of the craters. To the east lies the well-known Kilimanjaro, highest mountain in Africa, with its smaller but more rugged companion, Mt. Meru, and yet the Great Craters had never, I think, been visited by an English-speaking explorer before Sir Charles Ross was there in the winter of 1921–1922, in the company of A. Radclyffe Dugmore and T. Alexander Barns. They brought out a fascinating lot of data concerning the greatest of all the craters, Ngorongoro, wherein live tremendous herds of game in a kind of animal Arcadia. It was Sir Charles who told me of Ngorongoro, and he was so kind as to give me a set of maps as well.

The branch railroad set us down at the little town of Moshi, which nestles on the southeast slope of Kilimanjaro, and from there we made our way to the west. After passing through the post of Arusha on the slope of



A. Radclyffe Dugmore

Hippos bask in the sun or sink from sight beneath the surface of the water in placid pools

Mt. Meru, with a well-outfitted safari, we journeyed for several days across the hot, unwatered plains of Rift Valley and then up a two-thousand-foot escarpment on the farther side of the valley and northward across a rich, green plateau. At last we approached the place for which we were searching in this land of extinct and time-eroded volcanoes.

Up and up we climbed, to the foot of the more abrupt slope leading to the very edge of Ngorongoro. In those highland sections the endless stretches of grass gave way to bush so thick that our safari seemed lost in the vegetation. The trail wound in and out, until only two or three of the men ahead and two or three of those behind were visible at once. We kept our rifles constantly ready; for so heavy was the growth that we might have come upon elephants or rhinos without warning. That such animals were about, we knew; now and again we came across signs of them, but still we pushed on, eager to get a look into the crater of which we had been told such extraordinary stories. All one morning we struggled up along that trail, stopping often, since the altitude was beginning to make itself felt. It was with great relief that we discovered a level spot at noon and halted for our midday rest. There was a narrow opening in the trees just beyond our stopping-place, and I made my way through it and into the undergrowth beyond. Pushing in for a little way, I suddenly found myself standing on the very brink of nothing. I gripped the bushes in astonishment and gazed out across such a scene as I had never beheld before.

Imagine yourself standing on the edge of a gigantic bowl twelve miles in diameter, with huge walls rising two thousand feet above the level of the bottom. Imagine lakes and forests and plains, so merged into uniformity by the distance as to seem like a boundless and amazingly smooth floor covered with a patchwork of different shades of green and tan, with here and there the sheen of sunlight on quiet water. The very edge of the world seemed to be that awe-inspiring precipice upon which I was standing; for nothing whatever was visible save the bowl itself

and the sky. What I later discovered to be two forests of acacias lay so far below me as to appear like sections of well-kept lawn. Reed-filled swamps, about the margins of which we hunted lions, once we had made our way into that incredible place, gave no inkling of what they were. For long minutes I clung there, making out this and that and taking note of countless black and white specks that looked very much as pepper and salt might look, scattered about the bottom of a green dish. At first I could not understand what the specks were, and then, drawing back from the edge, I focused my glasses. The specks came to life and resolved themselves into zebras and wildebeests. The brightly marked zebras were the tiny grains of salt. The dark wildebeests were the flakes of pepper, and, even when my glasses had shown me positively what they were, I could hardly believe my eyes, so vast were the herds.

We descended into the crater by a precarious trail, and for three weeks we camped there, collecting a few specimens, but principally studying the animals of that animal Eden. We found that within the one hundred and ten square miles occupied by the floor of the crater there is everything an animal could possibly desire. There are streams of sparkling water and lakes like perfect mirrors. There are forests of wonderful trees and plains of succulent grass. There are warm days and cool nights. About the edge there are bush-covered slopes that provide cover.

Elephants wander in moderate numbers through the trees, and buffaloes make their way here and there. Hippopotami bask in the sun beside placid pools or sink from sight beneath the surface of the water. Lions in abundance stalk their prey without making any noticeable inroads. *Chitas* course their game at will or lie up to rest among the rocks and knolls of the southern side. Rhinos move about, snorting and charging now and then when something unusual attracts their dim-eyed notice, or standing half asleep in the shade of trees and bushes. Thousands of birds flock around the watering-places and in the trees, and monkeys chatter and swing



A. Radclyffe Dugmore

A. Radclyffe Dugmore photographed this black rhinoceros as it was charging James L. Clark, who stood just to the left, outside the camera range. The two men had stalked a rhino "carcass" on the plain, expecting to find the animal dead, as had happened in similar cases. But it got up and came straight at them, plunging through the tall African grass with a sudden rush

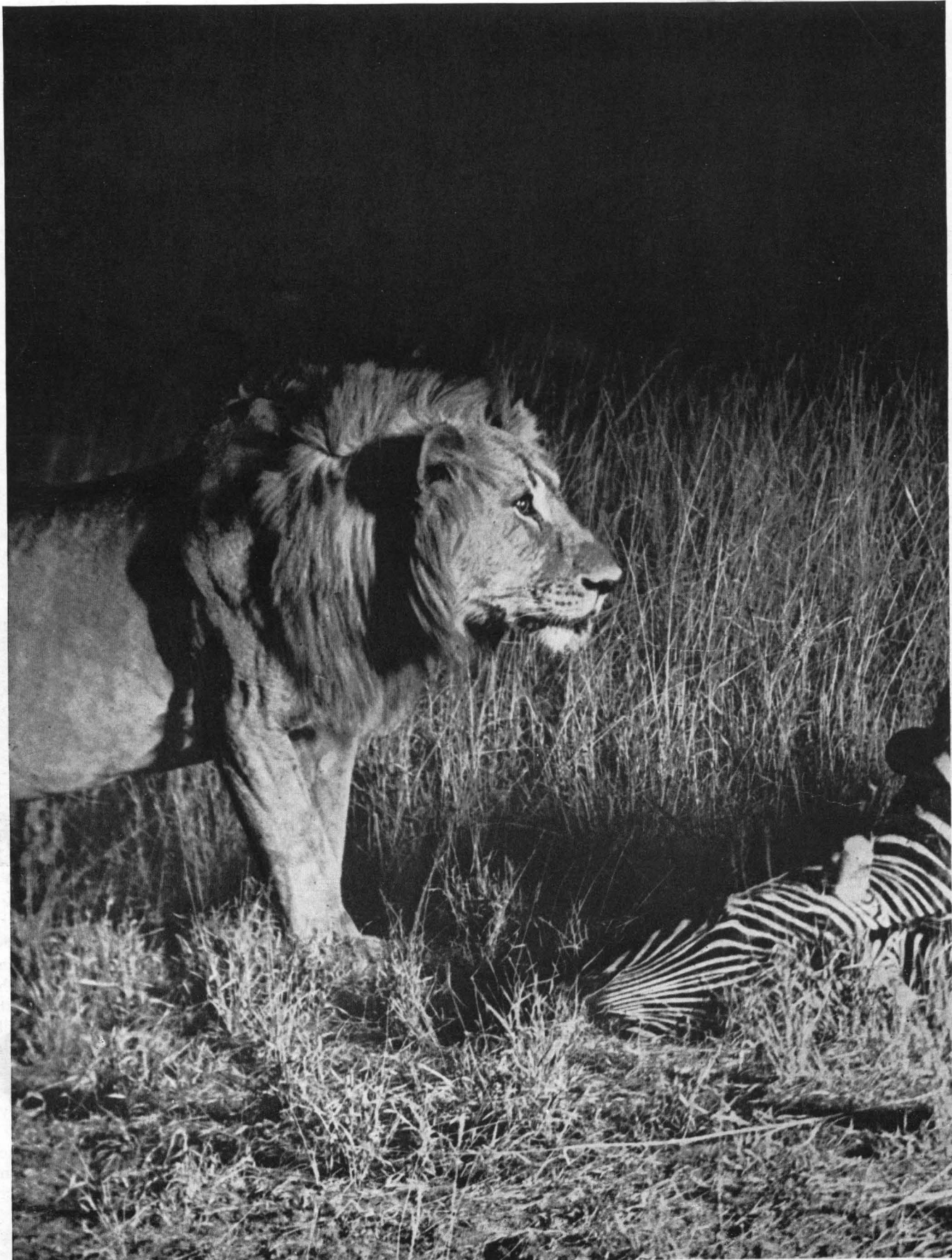
among the branches. Antelopes and zebras are ever present in herds so enormous as to make one marvel.

On one occasion I saw a herd of wildebeests, which probably are better known to cross-word-puzzle enthusiasts as gnus—the numbers of which I could not estimate. As nearly as I could judge, the herd extended for four miles without a break. From where I was watching the animals with my glasses, the line of their backs was absolutely constant. There were at least five thousand of them actually in sight at once, to say nothing of those on the farther side of the herd, which I could not see.

These animals alone would have been worth the trip; for wildebeests are most entertaining. While they are grazing along as if they had not a care in the world, suddenly, and apparently for no cause at all, they will raise their heads and break into a furious gallop. Off across the plains they run, snorting, kicking—almost stampeding. Thereupon one of their number will separate himself from the herd and, for all the world like some excited

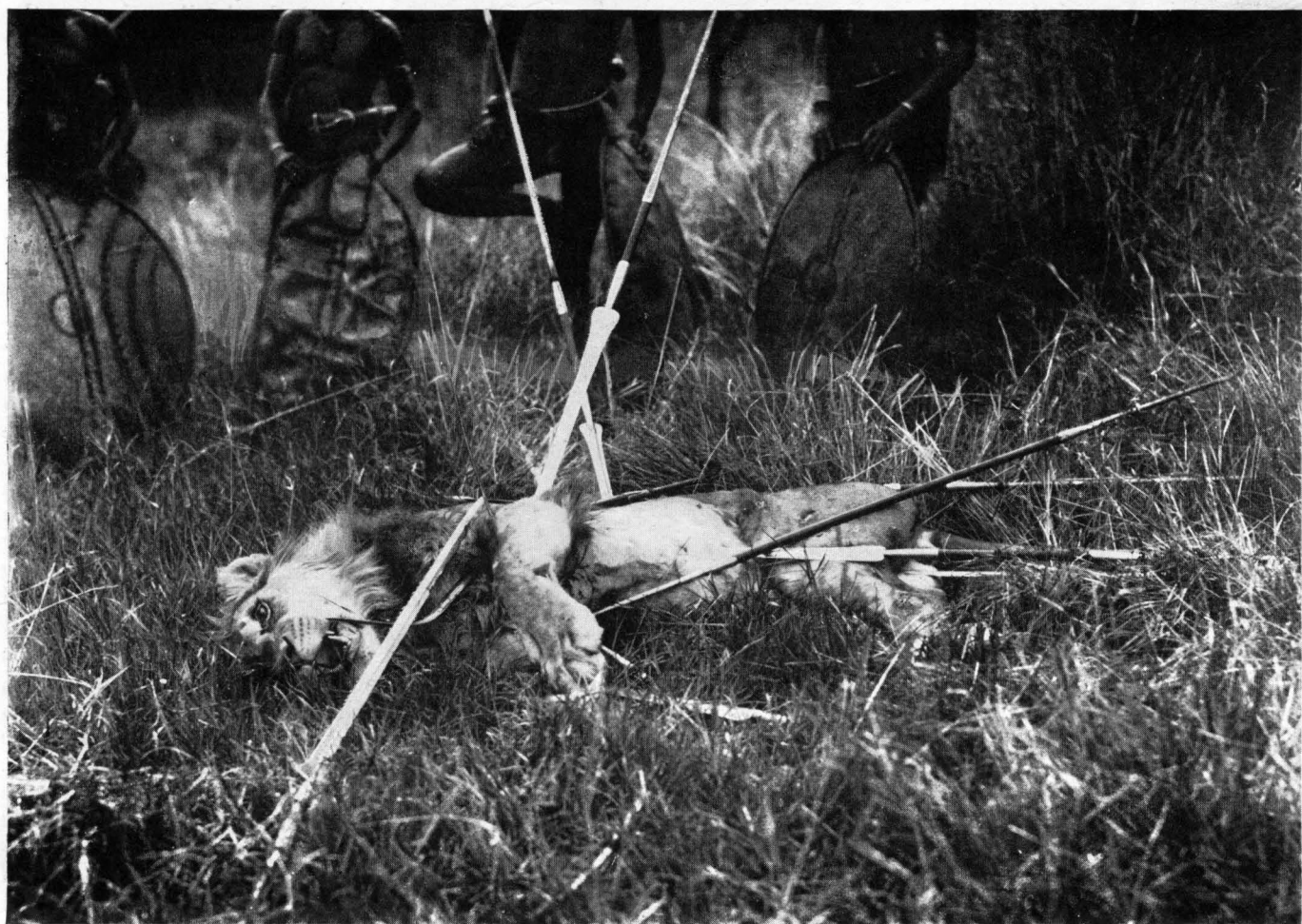
second lieutenant, go racing up and down beside the main column. Snorting all sorts of orders, none of which seems to have the least effect, he will make his way at furious speed up to the van and, with equal speed, will gallop back once more to the very rear. And then, with just as little reason, seemingly, as they had for running, all the members of the herd will stop and go to grazing again, the cause of their panic abruptly and completely forgotten.

They are strange-looking creatures, as every one knows. Though they are antelopes, of course, they seem more like cattle or buffaloes than do any of the other antelopes. Their horns are strangely kinked, their faces are strangely elongated and their noses look for all the world as if they had inquisitively poked them in at some barn door, which had closed abruptly and squeezed them out flat. Their nostrils, too, are interesting, since they are subject to much more dilation and contraction than are those of most animals. At times—particularly when



A. Radcliffe Dugmore

This splendid lion was caught in a flashlight photograph as, approaching the dead zebra placed on the ground as bait, it momentarily fixed its eyes on the "boma," or blind, where Mr. Dugmore and Mr. Clark lay watching, just ten yards to the right. Among the Nandi tribesmen one sees many lion-skin head-dresses, each indicating that the wearer has slain his lion



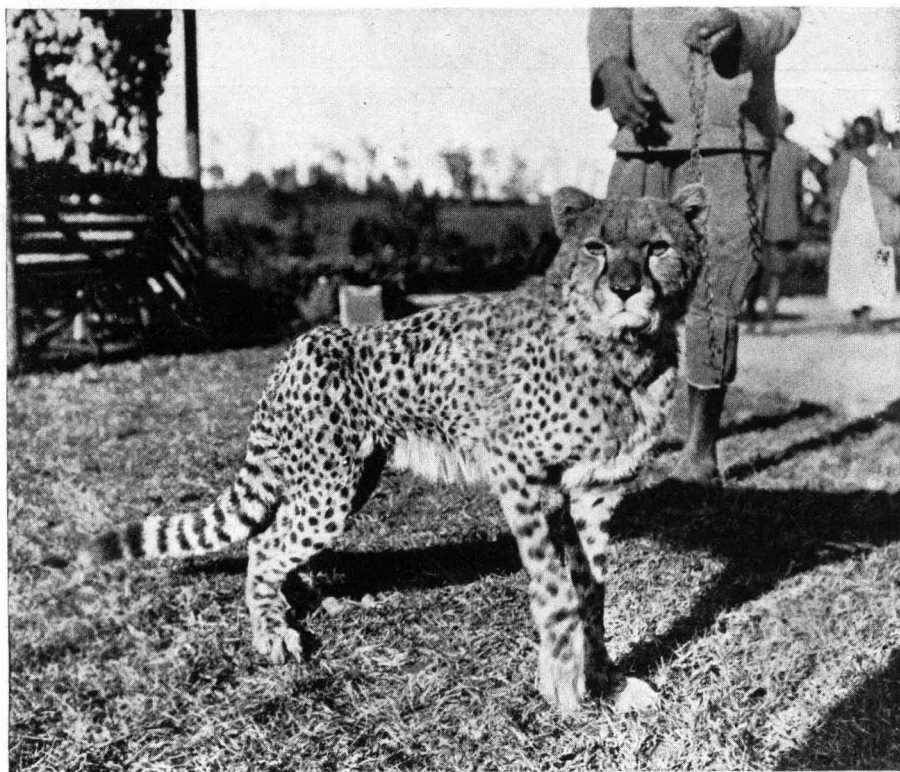
Carl Akeley

The Nandi pictured above is holding his shield behind a pink-and-white African field-lily. Such a spearman cannot strike his prey at a hundred yards, or even at twenty. Instead he must somehow come to close quarters, perhaps by making the animal charge, and then, with only his leather shield for defense, boldly keep his ground and slay it with a well-placed thrust of his spear

some storm is filling the air with dust—their nostrils contract until they are hardly more than slits, thus making it possible for them to strain the dust-laden air through the hairs with which the nostrils are lined.

And certainly no other animal seems to have half the endurance that these wildebeests have when they are running. Most animals can be run down on horseback, if the going is good. But no horse I ever saw could keep the pace the wildebeests set. Off across the plains they go, and, long after a horse has been winded, they can gallop on, apparently as fresh as ever.

We were in Ngorongoro in February, and, when we arrived, there was not a single calf to be seen among the huge herds of wildebeests. In a few days, however, the little fellows began to appear, and then, from day to day, their numbers increased bewilderingly. I learned that the expectant mothers made it a practice to leave the herd when the young were ready for birth and, at least in many cases, betake themselves to a parasitic cone that rose from one side of the crater floor. There, in this miniature extinct volcano, was their maternity hospital. Apparently they felt secure from the lions and other beasts of prey, and, after their long-legged, awkward calves were born, they slowly made their way back to the herd, watching most tenderly over their very wobbly offspring.



In captivity at Nairobi, this "chita" can no longer race through the wilds on the long legs that make it one of the fastest of animals. The chita, when photographed, appears to be more like a leopard than it really is

One morning three of these mothers left the small crater almost together, and I watched them as they moved away, pausing from time to time to wait for the little ones, which I took to be utterly helpless. But not later than the very next day my mind was disabused of any such notion about baby wildebeests.

I had wandered out from camp to see what I could see, and, without realizing it, was followed by several dogs

that had attached themselves to our safari. Had I been out to do more than watch the game, I should have called some of the natives and had the dogs taken back, but, since the creatures apparently distrusted me somewhat and kept at a distance, I did not bother about them. By the time I had got a half-mile or so from camp, however, I realized my mistake; for they came upon a wildebeest calf not more than a few days old and, of course, took after him. I could do nothing, although, if I had had a gun with me, I should most willingly have shot the dogs. As it was, I merely looked on.

To my surprise, the calf watched them for only a moment and then proceeded to run. His awkward, big-jointed legs were not strong, but never, perhaps, did any animal put his legs to better use. As the dogs approached him, he actually pulled rapidly away from them. I was delighted but soon saw that he could not keep up such a race very long; for the dogs were mature and hardened and well able to chase him for hours. Time after time, however, the calf managed to elude them, widening the distance between himself and them, only to slow up until their barking almost at his heels gave him strength enough to sprint once more. Being alone—his mother may have gone to feed a lion the night before—he had no protection save his own energy. One last effort he made, and drew painfully ahead, before his muscles failed him. He lost ground to the maddening tune of yaps and barks and finally fell before the onslaught of the leading dog as the animal leaped upon him and dragged him down. But, even though he could not save himself, he had given a remarkable demonstration of speed and agility on the part of a little creature not previously put to the test.

Among animals never able to protect themselves except by flight, there often seems to be some clearly understood system of sentinels. The baboons most certainly have one. They like to dig about in *dongas* and swales in search of the roots they eat. On one occasion in Ngorongoro I came upon a band of baboons but was not aware, at first, that there were more than two or three of them. Being in no hurry, I paused to watch the few that were in evidence, each one sitting on an ant-hill that thrust its conical top above the grass. Because I did not approach them too closely, the baboons continued to sit on their hills, scratching themselves now and then, and chattering a bit, but otherwise seeming to care very little about me.

So I decided to go nearer. Before I moved, however, a new baboon surmounted the hill occupied by one I had been observing, and no sooner had the newcomer appeared than the other scratched himself once more and shuffled down into the grass. I perceived, then, that I had seen one of the sentinels guarding a whole troop of baboons relieved of his duty.

I crept closer, hoping I might have a chance to watch



A. Radclyffe Dugmore

These are hartbeests—a species of antelope—photographed by flashlight as they came down to the water to drink. Night after night Mr. Clark and Mr. Dugmore “lay up” in little thorn-bush “bomas” by water-holes and game trails, in order to study the habits of African animals. Many an unusual experience and many a photograph rewarded them for the long, patient hours

the troop feeding in the grass, but the sentinels grew much more interested in me and began an angry sort of chatter, standing up and sitting down, barking and crying out in the most excited manner. That they had sounded a warning I am sure; for, having made as much noise as they could, they started their retreat. I fully expected all the others to disappear without allowing me any further glimpse of them, but they were far too curious for that. Though they unhesitatingly followed their leaders, the whole string of them took a route that led directly over the crests of several ant-hills, bringing each animal in turn above the grass to a point of vantage from which it could see me and chatter at me as I stood watching this humorous single-file exodus. Old males and old females, youngsters able to take care of themselves and tiny babies clinging to their mothers' backs all expressed their opinion of me as they crossed one ant-hill after another and finally disappeared among the rocks and trees.

In so extraordinary a natural game reserve as Ngorongoro, it would be almost impossible, one might imagine, ever to lose sight of all game. Yet, at times, even on the level stretches over which one had a good view to the very base of the crater wall, not a single animal could be seen. This does not mean that the animals were not there; it means only that their markings and colorings were such as

to blend perfectly with the background of grass and rocks.

The “Tommies,” or Thomson's gazelles, were, perhaps, the most remarkable examples of this protective coloration. Often I have gazed across the grassy plains without seeing an animal save, perhaps, a huge herd of wildebeests in the far distance, only to be surprised, when I moved, by the sudden and seemingly miraculous appearance of fifty or seventy-five “Tommies.” These delicate, happy little animals are fawn-colored, with their backs noticeably darker than their bellies and sometimes with a black stripe along their sides. So well does this coloring harmonize with a background of dried grass and dun-colored rocks that, so long as the creatures stand still, they are likely to be quite invisible. And, even when they are startled and begin their flight, they seem not so much to gallop off as to dissipate into thin air, leaving one puzzled over what has become of them. Aside from their coloring their outstanding peculiarity is the absolutely tireless way in which they keep their tails wagging. No other animal of which I know, keeps up so constant a wigwag. When they are at any distance, it is this tail motion that sometimes betrays them and enables one to recognize them for what they are.

It was of great interest to us to learn that we could easily tell when lions were wandering over the crater bottom, even when they were too (*Continued on page 342*)



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quantity of food by quality may in some degree replace quantity of population by quality.

The second possibility is that of finding food abroad. I have shown that at present all food-stuffs imported to Japan amount to about 5 per cent of the total food consumption of the country; there is therefore no reason why Japan should not import much more than she does. Moreover, since the real trouble with the Japanese diet is not quantity but quality, a comparatively small importation of food rich in nitrogen, to correct the evils of too much rice, would be equivalent to a much larger importation of food of the kind already employed. The problem is therefore not in reality so difficult as it might appear. At present, moreover, so much food is turned into manufactured products either for home consumption or for export, and often for uses other than nutritional, as in the case of alcohol and glycerine, that by merely suppressing such manufactures and employing food in its natural state, Japan would discover imports to be unnecessary or needed in much diminished quantity.

We come now to the third and by far the best way out of the difficulty; namely, to increase the production of food in Japan. How this is possible I have already pointed out. Will the Japanese government accept the evidence of the facts? But slowly, it may be. Undoubtedly the government has the matter at heart, but politics is not an exact science, and, more than that, there are always unqualified persons, with the best or the worst of intentions, at hand to give advice. The statesmen of the country should realize that agriculture is a science, that foods have an ascertainable chemical composition, that the nutritional needs of the people can be stated in terms of so many kilograms of various materials and that the great need of Japan is quality and not quantity. It should also be understood that food made by nature is better than food manufactured by man and that every unnecessary interference with the food of the country is to be deprecated. It is vital to Japan to improve her methods of handling the food supply and of distributing it rationally so that all members of the community may receive a well-balanced diet. If the government will base its policy on the sure ground of science, there need be, I believe, no anxiety concerning the future.

THE NGORONGORO ANIMAL EDEN

(Continued from page 273)

far away for us to make them out. There are large stretches of open plain in the crater, in addition to the two forests, the swamps and the lakes, and so tremendous is the number of animals on this plain that, seen from above, a spot not covered by them is very apparent indeed. So we learned to choose points of vantage from which we could look out and down upon the herds. When no lions were in the open, the herds were scattered more or less evenly over the entire surface, but, when a lion appeared, the other animals gave way before him and closed in calmly enough behind, leaving a telltale circle, two hundred yards or so across, wherein we could often make out nothing. With the glasses, however, we invariably found the cause of the opening, and on one occasion, at sunrise, when the opening was larger than usual, we were amazed at being able to count seventeen lions solemnly filing through.

We determined to see what we could do in stalking them; for so large a group was very unusual. They were bound, apparently, for a bush-covered slope in order to rest for the day, and with care we headed toward it. Yet, when we reached the spot we had chosen, there were no lions to be seen.



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We lay still for a time, watching, and then, quite suddenly, two cubs appeared in plain sight upon a rock and inquisitively sat there, like big kittens, staring in our direction. That the lions knew we were in the neighborhood was obvious; only the cubs were foolish enough to venture into the open. We could easily have got them, but we were not after cubs; so we lay there, hoping to see one of the larger animals as it moved about. But, watch as we would, none appeared, and that, to me, is proof that experience is something from which animals profit greatly. There were those cubs, within easy gunshot, wondering what on earth we were and why we had come, while the grown animals remained cannily hidden, not at all certain, of course, that we were enemies, but more or less sure that we were not friends. At last, as we lay there, Mrs. Clark, who had her binoculars, saw the shoulder of a lioness through the bush and pointed it out to me. I took aim while she continued to tell me what she could see. I knew that we were not likely to get a better shot, and I finally pulled the trigger. There was a grunt that told me I had hit, and the cubs disappeared in a series of awkward leaps.

Since I do not like to let wounded animals escape, perhaps to die lingering and painful deaths, I felt that we had to follow. So for a strenuous three-quarters of an hour we searched in vain for that lioness. By the time we were forced to give up, I was convinced she had not been hard hit. If she had been, she could not have got over so much rough ground. For several days, however, to make sure, I watched for vultures in that region and saw none.

After my three weeks in Ngorongoro, I know that African animals are far more given to fraternization than many people seem to believe. The dangerous animals, of course, tend to live apart. Elephants, it is true, will sometimes, though not often, be seen near buffaloes; but lions, leopards, and rhinos invariably associate only with their own kind. The plains animals, however, are generally much more gregarious than are the so-called dangerous animals, and herds of several species are often intermingled. The zebra is the outstanding animal in this respect. I have often seen zebras intermingled with wildebeests, hartbeests, elands and other antelopes, and they herd with giraffes in a way that is very entertaining. It is not merely that herds of zebras approach herds of other animals. They actually associate with them so freely that it is impossible to say which kind of animal predominates, and when such a herd is startled, they all bolt together. The zebra is, of course, not an antelope at all. Though he is a close relative of the ass, the antelopes seem not to hold that fact against him, but to welcome him into their herds whenever he sees fit to join them. So it should be in an animal Eden. And where on earth could there be a fairer Eden than this, a more peaceful reserve for the maintenance of animal life? Here, it is to be hoped, game can continue to exist in the future as happily as it has existed ever since the seething lava of Ngorongoro cooled down. One estimate numbers the inhabitants of this natural zoo at fifty thousand. Personally I believe there are more. But what difference do a few thousands make when so many animals are there and those more distant fade into the blue of the heat-waves as one's eye seeks them across the wide meadows of that matchless place?

* * *

Next month James L. Clark will write of the native African tribesmen, who have accompanied him on many a "safari" into the wilds.



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