



FROM NAIROBI TO KIRINYA.

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# A COLONY IN THE MAKING. *Or* SPORT AND PROFIT IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA *By* LORD CRANWORTH

1877-1914

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WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS



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district, Thomson's gazelle grows horns up to 16 inches, at least an inch longer than is attained further south. On one day they will prove quite tame and easily approached, while the next they may be most elusive.

All the lesser buck provide good eating, and the varieties to which the settler will help himself in different localities are duiker, steinbok, Kirk's dik-dik, common oribi—especially numerous near Londiani and on the Uasin Guishu plateau—and the Kenia oribi, which last, extremely local, is getting very scarce.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE BLACK LIST

THERE remains another category of animals with which the settler is only too well acquainted. This list comprises those which have much to condemn them, but provide nothing through which these disadvantages may be counterbalanced. As a lover of animals it has been my aim to make this list as short as possible, and animals have been included in worthier lists which would by the majority of settlers have been placed in this, the Black List.

Of all the suspects, least can be urged in favour of the *Rhinoceros*. It is to be feared that, from a settler's point of view, he has nothing whatever to recommend him. He is destructive, and no fence has yet been erected which will withstand his onslaught. He offers no kind of sport whatever himself, and at the same time may be a very considerable nuisance when the pursuit of some worthier trophy is in process. His hide, it is true, makes excellent riding whips and most odoriferous table-tops, but his whole skin is usually too bulky to be removed, and one could hardly shoot such an enormous brute for the sake of half-a-dozen riding whips. As to the comestible properties of his flesh, it can only be said, as Nebuchadnezzar, when on

a grass diet, is reported to have remarked, "on tasting the unwonted food: 'it may be eaten, but it isn't good.'" The only real use of the rhino is to provide thrills for big-game hunters and episodes with which to harrow the feelings and compel the admiration of friends in England. It is the very rarest of exceptions for a "safari" to return from a shooting expedition without a rhinoceros having provided a hairbreadth escape to some member of the party, black or white. It may be of some consolation to the intending voyager to know that the breadth of the hair will practically always be on the right side. During all the years of big-game shooting in British East Africa, and after all the many hundreds of specimens which have been slain—707 were accounted for in 1910 and 1911 alone—the fatal or even serious accidents can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The rhinoceros is large, the rhinoceros is blind, he looks very fierce, and he has got to go somewhere when disturbed, which, like most animals, is almost invariably up wind. The consequence of these facts is that a horrid great monster, sleeping under a tree, gets the wind of a caravan and naturally rushes up wind towards and through it, and no one can deny that he looks most objectionable. As a proof, however, that he is not really vicious lies the fact that it is the rarest of occasions on which he retraces his steps; almost invariably his initial rush goes straight on. Mr. Stigand, in a very carefully reasoned argument, comes to the conclusion that one in every 250 rhino charges with vicious intent. In common with everyone who has passed much time travelling about the Protectorate, I have seen a good many hundred rhinoceroses, but only once have I seen a rhino—or in this case a pair of them—

who showed an apparent wish for my extermination. This was in the Southern Game Reserve, and after the pair had made three charges at increasing proximity, I thought it advisable to conclude my observations from the branches of an exceedingly thorny tree. The wind at the time was very shifty and my opinion is that it was uncertainty as to the safest mode of escape that influenced their actions. However, I most certainly felt that a tree, even a thorny one, was to be preferred to the ground. The conduct of the animal when disturbed is one over which every sportsman can dogmatise to his heart's content. As Mr. Dugmore in his excellent book points out, one is too much inclined to judge by personal experience. One man comes out, sees half-a-dozen rhinos, shoots two, and says that they are quite tame and easily obtainable. His friend comes next season, sees three or four, of which a couple run through his caravan and one puts his foot through his camera. He doesn't shoot a specimen. This man reports that they are very vicious, and not too easy to obtain. I hold one belief, possibly rather far-fetched, that certain sportsmen, greatly affected by exertion in the sun, give out a considerably more pungent odour than others, and that this odour invites a determined charge. In short, that those who sweat the most are charged the most. One thing is absolutely certain, and that is that the species is a nuisance to the sportsman and impossible to the farmer. A kudu or buffalo is being pursued through thick bush; suddenly there is a horrid snort, and a huge dark body bursts through the trees and dashes by in a manner which is ruin to the nerve and to the steady hand. This is bad enough, but if the animal's course be directed towards one's 'shamba' it is

worse! Luckily, they are not slow to take the hint that their room is preferable to their company, and are very easily banished. Thus practically all the open plain in the Highlands used to be infested with rhino, and notably all the open country round Nairobi. Nowadays it is quite the exception to come across rhino in the open, though the surrounding bushland may be full of them. Rhino are usually found singly, in which case it is probably a bull; or in pairs, in which case they are *generally* a cow and calf; or in threes, a bull, a cow, and a calf. Larger parties are sometimes seen, but I cannot personally recall more than five standing together. Their favourite food is young mimosa thorn coming up in the grass, or boughs taken from trees of the same variety. They do not care for grass, of which they eat but little. Those who aver that they have seen rhinoceros browsing vigorously off grass on the plain would very often find on examination that it is the young thorns amongst the grass that have suffered. The mother suckles its young for three years, and one can accordingly understand how long-lived and therefore easily exterminated the race is. To the great satisfaction of all concerned, each year sees less rhinoceros on the more traversed routes. There need be no fear whatever for his absolute extermination, as there are large tracts of forest and almost impenetrable bush in which he can exist and where to hunt him will be a sport dangerous and genuine enough for anyone. Large horns are very rare nowadays, or at all events hard to obtain. The longest are nearly always possessed by cows, those of the males being the more massive. Outside thick cover it is to-day hard to obtain a horn of more than 22 or 23 inches.

Rhino are especially numerous in the following localities: round Lake Marsabit, the Yatta plains, the northern Guaso Nyero, the South Guaso Nyero, the Tana and Thika rivers, especially towards the junction of the two; in this neighbourhood a few years back I counted sixty in one day, the Tsavo river, and all bush country where there is any water, more especially the large tract lying between Kitui and the lower waters of the Tana, the Ithanga hills, and the country all round Lake Baringo. There remains one female with an exceptionally long horn, at least 36 inches, in the Ngongo forest.

Next to the rhinoceros the *common Zebra* is the most unmitigated pest to farmers in the Protectorate. He is almost ubiquitous throughout the Highlands, and is found, not only on the plain, but through the bush and even on hills of considerable height. Zebra nearly always congregate in herds, which herds constitute the favourite prey of the lion. Most travellers through the country know the zebra's note of alarm, like the bark of a terrier dog, followed by the clatter of a hundred hoofs which tells of the stampede of a herd from a real or imagined attack. It is these stampedes that no ordinary fence can withstand and which render the presence of zebra so absolutely fatal in the proximity of agriculture. The beast, moreover, has no advantages to compensate ever so slightly for the damage he inflicts. The meat has the same nasty sweet taste as horse, and one must be hungry indeed to eat it with any relish. Natives, however, prefer it to any other and it enables them to perform astonishing digestive feats. Also those who should know say that pigs will eat it with avidity. The hide is soft and of little local value. It is sometimes used for the backs