

scrub and tambuti, the buffalo can be a very dangerous foe. In the forest, however, to a watchful hunter, it is nothing to fear.

Change the field again to grass some three feet high and scrub-covered, and by far the most dangerous animal to meet there in a death charge is a lion.

Elephant, rhino and buffalo in this short scrub bush would be easy to meet and beat, but here even a good hunter gives away points to the lion, which may charge him straight or swerve; and its pace is always faster than it appears to be.

Again, in this short scrub country, a lion charging would take advantage of the bush between. If it happens to be a wounded lion the hunter is tracking down, in this short thick scrub it becomes even more dangerous—quite the most dangerous possible, as its eyes are on one all the time, gliding this way and that way according to one's movements: under those conditions the charge is fearfully swift and short. One shot only, win or lose; no bang! bang! from a heavy double here; because bang! bang! means both misses. I have seen it often: only one bang; head or tail, and tail you lose.

In the T'savo country, while after a very big bull elephant, I happened to come across a well-known white hunter from Nairobi after the same elephant, and carrying a big double .577. As our safaris were both moving up along the T'savo River to a point where each would turn his own way according to his individual judgment, we just strolled along together through the bush for half an hour or more. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, a black rhino shot out and, ears pitched forward, came straight for my companion. Bang! bang! roared his big double, and seeing the rhino unchecked, I sent in a 10.75

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Mauser bullet through the rhino's shoulder. The rhino swerved a foot or two and dropped. On examination there was only one shot found in it; bang! bang! had missed both shots at less than ten yards.

Three days later I got the big bull elephant, which caused many a heart-burn, as there were six well-known Nairobi white hunters all after the same bull at the same time, and some of them had parties and cameras in plenty to photograph the great bull when down, which each and everyone hoped to claim.

Hunting elephant in such country as parts of the Lower Wakamba and Tanaland, conditions and arms contribute much towards the hunter's difficulties and dangers. Tracking a bull through thick country like the above, it is generally round about 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. that contact is made. There may be one, two or more bulls during this period of the day resting under the shade of a big tree sometimes surrounded by wait-a-bit thorns and sansaviro. The gases rising up from the ground caused by the heat of the hot sun on the elephant and rhino secretions during this time of the day can often be seen rising like mirage, and always felt. The effect is often stupefying and is very likely to throw the hunter off his guard. A similar effect is experienced by a motor-man repairing a broken petrol-pipe or leak under the car during the heat of the day on the hot sands with petrol dripping round his head. Tracking an elephant under those conditions a hunter sometimes experiences black moments, when all around and about him becomes invisible and his senses reel. He quickly pulls himself together and notices that his trackers are likewise affected. Such a position calls for quick action and determination if disaster is to be averted. Under the above conditions a big heavy double is a great handicap.

The hunter must have it in his own hands—no gun-bearer here. The double is fearfully heavy and gets heavier and heavier, and the oil from the gun, combined with perspiration, makes it very slippery and difficult to control; while perspiration from one's forehead runs down over one's eyes and dries there, piling up drop by drop.

With a drop or two falling into the eyes, a heavy slippery gun, a black moment and a charge, the hunter has no hope, and many good hunters have gone under this way.

To keep the safety button off through the thousands of thorn-trees and bush is dangerous, and to slip the low, small, slippery safety off at the moment of the charge, only a few feet away, is often very difficult, requiring great pressure of the right thumb, which is apt to slip over and pass the safety without shifting it. I have been up against it under those conditions often, and once with a rhino which I saw coming. I experienced such difficulty and delay in my exhausted condition in getting the safety forward that I only got my shot off as the rhino hit the muzzle of my big double.

Again, under the above conditions, to break a heavy double ejector, re-load and close it again with perhaps leaves and bits of twig falling in the breech, is no easy task. It is all simple in shops and camps, easy as pie, but under the above conditions requires great strength and self-control.

In Equatorial Africa I have known of several reputed good hunters who have met their end under similar conditions. Their great doubles were sometimes found near by the seat of tragedy, discharged, with empty shells still in the breech, some empty with shells ejected; while one, an East African hunter with a big double .600, had evidently failed to get his safety off in time. The un-



A RHINO SHOT UNDER DIFFICULTIES
(see page 154)



A GREAT BAOBAB TREE IN THE LOW COUNTRY

denizens of the jungle, and never go near blood of any kind; why, then, should they lead people to them?

The fact is that just past where the rhino or buffalo were standing the fat honey was. The bird, with all its intelligence, could not convey the message to the big cowardly bipeds who threw over their little friend and ran from the animals, on the way blaming the bird. These birds are passionately fond of honey, and all natives or followers of the bird usually drop a little piece of comb for the bird before leaving.

Dangerous animals one may happen to meet on the way would not be likely to understand the little bird or the man's mission and, thinking him after them, may retaliate. The reply is, go armed and prepared every time, but go on to the honey and show a little appreciation by leaving a little honey for the bird.

Marcus Daly 1934

Big game hunting and adventure.

CHAPTER XII

RHINOCEROS (*Diceros bicornis*: Family *Rhinocerotidae*)

Many have shot the rhino and more have seen it, but few have troubled to study it and its funny ways.

A rhino, really, is a great bundle of nerves, and it is those nerves that make it so pugnacious, like the man who cannot stand a child crying, laughing or making a noise, or the rattling of cutlery, or the falling of a fork from the table.

Most apparent charges are really made in its endeavours to break through and get away. Those are easy to discriminate between if the rhino can be seen. A steady advance with the ears pricked forward towards one is a most dangerous sign, and one must quickly and quietly give way or face it. A charge across a clearance or through light bush, with both ears pricked forward, where a rhino can clearly see its man and charges towards him, is a death charge and must be met. Even if such a charging rhino should, for a few moments, lose sight of its target, it will turn and hunt round for it. In the bush or clearance a rushing rhino with both ears going in all directions is seeking an outlet and will pass within a few feet of one without pausing. It is well to understand these signs as many a poor rhino has been shot as a charging rhino while, as a matter of fact, it was doing its best to avoid one. In a big forest, as a rule, rhinos are not so dangerous as in the thorn-scrub country. The reason is that in a forest there is not that nerve-jarring, snapping, cracking, scraping, scratching noise

to be heard in the scrub country. The rhino can locate the intruder easier and get away silently. The ground, too, is soft and springy, and not hard, noisy and gravelly.

The long thin-horned rhino are always found in thick bush or forest country where the rainfall is plentiful, the soil deep and moist at fairly high altitudes, such as west and north Kenya and the Aberdare Mountains of Kenya Colony and such country.

In the hard low country of scrub-thorn and gravel ground the long-horned rhino is never found, unless by chance it has been hunted down there, when, left to itself, it will quickly return to its forest home. Indeed, a long-horned rhino could not live in the low hard country, if only on account of its long horn, as the long thin horn could never dig up the necessary root food in the hard ground. It would be like a man trying to dig with his bare hands in a hard ant-heap in the desert for apples.

The low, thorn-scrub bush-country rhinos have very thick, short strong horns well adapted to the country in which they are found, and they in turn could not thrive in the high forest country. First, on account of the cold, which they are not accustomed to, and the heavy rains, and, second, their shorter horns could not dig down far enough for the root food in the forest, and the foliage of the forest would not suit them any more than green grass suits the Gerenuk (*Lithocranius*).

Much has been said about the comparative aggressiveness of buffalo and rhino. Some hold that a rhino is easier turned than a buffalo, and so on. Lone buffalo bulls will often be found, like rhinos, trying to get away and avoid trouble, and their intentions are just as easily detected as the rhinos'. Through light bush or across a clearance in a death charge there is little between them. The one is just

as easily met and dropped or turned as the other, or just as difficult, as the case may be. I have met death-charging buffaloes under every conceivable condition, and sometimes with an ordinary ten-seven-five have put down a bull at very close quarters and stood to see what its attitude would be when it rose again, full in view of the bull some ten paces away. Some have risen, shaken themselves and come in again, while others, after rising and looking at me hard, have tried to get away. Rhinos have, from time to time, done the same thing, as I stood and waited to see the next move after rising. I am speaking of those animals which I knew were not hit fatally but just knocked down with a stunning blow. Some rhinos have risen and cast round for sight of me and, as I coughed to indicate my position, come right in again to fight it out to the death. Others have turned and fled back to cover which I always allowed them to reach, but not the buffalo bull, which I seldom allowed to get away once it tackled me.

Rhinos in the open are the easier target as they come straight in; but in the thick thorn-scrub they are more difficult to stop. Again, pushed for time and space, I have loosed off a quick shot at a charging buffalo bull plunging out of thick cover a few yards away, hitting it anywhere in front so as to gain time for a steadier shot. On the first blow they have swerved and tried to get away. Rhinos have often done just the same thing and been allowed to get away, unless required.

Watching rhino near a watering-place I found their antics very amusing and entertaining. Two would appear out in the open in the bright moonlight, a cow and a bull, and separate a few yards from each other, standing looking at one another for a few seconds, then the cow would rush off and around the bull at terrific speed, jump high all-fours

off the ground, land and skid along on her throat for several feet, rise and shake herself, and take up her original position facing the bull.

It was now his turn: my word and what a turn! Round and round he went, encircling the cow, and in course of a circle he would spin round like a top without altering his course; this he would repeat twice in each encircling round of several rounds and finish with the same high jump, landing on his throat with the whole of his great weight behind him and skid along further than the cow did, rise, shake himself and take up his position facing the cow. The cow seemed to consider the position for a while. Clearly she seemed to say, "You have beaten me, but I'll do my best"; and off she would go again full tilt round and round, but lost ground on the spin, and finish the same way, always the high-jump, throat-and-skid landing.

This performance lasted for over an hour and before drinking.

Many hold that the rhino is very poor-sighted. But take the following facts and consider whether their sight can really be as poor as made out, particularly by night.

I was camped in the bush down in the Lower Wakamba country among the thorn-trees growing very close together, trunks only some six feet apart and extending for some distance, set out like a chess-board. The night was a very dark and stormy one, and about 11 P.M. three large rhinos came along at full speed past my tent and through the thorns, the noise of the stampeding feet disappearing in the distance.

Knowing the density of the thorn-trees, through which one could not have ridden a polo pony without scrubbing against first one pole and then another, I wondered much, as I had heard no trees hit. Next morning, being curious



A ROGUE ELEPHANT AND "WASHIARIA", THE BEST TRACKER THAT EVER CAME OUT OF WAKAMBA



AN OLD RHINO OF TANALAND, SHOWING THE GROWTH OF A THIRD HORN

to investigate the performance of the night before, I followed a considerable distance through the trees. There were the three spoors of the three big rhinos, each taking their own course along parallel lines not following one another, and, though plenty of mud about, not a single tree-trunk had been touched—and this at full speed in a very dark night. This surely could not have been by scent or hearing.

At another place, while lying down near a watering-place (some hundred yards from the water) at night-time, with no tent, a rhino sounded about a hundred and fifty yards up-wind. It sounded and sounded again, then gargled with strange ball-like, rolling noise in the throat. It was perfectly clear that the rhino had seen me lying down at that distance in the dark. I had not passed that way and the wind was from the rhino, not from my side. As I endeavoured to shift my position the rhino came on at the charge. I heard it coming but couldn't see it. Waiting, sitting down until I felt it close in front of me, I loosed off my 10.75 Mauser. The rhino veered and charged past me, taking the skin off the side of my right forehead and bumping me heavily on the shoulder as it passed in the inky darkness, and did not return.

Surely this was eyesight. I couldn't see ten yards round me and I was not on its path to water. Later on, rhinos came to this same water, snorted and blasted at me, and clearly saw me but did not in any way interfere. I was quite alone at the time, as I had been caught by the darkness in the wait-a-bit thorns, some miles from my camp, and this place was the only little clearance near. A dying rhino is an upsetting object to watch. Its great struggle and heavy sighs are most distressing, and pathetic little squeaks it makes as if pleading for help. It is the worst animal, I think, to watch dying.

Rhinos are sometimes taken by crocodiles through their own stupidity. A croc. will never tackle a rhino while actually drinking, as it will a buffalo, by grabbing or closing its great jaws over the mouth, but waits till the rhino turns leisurely to walk out. Then it fastens on to one or other of the back legs. The rhino, feeling the grip, will try to swing round on three legs to knock the croc. off; it thereby loses much ground and backs further in, pulled by the croc., at the same time to deep and deeper waters, where it finally disappears and is drowned.

If the rhino would only keep on lunging forward on towards dry ground the croc. would sooner or later have to let it go, unless it happened to be one of the giant crocs. found in the west. Instead of this it really helps the croc. by trying to reach it with its horns at an impossible angle and backs itself into deep water. I saw one pulled in and down under this same way in the Limpopo River just as described above.

One evening, camped on the banks of the Upper T'savo River, I had another chance to study the black rhino by night. My tent was pitched near the bank of the river, running some six feet below the upper level of the bank where my tent stood. Just behind and a little to one side stood my natives' tent. The night was moonlight clear and beautiful, and most of the natives slept outside, all round about.

Hearing rhinos feeding close by, I quietly picked up my rifle and went outside and sat against a tree in the shade watching, my rifle standing against the same tree. Two big full-grown rhinos approached eating the short green grass. They both fed right up to the tent, pausing to listen every now and again. One of the natives sleeping outside was snoring like a foghorn, while some now and again spoke in their sleep. The rhinos would listen for a while and

continue feeding and moving right up and between the sleeping natives; they smelt at the tent ropes but never touched them. They both looked hard several times my way. Giving them time to get away from the sleeping natives towards the centre of the opening (about one acre), I quietly rose from my sitting position in the shade and walked towards my tent and back again to my watching position. They both looked up at me while going and coming from the tent, till I again sat down; and they then went on feeding and several times grazed up to quite near again. The natives were sleeping quietly and they knew it, and their nerves were at rest. They must also have judged that I was not aggressive and only wanted peace and rest. Slowly they grazed back and were soon lost to sight in the thick thorn-bush. Next morning there was quite an alarm among the natives, one and all pointing out where the rhinos had passed during the night right amongst them, and calling on me to come and see for myself if I didn't believe them, not knowing that I had watched the rhinos' movements the whole time.

With the rhino-nerves passive they are quite docile, but one never knows when the nerves are going to buzz. In the bush at night or other dark spots, when they or the hippo can be heard feeding and not seen, and one is uncertain as to whether it is a hippo or a rhino (which is sometimes very important to know), listen carefully to the mastication which in each of them is exactly the same time, a very steady rate of one to a second. A rhino is identified by the regular pauses in between each time it swallows a mouthful; generally, about every twenty seconds, for about five seconds it pauses and then continues mastication. Sometimes it will stop chewing with a mouthful and listen for three or five seconds before continuing to chew its food.

A hippo carries straight on, swallowing its food as it masticates, never pausing unless moving away. All other animals masticate at twice this rate. A buffalo blows and puffs like an ox when feeding and is continually moving.

The so-called white rhino (*Ceratotherium simus*) is much the same colour as the black rhino, and I have seen some black rhinos actually lighter than they are. There is a great difference, however, between the two, the white rhino being much bigger and heavier, with a much bigger head even in proportion to the black rhino. It is not so pugnacious as the black rhino, and generally tries to avoid one whenever possible; but is not, however, to be played with, as many have found out to their cost in Equatorial Africa.

In the southern portions of Africa this beast is now very rare, but in the southern parts of the Sudan and north-east Belgian Congo they are still plentiful. In French Equatorial Africa while I was there, owing to the prevailing high prices offered for the horns, many thousands of those great brutes were slaughtered. Some French hunters, employing as many as fifty armed cap-and-powder native hunters and many more with modern rifles, would set out after them in large parties for months on end, returning with anything between half a ton and three tons of horns; and many dozens of such parties were all actively engaged in different parts of the country right across to Lake Chad and well across the British Nigerian frontier. During the years 1927-31 there must have been well over 10,000 white rhinos shot in these territories alone.

Their natural habitation was the soft green, thornless bush country and were often to be met with in parties of three to a dozen and more, browsing in the open like great cattle. While the slaughter was at its height many of the

survivors took to heavy country, where this class of hunter dare not follow, and are to be found there now changing their habits, as the elephant had to do, from open bush country to dark jungles.

Many took to the great matteti reeds, which they are also fond of; but when the rains pass and the dry season sets in they are driven out of this fairly safe (in wet weather) cover by the great annual fires.

It was during those great fires that many thousands of them were slaughtered by large organized parties prepared for such.

I am glad to say that I took no part in this, refusing all big offers made to me from time to time to take charge of one or other of these slaughtering parties. These rhino are not so playful as the black rhino and not so fast. A black rhino can easily outrun the average hunting pony and keep going for miles.