



A REMARKABLE "CLOSE UP" OF A TIGER ON THE NEAT-TRAIL.
(Photo: F. W. Champion.)

HUNTING WILD BEASTS WITH RIFLE AND CAMERA

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"THE LION'S WAY"
ETC.



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CHAPTER III

THE AFRICAN RHINOCEROS

IN Africa I am on my own ground. I have wandered a little in other countries, but in the "Dark Continent" I am at home. "Dark Continent" is a misnomer, for Africa's most striking quality is its brightness. A large part of the continent is composed of great arid plains, and deserts the extent of European countries. But one is seldom out of sight of mountains, and generally these are clothed in big forests, some of which have never been penetrated by man.

One frequently hears the assertion that few unexplored portions of the globe remain to tempt the ambition of the investigator, yet there is far more territory unvisited in Africa than was ever pressed by human foot. Doubtless Cæsar thought he had "discovered" Britain. He discovered that there was such a place, but his ignorance of the internal topography of the country must have been stupendous. In just such a way has Africa been "discovered."

The explorer, pushing across vast tracts of unknown country, fords a river, and sees in the distance a lofty mountain. Reason and experience tell him he is viewing the opposite side of a mountain previously described by one of his contemporaries. He puts it into his map, together with the observation that the river probably has its source

at this point. That territory is then "explored." I might point out that to view the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral from Ludgate Circus is insufficient acquaintance with the building. There is, then, plenty of scope for the prospective explorer in this most interesting of all countries, and how better can he describe the territory he explores than by means of photography? The animal life of Africa, particularly of the East and Central parts, is the most varied and numerous in the world. It is also the least known. We have few naturalists in that country. The men who know most about the animals are the professional hunters, but the requirements of their trade are prejudicial to accurate observation of the habits of the beasts they pursue. To study an animal one must avoid frightening it; and a rifle bullet is a terrifying visiting card with which to introduce oneself.

Of late years the camera has superseded the rifle as a means of forming closer contact with wild animals. Sportsmen have come to recognize that destruction is senseless; that the "hunting instinct," far from being admirable, is a brutal attribute to be found most fully developed in the lower forms of creation. Undoubtedly we should endeavour to enjoy our pleasures without causing suffering to man or beast; we are more enlightened than the theatre audiences who howled for blood in ancient Rome.

Nevertheless, in some instances, killing is not only justifiable, but commendable. A man-eater must be dispatched without mercy, and one would not expect a man to go short of meat while surrounded by many varieties of ox-like and sheep-like animals upon whom, in company with the carnivora, it is our privilege to prey. It is reasonable that we should kill in protection of our lives, or in

satisfaction of our bodily needs, but we may not kill uselessly for the mere pleasure of slaughter. Mr. C. G. Schillings, to whose books I recommend you, is a pattern of what a sportsman should be, but, alas! seldom is. Few men know more of Africa than he, and of none can it be more truly said that the country and its fauna was the better for his acquaintance with it. In contrast to the exploits of the money-making butchers and notoriety-seeking idiots who have strewn the veld and forest with the skeletons of African animals, this man appears as a wise, enlightened discoverer—a true lover of the wilderness and the creatures inhabiting it.

In the course of years I have ceased to be an enemy of wild animals, and have become their friend; discovering in lion and leopard and antelope the same admirable and engaging characteristics as may be found in the domesticated horse and dog and cat. It is time we exercised our privilege of over-lordship more rationally; abandoned the methods of the feudal baron, and adopted those of the amiable squire. In the future, then, the true sportsman will be the friend and champion of the beasts; he will secure his trophies with the film and shutter, instead of with the rifle and trap, and when he points to the framed picture on his study wall he will feel greater satisfaction than if it were a head, or mask, for he will know that the subject of it is none the worse for its brief contact with a human being.

Among the animals who may be regarded as criminals deserving of execution is the rhinoceros—whenever he is found in settled districts. He is a survival of that era when brawn was superior to brain; he has the strength of a motor truck, with the intelligence of a rabbit. Nobody



A STUDY OF THE WHITE, OR SQUARE LIPPED, RHINOCEROS.
(Photo: H. Lang.)

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loves the rhinoceros, except Schillings, and his humanity extends to all living things, irrespective of their destructiveness. In uninhabited districts the rhino is only a nuisance to himself and to the wild creatures about him; but in settled territory he is a great danger, and, unfortunately, he will not stay in the seclusion of his inaccessible forests.

At Nyeri, a prosperous coffee-growing district on the foothills of Mount Kenya, rhino are particularly dangerous. There are large belts of forest there, and forest is the rhino's favourite habitat. Several settlers and many Natives have been killed and injured by these stupid beasts at Nyeri. It is the rhino's stupidity that makes him especially dangerous. Many years ago, before the introduction of firearms, he was to be found roaming about on the plains, but of recent years he has retired into densely grown bush veld or mountain forest, where he is less likely to be disturbed by man. He feeds during the hours of darkness, taking his drink at dawn before he seeks a place in which to sleep away the day. This is usually a belt of thick bush, in which may be found a shady hiding-place. Now the rhino follows well-defined trails made by his own species, or elephant, or buffalo; and when he selects a bedroom it is usually just to the side of one of these trails. He lies down, doubling his legs under him, and resting his head on the ground. The small green tick birds (about the size of starlings) gather about him, eating the parasites which infest his scurvy hide. They have the same peculiarities as tits or parrots: they run about upside down under the body of their big host, displaying as much confidence and agility as if they were in a more normal position, and occasionally one will completely disappear into the rhino's ear. At such times the

beast shakes his head uneasily until the bird emerges from his auricular cavity, where, one would suppose, he causes considerable irritation.

So savagely do the birds attack the rhino's skin that they make holes in it, and draw blood, but the rhino does not seem to mind. The birds perform two useful services for him : they denude him of the big ticks which are the bane of his existence, and they warn him of the approach of an enemy. The rhino tick is a monster, and if it bites a European leaves a mark as big as a shilling, so that one sympathizes with the unfortunate animal who is condemned to act as host to these ravenous parasites.

Should a human being approach the rhino, the birds fly up screaming from his body, warning him of danger. In this the birds perform a dual service : they alarm the rhino, and they inform man of the presence of a dangerous beast.

We will suppose a man to be travelling through one of the big Kenya forests. He has been on the march all day, facilitating his progress by following well-marked game trails, and with the approach of evening he has become tired and a little careless. The trail leads him into a dense thicket, but since he has traversed many such without encountering danger, he is not particularly apprehensive of it now.

Suddenly he hears the screeching of tick birds just in front of him ! An old rhino is sleeping there under an overhanging bush, a few yards off the trail. The birds fly about his head, screaming their message of warning into his ears. Immediately he gets up and stands, listening intently.

The rhino's vision is very poor ; he can see nothing

clearly at more than thirty yards range, but his senses of hearing and smell are abnormally acute, as are those of a blind man. In the thick forest there is very little breeze, and what there is travels in circles, directed by the bush-clumps and hillocks.

The rhino knows there is danger, for his guardians the tick birds are never mistaken ; he can neither see, hear, nor smell it, but at any moment he expects to feel a spear or an arrow in his body. Making up his mind in a hurry, he decides to leave that locality as quickly as possible, before some enemy inflicts upon him a painful wound. He dashes out on to the trail, snorting with fury and alarm, smashing saplings and bushes out of his way as though they were bamboo canes. Almost always he flies up-wind, so that his nose shall prevent him running into fresh danger, but when the wind is so faint and erratic it gives him no information until he is in close proximity to the man.

Directly he sees him he knows he is in serious trouble ; the man may spear or shoot him instantly. The rhino copies the actions of a man threatened by a missile in the hands of an enemy ; he dashes at him in a desperate attempt to upset his aim, or knock him down before he can get into action.

The consequences to the man are often very serious. In the narrow, bush-girt trail he cannot get out of the way, and he certainly cannot out-distance such a pursuer. He must shoot, and shoot very straight, if he would save his life.

It is in this way that most of the accidents happen ; generally they are fatal. You can imagine how unpleasant it is to have these dangerous beasts lurking in the vicinity of your farm, where your friends and servants may encounter them at any moment.

An incident of this description happened once when I was riding a Somali pony through the forest on the lower slopes of Mount Kenya. My pony was a long-legged, rather ungainly animal, standing over fifteen hands high. He was never sure-footed, and often when traversing broken ground we had come down together in a heavy fall.

On this occasion I was following a buffalo trail which wound up a steep hill among boulders and tree roots. The branches grew low across the path; frequently I had to lie forward on my pony's withers to escape them. At the top of the hill the trail led into thick cover, and as we approached this I slung my rifle across my back, looped the reins over my wrist, and took out my pipe and tobacco pouch. It was my intention to get my pipe alight before entering the thick stuff, where all my attention must be focused on the job at hand. The pony slouched forward of his own volition until within a few yards of the thicket, then he stopped, threw up his head, and pointed his ears. The screeching of tick birds sounded loud in my ears; with one motion I thrust pipe and pouch into my pocket and grabbed the reins; but, as I did so, the pony reached at his bit and got it between his teeth. The next instant, with a noise like a locomotive rushing through a bramble patch, a big rhino made his appearance, heading straight towards me. The pony spun on his hind-legs and set off down the path at full gallop. I could do nothing with him. To avoid the branches above me, I lay forward with my cheek pressed against the animal's neck, the rifle bumping on the back of my head in a very painful manner. In this position I had a disquieting view of a winding, rutted track, falling sharply away from me, studded with moss-grown boulders as big as hassocks.

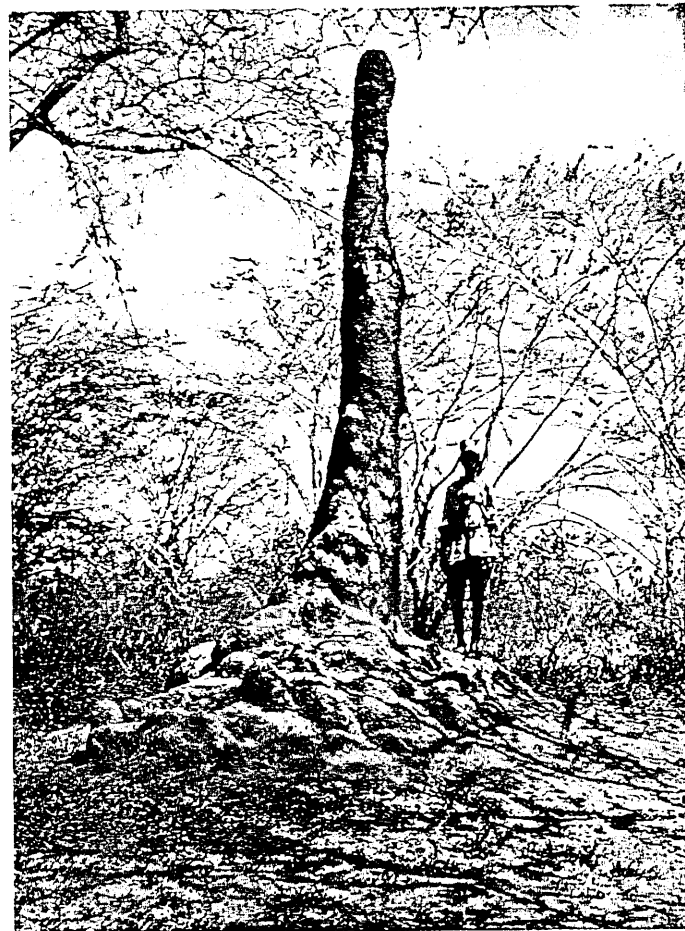
I had no control over the pony whatsoever, and I knew the rhino was behind me, coming down the hill like a landslide. I have ridden some exciting races, but never have I been so anxious to win, nor so exultant in the prowess of my horse. He never put a foot wrong! Several times I felt the rifle on my back come in contact with the trees; had it hooked up on one of them, I should have been wrenched out of the saddle and presented to the rhino in a helpless and undignified position. But my luck held good; almost before I had time to realize the full danger of my situation we were down the hill and on to the level, where my excellent steed stretched out and ran clear away from his pursuer. It was over a mile before I could pull him up. I have been charged by rhino dozens of times while on foot, but this was the only occasion when I had to deal with one of these creatures while mounted, and it convinced me that in forest country walking was safer than riding.

Besides this stupid, unnecessary manner of attacking man, the rhino has his purposeful moments, when he deliberately seeks a combat with his enemy. He is an irascible brute, morose and quarrelsome, and when in a bad temper he fears nothing. During the war a rhino charged a Ford car near Longido. He put his horn under the running board and turned the whole thing over—driver and all! A bull rhino tried conclusions with a locomotive on the Uganda Railway (so called because it traverses Kenya to get to Uganda); but the engine could out-snort him and out-push him, and the vultures devoured his remains.

In war time, when we were moving in column of route along a bush track, we were often scattered by rhino

charging through the midst of the column, and, since erratic bullets are of small avail to penetrate their thick hides, we were seldom able to stop them. Fortunately they are not difficult to dodge if one has plenty of room to manœuvre. The weight of the animal (from two to three tons) and the speed at which he charges makes it exceedingly difficult for him to turn quickly, and a sudden, sideways jump on the part of his intended victim will leave him helplessly bewildered, with nothing but the broad, empty world before him. In such instances he usually makes good use of his enlargement, and dashes off in a frightful temper far from the cause of it.

At Longido I came upon a rhino standing by an ant-hill, like the one in the photograph, but much broader. He got my wind and came towards me. In those days I did not know as much about them as I do now; thinking myself in danger I shot the animal, and he swerved off behind the ant-hill, from whence he emerged again a moment later, to rush away like a mad thing through the scrub. I was amused by his panic; he took everything in his stride, knocking thorn trees into drunken attitudes, and scattering bushes like chaff before his enormous feet. He disappeared into a valley; I climbed the base of the ant-hill to try and get another view of him. Some minutes later I saw him streaking up the opposite hill, still running for his life and still going quite straight, regardless of obstacles. Evidently he was not much hurt, I thought, as I watched him vanish over the rise. Then I turned to descend from my perch, and saw, within a few yards of me, the body of a large rhinoceros! There had been two of them; the one I had shot had run behind the ant-hill, where he fell dead, but his comrade, drowsing in conceal-



THE NEST OF THE TERMITE, OR "WHITE ANT."

These ant-hills are very common in the thorn-bush desert, and attain to a height of twenty feet.

(Photo: Dr. L. Bayer.)

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ment, had rushed into view, completely deceiving me. Had the first beast been only wounded he would, almost certainly, have killed me as I stood gazing after his panic-stricken friend.

By such experiences as this, if he is lucky enough to survive them, the hunter learns his trade. Never, since then, have I allowed my attention to be distracted while in touch with a dangerous beast, and never have I jumped to rash conclusions about the effect of a rifle bullet. "Leave nothing to chance" should be the hunter's maxim, and the photographer needs to be even more cautious, for he cannot stop a charging beast with a camera, and, when every second counts, there is small chance of exchanging it for a rifle.

In the early days I had two dwellings: one at Nanyuki, to the west of Mount Kenya; and one at Meru, sixty miles to the north. It was my custom to ride between these two places twice a month, and I always went across country; over forty miles of bush-veld, and through the famous Meru Forest, which is very wild and dense. The Government decided to make a road from Nanyuki to Meru; they made it follow the route by which I so frequently travelled, and which experience had taught me was the easiest one.

Shortly after this road was cut a settler named Captain Atkins and his wife were journeying along it in a motor-car. Unknown to them a woman tourist had been staying at a farm close by, on the Teleswani River, and early that morning she had gone out shooting. Despite her ignorance of big game, she had not hesitated to shoot at a rhino she found standing along the river-bank. The beast charged, knocked her down, and went into the bush to conceal

itself. The woman was carried back to the farm, to die later of her injuries.

Now, no one seems to have thought it necessary to pursue the rhino and kill it, despite the fact that a wounded rhino in the vicinity of a public thoroughfare is as dangerous as a charge of dynamite on a railway track—the first thing to pass is likely to be severely damaged. The wounded beast made its way to a bushy donga (a rocky, thorn-grown ravine), across which the road ran. About midday I passed, riding to Meru; but I saw no sign of the rhino, and, indeed, knew nothing of the tragedy enacted a few hours previously.

A short while later Captain and Mrs. Atkins came along in their car. It descended into the donga but refused to climb the opposite bank. They both got out, leaving the rifle in the driving seat, and Atkins began to crank the engine. The sun was very hot; he was removing his coat, when suddenly from the thick bush emerged the rhino, furious and murderous. Atkins shouted to his wife to run. Women who live in countries infested with wild beasts do not stop to argue at such a moment; they have faith in the knowledge and ability of their men folk, and act promptly upon instructions. Mrs. Atkins ran along the track, but the rhino saw the moving figure and charged it. Her husband leapt in the beast's path, flicking it across the head with his coat. The rhino turned upon him, but he dodged it, using his coat to bewilder it, as a bull-fighter uses his crimson cape. Three times he eluded the maddened beast, then an error of judgment or a stumble on the rough surface placed him at its mercy; it knocked him down and stamped him to death. So died this gallant gentleman.

This accident shows the danger of leaving a wounded

beast at large in a settled district. When fierce animals are hurt by man they seek revenge, and all men are their enemies.

The curious actions of a rhinoceros with a motor truck were related to me by a transport driver in the King's African Rifles. He was driving a lorry from Meru to Archer's Post one evening, and, thinking he had dropped something from the load, he stopped the car and walked back to look for it. When he returned, he was astonished to see the back part of a rhino protruding from the cab of his lorry. The animal had got its front feet, head, and shoulders into the driving seat of the truck, where it was sniffing inquiringly at the controls. The man shouted and threw stones at it, when it backed out of the cab and charged him determinedly. He was forced to shoot it in self-defence.

All that I have said about these beasts, so far, applies to the *bicornis*, or black rhinoceros, which inhabits most parts of the continent. There is another species, the white or square-lipped rhinoceros, who carries a single horn. This is the larger animal of the two, but it is now rarely found, having been almost exterminated by the early Dutch and English settlers of South Africa. There are still a few white rhino in Zululand, and they are strictly preserved. Though bigger than the black variety they are not as fierce, and, owing to their fondness for standing about in the open, were more easily killed.

To return to the *bicornis*: he is easy to approach, providing you see him first and do not alarm his friends, the tick birds. One may find his spoor and track him to his sleeping place. Sometimes, in sparse bush country, one may catch sight of him some considerable distance away,

and often, in such circumstances, he will have no tick birds with him. A cautious approach up-wind will bring you near enough to take a good photograph, and you may steal away again without the beast ever being aware of your presence. Frequently I have taken people up to within ten paces of a drowsing rhinoceros with complete safety. But if you desire to take a picture of him charging it is more difficult. The first requisite for this kind of work is a companion who is not only a first-class shot but a seasoned hunter, with nerves unlikely to fail him at the crucial moment. It is desirable that the exposure be made when the beast is near to the camera, and therefore the photographer must wait until the last possible moment before opening the shutter. The sight of a huge, angry beast outlined in the view-finder, approaching with the speed of a railway engine, is unsettling to the nerves.

The operator is entirely dependent on the rifleman for his safety, and he must have implicit confidence in his protector. From the rifleman's point of view the position is even more trying; he is not allowed to shoot until he receives permission, and he may feel that in his desire for a good picture the photographer may cut things a shade too fine. As the rhino rushes madly towards you, you cover him with the fore-sight, awaiting the word to fire. Your companion, crouched over his camera, is tense with excitement; he is watching the onrushing beast through his view-finder, and you wonder if he is conscious of just how fast it is travelling and how near it has approached. In the course of a few seconds the sights come beautifully in line several times; you could have killed that charging rhino without any mistakes on more than one occasion; but, when the crucial moment arrives, will you

be able to shoot straight enough to avert the threatened catastrophe?

The beast is fifteen yards away, his great feet thundering over the ground, his horn lowered to hurl you into eternity.

There sounds a faint click, and a hard, tense voice saying, "Right!" Follows the crash of the rifle and the jump of the butt against one's shoulder; neither of which sensations are perceptible at the moment, but linger on the mind, to be realized directly its tension is relaxed.

Now that he is in action the hunter is quick, cool, and deadly; full of confidence in himself, with no time to think of what may happen if he fails to stop the beast. Over the sights he sees the rhino lurch and swerve—"that one shook him up a bit!" His hand works the bolt, quickly and firmly; an automatic action, requiring no effort of concentration. Bang! goes the rifle again; the rhino plunges forward on to his head, his nose ploughing up the ground. The hunter steps nimbly aside, clear of the struggling body; the photographer is fumbling with his plates, or turning his film frantically, to try to get another picture before the beast is dead.

Fast living, my friends! You hear, and see, and smell, and taste much more keenly in the few minutes succeeding an adventure such as that. No wonder that, after the collapse of a charging beast, the hunter's first action is to reach for his cigarette case; he needs a sedative for his jumping nerves.

Mike Cottar, a well-known hunter, has stood by the camera for many picture makers whose films are famous in every country, and when Mike was a boy he and his brother used to throw stones at rhino to make them charge,

and then play tag with them round a tree! On one occasion one of my friends was assisting a wealthy sportsman to take a photograph of a charging rhino. They found a large animal among some mimosa trees in a little clearing. Having approached to within fifty yards, my friend the hunter fired bird shot from a shot-gun at the beast. Stung by the pellets, the rhino came walking wrathfully towards them, and when near enough to get a view of their insulting gestures, it charged.

My friend thought that his patron would never press the bulb, and give him leave to kill the furious beast. The rhino was within eight paces when he got the word, and then he could not stop it—the bullet seemed to have no effect on it whatever.

Both men leapt for safety, leaving the camera standing on its tripod directly in the rhino's path. The animal thrust its horn between the legs of the tripod and carried the whole contraption away into the bush, where it was found afterwards smashed to flinders.

You would not think a man could receive the full force of a rhino's charge without suffering injury, but I know of an instance when this happened. One of the well-known hunters had as his client a rather boastful man, who had come to East Africa for the express purpose of shooting dangerous game.

After bagging a few specimens of the pachydermata and larger carnivora, the visitor was convinced that big-game shooting was a safe and easy pastime; he gave it as his opinion that the danger connected with this sport was practically nil. The hunter, who had taken pains to keep his client clear of trouble, was annoyed to hear his trade so disparaged. He did not attempt to point out the folly

of the other's opinion, but decided that, since the man was so cock-sure of his ability to look after himself, he should have an opportunity of proving his competence. One day, in crossing a clearing, they disturbed a bad-tempered rhino. Now, in game districts far from human habitation, we do not shoot rhino unless for some special purpose; the licence costs £15, and only a really good horn makes that expenditure profitable. The visitor had already shot one rhino; he did not want another, so when the hunter saw this beast rushing at them he called to his companion to run, and himself sought the shelter of a tree. On looking back he was horrified to see his client standing, as though petrified, full in the path of the charging beast. Before he could shoot, the rhino had struck the man, knocking him out of its way, some distance into the grass.

Remorseful for not having taken better care of his companion, the hunter ran to him, expecting to find him terribly injured; but when he reached the spot he was astonished to see the man sitting up looking at him with wide eyes, apparently none the worse for his experience.

"Thank heaven you are not hurt! Where did he hit you?" cried the hunter.

There was no reply; the man was silent, gazing at him with an unwinking stare. He would not answer any questions; the hunter was obliged to examine him all over to assure himself that no physical damage had been done. Having completed his investigation, he picked the man up and stood him on his feet. He still did not speak. The hunter came to the conclusion that he had been stricken dumb.

Greatly perturbed, he hurried the sufferer back to camp, where he dosed him copiously with brandy. He then put

him to bed, where for some hours he slept like a dead man. About midnight he awoke, and saw the hunter sitting by his bedside. He opened his mouth and spoke, and the first words he said were—

"Holy smoke! Let's get out of here and go back to Nairobi!"

The shock to the man's nerves had deprived him of the power of speech, but when he recovered it his first act was to express the thought dominant in his mind when the rhino struck him. In that instant, when he supposed himself upon the point of dissolution, his views of big-game hunting had undergone a radical change.

CHAPTER IV

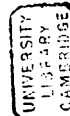
A RHINO ADVENTURE

DURING the war I had an unpleasant adventure with a rhino. Near to Kilimanjaro is a mountain called Elephant's Skull. It is only about 8,000 feet high, but is so overgrown with tangled bush that climbing it is exceedingly difficult. The whole of the top of this mountain is one great cap of granite, which from a distance bears a distinct resemblance to the head of an elephant, and this peculiarity induced us to give it the name by which it became known far and wide. The Natives reported that, high up among the rocks, klipspringer were to be found; and as in this part of Africa these curious little antelopes are comparatively rare, I was eager to obtain photographs of them. There was plenty of work in camp for the boys; Mills, my companion, and myself, decided to make the trip without porters.

We started very early one morning, and, by keeping to a part of the mountain where the bush was fairly open, managed to make good progress. Before mid-morning we had reached the top of the "shoulder," and had only the "neck" and "head" to negotiate; but at this point we were tempted to forsake our chosen route to attack obstacles which proved insuperable. There were streams on the mountain; we had not thought it necessary to encumber



YOUNG RHINOCEROS (DICORNIS)



ourselves with water-bottles, and we now deemed it high time to quench our thirst. Away to the right ran a swift river, but it was deep in a rocky gorge, and, though we could hear the thunder of its progress, we could not see it. We began to climb down over the rocks to reach the water. As we went the canyon became steeper and rougher until, finally, a sharp slope of granite, upon which there was no foothold, brought us to a stop. It was most annoying. We were very thirsty, and had wasted precious energy descending thus far into the river bed, only to find our toil useless. Below the rock slope was a grassy bench; I suggested we should slide down and land on this precarious footing. This we did, with greater ease and safety than we had anticipated. From there we soon made our way to the water, still some distance below us.

The river valley was a wonderful place. It was a deep gulf in the breast of the mountain, guarded by rocky battlements from which protruded strange tropical trees and plants, new to our acquaintance. The floor of this rift was sheltered from every wind that blew; at midday the sun shone down into it, and its heat was reflected from the rocky walls, so that the temperature by the river was that of an orchid house. Tropic fauna and flora took advantage of these conditions to establish themselves in the valley; among most beautiful orchids and luxuriant ferns huge gaudy butterflies and brilliant parakeets flapped and darted. In this paradise one might have thought oneself transported to the forests of the Amazon.

Amidst all this beauty we rested and drank by the rushing stream. It was a most turbulent river. Every few yards it swept over a precipice anything from thirty to a hundred feet in depth, and even in its less tormented

moments it boiled and rattled among boulders and shingle. We spent half an hour in the shade of a rock, very hot, but very happy ; then we attempted to retrace our steps to the conquest of the mountain-top. But this we were by no means able to do. The slope down which we had slid was too steep and smooth for us to climb, and at all other parts we were confronted by sheer, unscalable cliffs. We became slightly worried, as it dawned on us that we were trapped in the river bed.

After discussion, it was decided that our only course was to follow the river down until the banks should grow less steep, and allow us to climb out. We removed our boots and socks to make climbing easier, and started. It was a most nerve-racking experience. Mills was an officer in the Merchant Service : he was used to climbing upon yards and rigging, but even he was severely affected by the precipices we had to descend and the rock slopes we had to cross. As for me, who dread heights, I was reduced to a state of abject terror, and only the certainty of death if I stayed where I was induced me to face the possibility of death in this other, unpleasant form.

We travelled down the river bed for about half a mile. One man alone could not have done it : there were many places where we had to make a rope by tying our rifle slings and belts together, so that I could lower Mills to the doubtful security of a narrow ledge upon which he could stand, clinging to the rock, to receive my sliding body as I skated slowly down to the lip of the horrid chasm yawning for me. The parts which most affected me were the steep rock slopes where we had to cross from one side of the river to the other in order to find a way to a lower level. Picture a broad, smooth slope of granite, pitched

like a house roof, and polished by the floods of centuries. It is perhaps fifty feet wide, and its lower edge overhangs a sheer drop on to hard, sharp-toothed boulders. The middle portion of the slide is covered with six inches of racing water, which booms down into the abyss ; on either side of the water the rock is green with moss and weed, as slippery as soap. Out upon this one must venture, holding boots and rifle in either hand, balancing like a tight-rope walker. One's only safety is the grip of bare feet on the rock—and there is the treacherous weed to cross ! The hurrying water hypnotizes one ; to preserve balance in such conditions is most difficult, and the thought of that fifty-foot drop and the big boulders below it is like a hideous nightmare. It makes me shudder even now to remember it !

There were several false steps and stumbles. Once, Mills staggered and sat down, sliding some distance before, with elbows and feet, he brought himself to a stop. Parrots and monkeys screamed and barked at us, resenting this invasion of their privacy. It is probable that many of them had never before seen man. There were several troops of baboons in the valley, and we envied them their confidence and agility, climbing among those rocks. At one particularly bad descent, down the face of a cataract, my haversack swung round in front of my body, jamming against the rock, and sending the water in a torrent into my face. Blinded and desperate, I ducked out of the sling, and away went camera and spare ammunition into the rapids, to be washed out of sight in an instant. I did not regret it at the moment ; I was glad to get rid of it ; but afterwards I sorrowed for our pictures.

At last we came to a flat shelf where the river ran more

quietly for a hundred yards. There was a rift in the rock wall, but, unfortunately, it was on the wrong bank for our purpose. Nevertheless, it offered escape from the river bed; we climbed it and emerged on to the mountain side again, in the midst of the thickest bush I have ever seen. It was a tangle of thorn scrub, interlaced with spiked creepers and brambles, and beset with wild sisal, a plant having inch-long spikes upon the end of its fibrous leaves, always levelled at one's shins and knees. With sheath knife and rifle butt we attacked this bush, and in an hour we travelled about a hundred yards back from the river! We took it in turns to do the cutting, forcing out a narrow tunnel through which we could twist and scramble among the thorns and briars that obstructed us. We were both exhausted; our clothes were in tatters, and we bled from a hundred stabs and scratches. It was terribly hot, and before we had been working ten minutes we were parched with thirst. This was no longer a pleasurable adventure; it had become a struggle for life in which we seemed likely to be on the losing side.

Then we struck a rhino path. It plunged straight across our front, a narrow lane through the bush, parallel with the river and leading up into the mountains. Originally it might have been made by elephants, but rhino had used it for many years, as I could tell by numerous indications. How easily these powerful beasts forge through obstacles almost impenetrable to man: their thick hides are impervious to the thorns; their great bulk forces tree and bush aside, and snaps monkey rope like packthread! I blessed the irritable pachyderm who made his home in this wilderness, saving the lives of his greatest enemies by the exercise of his strength and hardihood.



We agreed it would be ticklish work following that trail. It was just a narrow alley hemmed in by walls of vegetation, as difficult to escape from as a byway in a big city. The rhino was probably enjoying his midday doze somewhere along the track, and at any minute we might bump into him. I, being the better shot and more experienced hunter, took the lead, walking slowly, with every sense alert, holding my rifle ready to shoot at an instant's notice. My ears were strained for the cries of the tick birds, and my eyes never left the dense jungle on either side of the path about ten yards ahead, the range at which I was prepared to deal with a charging beast.

We proceeded without event for nearly a mile, and then we came to another path, turning off in the direction of the river. "This is where he goes to drink," I said to Mills. "For heaven's sake let us follow his example; I am nearly dead with thirst," he replied. The trail descended sharply to the water.

With thankfulness we returned to that river which, a short while before, we had decided we never wanted to see again. At this point its bed was more shallow; the rocky banks hemming it in were neither so steep nor so high. The rhino path ran through a rift in the strata by a way which even such a clumsy beast as this could follow. Opposite us was a cliff whose top, some fifteen feet from the rocky shelf of the river margin, receded in a grassy bank. Even as I hurried to quench my thirst I speculated upon the possibility of climbing out that way; I had no fancy for the rhino path, and knew that our easiest way to camp would be along the route by which we had left it. Mills agreed with me in this; he pointed out that some tufts of grass grew out of the side of the cliff, and opined that

they would support our weight, allowing us to climb to where we could reach a tough shrub on the bank and pull ourselves out.

After our drink we sat by the water removing our boots, in preparation for the venture. We were very tired, and disinclined to exert our sore muscles further; but suddenly we were galvanized into action by the sound of a terrific snort from the path along which we had come. We stood up, gazing wildly at the mouth of the leafy tunnel from which a savage rhino might emerge; but there was no further sound, and I decided we yet had time to make our escape before the beast discovered our whereabouts. Evening was approaching; it was time for him to take his drink, but the scent of man on the trail might turn him back. In a few moments I recovered my equanimity; I felt sure the rhino had departed. Motioning to Mills to keep silent, I approached the cliff, slinging my boots round my neck by the laces, and making ready to climb. My companion made a back for me; I mounted upon his shoulders, reached up, and threw the rifles on to the bank out of sight. I then got my knee on a grass root, gave a spring, and grabbed the heather-like bush above me. In a moment I was scrambling on the steep, grassy bank at the top of the cliff.

It had been my intention to recover the rifles, remove the slings, and make a rope with which to draw Mills up beside me; but before I could put this design into execution my attention was attracted to the bush on the opposite bank of the river, where another terrific snort, and a crash of breaking branches, announced that the rhino was advancing upon us in no friendly mood. Mills understood his danger. He gave a mighty jump, seized a grass root with

one hand, and, pulling his body up like a man climbing a rope, caught another of those insecure holds still higher. There he clung, digging his bare toes into the rock, about eight feet clear of the ground, but just out of reach of my down-stretched hand. I was lying on one haunch, my leg doubled under me, my left hand gripping the shrub, and my right hand groping for my companion's wrist. My position was precarious, badly balanced as I was, but that of Mills was infinitely worse. A rapid glance showed me the rhino emerging from cover at a trot, breathing fire and slaughter. Then I looked down at Mills again, and saw by his eyes that he was in desperate straits. "Be quick," he gasped; "the grass is pulling out!"

It was only too true; the withered tuft to which he clung as his main support was slowly separating from the crevice in which it grew. I took a firm hold upon the shrub, slid my body down until I dared stretch no farther, and managed to grip the hand with which Mills supported himself. Immediately he grasped my wrist tightly with his free hand. I looked backwards and upwards at the shrub; it was bent flat to the ground, and its roots were drawing. Mills was a small man, weighing no more than nine and a half stone; I am fairly heavy, but well equipped with muscle to compensate for my bulk. It seemed to me that one good heave would tear the shrub out of the ground, but that with the same heave I could yank Mills up the cliff to safety. "When I say three," I announced. "One, two, three," and up he came, using feet and knees to help, so fast that he was able to relinquish his hold of me, and scramble right up on to the bank above my head. At the same moment I turned, and drove my fingers into the grass at the full stretch of my arms, wriggling my way to

safety. I took one glance into the river valley, and saw the rhino tossing his head at the foot of the cliff immediately below us; then I removed myself far from the edge, lay down in the grass, and lighted a cigarette. I had strained my knee somehow, and it was causing me great pain.

How we got to camp from there I do not quite know. It was no great distance, but I could hardly walk, and both Mills and myself were exhausted to the point of delirium. It was eight o'clock by the time we reached the camp fire, and found our boys quite reconciled to our being lost on the mountain, but uneasy about the necessity of setting out in search of us. Doubtless it would have been daylight before they argued matters to a conclusion, and I do not suppose they would have looked very far, or very carefully; when a Native is convinced that he is wasting his time, he proceeds to waste it thoroughly.

I lay for several days in my blankets, and my knee swelled up to the size of a football. Later I was in hospital for a couple of weeks with synovitis. I still regret not being able to photograph that rhino, as he stood below the spot from which his enemy had been miraculously drawn beyond reach of his attack.



"THE WATCHERS BY NIGHT." YOUNG LIONESSES.