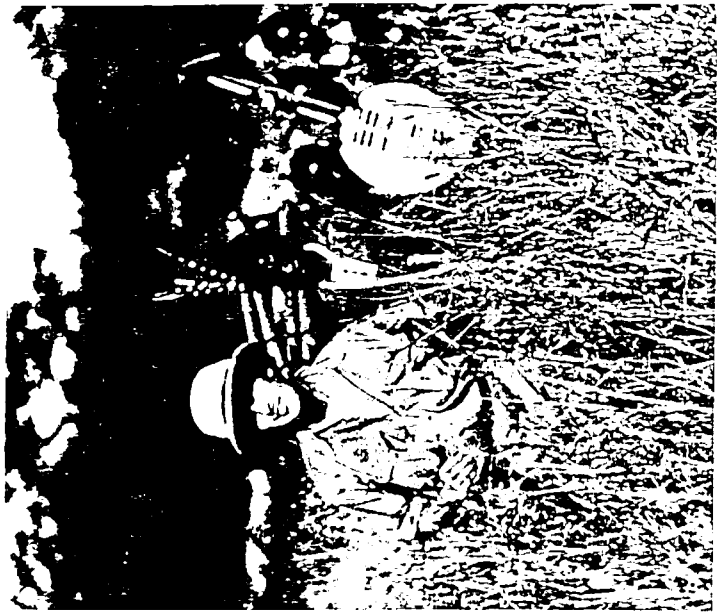
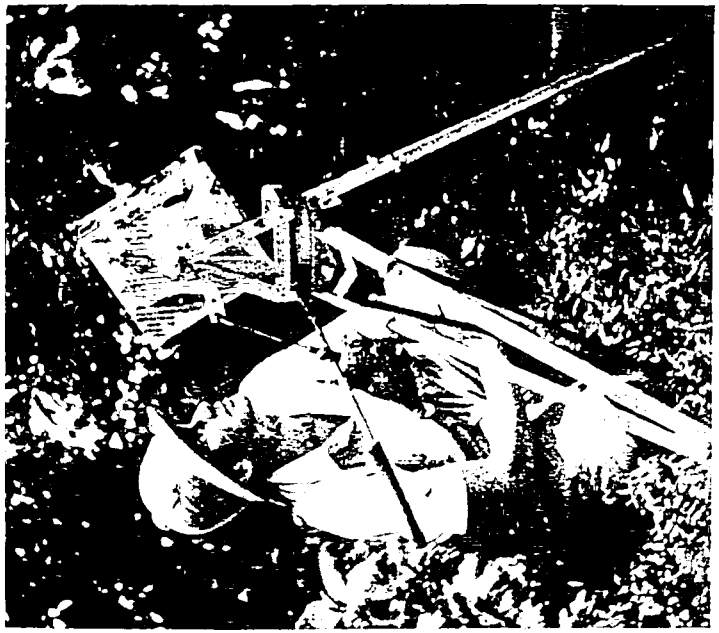


*The Author on safari with native followers carrying photographic kit*



*J. Blake Dalrymple "shooting" with his ciné camera in the African bush*



# CELLULOID SAFARI

*Filming Big Game from Cape to Cairo*

BY

STIRLING GILLESPIE, F.R.G.S.

*Photographs by J. Blake Dalrymple, F.R.G.S. and the Author*

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from its stem, dry it, and scrape out the pulp to form a beautiful pot, was to us the acme of economy, and made an instant appeal to our Scots minds.

On the subject of Scots economy, we soon learned that even as far away from Scotland as Zululand, the Scotsman's " ca' canny " characteristics were known. It seems that in the old days, when native labourers were paid in half-crowns at the rate of about eight per month, one enterprising, if dishonest, trader paid out eight florins to his " boys ". The natives did not know the difference for some time, and thereby lost four shillings per month in wages. When the trick was discovered, the Zulus immediately added to their very descriptive language a new word for florin. They called it *iskosh* or *iskoshman*.

In their dress Zulus show amusing eccentricities—particularly those who emulate Europeans. Many of them persist in wearing garments so torn that only a few threads cover their backs, while others prefer to exhibit their entire wardrobe on all occasions. It is not uncommon to see them don three greatcoats on a blisteringly hot day. A few wear long trousers with " shorts " on top, but the masses prefer a simple shirt, with a *mutsha* cunningly hidden beneath the tails. The varied head adornments of natives have become something of a byword, but the most original outfit we saw was that of an old fellow who wore over his jacket a lady's brassière!

## CHAPTER VI

# Rain and Rhino

TO the north lay the beacon-like summit of Mpisinene, its grey slopes twisting and heaving into fantastic shapes as though crushed by some elemental force. Panzagazi range circled to the west and merged into the terraces of Zankomfe in the south, and the walls of the great crater were completed by the heights of Umtoli, like a grim sentinel on the eastern extremity.

Encompassed by towering escarpments lay four hundred square miles of game country, teeming with wild life. Protected by the game laws of Zululand, the animals in the Hluhluwe district had multiplied rapidly, and thanks to the untiring energy of Captain H. B. Potter, some new species had been attracted to the basin. Among these were the white rhinoceros, until recently almost extinct. Though in past centuries they had a plentiful distribution in Africa, they are now confined to two small colonies, one in Zululand and the other to the north of Uganda.

Blake and I were eager to find any good material for educational films, and the prospect of obtaining some rhino shots was hailed with enthusiasm. On the way to St. Lucia Lake in search of hippopotamus and crocodile we stopped one night at Eshowe.

When we were settled in a homely hotel, we took a stroll round. A figure loomed out of the night, exclaiming, " Hey, chaps! Fancy meeting you up here!"

The speaker was a tall, slim young man with æsthetic features—rather like Edmund Kean I often thought afterwards.

" Drabble," I exclaimed, " Derek Drabble of the *Times*." There he was, the same Drabble of the *Cape Times* who had " covered " some of our movements in the Cape three months previously. He had come to Zululand to complete a quiet holiday.

" I knew you were here," he said. " The barman described two young Scots cameramen who were staying in his hotel, and I couldn't mistake you."

" Once seen, never forgotten," Blake grinned. " But come back to the hotel with us. We've been asked to meet a man who is well up in Zululand game, and you might find a story in him."

In the hotel lounge we were introduced to Mr. Harris, a noted entomologist, who was dealing successfully with Zululand tsetse fly. He had invented a remarkable trap, shaped somewhat like an animal, which attracted the pests and trapped them. He worked upon the fly's impulse to seek an animal's belly, and when it had entered the trap from below, to fly up towards the light, where it was caught in a net. He had so reduced the number of tsetse flies around Hluhluwe by this method that he hoped to exterminate them completely in quite a short time.

Mr. Harris was interested in our film work, and told us of his own efforts to film game with a 16-mm. ciné camera.

Sitting in a comfortable drill tunic and trousers, his eyes glistening with enthusiasm, he told yarn after yarn about his personal experiences, and showed us a newspaper cutting recording an incident which almost closed his career.

He had approached to within fifteen yards of two sleeping white rhino, when the little black rhino birds spotted him and gave the alarm. The rhino scrambled to their feet, and dashed straight at him before he had time to turn. Throwing himself to the ground, he rolled clear as the monsters thundered over the spot where he had stood.

These and other stories enthused us with the idea of



abandoning our trip to St. Lucia, and taking the trail of the rhino at Hluhluwe.

" Look here, Drabble. What do you say to finishing your trip with a rhino hunt? Something worth writing about."

" The idea is definitely attractive, but can you guarantee my return within four days? I've a boat to catch for Cape Town."

" Subject to vagaries of weather and car engine, I think we can guarantee your return," said Blake. In view of later events it was lucky we mentioned the weather.

And so the next day we set off, the three of us, to seek the big pachyderms in their native haunts. We journeyed through Empangeni to Mtubatuba without incident, only stopping at the latter to lay in a few additional stores. As we turned into an obscure track rank with summer vegetation we failed to see a ridge in the middle of the road, hidden in tambuki grass. We bumped up high and dry, like a ship on a sandbank, and every effort to dislodge the car from its pinnacle was fruitless. Eventually we returned to the main road where some " boys " were working, and recruited them *pro tem.* A song means much to a native, and so it was in this case. With a suitable chant to the effect that even an elephant could not uproot a maroola tree unless all his feet thrust in unison, they heaved as one man at a given word. The car swayed with the pull, and lurched into another set of tracks, and we were once more ready to push on.

The grass became longer and longer until we could barely see over it from the windows of the car. Blake drove, Derek stood on the running board, and I lay on the " bridge-decked " roof watching the ever-changing vista of the colourful veld. We were rising steadily uphill, each small summit revealing further hills ahead, and, on either side, wild thrilling valleys of thick bush.

As we swung under the branches of some tall trees and emerged in a clearing we saw in front of us a group of conical

huts, adjoining a trim shack. We left the car and walked into the village, but not a sound broke the stillness. The huts were deserted. We peered into one of them to see a heap of smelling hides sprawled grotesquely on the floor.

For a few moments no one spoke—the utter desolation required no words. It was not until we returned to the car that Derek broke the silence.

"Didn't it remind you of a scene from 'Trader Horn'?"

I agreed. "It required only the throb of tom-toms to complete the atmosphere."

We drove on, crossing a drift eighteen inches deep, and quickly completed the remaining miles to the camp, at which we arrived as rain began to fall in a slow drizzle.

Captain Potter emerged from his house, a slim, wiry man, tanned with exposure to years of sun in the hills of his beloved game country. We explained our mission, and hoped that we should be able to obtain "shots" of rhino suitable for British classrooms.

The naturalist pursed his lips.

"Special permission is required for filming game, and this is a bad time of year for filming. The grass is long and the scrub thick; it's difficult to get the game in the open. But I'll see what we can do."

We told him of our intention to motor up country, and the impossibility of returning several months later.

"In that case," he said immediately, "I'll have one of the 'boys' take you out to-morrow. Meantime, our rest-hut is at your disposal. The native 'boy', Jack, who is in charge, will attend to you."

We thanked Captain Potter for his assistance, and forthwith removed ourselves to our sanctuary. The hut comprised a mud-walled dwelling, grass-thatched, with the thatching exposed to view from inside as well as out. The walls were distempered, and the three small rooms well furnished, so that we were very comfortable.

Jack was a Shangaan boy of delightful versatility, who

*Rhino country—rolling plains of grass and thorn*

*Charlie*



showed his ability to cook by providing a quickly served dinner from our stores. As we scraped luscious pulp from slices of paw-paw, our ears tuned in to the unaccustomed jungle noises around us.

The very darkness vibrated with that weird cacophony. The plaintive wail of a " bush baby ",[1] one of Africa's most lovable little animals, trembled in the air to the moaning whine of hyænas in the valley. A coughing screech, vaguely wafted from the distant hills, heralded a hungry leopard. And aiding these soloists in the music of the night was the chorus of frogs, from the *profunda basso* of the " bulls " to the soprano wail of the little fellows, chanting a full-throated harmony from every quarter of the veld.

We turned in early and were lulled to sleep by the bush music and the plashing rain in the thatch. With the coming of dawn the music had stopped, but the plashing continued, much to our annoyance, for we had hoped for good light to " shoot " our game.

Little more than half a mile from the camp, across a wooded ravine, a herd of twenty buffalo were grazing on the higher slopes. As the light grew more intense, they drifted into the bush, from which they emerged no more that day.

A lean youth who introduced himself as Bobby Charter, arrived on the scene, and with the explanation that he spent all his holidays in the district, offered to accompany us in search of rhino. He had brought along a Zulu named Charlie Ninela who was to act as tracker. Naturally we welcomed the idea of having with us two guides so well versed in the ways of the wild.

We drove, with our cameras in the car in the vain hope that the rain might cease, along obscure paths until Charlie signalled a stop, and climbed to a peak where we could survey the widespread landscape.

We stood upon a giant rock below the bulk of Umtoli,

[1] Galagos—the only long-tailed lemurs on the African mainland.

and below us were rolling plains of grass and thorn, broken at irregular intervals by maroola trees or acacias, singly or in dense clumps. Near the rock was a cabbage tree with a powerful bole, a gargantuan likeness to the slim castor-oil plants which grace so many overseas drawing-rooms.

Charlie's keen eyes swept from covert to covert, seeking some sign of our bulky quarry, but beyond a few wildebeeste on the lower hill slopes, and vultures circling in the dome of grey sky, the landscape seemed devoid of life.

Rain fell in a steady drizzle, soaking through our clothes before we had left the car a quarter of a mile behind. We did not take our cameras—we had experienced too much trouble already as a result of their becoming wet.

Approaching a water-hole stealthily, Charlie gave a quick glance at the game tracks in the soft mud. There was the spoor of a timid little blue buck, side by side with large deep prints of wildebeeste and zebra. Here, where the mud was broken up and scraped about, were the tracks of a family of wart-hogs. Charlie beckoned us to follow round the edge of the pool. With hushed voices we stepped noiselessly over twigs and leaves, and drew up beside the native.

"*Mbejani*," whispered Charlie, pointing to the deeply marked rhino spoor. The tracks were all round the mud flats below the pan. A hollow indicated the spot where a rhino had enjoyed his mud bath; a coating of mud round the bole of a tree showed where he rubbed himself afterwards. Dense, dripping bush on every hand provided perfect cover for any animal however large, and we may be excused for glancing round apprehensively and starting at every sound.

Charlie moved off into a game trail, closely followed by Charter, myself, Derek and Blake. With his right hand clutching a rifle[1]—he was the only armed member of the party—and his left hand spelling a message with every

[1] We discovered some days later that the rifle-bolt was out of action.



expressive gesture, Charlie pushed on, studying the secrets of the spoor marks. We followed a rapid gesture to the left, and saw a herd of zebra disappearing through the scrub. Trees gave place to low thorns, the leaves of which provide the black rhino with his principal diet. Where previously we were troubled only with the dripping trees, we had now to endure the discomforts of a steady downpour without cover of any kind. We brushed through long grass and thorns in a wide circle but the rhinos seemed to have more sense than ourselves, for apparently they had elected to stay under cover.

After several hours' fruitless tramping we induced our guides to give up the quest, which, without our cameras, we felt to have little purpose.

As the rain grew steadily worse Blake and myself began to have fears for the utility of the car on the return to camp. Shortly after we started back we came to a *donga* [1] where water was already beginning to flow. As the wheels bit into the dirt for a grip, the built-up bottoming of stones gave way and we tilted over at a dangerous angle. We toiled for an hour with a jack and a heap of stones to bring the car back to even keel.

Shortly after resuming our journey we passed along a section of open track where we could see all round for a distance of thirty yards. A tyre burst and Blake and myself jumped out and changed wheels without giving a thought to the fact that there might be dangerous game in the vicinity.

When we arrived back at the rest camp we were surprised to hear Charlie mention something of two rhino which had disappeared into the thorns quite near us.

"When was that?" we asked.

"When the *in'kosanas* were changing the wheels."

We were out of bed at 5 a.m. next morning, ready to take up the trail of the rhino again. We were disappointed,

[1] A small ravine.

however, for rain continued to fall the whole morning, converting the roads into impossible quagmires. Towards afternoon the clouds rolled away to give place to a blink of sunshine. Ready to avail ourselves of any opportunity to come within "shooting" distance of our quarry, we set off on foot. The roads were impossible for the car, much to the regret of the party, and of necessity each of us carried some item of equipment.

As we plodded down the slopes towards the valleys we heard a sharp bark, closely resembling that of a dog. It was a watchful chacma baboon, sitting above a group of its gambolling fellows, giving warning that danger was approaching. No sooner had the baboons caught sight of us than they loped off up wind. One old fellow remained—a veritable patriarch in size and dignity—until we stopped to watch him; then he also decided it was time to go.

We rounded a sharp bend conversing in undertones, and surprised a wart-hog with a young family, grubbing on the pathway a few yards away. The babies scampered away immediately, but the big fellow, carrying a pair of very long tusks, looked at us sharply. Suddenly his tail shot erect, and he dashed off into cover.

For some time we crept along a maze of game trails without any trace of *mbejani* or *umkombe*.[1] Nevertheless we felt somewhere around us the pachyderms must be grazing, concealed by the screen of thorns.

A snort brought us to a sudden halt. Not knowing from whence it came I picked out a suitable tree for emergencies, and tried to gauge the time I should take to sprint to it and scale its lower branches. Charlie grinned and beckoned us forward, and we joined him at a bend in the trail to peer through the bushes.

In a little clearing a few yards from us were two wildebeeste—big fellows and high at the shoulder, with horns not unlike those of buffalo. They pawed the ground viciously,

[1] *Mbejani*—black rhino. *Umkombe*—white rhino.



shook their heads, and snorted loudly—an attempt, we took it, to scare off the threat of danger conveyed to their keen senses by an eddy of wind or an unusual sound.

As we watched, a troop of zebra drew out of the cover of the bush and stood behind them, shy, timid creatures, ready to flee from anything they did not understand. Buff coloured, with the clearly defined stripes which make them a source of wonder to every child who enters a zoo, they were excellently camouflaged in the broken light of the bush.

We stepped into the open and every animal bounded away down the trail, the wildebeeste crashing their way to safety, the zebra beating a tattoo on the harder ground as they held to the trail for speed.

Wildebeeste and zebra often associate in the jungle because their allied senses are an advantage in giving timely warning of danger.

The bright period had come to an end, and with heavy clouds rolling up, and darkness approaching, we had to give up the idea of filming. But Charlie was very anxious to show us rhino, and off he went by himself while we plodded homeward with the camera. In a few minutes he returned to tell us he had found fresh spoor. Leaving the cameras in a cache below a euphorbia tree, we followed Charlie down into the flats towards a dense spread of bush, where he picked up the trail and motioned us to silence.

We crept forward, bending low to avoid the "wait-a-bits"[1] until we saw Charlie stiffen and look to the right. He peered through the bush, then came slowly back to us.

"*Mbejani*," he whispered, "a cow and a calf."

A sibilant conversation between Charlie and Charter followed, both speaking Zulu.

"He says there are two black rhino in there, only ten

[1] Wait-a-bit thorns, so named because they cling to one's clothes and hinder one's passage through the bush.

yards away, and they are listening. Find a tree and get up."

Blake and I scrambled into the fork of a thorn tree, much to our discomfort, while Drabble, Charter and the native found refuge in maroola trees. In doing so we had made some noise. Fortunately the animals did not get our wind, but their ears told them that something was amiss, and without warning they rushed through the thorns across our line of progress. Under a tree the cow stopped to watch the backtrail and the calf stopped with her, only following when the mother had gone on ahead.

From their high perch on a maroola, Drabble and the native saw part of this manœuvre, but Charter, Dalrymple and myself, five feet above the ground, our view completely blocked by the low bush, saw nothing of the beasts, much to our disgust. How, we wondered, were we to make films of game in this thick scrub, where we could not even see a rhino at ten yards.

As darkness crept over the plains and lifted to the surrounding heights, we crept back to camp, more dead than alive. Hyænas moaned in the valley below; bush babies whined plaintively and were silenced for a moment by the coughing scream of a leopard; the threnody of frogs lulled us to sleep, and we closed our eyes to the darting gleam of fireflies.

## CHAPTER VII

# Marooned!

WE rose next morning to view a depressing landscape, sodden with rain which had fallen all night, and now continued without any apparent indication of stopping. Bobby Charter came to tell us that the rivers were in flood, and that we could not get back to civilization even though we wanted to. Cheerful soul!

And so we had to resign ourselves to several days of inactivity. Blake was far from well owing to the effects of repeated drenchings, and kept mostly to bed. Drabble and I improved the shining hour with some writing, sitting at a table beside the door of our thatched hut, listening to the patter of incessant rain or watching plashing pools forming in the mud outside.

Drabble was concerned about his chances of getting back to more civilized surroundings. The period of his leave was now exhausted. He had to return to Durban immediately to catch a ship bound for Cape Town, and the delay caused by the change in the weather was getting on his nerves.

We were sitting quietly writing when the journalist suddenly leapt to his feet.

"Good God!" he shouted, "will this rain never stop?"

He glared out of the door for a moment, then he smiled. "Weather like this would drive you crazy."

Blake looked over his pillow.

"Reminds you of 'Rain', doesn't it?"

Trying a spot of thin humour I remarked that it certainly didn't remind one of bright sunshine.

" I mean Somerset Maugham's ' Rain '."

" Yes," admitted Drabble, as the rain pattered a monotonous obbligato. " One can understand the psychological effect that it must have had on a group of marooned people."

" At all events, the weather suits me at the moment," I put in, " for I'm getting up to date with some copy."

" Don't you think Zululand is particularly rich in copy?" asked Derek, beginning to forget the rain.

" You could fill volumes with the story of the Zulus."

And we plunged into an orgy of reminiscences . . . of Tshaka, the tyrant king who formed his impis into crescents and gave them short assegais to annihilate their enemies. . . . Tshaka the dictator, who " smelt out " friend and foe alike for torture and death. . . . Tshaka who was murdered by his half-brother Dingaan, who in turn was killed by a Swazi. . . . Dingaan the terrible, who had the floor of his kraal caked and polished with blood . . . who ambushed Piet Retief and all his men under a cloak of hospitality so that none escaped alive.

The place names all around us were vivid reminders of these savage days a hundred years ago. Empangeni, Mtubatuba, Ginginghlovu (which means the rolling of the elephants) and Tshaka's Kraal—all were associated with Zululand's travail before Europeans brought peace and order to the land.

These discussions came to an end when we were treated to a few hours of bright sunshine. We attempted another rhino hunt, using a camp lorry which carried us down to the flats before it became bogged in a newly formed stream. Sending word back to the rest house to have our car brought to meet us, we went on afoot, Charlie, Kosheni, and an *umfana* [1] carrying the ciné equipment.

A walk of three or four miles brought us to a rise of thick bush. Charlie suggested that we should wait while

[1] Youth.

*A Zulu " boy " carrying the ciné tripod*

*His necklet is a coloured " love letter " from his best girl, and in his hand is a ceremonial umbrella*

*Eland cow and calf—the largest African antelopes*



he scouted around for rhino sign, and we dropped our loads and sat down below a cabbage tree. The sun was filtering through a shimmer of haze, giving us enough light for bright " shots " should the opportunity arise.

In this fertile country low trees and shrubs grow in great abundance. Higher up the slopes we could see aloes and lemon wood, giving place to maroolas, cabbage trees and wild figs. River palms marked the course of a stream cutting through the vegetation below our point of vantage.

A low bank of cloud loomed behind the peak of Umtoli.

" If we don't get our ' shots ' very quickly the weather is going to spoil everything again," I predicted.

" Just our luck," Blake said, watching the activity of a beetle rolling a ball of animal dropping, twice as big as itself, up a steep slope. It was just dragging the coveted prize down into its lair when Charlie emerged from the screen of bush with the news that he had spotted rhino.

Fears of the weather forgotten in an instant, we caught up cameras and tripods and fell into line behind the tracker. I stopped for a moment to adjust a strap, and when I looked up the others were swallowed by the bush. Possessed of a good sense of orientation, I hurried forward, hoping to catch them up immediately, but for several minutes I could not discover their whereabouts, and I was beginning to feel rather anxious about the proximity of Charlie's rhino, when I saw fresh tracks in the grass. I followed them for several yards, and came upon Derek and the *umfana*, who had also become separated from the others. The boy seemed to know where he was going, and we followed him quietly.

The ground beyond the top of the rise sloped steeply away, and was practically bare of scrub. No sooner had I emerged from the cover than I skidded into a deep hole concealed by grass, and ripped the skin from my right leg on a hidden tree-stump. Since my garb comprised only shirt, shorts and rubber shoes, I had no protection from the

splintered wood, and consequently climbed out to firmer ground in no pleasant frame of mind.

A sibilant whisper recalled the job in hand, and I looked up to see the *umfana* pointing at something.

At the foot of the slope was a wide *vlei* or marsh, linking the hill upon which we stood with another rise two or three hundred yards away. In the hollow were two white rhino accompanied by a calf. The male was an immense brute which must have weighed all of five tons, the female but slightly smaller. The calf could barely be seen in the long grass.

They had been wallowing in a pool below us, apparently, for they were caked in red mud. Followed by their lumbering offspring, they were moving up out of the *vlei* towards thicker bush on the opposite slope.

A whisper on our right told us we were near the rest of the party. We joined them and discovered they had already seen the trio and were now concentrating their attention on an object some distance to our right. It proved to be another white rhino standing clear of the bush at the near side of the *vlei*. If it did not move away, and if we could approach it without disturbing it, we should get an excellent " shot ". If . . .

We raised our packs and glided down to the cover of the grass, growing higher than our heads in places. A last glance at the first three rhino, before we were too low down to keep them in sight, indicated that they were drifting towards the cover in which we intended to stalk the other. For myself, I hoped they would not come in behind us and get our wind while we were " setting up ".

We emerged from the grass into a donga, and stopped to set up the tripod before moving forward with infinite caution toward the screen of low bush concealing our quarry from view.

We were twenty-five yards from the bushes when they were violently agitated, and a huge white rhino lumbered



into view. From where we crouched to wait his next move we could clearly see the characteristics that distinguished him from his black brother—elongated head rising to a high lump behind very long ears, extra long horns, square upper lip, and excessive bulk. Most surprising of all, in colour he was the same dirty grey as the black rhino.

He drew up sharply in the long grass and looked about him. He was suspicious. Something had conveyed to him that there was danger in the air, and he was not to be caught napping. His ears cast round for a tell-tale sound, and his little eyes swept over his limited field of vision. We were well downwind and his nose, more valuable to him than the keenest eyes in thick bush, told him nothing.

Without a sound I set up the tripod, and Blake adjusted the camera and squinted through the viewfinder. Then he shook his head.

" It's no use," he whispered, " the grass is too long. We'll have to get him into the open."

" Never mind them," Charter said, creeping up to us. " There are five rhino in a pan round the *vlei*."

Hastily collecting the gear, we followed the tracks of the white rhino round the edge of the swamp, holding to the shelter of the thorn bushes at the expense of torn clothes and scratched legs. Knowing that the three white rhino were in the bush just ahead of us, I prepared to run for dear life if one should dash out.

An angry snort alarmingly near to us brought my heart into my mouth. All of us froze where we stood. The creatures had circled above us and must have heard our movements, but if they remained where they were, they would not get our wind, and we moved on to the edge of the pan and peered from the shelter of the low bush.

" *Mbejani*," whispered Charlie excitedly.

Splashing in reed-covered swamp water were five black rhino. On their backs we could see little brown rhino birds, ready to give warning should we display too much movement.

Three of them had enjoyed mud baths and were moving upwind to a point fifty or sixty yards distant where they could find trees for a " rub-down ".

The other two, barely twenty-five yards away, were looking in our direction, as though the snort of the white rhino had put them on the *qui vive*.

Step by step we edged forward, seeking a gap through the grass which had defeated our every attempt to " line-up " a decent shot. For educational material it was useless to show only a row of heads.

Twenty-five yards . . . twenty yards . . . fifteen yards. We stopped and placed the camera on the tripod. I crawled back to Drabble and the *umfana*, who had remained at the edge of the bush with the spare gear, to fetch another lens in case Blake should need it. As I stole back I heard a sudden crash behind us, and felt sure that at last I was to face the charging rhino. When I discovered a wart-hog leaping almost under my feet, my annoyance with the ugly creature was only second to my relief that I should still be in a position to rate him for his stupidity.

The noise had alarmed the black rhinos and we saw their ears twitching and their horns thrust forward aggressively. Charlie had been circling about to fix the position of all the animals in his mind, and when he told us that another three *umkombes* were almost downwind from us, we decided the situation was becoming critical. I saw Charter remove his conspicuous white shirt and kick off his loose shoes, and I knew something was likely to happen.

An angry snort rent the air, and we wheeled round to see the white rhinos crashing away from us, alarmed by our tell-tale scent. The black rhinos immediately joined the stampede, three of them disappearing from view beyond the pan. But the other two had decided to come our way, and we rushed towards the edge of the water as the snorting pachyderms barged past us, so close that we could have discerned the ticks on them had we taken time to watch.



Blake had swung the camera towards them but he had just time to photograph a rump and tail before they were gone. I was accelerating in the opposite direction, and Blake followed me through the mud and water in the pan. We were joined by the others and after scrambling down into a donga we revived ourselves with long drinks of clear, cool water and the juicy fruits of a *tunduluga*, resembling plums.

Though relieved to have escaped from a very tight corner with whole skins, we were disappointed at losing such excellent film material. But as Charlie said, " *iqina leqa embezeni*," there's many a slip. . . .[1]

Banks of cloud rolling over Umtoli blotted out the thin sunlight, an indication that we had better return without delay to the track where we had to meet the car. After a tiring trek through clinging thorns we found ourselves below our old cabbage tree, and looked in vain for any sign of a car.

By this time Blake was thoroughly disgusted.

" Just as I expected. The nig hasn't delivered the message properly."

Bobby Charter was confident that the car would come before long and suggested we should wait where we were for an hour or two.

The sky became more and more overcast, until it could hold its weight of moisture no longer. Down came the rain in solid sheets. We gathered the camera equipment into a heap with feverish activity, and with the aid of Charlie's cane knife, hacked down dozens of branches to build a shelter. It was far from pleasant to see the rain flooding down on expensive cameras and lenses, and we were glad to see the last branch put in place. By that time our clothes were sodden, and our useless sun helmets were oozing moisture within.

It was obvious now that even though the car had set

[1] Lit. " The venison jumps out of the pot."

out it could never reach us through the mud and floods. After a brief discussion we decided to leave the "boys" in charge of the cameras with instructions to take them to the nearest kraal when the rain abated, and we set off unhampered to walk back to camp.

I do not wish to dwell on that heartbreaking tramp of eleven miles through dripping bush and squelching trails, our shirts so wet that we tied them round our necks to prevent their wet folds clinging to our skin. Rhino might lurk in every covert, but we plodded on with heads bent to the rain, without a glance to right or left.

We had covered five or six miles when the rain abated, and we were able to take more stock of what was happening around us. We picked up several quills dropped by some unfortunate porcupine—probably the result of a family squabble. Monkeys grimaced at the strange apparitions invading their domain; a small snake made an unsuccessful dart at my legs and was killed by a well-aimed stone from Bobby—"on principle," he said.

We disturbed an eagle fighting with something on the track. The bird must have stood over three feet from the ground, and as it spread its wings, measuring nearly nine feet from tip to tip, it presented a magnificent sight. It shot up into the sky, and we approached the scene of the struggle to discover it had tackled an iguano five feet in length and had bitten off one of the reptile's legs. We allowed the stricken monitor to drag itself to a hiding-place in the bush.

On the higher slopes a cold mist lay on the ground, and our exposed bodies shivered to the chill breeze as we rose steadily upwards. Feeling more dead than alive, Drabble and I hastened on ahead, to have hot dinner prepared for the others. Blake told us afterwards that the additional rain coming on top of his previous chill was too much for him, and he was practically carried over the last mile by Bobby.



When he did not come to the camp within half an hour, Derek and I went back to look for him. We found him peacefully sleeping in Captain Potter's house, wrapped in warm blankets. The rest did him good, and next day he was almost himself again.

Followed days of waiting for word that the rain had stopped long enough to allow communication with the "outside". We sat in the rest hut looking out over the mist-enshrouded valleys.

"Will the rain never stop?"

"Are you sure you haven't another cigarette?"

"Sorry, old man, the last one went days ago."

"How long will this blasted weather last?"

Then one day we were told that a lorry was going to try to get through, and Derek Drabble, long overdue in Cape Town, decided he would go with it.

His adventures have been recorded hitherto in the *Cape Times* and require no repetition here. Suffice to say that after crossing two rivers, the lorry was held up by the flooded M'zanene, and Derek had to cross on the shoulders of a native, who had great difficulty in holding his head above water as he staggered over the treacherous stones, leaning against the roaring current. After seven miles trek with the "boys" Derek staggered into the store at Hluhluwe, and was put to bed with a doze of quinine to set him right for his journey to Durban next day.

When the natives returned to the rest camp, they brought news of the alarming floods in the district; of derelict cars and lorries; of washed-away bridges; of lost cattle; and of deaths by drowning.

A native corporal had been swept to his death in a flooded *donga*. Crocodiles had made short work of cattle and wart-hogs caught in the rivers. Someone had seen a rhinoceros skid on a muddy track, and sit down with a grunt of annoyance.

We waited for two days until another lorry, driven

by Captain Shenton, was going out, and decided to accompany him in our car. From the start the going was rough, and although the total distance to the store at Hluhluwe was only eighteen miles we were unable to make it. We spent the whole of a tiring day in digging the cars out of mudholes, crossing the Manzimbomvu and Manzimyama, and breaking new trails over the veld where the old road had been washed away or was under water. Our tyres were almost chewed to ribbons by the chains; our speedometer registered thirty-four miles—an indication of spinning wheels on every mud-flat.

At the M'zanene we found the road was several feet below the surface of the torrent, and Captain Shenton decided to break a new one over the veld and attempt to cross at the first point where the river spread out. Eventually we found a creek shallow enough to ford, but to reach the river bed we had to run the car down a slope with the wheels straddling a cut gouged to a depth of four feet by the floods.

At the other side of the river we acccpted the offer of a native to guide us back to the road. Unfortunately his idea of ground suitable for a car track was very hazy, and we soon found ourselves sinking deeper and deeper in mud until we were hopelessly bogged in the centre of a swamp. We had to send for a gang of natives, and pay them handsomely for pushing us back to firm ground. Another long detour was necessary to find the road, and night caught us bumping over a hill through grass as high as the car windows. We pitched our tent and the whole party crowded into it to sleep until morning. In the light of the dawn we found ourselves almost under the shade of stark yellow fever trees, ghastly as the grim figure of Death.

And so we reached Hluhluwe in the morning and motored to Inyoni before night again caught us. On the third day after leaving the camp we drove down West Street, Durban, having had more than our fill of rain and rhino.