

LIFE STORIES OF BIG GAME

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WITH SKETCHES BY

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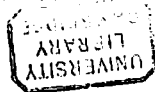
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"ROLLING TO EARTH FAST LOCKED IN THE GRIP OF A YOUNG
MALE BABOON."
(Frontispiece)



CHAPTER IV

"CRUSTY," THE RHINOCEROS

SHE was an ill-tempered little beast from birth, or at any rate from two days old, and so deserves the name of "Crusty" which I have given her. We usually reserve that sobriquet for gouty old gentlemen and retired Indian Colonels; but I can assure you that "Crusty," the rhinoceros, was more choleric than either!

She was born at the end of a heavy rainy season. How Mother Nature taught her parents to arrange this I do not know; but it is certain that she did so—and for a very good reason.

During the rainy season—when most of the forest folk grow fat—the rhino family becomes lean and gaunt, and in no condition to rear growing progeny. This is partly due to the heat—and the heavy coat the rhino wears at all seasons—and partly to scarcity of appetising food. Dry food, dry weather, and dry country make a combination the rhino loves. Perhaps this accounts for his evil temper. One can imagine that the sight of fat forest denizens all around him, at a time when he is thin and hungry, might well inspire a sense of injustice.

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Yet even ill-temper may have its uses. It was owing to her first manifestation—when she was two days old—that "Crusty" lived the long and not uneventful life I am able to record in this history.

Her mother had placed her in a shallow pit she had dug in the sand, beneath a thorny acacia tree; and carefully covered her with brushwood to hide her from prowling enemies. Whether she had learned this trick from the elephant folk I cannot say; but she seemed to copy the forest kings in this and other ways, just as she resembled them in strength and size.

"Crusty" was lying half asleep with only her small nose protruding when a strange smell made her open her eyes and twitch her small ears. At the same moment two pairs of black hands jerked away the brushwood just above her head. Looking upwards, she saw two black, upright forms, and as these stooped towards her the strange scent became overpowering.

At once "Crusty" hated that scent, and the hatred remained with her all her life. Yet she did not know why, for she felt no fear. But with her breed dislike is the precursor of rage, and as four hands inserted themselves beneath her, and strove to raise her, she gave a shrill squeal of anger and butted violently with her small head at the disturbers of her peace.

That squeal saved "Crusty." Her mother,

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"Fury," was busily uprooting a euphorbia tree about three hundred yards away which promised succulent nourishment, and had "Crusty" remained silent through fear, the two natives might have made her captive without hindrance. But as her baby's thin plaint reached "Fury" she gave a loud snort and started towards her nursery at a clumsy gallop.

The two natives heard the snort and the crash of her passage through the bush. They waited to hear no more. Grabbing their flint-lock muzzle loaders from where they lay on the sand they started at top speed in the opposite direction. Even so, they were barely a hundred yards distant when the cow hurled herself into the small clearing where "Crusty" lay hidden. For in spite of bulk the rhinoceros can move with surprising speed when needful.

Fortunately for the natives, the distance was too great for "Fury" to see them clearly, and since they had raced down-wind she quested the air in vain. For, like the elephant, the rhino depends on scent and hearing for information rather than sight. But as she nosed her baby and smelt the man-taint on her body and on the disturbed brushwood the squeal of rage which reached the fugitives expressed her feelings so clearly that their speed over the next hundred yards increased.

The sun was about three hours old when this happened, and for the next three hours "Fury"

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did sentry-go over "Crusty," pausing once or twice to allow her baby a drink of milk. But as the sun rose higher she became obviously impatient, and stood gazing frequently down a well-worn path which disappeared into a patch of thorn bush to the east.

Occasionally she uttered a peculiar squeal which was totally unlike the angry sound the man-taint had drawn from her. The last time she did this there came a faint answer, like an echo, from far down the trail she had been watching. About ten minutes later there came into sight a huge, black shape, coming towards the clearing at a trot.

In a few minutes "Bighorn"—the largest bull in that district, and "Fury's" mate—halted in front of her and attempted to rub his ugly muzzle against her shoulder. But "Fury" was not pleased with her lord this morning. Perhaps she blamed his long dalliance at the water-hole for the threat to little "Crusty." Or perhaps she was thirsty. At all events, she met his advances with an angry snort, and gave him a vicious jab in the shoulder with her horn.

"Bighorn" grunted morosely and stepped over to nose the calf. He must have smelt the man-taint and sensed the cause of his mate's annoyance with himself, for he gave a short, angry squeal, followed by a succession of grunts, and commenced to hurl sand and roots into the air with his great thirty-six inch horn. "Fury"

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watched him for a moment and then, satisfied, that he realised the danger and might be trusted to avert it, she departed at a trot to quench her own thirst.

That she and "Bighorn" were obliged to do this in daylight was due to little "Crusty." As a rule she and her mate drank at night, but while the necessity of guarding their helpless baby from any prowling lions devolved upon them, both parents kept guard during the night hours, drinking only after daylight at water six miles distant.

"Fury's" confidence in "Bighorn" was justified, and when she returned, soon after midday, the big bull still lay, alert and vigilant, a few paces from their small daughter.

About four days after her escape from capture little "Crusty" refused to stay in her usual hiding place one morning. Twice her mother pushed her gently into it, and twice she scrambled out, squealing a peevish protest. The second time "Bighorn," who had stood watching, turned and walked slowly towards the thorn bush through which the water trail led. "Crusty" looked from the big bull to her mother for a moment in indecision, then trotted unconcernedly after "Bighorn." "Fury" promptly followed, glad, no doubt, of a prospective change from the near-by feeding ground "Crusty's" inability to travel had confined her to for a week past.

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For rhinos consume almost as much as elephants, and during that week she and "Bighorn" had sadly diminished supplies of appetising food—such as evergreen shrubs and bushes, roots, twigs of the thorny acacia, and euphorbia saplings—growing in the vicinity.

But "Crusty's" first pedestrian effort was not a prolonged one. After about four miles the bush belt suddenly ended, and the path continued across a wide, open plain. "Crusty" grew suspicious of such unaccustomed surroundings, and feeling tired about the same time she lay down and obstinately refused to budge.

"Fury" gazed around speculatively, and seeing a dense clump of overhanging "mutema" bush about twenty yards off the path she walked over to it, and with horn and feet soon hollowed out a shallow depression beneath it. Then she gently urged "Crusty" into the shelter, broke off a few branches with her prehensile upper lip, dropped them over her baby, and proceeded to search the new habitat for provender.

"Bighorn," meanwhile, continued a leisurely progress towards the water-hole located in the valley, whose contour could now be seen about two miles away.

During the next week little "Crusty" accompanied her parents in their nightly search for food, but always returned to her little nest before dawn and lay there through the hot hours. It

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was owing to this that a rather terrifying adventure befell her.

"Fury" and "Bighorn" had developed the habit of going to water, shortly before daybreak, without her; relying, perhaps, on their speedy return to prevent accident. One morning, as dawn showed faintly in the Eastern sky, "Crusty" awoke from a slumber which had lasted less than an hour to feel the brushwood above her being gently pulled aside. At the same moment a disagreeable smell greeted her nostrils, and, looking upwards, she stared into a pair of green, opalescent eyes.

With little thrills of rage and terror tickling her spine, "Crusty" emitted a lusty squeal for help and attempted to scramble out on the side farthest from the unpleasant eyes. But on this side she met another pair equally baleful, and again squealing her terror she crouched low in the pit and shrank as far as possible from the marauders.

Next moment two pairs of talons fastened on her head and shoulders and attempted to drag her from her hiding place. She was already a strong little beast and struggled bravely to free herself, but in vain. The two leopards which had scented her retreat were full grown, and much too powerful for her sturdy resistance. She was dragged forth on her side, and while the female leopard seized her short hind leg in her jaws her mate fastened on "Crusty's" throat and commenced to squeeze breath and blood from her together.

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A few minutes more and her short life would have ended. But it so happened that "Longclaw," the leopard now attacking her, had been trailed for the last hour by "Black Shadow" (the biggest leopard in that district) out of desire for his mate, "Lightfoot," and at that moment "Black Shadow" arrived.

He arrived silently, but with a quick rush that landed him on top of "Longclaw," so that for a moment "Crusty" lay struggling beneath two heavy bodies. At the shock of "Black Shadow's" weight "Longclaw" abandoned his strangling grip and writhed to his feet, while "Lightfoot" released her painful hold on the hind leg, and stretched herself at full length on the sand to watch the struggle. "Crusty" waited for no more, but as the cool air filled her aching lungs she uttered a squeal of pure terror, and in spite of the pain of her wounds dashed down the water trail as fast as her short legs would carry her.

"Fury" and "Bighorn," returning in single file along the water trail, heard that squeal. They were barely two hundred yards away, and dashed to the rescue, snorting vengeance. "Fury" pulled up beside her trembling offspring, and at the smell of blood from her wounds squealed with rage, and dashed forward again to punish the enemy, followed by "Bighorn."

So that "Black Shadow" and "Longclaw," writhing over and over in a desperate death

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struggle, suddenly found themselves lifted and hurled into the air, to fall painfully into a thorny bush some ten yards away. "Fury's" horn had driven clean through "Longclaw's" body, and lifted both leopards together. As they fell, "Black Shadow" disengaged himself and dashed hastily after "Lightfoot," who had vanished silently as the avengers appeared.

But "Longclaw" could not rise, and as he struggled to regain his feet "Bighorn's" great horn raised him high in the air and tossed him backwards into "Fury's" path. Two minutes later only a shapeless, blood-soaked mass remained of "Longclaw" the leopard.

Then the big beasts returned to "Crusty," and while "Fury" licked her wounds and comforted her, "Bighorn" stood sentinel beside them, grunting his defiance to all enemies within earshot. Thereafter "Crusty" accompanied her parents to water or elsewhere; but until she died, faint traces of "Longclaw's" teeth and claws showed on the thick hide of neck and throat which had saved her.

During the first month, when she followed her parents to water, "Crusty" discovered three things. The first was the existence of two creatures whom her parents feared; the second, that the ill-temper which she had often seen expressed in domestic quarrels was common to all her kind; and the third, that the said ill-temper made her kind the noisiest of all the forest folk.

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For the last mile to the water-hole the path led through rocky ground, and at this point many trails converged into one. But each was used only by rhino and had been so used for so long a time that the path in the hard ground was worn to a depth of nearly two feet. Indeed, "Crusty's" small shape was almost hidden from view when she entered this last section.

On the first occasion she followed "Bighorn" and was in turn followed by "Fury." Ahead of her she heard vengeful grunts and squeals and soon discovered the reason of these. Just ahead of her father loomed the black shape of another bull, who, instead of progressing peaceably to water, was engaged in combat with another rhino ahead of him which had turned to resent a vicious prod from his horn.

To add to the uproar her father promptly lunged forward and attacked from the rear. At once the assaulted bull turned on his new antagonist, while his former adversary hastened after his mate to water. Presently, after much uproar and many hard cracks, the bull ahead of "Bighorn" turned and trotted onwards, and "Crusty" and "Fury" were able to resume progress.

Behind them sounded similar grunts and clashes of horns, and it was not long before "Crusty" realised that such stupid obstruction and angry aggression was the nightly accompaniment of the

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progress of her relatives down the narrow trail their feet had worn.

The other forest folk knew this however, and gave the evil-tempered beasts a wide berth. When "Crusty" emerged at last on the edge of the big "pan" she saw shapes of scores of antelopes, zebra, bushpigs, and other animals which had arrived by different routes in peace and silence. About thirty rhino were gathered on that first night—made up of little troops of three or four—and even while drinking they could not refrain from quarrelling. The quieter animals viewed them with disdain or indifference from a distance, while watching alertly for enemies of their own.

While her parents were drinking here a week later two of those enemies materialised suddenly. "Crusty" stood watching a group of graceful impala drinking at the opposite side of the pool, when suddenly there was a frightened rush, and the bounding red forms scattered in all directions. But two remained, with legs kicking spasmodically, and a great tawny shape was fastened with tooth and claw to the throat of each.

At once the six or eight rhino drinking near "Crusty" ceased their quarrels and clustered close together in silence, gazing intently at the tragedy being enacted across the pool. Then an old bull set off up the trail at a trot and the rest followed. So "Crusty" learned that lions were at least avoided, if not feared by her kind.

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Although she did not know it, it was to secure the safety of numbers that the rhino folk used a single trail to water. A troop of lions might well prove too much for a single bull, but would hesitate to attack a number, even when meat-hungry.

Two nights after the killing at the pool "Crusty" stood there again, watching her parents roll and wallow in the mud with other rhino, when loud rumbling noises smote her ears, followed by a deep trumpet note. Next moment majestic black forms of mighty proportions, with huge flapping ears and pendent trunks, emerged from the bush on the opposite side of the pool, and "Crusty" gazed in awe at the first elephant she had seen.

Led by a huge cow eighteen of the forest kings stepped slowly round the edge of the pool towards the rhinoceros group. The latter drew together and watched in silence strange to them, as their great kinsfolk sprayed shower after shower of water over their dusty hides. Then, as the elephants drew nearer to them, they turned and retreated to a distance from the pool. Since they never gave way for other animals or for each other, "Crusty" got the impression that they feared these great beasts she now saw for the first time.

In this she was right, though as a matter of fact their fear was needless, for the elephant is placid and even-tempered, as the rhinoceros is irascible and aggressive. But before she died

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"Crusty" was to incur punishment for a display of aggression towards the elephant folk; and in the punishment she found sufficient reason for caution—if no more.

Her first year's education consisted principally in learning edible foods and classifying them in varying degrees of desirability. Many different leaves, twigs, and roots were sampled and enjoyed, in addition to those of the thorny acacia, and the stems of the euphorbia saplings her parents uprooted she also shared and enjoyed.

During the winter months her parents forsook the dense thorn thickets where they usually rested by day and fed by night, and spent most of their time on open, grassy plains, where at first sight she could discover no food. But soon loud champ-ing noises in the grass near her told her that other rhinos had discovered food supplies. Just afterwards her parents introduced her to succulent ever-green plants growing amidst the tall grass.

Then, also, in addition to the luxury she found obtainable from a mud wallow, she achieved considerable enjoyment from a roll in the red and yellow dust of these plains, so that sometimes her colour was completely changed from its usual greyish black. An inexperienced hunter who chanced to have met her in such guise might well have startled his friends by an account of a red or yellow rhino!

But as the rains came on, and the heat increased,

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her parents took to the dense cover again and slept most of the day, though they sometimes went to water in daylight when not far distant from cover, as well as at night. She preferred the daylight drinks as only odd members of the rhino family were encountered, and the squealing aggressive tactics, incidental to the crowded nightly procession, were less in evidence.

For although "Crusty's" ill-temper increased as she grew up it was developed chiefly by contact with others equally afflicted. It is probable that, if by accident she could have spent her life amongst gentler folk, she might even have become good-natured. But amongst the rhino clan aggression and pugnacity seemed the law of life, and even in her gambols with young playmates she had to be ever on guard against a vicious dig from older companions whose progress she might accidentally obstruct. A tit-bit in the food line, too, was more often than not secured by an angry quarrel—even between her parents—and she learned (as we all do) by observation.

In the course of her second year she witnessed a tragedy which stirred memories of her own youth in her dull, stupid brain. She and her parents were proceeding to water just before sundown when suddenly a ferocious growl shook the ground beneath them. A few yards ahead a great tawny shape rose to his feet with bristling mane and bared fangs. Beside him crouched a lioness

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with paws outstretched on the body of a rhino calf they had dragged from cover and killed. From the opposite direction at the same moment the parents charged down on the killers, and "Bighorn" and "Fury" stood blinking with their dim little pig's eyes at a scene they had watched many times before.

That scene was an attempt to punish a more agile enemy in which the rhinoceros family is far too stupid to succeed. As they thundered down, the lion and lioness sprang aside and struck savagely at each with unsheathed claws. Squealing with pain and anger, they turned and charged again, to be met in similar elusive and painful fashion. A third time they essayed to reach their enemies with their terrible horns, only to receive another slashing stroke low down on the flanks. It was enough. This time the pair continued the charge until they reached "Fury" and "Bighorn," when they halted and stood staring at "Crusty's" parents in comical and stupid surprise.

Instead of offering sympathy or help, as the elephant folk would have done, "Bighorn" grunted savagely and charged at the bull, who promptly whirled aside and decamped, followed by his mate.

For a mile they could be heard squealing their woes to an unsympathetic world, while "Fury" and "Bighorn" continued their way to water without evincing further interest in the tragic couple. But "Crusty" noted that the snarling lions re-

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mained in possession, and as she sidled hastily between her parents, certain gruesome sucking and rending noises behind her sent apprehensive shivers through her body, and made her glance apprehensively backwards.

When she was nearly two years old her mother became decidedly hostile towards her, and "Bighorn" would, as often as not, seize food she had laboriously uprooted for herself. So falling in one night at the water-hole with a group of three young rhino about her own age "Crusty" conceived a preference for their company and left her selfish parents for ever. Since "Fury" produced a bull calf a month later perhaps they did not miss her?

Throughout that third year of her age she wandered with her new companions, but even with two of these she was obliged to assert fighting prowess constantly. These were two young heifers, and, although as yet their horns were embryonic, they would administer to "Crusty" or each other a painful dig, when by so doing they could secure a coveted morsel or right of way. The other member of the group was a young bull and with him she got on better. His attitude to his female companions was one of indifference or stolid curiosity, and on occasion he would even relinquish food in their favour. But towards the end of that year tragedy robbed her of his companionship, and induced her to seek safety with an older group.

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The three heifers were busily uprooting some young euphorbia trees they had discovered in a small glade, and the young bull was struggling to extract a root on the other side of the glade, about twenty yards from them. Suddenly a great form flashed from behind a bush and landed on the bull's shoulders. He sank to his knees under the impact, and before he could recover, two other lithe shapes seized him by throat and flank. The swiftness and silence of the attack—there in the bright moonlight of the peaceful glade—almost paralysed "Crusty" with an indefinable fear. But, as agonised squeals and savage snarls came from the whirling dust-cloud which hid their companion of a year, "Crusty" and her mates decamped, leaving their escort in the deadly grip of three great lions. They never saw him again.

Dashing panic-stricken through the moonlit forest they presently emerged on a dry river bed, and, following a game trail along its banks, they suddenly met two young bulls of about ten years' growth. These stood and watched them stolidly for a moment, then, as they stood trembling from their panic-driven exertions, the bulls advanced and sniffed them over carefully, but without sign of hostility. The inspection seemed to be satisfactory, for presently they stood aside, and when "Crusty" and her mates moved onwards the young bulls followed.

For two years these five wandered in company

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with no more incident than is usual in the life of forest folk. An occasional gory combat between mate-maddened bulls, a tragedy amongst the antelope folk, a hasty evacuation of feeding grounds before the elephant advent, and that was all. For the two bulls were well-grown and already carried horns of useful dimensions. They were beyond the size usually selected by lions for attack, and the heifers acquired safety from their company. Yet their presence at last brought tragedy from a deadlier source.

Few rhino groups numbered more than four at most, and a wandering white hunter, with a passion for investigation, became intrigued by the sign of five they left wherever they wandered. He decided to follow, not because he wanted trophies, indeed the spoor was too small to promise any, but to discover, if possible, the age and sex of an unusually large group.

But for that fatal irascibility I have referred to, his observation might have been harmless. As it was he approached the covert where they lay sleeping by the path they had made in entering, and unluckily he brought the wind with him. Rhinos evidence stupidity in many ways, but in none more so, perhaps, than in their invariable habit of using the same trail to enter and leave a covert. But for this, and their innate pugnacity, "Crusty" and her comrades might have vanished silently and unhurt when the man-taint reached

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them. Instead of which the bulls charged at once down the trail, followed by the three heifers.

The white man and the native gun-bearer sprang clear as they came, but a second native was not quick enough, and the leading bull caught him in the stomach and hurled him some yards away. Instantly a rifle shot rang out and the bull collapsed. His mate and the heifers blundered on and stood sniffing for the taint which was now behind them and down-wind. The native gun-bearer, incensed at his companion's death, fired at the standing group without instructions or definite aim.

The bullet scored "Crusty's" shoulder and passed onwards without serious injury. At the pain of the hot, searing missile she squealed in anger and rushed onwards, followed by the others. When they halted a mile away she was limping from the pain of the wound and blood flowed freely. Yet Nature is an expert healer, and within a month the wound was healing rapidly while her action was unimpaired.

Thereafter she and one of the other heifers joined this group or that for a week, a month, or a year, and anon wandered alone, until her tenth year was reached. When this was nearly completed a strange restlessness seized her, and she began to stay for hours near the water-hole, alone, waiting for, she knew not what.

One evening, as the sun sank, she stood watch-

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ing first one and then another of the shy forest folk stealthily come and go, when a well-grown young bull of perhaps twenty years of age proved to be the first rhino visitor of the evening. As he emerged on the water side he sniffed the air for a moment and then walked tentatively towards "Crusty." She advanced to meet him, and instead of greeting him with the ill-tempered prod she usually handed to strangers at close quarters she stood passively, while he gently rubbed his ugly snout against her shoulder.

What they said to each other I don't know, but after a time they seemed to reach some agreement, and when the young bull turned away from the water "Crusty" followed. They were about halfway along the path to the forest when two larger bulls met them. These halted simultaneously, and as "Crusty's" escort halted too the leading stranger advanced again slowly towards him.

He had arrived within a few paces when "Crusty's" escort gave a vicious snort and charged. He was met by an equally determined rush on the part of his adversary, and with the shock of collision came the clashing of horns and squeals of rage from both combatants. Charge after charge they made, first one and then the other going down under the shock of impact, and as the fight progressed blood flowed freely from both.

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Meanwhile the second bull trotted up to "Crusty" where she stood watching the conflict, unmoved by any feeling but that of mild curiosity. As he came up to her she lost interest in the fight, and with fine feminine faithlessness transferred her interests to the newcomer. After a few moments, that ill-favoured suitor moved tentatively towards the forest and she was on the verge of following when her first escort went down heavily and lay groaning with pain. At once his opponent dashed at her new suitor and a second battle began.

For five minutes she watched this second conflict without manifesting sympathy for, or interest in, her defeated lover, who remained where he had fallen. At the end of that time her second suitor placed his antagonist hors-de-combat. Whether his earlier exertions had handicapped him, or whether his new rival was really the stronger, may never be known, but when the winner of the first battle staggered to his feet he headed down the water trail at an unsteady trot, instead of resuming the conflict. For a few yards the victor followed, hastening his rival's departure with jabs from the rear. As these brought only angry squeals by way of retaliation he returned to "Crusty," and the pair headed for the bush, leaving her first escort to recover slowly and painfully from his severe grueling.

But the following day her new husband "got



"CHARGE AFTER CHARGE THEY MADE, FIRST ONE AND THEN THE OTHER GOING DOWN UNDER THE SHOCK OF THE IMPACT."

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his," as the Americans say. They were feeding in the midst of thorn bush which only the thick hide of a rhino or elephant could afford to ignore, when a great, black shape emerged from behind a tall bush, and stood blinking at them with small, wicked eyes. This was "Red Terror," the hardest fighter, and one of the very biggest bulls within a twenty-mile range. "Crusty's" escort knew him, and at once stopped his rooting to eye the intruder dubiously.

As "Red Terror" stepped towards him he retreated a few yards and, encouraged by his hesitation, the newcomer rooted the ground viciously and hurled the flying sand over his head. Next instant he dashed at "Crusty's" mate with a pugnacious squeal.

But if the rhino brain lacks intelligence the rhino heart is courageous enough, and her mate stood his ground. Came the shock of impact, as the great bodies met shoulder on, and as each staggered sideways, a spurting blood stream on their sides showed an "even break" from this opening bout. For nearly half-an-hour charge alternated with counter-charge, until at last "Crusty's" husband of a day went down and stayed down, breathing painfully with laboured gasps.

The blood on his rusty hide showed the amount of punishment he had suffered gamely, but in place of offering sympathy "Crusty" squealed

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with anger, and horned the prostrate form viciously as she passed. Then, having shown the true nastiness of her evil temper, she headed with pretended indifference for the deeper thickets, knowing intuitively that "Red Terror" would follow. This he did, and for eighteen months she and another cow shared the wifely honours and followed him.

At the end of that time a little bull calf was born to her, but this happy event did little to improve her temper. Indeed, it was that same ill-temper for which I have named her that betrayed her into an act of unwisdom and caused the death of her first baby.

"Red Terror" and his second wife had gone to water just after sundown, leaving her on guard over the calf. The water was at that time only three miles away. For, as the time of her motherhood drew near, "Red Terror," with the wisdom born of experience, had changed their feeding grounds, which, until then, had been ten miles from water.

As she stood waiting for their return to allow her own passage to the water a great elephant cow suddenly appeared and came slowly towards her, followed by a small calf. At any other time she would have moved away silently from the grey shadow's path, but to-night maternal pride, or the irritability produced by thirst, led her to a display of temper.

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Without reflection she gave an angry squeal and dashed head down at the great form as it advanced. Resentment at the unprovoked attack, and fear for her own calf, stirred the elephant mother to a mighty wrath and made her unusually aggressive also. Trumpeting with fury she whirled aside, and as "Crusty" passed she drove her great head into the rhino's flanks, sending her crashing to earth and rolling over and over.

Her own small calf unluckily headed for the pile of brushwood under which "Crusty's" baby lay, and in fear for his safety she pursued. Next instant her front feet descended heavily into the shallow pit where "Crusty's" first-born crouched, and the breath was driven suddenly and painfully out of his small body. As the elephant mother swept onwards "Crusty" regained her legs, but when she arrived at her baby's shelter a shapeless and nasty red and black mess was all that remained of him.

When "Red Terror" and his second mate arrived an hour later they were met by a demented "Crusty," who charged each in turn with fine impartiality, until chastisement brought home to her the folly of inflicting her woes on her companions. For a week she sulked. Then the disaster passed from her short memory and food became again the chief aim of life.

Six months later "Red Terror's" second wife was equally unfortunate. He and "Crusty" re-

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turned from water one evening to find her rushing to and fro in the small glade where they had left her, while snarling over the remains of her week-old calf were two great, gaunt lions.

"Red Terror" charged instantly, supported by his two mates, and although all three received painful wounds from the deadly claws, weight of numbers told, and the assassins presently decamped. But this led indirectly to "Red Terror's" death. One wound in his stomach became septic and painful, so he took to resting by day under the shade of a tall and leafy tree where flies were less numerous and troublesome.

Now rhinos have the singular habit of dunging always in the same spot while using a particular cover or feeding ground. As a rule such heaps of fumets are found adjacent to thorn scrub, which forms the usual cover and affords no ambush for human enemies. While asleep he is efficiently protected by flocks of tick birds, which in return for the feed of ticks secured from his body give him prompt warning of the approach of enemies.

When "Red Terror" commenced to use the big tree for his daily sleep a pile of fumets rapidly collected in the vicinity, and two hawk-eyed natives chuckled with glee when they perceived from the spoor that the spreading branches of the tree formed an ideal and unusually easy ambush. His feathered attendants gave no warning because

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the natives were already concealed above them when they arrived with "Red Terror" one morning. He limped slowly beneath the spreading foliage and had barely lowered his bulk to the ground when two heavily-weighted assegais descended, driving through the spine sheer to the lungs and killing him where he stood.

So "Crusty" and her mate wandered widowed and childless and alone. But in the forest memory is short and Nature urgent. Life must be lived at all costs while it lasts. So a month afterwards, when two bulls had been killed in fight for them, the two cows accepted as lord a great bull whom the forest knew as "Grey Death" because of the peculiar colour of his hide and his habit of ferocious attack on the least provocation.

"Crusty" had wandered under his protection for over four years, and two of her calves with them, when natives armed with rifles commenced to hunt the district increasingly. Soon the sharp crack of weapons and the thud of bullets became a familiar sound, while crippled and maimed beasts lent terror to the old trails.

One morning, as "Grey Death" led the way along the trail to cover, the dreaded sound came from close at hand and the big bull lurched a few paces onwards then fell headlong. At the same moment "Crusty" caught the taint of the slayer and charged savagely at the bush from whence it came.

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The native, who had fired at thirty paces, slipped nimbly aside, and under ordinary circumstances "Crusty" would have blundered stupidly onwards and perhaps received a second shot. But when the taint reached her year-old-calf, hastening beside her, he squealed with fury, and at the sound she whirled in her tracks and darted back. Before the native could evade her her horn took him in the stomach and whirled him aloft. A few moments later his body was torn and stamped into nothingness.

But, although she had thus avenged her lord, "Crusty" was again a widow, and she liked neither widowhood nor loneliness. So that night she headed for a great plain fifteen miles away, where, owing to the persistent hunting in the bush, the rhino folk gathered in numbers. Here, within a month or two, she found a new mate, an old bull this time, of mediocre strength but great wisdom.

With him she roamed the plains for nearly two years, successfully evading both game-pits and snares, as well as the fires which the meat-hungry natives tried constantly to encircle them with. But when the time of her travail drew near again, and shelter for her baby became essential, the old bull led her to a remote, thorny thicket, many miles away, where the crack of the dreaded rifle was seldom heard.

Even here, however, scattered parties of native

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elephant hunters wandered occasionally, and when her calf was but three days old two of these un-luckily passed near her hiding place. With animals, as with men, Fate sometimes takes a hand in weaving a warp and woof of fortune or disaster, and history sometimes repeats itself in the animal world also. Such a combination occurred this morning, and against it the wisdom the years had taught "Crusty" and her lord was powerless.

It happened that a white hunter was camped ten miles away who sought a baby rhinoceros for a certain zoological garden, and he had promised the natives a handsome reward for assistance in securing one. That was circumstance Number One. Number Two in the chain of causation was this, "Crusty's" old mate had gone to water in the small hours of the morning and had found a young bull there whose mate had recently been killed by native hunters. Smelling the cow-taint on "Crusty's" mate he had given battle, and although the old bull had held his own and had at last driven off his adversary, he had not been free to return to her until after sunrise.

About the same time the two natives had come upon her baby's hiding place. With the reward in mind, and also the probable presence of an angry mother in the vicinity, they decided, after discussion, to lead the white man to the spot and allow him to take his own risks in securing the prize.

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They set off at once, but it was well after noon before they approached the cover again, and meanwhile a good deal had happened there. Soon after their departure "Crusty" had returned to her calf for the twentieth time and gazed morosely down the trail which led to the water. Her mate should have returned by this time, but although her thirst had increased with each hour she was loth to leave the calf.

The intermittent battle through the night hours had prevented her lord's return, and now, sore and spent with wounds, he was returning by a circuitous route. For his victory had not been decisive, and he feared lest his fresh spoor on the usual path might lead the enemy to "Crusty," should he seek a resumption of the conflict.

So it was three hours after sunrise when he at last arrived, and by that time thirst had aggravated her usual peevish temper considerably. Hence, instead of her usual friendly greeting and prompt departure, she rushed at him and horned him viciously on his already injured shoulder. But he merely turned head-on and grunted warningly. Then, as "Crusty" forgot her ill-humour in desire for water and departed, he went and lay down near the calf with a rumbling groan.

As "Crusty" emerged at the "pan" her mate's late opponent approached from the opposite direction. He may have been seeking his late adversary, a possible mate, or merely water. However

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that may be, as soon as he espied "Crusty" he trotted towards her with friendly overtures. These she rejected in irascible fashion, but when she turned from the water and headed back for cover he followed a few paces behind her.

Pursuing her way indifferently she arrived at last at the clearing with the bull a few yards behind. No sooner did her prostrate mate's dim eyes perceive her escort than he came to his feet and charged instantly. Nothing loth the younger animal rushed to meet him, urged to greater vigour this time by the proximity of the female lure.

Time after time the combatants staggered and fell under the shock of collision, or in stumbling endeavour to avoid a shrewd stroke, and at last her mate fell heavily and made no effort to rise. He was obviously done, and no sooner did she realise this than the faithless "Crusty" ran at her defeated spouse and added a slashing stroke to his already severe punishment.

For the law of the bush is expressed in Robert Service's poem, *The Law of the Yukon*: "that surely the weak shall perish and only the strong survive." "Crusty's" action was not the result of reason but of natural instinct; an instinct which decrees that only the strongest and hardiest animals shall father creatures whose lives depend upon their physical energies.

Five minutes earlier the white hunter, whom

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the natives had informed of the calf's hiding place, had arrived. Being aware of its position he had approached from leeward, and the clash of conflict had effectually covered his soft approach.

Hearing the sounds of battle coming from a quarter where he had expected domestic peace he had drawn cautiously close enough to witness the end of the struggle, and "Crusty's" attack on her stricken mate. He had expected the necessity of shooting the cow in any case, and, being a kindly man, had deplored it. But now, as the cow nosed her new paramour in shameless congratulation on his victory, he felt that he could administer punishment with a lighter heart.

Next moment his heavy express awoke the echoes, and "Crusty" collapsed with a bullet through the heart. Two seconds later the bewildered bull fell in his tracks to a second shot as he searched the air for the source of danger. Then the hunter walked up to the dying bull and sent him, too, to the rhino hereafter with a merciful bullet.

So died "Crusty." Her life had not lacked adventure and had held its share of tragedy. In extenuation of her faults it must be remembered that it had been her rhino fate to be born with great bulk and little brain, and that her life had been spent in a school where few virtues are taught. Had she lived her allotted span she might probably have died from hunger, or injury by tooth

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or claw. For death in the forest is generally as painful as life is hard, so that the swift death which came to her in the prime and strength of rhino life was after all the best end we could wish her.