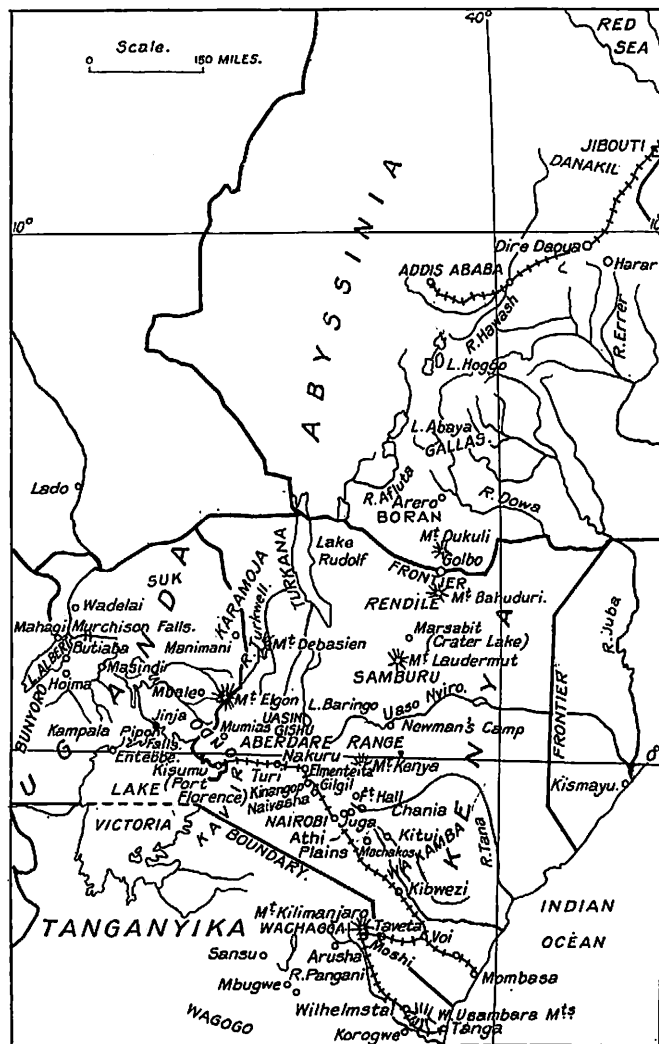
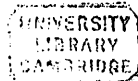


651. c. 92. 24



WHERE THE SCENES OF THE STORY WERE LAID.

Railways are shown as at the time of the narrative.



THE COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS

BY
JOHN BOYES, F.R.G.S., F.Z.S.

Author of
"John Boyes, King of the Wa-Kikuyu"

With a Foreword

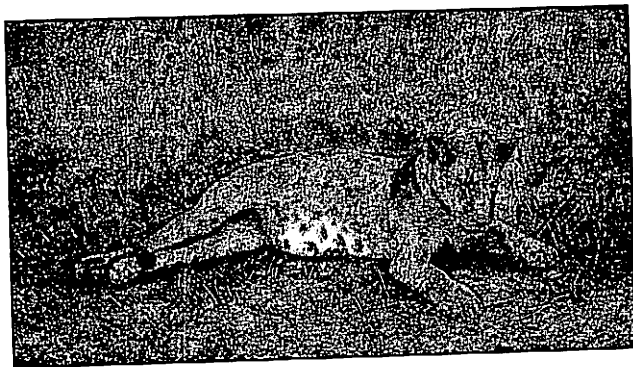
BY
THE RT. HON. LORD CRANWORTH, M.C.



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A LIONESS SHOT ON THIS SAFARI



THE END OF A TROUBLESOME RHINO.

bag, including, besides plenty of lesser game, a lion, several rhino and giraffe.

The killing of the lion was a most exciting incident. Mr. Bulpett was very anxious to secure a lion, and every night we heard them roaring, but it was some time before we came near one. One night we could tell by the particularly ferocious roaring not far from camp that the lions had had a kill. Next morning some of the boys were sent out to investigate and found the remains of a partly eaten animal. They followed the lion spoor into a dry river bed covered with thorn bushes, where the tracks ended, showing that the lion was still hidden in the bush, doubtless sleeping off the effects of his feed. When this news was brought into camp we at once started off for the place.

Mr. Bulpett wished to shoot the lion and Dr. Groat wanted to take some photographs. Mr. McMillan did not go, but Marlow went with us. At the river bed we could see where the lion had entered the bush, and concluded that it was still there. Of course, we could not see it, but the Natives went into the bush to beat it out, while we took up positions at different points where it was most likely to break cover. The beaters started off very quietly, and after a time we heard them at work. We waited some time without any sign of the lion, and then we heard shouting, from which we judged that the beaters had sighted the lion and intended to warn us that it was coming. Instead of waiting until the lion broke cover, however, Mr. Bulpett in his excitement rushed into the bush. Almost as soon as the beaters started shouting I had seen the lion stealthily creeping towards us and called to Bulpett, but he had evidently not understood me and went forward without taking the slightest notice of my warning.

The resulting mix-up happened all in a second. So far as I could make out, Bulpett fired and hit the lion about the hindquarters without touching a vital part. The brute immediately turned round with a snarl of pain and made a leap in his direction. Both Bulpett and Marlow fired together, but the animal seemed to fly through the air like a huge cat, with its paws outspread. Bulpett and his men had no time to get out of the way, and the lion came down upon them with a paw on each of the gun-bearers to the right and left of Bulpett, and with a force that crushed them to the ground. At the same time the lion made a bite at Mr. Bulpett's head, which would have put an end to his hunting career had he not been wearing a large-sized pith helmet. But the helmet saved him and the lion dropped at his feet. It was not dead, but had been so crippled with the shots that it could not get up again, and Bulpett rushed in and dispatched it.

The whole incident occurred in less time than it takes to describe, but the damage wrought by the lion was pretty considerable. Three of the Somali gun-bearers had been wounded and had to be taken up to Nairobi Hospital, and Bulpett and Marlow had some ugly wounds from the thorns, though otherwise they were none the worse. The torn helmet showed the marks of the lion's teeth where they met through it, and as it had undoubtedly saved his head, Mr. Bulpett kept it as a trophy of his narrow escape. The lion was carried in triumph to the camp.

The Athi Plains were then one of the finest game areas in the world. I am, of course, speaking of the time before any land was taken up for farms. Anything more enjoyable than this hunting *safari* on the plains I have never experienced in the whole of my travels.

It was our custom after the day's hunting to sit at night with our whiskies and sodas round a huge fire made outside the tent and yarn till the small hours of the morning. Around us were fifty or more smaller camp fires, scattered here and there amongst the little white tents of the men, some of whom would be busy with the camp duties, such as cooking, others singing, and some skylarking. Occasionally in the lull of conversation we could hear the measured tread of the sentry, and the glow of the fire cast weird and fantastic shadows on the ground. Under the spell of the African night we were drawn together in a spirit of *camaraderie*, which loosened our tongues and caused each member of the party to tell of his experiences.

Dr. Groat, the archæologist, related stories of his twenty years' hunt for ancient manuscripts in the East and of his travels amongst the monasteries and ruins in the Arabian deserts. But to my mind the most interesting member of the party was Major Ringer, who had spent many years on the West Coast of Africa, and could tell some gruesome stories of cannibalism and Native witch-doctors and their practices. He was at the capture of Benin City, or, as it has been described, "The City of Blood." He had been an eye-witness of many scenes of horror and savage cruelty, and could paint a vivid picture of the torture the savages endured under the despotic rule of a Native monarch who sacrificed hundreds of his subjects to his merest caprice.

He had in his possession a small ivory fetish, which he had taken during the fighting from one of the chief witch-doctors. It was known as a "ju-ju," a kind of god worshipped by the Natives on the West Coast, carved out of ivory; it

represented the head of a Native with the tribal marks upon it. We were all impressed with the story of the African god, and as a result Major Ringer called his farm "Ju-Ju," and Mr. McMillan, who had taken a great liking to the country, bought a farm which he called "Ju-Ja"—"Ju-Ju" being the big god and "Ju-Ja" the lesser god.

The "Ju-Ja" Club for big game hunters and African pioneers, which had its annual Christmas dinner in Piccadilly, London, for some years after this, was the outcome of this talk round the camp fire in British East Africa. We amused ourselves by inventing a quaint ceremonial of "Ju-Ju" worship during the hunting trip, and later, on going back to Nairobi before starting for the Uasin Gishu Plateau, which we had decided to visit, we arranged a big mock function of the cult for the benefit of the town.

While on the Athi Plains we experimented in cooking a rhino's foot to see what it was like. First we dug a big hole in the ground where the camp fire had been burning, and half filled this hole with red hot ashes. We then put in the foot and covered it up with more red hot ashes until the hole was full. The camp fire was afterwards relighted on the top and kept burning for two days. Then we dug the foot out again, and found it had cooked splendidly. It tasted something like "bully beef."

Leaving Nairobi, we took train to Nakuru, and started for the Ravine over the old caravan road which I had travelled in my earlier days with my donkey waggons. We rested at some of the old camps where I had stayed on my previous journeys. Little game was met with between Nakuru and the Ravine, and the party was rather disappointed at first. On the four days' march to the Ravine

I noticed that quite a lot of land which had been wild, uninhabited country on my previous visits, was now in occupation by settlers. From the Ravine we had intended making for the Uasin Gishu Plateau, but were delayed there for about ten days on account of some misunderstanding about our mules, which had to be examined by a veterinary surgeon. All the white men of the party were mounted, and we could not proceed without the mules. Nevertheless, we quite enjoyed our stay at the Ravine, as we were well entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Foaker, who were in charge of the Government station. We exchanged visits, and had pleasant little dinner parties alternately at the station and at our camp.

The Natives round here, the Kamasia, are a branch of the Masai. They entertained us with several war dances, and we killed some bullocks for their special benefit. Quite a number of Wanderobo, too, who were living in the bush near by, came to see us. The Ravine *boma* is very healthily situated, and has a heavy rainfall on account of its high elevation, which must be at least 7,000 ft. above sea-level; while from the station itself a lovely view is to be obtained of the beautiful surrounding country, with a possibility, on a fine day, of seeing the gleaming waters of Lake Baringo away to the north-east.

During our stay I made friends with the Wanderobo, and asked them if they could show me where to get a bongo. They did not know what I meant until they found that it was the animal which they knew as the *sulguoto*. They said they could do so, but this antelope was very difficult to find, and no white man had yet shot one about there, though a number of people had tried. They knew a place where these animals were accustomed