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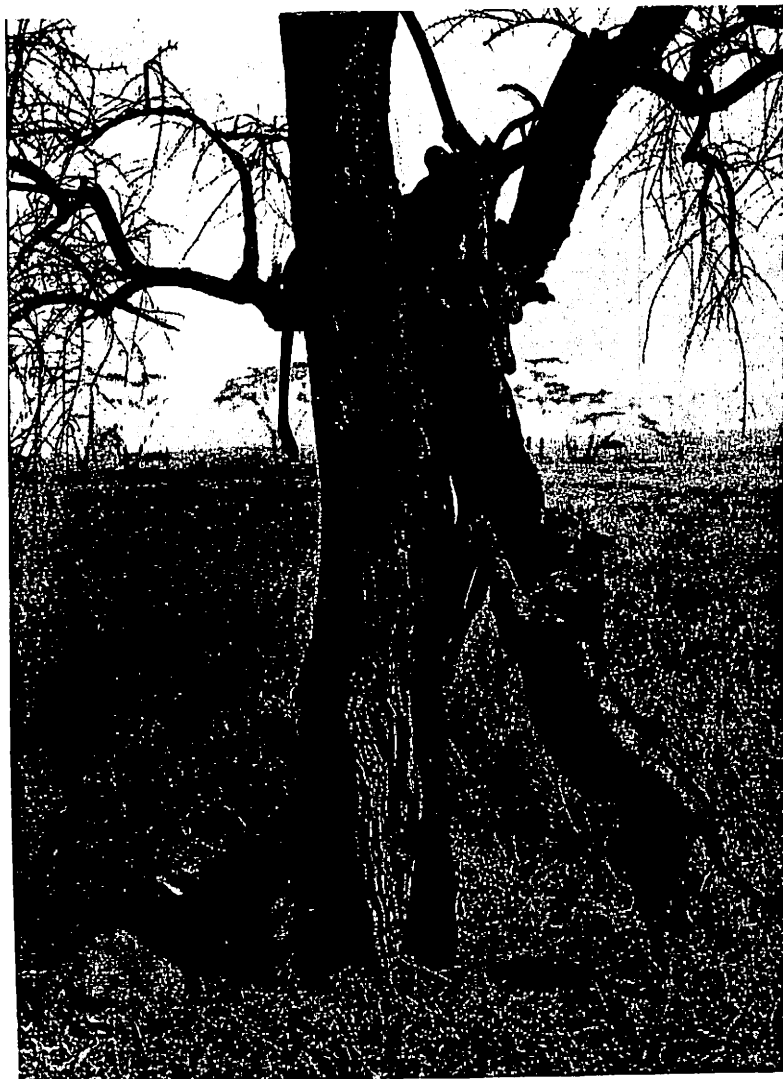
WHITE HUNTER

*The Adventures and Experiences of a
Professional Big Game Hunter in Africa*

By
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b. 1887

With Illustrations



A LIONESS POSING.

LIONS ARE NOT NATURAL CLIMBERS: BY A WELL-TIMED SPRING, HOWEVER, COUPLED WITH THE DEXTEROUS USE OF HER POWERFUL CLAWS, SHE ATTAINED HER OBJECTIVE.

LONDON

Seeley, Service & Co. Ltd.
196 Shaftesbury Avenue

1930

202 pp.

Rhino

I WILL now recall to my readers several hunts with that great, lumbering, ungainly beast the rhino. I have seen him at his best and at his worst, and even now I feel I never know what he is going to do next. His one idea at times is to charge anything. Even the unattended Fordson tractor out in the ploughed land has not escaped his attention, so much so that there is an instance of one of these stupid beasts having broken his own neck in trying to kill the iron mass. Not many years ago a certain motorist left his car unattended on a main highway, his petrol having given out, and on returning next day found his car badly damaged. The owner was wroth and returned immediately to the police station, where a report was made against someone for wilful damage. On the police officer arriving, taking notes and inspecting the car, much to the chagrin of the owner the officer took a piece of rhino horn from the radiator; this was stronger evidence than a thumb mark. I cannot see the officer of the law handcuffing the culprit!

An amusing incident, though it did not appear so at the time, happened when friends of mine were motoring along the Great North Road between Mpika and Serenji in North-East Rhodesia. When

ten miles from Mpika proceeding south, they were surprised to see a rhino cow and calf standing about fifty yards from the narrow highway. Driving very slowly, while his companion was in the act of getting his camera ready to take the picture of these on-lookers, one of them suddenly realised that instead of getting a picture, they would be lucky to evade her oncoming rush. When the car was practically abreast, the rhino put her head down and charged straight at the car, and before the driver realised, the great beast had her horn under the footboard and actually tried to turn the car over. The car weighed two tons and was loaded with one and a half tons of equipment. Notwithstanding this heavy weight, the car was tilted over at a dangerous angle of thirty degrees, when the running board broke off, with portions of the mudguards. The car dropped on the ground. This incident occurred in a few seconds, and the most amusing side of the picture was the rhino going like smoke with its front horn impaled through the eight-foot long board, creating a terrible din, with the broken mudguard hitting on the ground, and the youngster following in her wake squeaking as it ran.

Unfortunately this charge spoiled the prospects of what might have proved an interesting picture, but the artists were indeed fortunate in escaping without injury.

Having shot a number of these beasts, damage doers and otherwise, I have had unique opportunities of exchanging visits with them in camp and out of it. Even today I find him sullen, morose

and doubting. In open country he is like the rest of our dangerous game; if he gets a whiff of you he beats it with tail erect, trotting his best, with head constantly half turning to either side. It is in bush forest country that he can be distinctly alarming; he crashes out at no mean speed, puffs and snorts like jets of a steam engine, and more likely than not will run straight into your path. It is here you see him at his worst; his size and the ease with which he gets through the terrible thorn bushes make him all the more formidable.

His sight is dull, but his action is quick in the extreme, and Nature has provided him with death-dealing weapons, in his extremely tough horns. It may interest several to know that these horns are actually composed of fibrous and solidified hairs. Elephants I have found on many occasions give way to rhinos. Twice I have seen them meet, and on each occasion the elephants have seen the rhino first and hustled quickly past while the rhino stood looking, and then moved on without any accelerated speed. This proved to me that the elephant is actually afraid of rhino.

Hunting in elephant country two years ago, I came across a young rhino which was unattended. Natives informed me that the mother had been killed by elephants, as there were many in that place; but, as I had no proof, it was more than likely she fell a victim to their poisoned arrows. I wonder if any of my readers have ever noticed the difference in the blood of the rhino compared with that of any other beast? It adheres to your fingers like gum

after exposure to the air for a few minutes. This I found more pronounced with the northern frontier rhinos compared to those in the inland mountains of 6,000 feet, but this may only be attributed to the lesser degree of heat. In many parts today rhinos may be found wandering about in the semi-open bush until nearly noon, especially if it is a cool day accompanied by drizzling rain. He is the easiest animal I know to skin, the thick hide falling off in great folds to the smallest effort of the knife. This can be made into sticks and whips, and is at times useful. I have seen beads, graded down, made from rhino horn, uncommon necklaces of great beauty; there is a sheen, colour and feel about them which is particularly attractive. I am of the opinion that ivory does not compare. When in the Congo North, I saw many figures and ornaments, carved by the natives, made from the horn of the white rhino, and these works, completed with crude tools, certainly gained my admiration.

Many of the oldest bulls are found in quite inaccessible places, their shins lacerated and often suppurating from wounds inflicted by others; and these wounds, heavily infected by flies, mud and slime, take an indefinite time to heal, if ever.

The rhino bird is the friend and enemy of the rhino. In the former case, he will be guided by these birds, which, on approaching danger (up to sixty yards distance), will rise from his back, uttering their harsh "chir chir" notes, when he will wheel round. If they re-align, he will settle down and stay, otherwise he does not take thought of

either sound or smell and hoofs it. Should you see the birds flying overhead in the early morning, and they pass over certain bush, then you know the rhino is not at home; should they fly low and settle, then it is a certainty. This will show that the birds assist both the hunter and the hunted.

Rhinos are still plentiful in Eastern Africa, and horns of thirty inches long are still obtainable, and this measurement may be considered good. When hit I have heard him emit squeals not unlike the domestic pig, and in other ways resemble it. He browses on the shoots of branches and is not averse to the thorn and prickly varieties, his teeth cutting the twigs as if sheared.

The rhino's attack, as a rule, is a direct rush, hoping to impale you in his stride. His massive horns with the ton weight behind are capable of doing great injury. He is not the vicious, cruel type like the buffalo, and I have never heard of a rhino using his feet to stamp you. Even though this morose beast's vision is poor, his sense of hearing and smell are keen, and he is apt to be truculent when you least expect it. I do not consider him difficult to kill, and with a heavy rifle he will swerve off the reports and charge for safety instead of troubling you further.

I will tell an incident against myself. A certain American lady sportswoman, a splendid type, was keen to shoot a rhino. One morning we sallied forth on to some plains intercepted by two streams, and five rhino were seen slowly ambling along. My lady friend was armed with a Remington .305 calibre

rifle, and, as my gun bearer was carrying my spare rifle, a 9.3 Mauser, I suggested that she used this weapon in preference to her Remington. Nothing further was said, and I continued the stalk to the best rhino. At sixty yards range she fired, and that rhino dropped dead, killed with one Peters belted .225 grained bullet. I had never seen a neater shot, and was expounding on the merits of my 9.3 Mauser when she laughed and said, "But I did not use it." I felt wee! She had used her own gun. This will show what humane work can be done with accurate shooting from a modern small bore rifle.

That rhino have put the wind up me on many occasions I am quite willing to admit. I recollect having completed a hunt on the Tsavo River and cut across country to a station on the Uganda Railway called Kyulu. Now the distance was roughly fifteen miles, and everything went well for the first seven.

From then onwards I was scouting my way through that painful scrub, "wait-a-bit" thorn bush, and it was difficult enough to find without getting scratched and torn. But to add to the discomfort several rhino charged out in front of me and filled the air with vigorous puffings. I did not think much of this until a mile or so further on, where there was a small valley which held a clear pool of alkaline water. I had barely left this place when I tracked into a regular hornets' nest of rhino. Never have I seen so many; they bolted this way and that, puffing and snorting in the bush. I knew they had not gone but were listening, and it began to tell

on my nerves. I am sure I felt my hat lifting many times. My natives fled and I did not blame them. I would have done likewise, but you cannot (at least I admit I cannot) make much headway when you must keep your eyes at the back of your pants as well. I was fast becoming an expert rhino dodger.

At one time I thought of retracing my footsteps, and then I wondered how many of those sullen charging brutes had gone ahead of me. I continued on, and I arrived at the railway line quite three miles below Kyulu station with my clothes a mass of rags, but glad to get away from that accursed spot. I have never been there since and doubt if anyone has, if the native poacher has not found this rhino Mecca. Anyone wanting multiplied thrills will surely find them there.

Apart from being hunted in the day-time I have been routed at night. It was further south, near a place called Fudemayo in Kenya, when, in company with a friend, we were hunting sable antelope. The day had been hot and tiring, and that night I woke up with a thirst. I had only been drinking tea the previous night, and, feeling my way in the dark to the camp table, I felt something soft and fuzzy. Not finding a glass, I lit a lamp, and immediately I did so a trail of driver ants squirmed up my pyjamas and attacked me fiercely. The strange thing is they do not attempt to bite or attack in the dark. They were now getting too hot for me, and I was being bitten without mercy and could stand no more, calling Allen to come to my assistance. Thinking I was in the clutches of a wild

animal, he rushed forward to find me standing, as Adam, in the garden of Eden, without raiment. His look was one of astonishment; I am sure he thought I had gone "loofy." It took his assistance to rid me of the plague. They covered my bed and clothing, and nothing was safe from them for some considerable time. A trail of hot ashes was placed round the camp to get rid of this determined and man-biting string.

That these stupid rhino will "disturb the peace" I discovered one night when I was camped at the foot of Ngulia Mountains, Kenya. It was late in the evening when my safari arrived, and tents were pitched quickly without noticing that several rhino trails passed in close proximity, which led to the stream near by. I might mention that it would have been difficult to find a suitable place free from their tracks, which appeared to be everywhere.

That night at about 8 p.m. there were several snorts and similar noises; one is apt to get used to them and treat them with diffidence. My porters had fixed two of their tents (which were made of white drill cloth). About midnight I heard a terrible commotion outside, and the heavy gallop made me at once realise a rhino was in our midst. Seizing my heavy rifle, I was on the point of rushing out when I cannoned into a native who was fleeing into my tent for protection. He was too scared to make any explanation, and his colour from the usual black had faded, due to sheer fright. On investigating, I found one of the tents had entirely gone, carried off on the spikes and head of a rhino,

leaving the natives without injury on the ground. I wonder even now who actually had the worst fright, rhino or natives! One can imagine a porter's tent transformed into a ghost of the night, and the look of the panic-stricken natives my pen cannot describe.

Next morning we followed the trail of the rhino, and sure enough there were the portions of a perfectly good tent hanging on to the lower branches of "wait-a-bit" thorn bushes which had parted company on his terrible rush. Since that episode I have taken more care in selecting camping sites when in rhino-infested country. I hold several grudges against them. They have not always been kind to me, as my next incident will explain.

Trekking from Kenani station to the Athi River through impenetrable thorn bush was much harder than I had anticipated. I knew that in the dry season there were many big elephants on the Yatta Plateau, which were forced to come down to the river to drink, and my chances of securing heavy ivory were promising. Arranging with twenty natives to carry my kit and stores, we headed into the bush, two natives with slashers in front cutting branches which would facilitate the difficulty of the boys getting my chop boxes through the dense bush.

Within a distance of five miles from Kenani station we encountered rhino, and the noise of the boys cutting disturbed them, but they gave no trouble. Further on I saw a mother rhino and baby; this little one was the size of a collie dog, and

could only have been a few days old. Giving my porters a rest and not wishing to have any trouble with an angry cow, I watched the pair for some time, and it was interesting to see baby suckling exactly similar to a domestic cow, the mother standing while it did so.

It seemed strange that they should be so far from water, at least twelve miles off, but this was possibly on account of the mother's extra care for her little charge. Now rhinos, as a general rule, drink once daily, in the evening, and this little chap, maybe a week old, was doing his twenty miles a day to the river and back to the bush they laid up in. This will give the reader an idea as to the hardy creatures they are. As we were going to move on, the natives whistled and yelled at them, and they made off in the opposite direction.

The making of the way through the bush was a tiresome process, and it looked as if we would not reach the Athi River that day, and we did not. In the afternoon I saw a rhino with a good pair of horns, and, had it not been for delaying the safari, would have shot him, but, as we had not prepared for carrying water, it was out of the question. Fate willed it otherwise. My safari was keeping well together in Indian file, and I heard a native shout "Faro" (this is the Swahili native name for rhino), and there to our right was an old rhino, big in body, with one of the most miserable pair of horns I have seen. He stood about seventy yards off, with ears extended and head poised in our direction; I could see the natives casting glances to see if a suitable tree

was near; they evidently did not like the rhino's looks. In a moment he came trotting towards us, rudder straight on end—an ugly-looking customer. Yelling at him, he took no notice, and what was my shout, anyhow? His trot developed into a mad gallop; he charged down on to the line, but, from what I saw, on no one in particular. I knew then what would happen; I heard one chop box crash, then another. My porters were now going helter-skelter, "hell bent for election" speed. I had to shoot this desperate beast, and if only he had owned decent horns it would not have been so bad. Apart from that, here was my disorganised band now thoroughly demoralised. And my outfit! I remember seeing the sack which contained kettles and other camp truck, a bent and derelict lot. Retrieving my flying squad, we had no option but to camp there the night to enable us to take the rhino's hide and horns. Water was the difficulty; we had none, my spare water can had been upset and lost in that mad rush. I sent two natives on ahead to the river, instructing them to return with water for the others, but they did not show up that night, getting bushed on the way.

The heat had been fierce that day coming through that desert bush, and at night I kept my lips moist by making a hole into a tin of Heinz baked beans and sucking it. When morning came I was indeed pleased, and we started off, meeting the two boys on the way whom we had sent to the river the previous night. Arriving at the river was a welcome sight after the trials of the previous day.



MOROSE AND SULLEN.

THESE PONDEROUS CREATURES, DOUR BUT AGILE, ARE PLENTIFUL IN SEVERAL PARTS OF KENYA AND TANGANYIKA. AWAY FROM THE BEATEN TRACK, UP TO A DOZEN RHINO MAY BE SEEN IN A DAY'S TREK.

That afternoon I went along the river bank upstream to see what the possibilities were; there was plenty of spoor of elephants, buffalo and rhino drinking here. It was indeed interesting to sit on the bank of this shallow river and see rhinos coming down to drink in the late afternoon. Between 5.30 and 6 p.m. I counted nine of them drinking in a stretch of half a mile. It was evident they had never been disturbed here previously by white men, and here Nature was at her best. The distance from the river to the foot-hills of a steep escarpment was about four miles. I wonder how many hundreds of rhino were living in that area at this dry time of the year. I should say many, such are the numbers of these animals in Kenya Colony today.

Returning to my quest, the elephants. From 8 p.m. that night until midnight you could hear the animals splashing and gurgling in the river as they bathed and drank, notes varying from the high-pitched scream of the cow elephants to the deep outbursts of the bulls. It would be difficult to estimate how many of these big bulls watered there regularly while the drought lasted. I have scouted round the foot-hills adjoining and seen wide and deep tracks worn out and down by elephants' feet during the past centuries. There they have a stronghold and there they will remain for centuries to come, the country here being quite uninhabited, and apart from the native poachers has seldom been hunted by man, and the district lends itself to no other use than holding game.

Apart from the river it is an uninteresting place—no water, and desert thorn in abundance. The bush appears dry and sapless, but immediately after a little rain the whole country appears green, an unbelievable transformation, such is the forced and rapid growth. Natives seeking honey (who are in reality camouflaged poachers, their bows and arrows hidden in the surrounding bush) came into my camp, and immediately wanted to take me to the elephants. I agreed to go out next morning and see what we could find; these natives, I found, knew every track, in fact every trail in that little-known district. They would skirt a particular stretch of bush because rhino were there, and their idea, which was a sound one, was to stay the night on top of rocky kopjes in the valley and watch from the summit to see the biggest bulls passing to and from the river. I found method in their ways, and my hunt proved most successful.

These natives are great meat eaters, and a few years ago when a bonus of so much per pound was paid on ivory "found" and brought into a station, these natives harvested well. This was entirely as they wished it, as they would shoot many elephants with their poisoned arrows, eat the meat, bury the tusks, and after a lapse of three months unearth the ivory, bring it into a Government Boma and claim their reward, setting the onus against some European for having wounded one, or more, elephant and then lost it. The Game Department, now alive to this form of poaching, put an end to a vicious practice. The result is that today more elephants

live, as the native would not think of killing unless he could make profit from it. Lions in these outlying places are never molested by natives for the sport or fun of it, but if you put a price on the hides they will come along, such is the brain of our native poaching fraternity. On this I will say more anon.

Up to date I have actually only come across one rhino wounded by the natives' arrow. I was traversing an area in the Sonso country bordering between Kenya and Tanganyika, and spotting a big rhino bull, I could not understand why he was so uneasy; he kept stamping round in a circle and appeared to be in pain. Moving in his direction, I could see an arrow sticking in his side, the steel or iron part next the point being bent over. Going nearer him—some rhino birds flew off his back—he came in my direction in a determined charge of blind fury. I shot him and then examined the arrow wound; this had passed between his ribs, the iron stem of the arrow being polished on account of the rhino rubbing it against trees to dislodge it. The poison substance had entirely disappeared, and it is most probable that this had been old and baked, losing its paralysing properties.

Some years ago a tragedy under distressing circumstances occurred to one of two sportsmen, father and son, who proceeded to hunt rhinos. They hunted for several days, and luck had been invariably against them. One morning, seeing a good bull, they carefully reached within shot and killed him. While looking at him lying dead a

second rhino from thick bush adjoining charged out with unprovoked aggression and, before they realised it, knocked the father down, the horn inflicting terrible injuries. The son shot the rhino and then had to proceed a distance of eighteen miles for medical aid. When he arrived his feet were bleeding and lacerated, having run most of the way over terrible stony ground. When they returned to the scene of the tragedy his father had died from the effect of his terrible injuries. This will show that an accident like the above will happen very easily.

A Dutch hunter friend of mine, a man of the bush and one of the best hunters I have ever known, met with a similar accident, the muscles of his thigh being lacerated by the onrush of one of these dangerous beasts. He was taken unawares and entirely off his guard, his lasting regret that he did not get time to put an end to the rhino's senseless fury. The same might have happened to myself. One afternoon I was sitting near a belt of bush, smoking my pipe of peace, and my rifle was some little distance away from me. When I happened to glance behind there was an enormous rhino bull walking straight on to me. He seemed to come from nowhere, and yet with all his bulk and weight I never heard him. I made a grab for my rifle, and none too soon. Had I been without one I must have been at his mercy, as there was no protection near me. Since then I have always made a fixed rule of having my life protector near me. I will conclude my rhino escapades with a brush-up a

party and myself had in taking a female rhino's picture, of which she entirely disapproved.

We had hunted all morning for a suitable rhino subject. During the forenoon we had seen several rhinos, the trouble being that they were standing under thorn trees, and from the picture point of view unattractive. The outlook was not very hopeful until someone spotted a rhino by an isolated tree. She was standing about 200 yards away and not marred by heavy undergrowth or long grass, and everything pointed to a successful picture. We walked up towards her, and as we came nearer discovered there were two rhinos. Evidently one had been lying down, which was now standing beside the one we had previously seen. The idea was to get up to them as close as possible without their detecting our presence. Everything was working splendidly, the wind, though little, in our favour, and the light good. At sixty yards a standard 35 mm. cine was rigged up and filming commenced. It was now easy to discern the sex, a cow and her offspring; there was little difference in their size. The idea of approaching a little closer was suggested and acted upon. Slowly and cautiously we sneaked up to within twenty-five yards and were not detected. The cine on its tripod was fixed up, and at the first noise of the release, the cow promptly turned to the sound, ears all alert, to catch the direction of the strange noise. Finding this, she took a few steps forward, and now the situation did not look so good. My friend the operator—I give him full marks—kept on that starter

and the next instant she charged straight on to us. I do not know what fraction of a second she took to cover the intervening yards; it must have been little. I saw the film later. She received two shots and crashed only six feet from the tripod, a cloud of dust, as she struck the ground on her massive snout, flying all round us. When the charge came home, I noticed the young one was at her right side and slightly behind from the time she did that terrible rush. The surprising thing was that no one saw the young one go, as the dust the mother raised on falling obscured it.

That even the sound of a cine motor is strange to all animals, and is readily picked up, means that photography on foot is not an easy thing and, without protection, is, to put it mildly, dangerous. Even so, with all their bad qualities and their good horns, the rhino will still remain one of our sporting beasts worthy of being hunted and entitled to all the respect given to those animals classified under the heading "Dangerous."

C H A P T E R S I X T E E N

Hippo

THE hide of the river horse of Africa is thicker than that of the rhino, but when made into sticks is affected by damp weather and does not retain its shape compared to the latter. Here we have an unwieldy beast weighing when fully matured nearly three tons. He is to be found in the majority of the lakes and rivers in Eastern, Southern and Central Africa. There they are in very large numbers, and from the hunting point of view uninteresting. He can boast of the largest mouth of any animal in Africa, and has used it on many occasions on mankind with fatal results. That the hippo can be most ferocious—more especially if it is an old, war-scarred, bad-tempered bull, when he will attack canoes, actually biting them in half, including the occupants—is only too well known.

On Lake Victoria there has been from time to time considerable loss of life, and this form of hunting, unless you are a good swimmer, can be decidedly dangerous. Hippo flesh is eagerly sought by the natives, and the fat is amongst the best known and ideal for European cooking. I have eaten excellent biltong made from the flesh near the ribs, and the flavour always reminds me of the Cockney selling rabbits in London: "Who'll buy the rabbits with the porky flavour?" The hippo has the latter.