

PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA AS A HUNTING FIELD

By Howard C. Hillegas

IN the Pungwe River district of the Portuguese territory on the east coast of Africa fifty varieties of animals, ranging in size from elephants to jackals, roam over the country in troops of hundreds. It is one vast game



THE AFRICAN HUNTER'S MOST COVETED TROPHY.

park, in which the report of a sportsman's rifle is seldom heard.

Nowhere in the world is there anything comparable with this territory and its wild animals. Hunters who have been in the game districts of Southern Asia, Australia, and the Western Hemisphere say that those fields are of insignificant value beside those of the east coast.

The Pungwe River district is specially favorable on account of its proximity to the seaport of Beira, where lines of American and European steamers make regular and frequent calls. There is no necessity of making a long journey from the seacoast to this game territory; it is only a few miles from where the passenger leaves the steamer. By going in the regular mail steamers by way of Southampton and Cape Town it is possible to

reach Beira in six weeks at an expense of about \$300 from New York; but there are several lines of freight steamers, with excellent passenger accommodations, which ply between New York and east coast ports and make the journey in about five weeks. The fares on these lines are less than half that of the mail boats.

When South Africa was discovered the country swarmed with game. Even a hundred years after Cape Town was founded the land was filled with elephants and lions, and the settlers suffered as much from the attacks of these as from the wiles of the native tribes. Twenty varieties of antelope roamed over the plains, and great herds of quagga and gnu often devastated the farms on the outskirts of Cape Town. The wanton destruction carried on by the early settlers, who were satisfied with horns and skins, practically annihilated the game in that region, and caused the remnants of the herds to escape northwards into the east coast district, where natural advantages and the absence of hunters have combined in assisting in their propagation.

The coast territory between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers has vast numbers of game in every part, but the district bordering on the Pungwe, which is midway between the two, is the feeding ground of the largest herds of animals on the continent. To make general statements concerning this wonderful region is to invite incredulity, but it is almost impossible to exaggerate in speaking of it. One specific instance was sufficient to convert the writer to the belief that he who attempts to exaggerate concerning the game in this region must be extraordinarily adept in the art.

In the autumn of 1897, at the invitation of several Beira merchants, a small party of voyagers journeyed twenty miles into the interior "to see their zoo."



AN EAST AFRICAN CAMP.

as one of the hosts expressed it. From the limbs of trees situated on an eminence the party saw, through field-glasses, more than sixty different herds of game within a radius of ten miles. Attempts to count the number of animals in even one herd were futile, owing to their size and constant movement. A hunter of twenty-five years' African experience estimated that there were ten thousand head of game in sight. Among the herds were twenty-two elephant, several hundred buffalo and innumerable zebra, antelope, giraffe and eland.

This great feeding ground, which is mentioned by Speke, Grant, Livingstone and Stanley, begins within a few miles of the coast and extends several hundred miles into the interior. It is easily reached by railroad, on horseback, or by sailing up the river, which abounds in hippopotamus and crocodile. The country for the greater part is open and free from the rank undergrowth so frequent in tropical countries. The streams are heavily wooded, and towards the source of the Pungwe there are deep forests in which elephant are plentiful and rhinoceros numerous. Fever and lions are the only dangers to which the hunter is exposed, but both can be readily avoided by taking proper precautions.

Notwithstanding the fact that almost every South African claims to have slain a lion at one time or another, those beasts continue to exist in large numbers in the Pungwe region, as well as farther inland. Even in the settled districts near Salisbury lions constantly appear to terrorize the inhabitants, and the frontiersmen are constantly armed on account of them.

Lions are more plentiful, however, farther in the interior, especially north and west of Salisbury, a territory which is readily reached by the railway. The natives kill hundreds of them by scattering poisoned meat in the districts where they abound, and the white settlers are making systematic efforts to exterminate them by setting gun-traps. Notwithstanding these efforts to rid the country of lions the sportsman will have ample opportunity for excellent sport for many years to come.

The Pungwe district has not suffered to any great extent from the ivory-hunters, and consequently great herds of elephant still roam over the country. Only several months ago a playful herd interrupted communication between Beira and the north by tearing up the railway tracks and breaking down the telegraph poles. The Portuguese Government pro-

tests the elephant, to a certain extent, by compelling hunters to secure a special license for shooting this game.

Although the hunter may be satisfied with lions and elephant, it is the buffalo and the various kinds of antelope that furnish the greater part of the sport available in this district. Hundreds of these animals inhabit this region, and the country is sufficiently wild to prevent game slaughter, but not too thickly wooded to allow easy pursuit and a long range of vision. The territory practically is an immense zoological garden, in which every specimen of African fauna may be found in inconceivable numbers. Within fifty miles of Beira may be found, in addition to those already mentioned, giraffe, zebra, eland, haartebeest, blauwrok, koodoo, gemsbok, vaalrhebok, klikspringer, wildebeeste, hyena, wolf, wild-dog, jackal, and a score of different varieties of antelope and deer.

For the sportsman who loves bird-shooting there are almost as many varieties of fowl as of animals of higher grade. The speedy ostrich is as plentiful in the Portuguese country as farther north in German East Africa, where hunters make great fortunes by catching the wild birds in corrals by means of extensive drives, in which hundreds of

natives take part. Along the Pungwe there are wild ducks, geese, turkey, and bustard in great variety and number.

Unless an extensive stay is meditated, the hunter in the Pungwe district need make no expensive preparations. All the necessary camping paraphernalia can be secured in Beira, but when it is proposed to remain for several months it is advisable not to make purchases in this town, which has reached the point of civilization where taking advantage of a stranger is thoroughly understood.

The best season for shooting game in this region begins in April and ends in October, but there are just as many opportunities for sport in the other months, which constitute the wet season, or the African summer. In the dry season the game deserts the deep interior and finds better grazing near the coast, where there is little or no woodland. Sportsmen prefer the dry season for many reasons, chief among which is the one that they desire to avoid the possibility of contracting the deadly coast fever, which translates healthy men into corpses in less than ten hours. There is little danger of falling a victim to the disease between April and October, but it is advisable to use quinine freely when traveling in the district.



Photo by Reginald Shepherd.

A FEAST IN PROSPECT FOR THE NATIVE HUNTERS.