

LASSOING WILD ANIMALS IN AFRICA

BY

GUY H. SCULL

FIELD MANAGER OF THE BUFFALO JONES
AFRICAN EXPEDITION

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

AND A FOREWORD BY
CHARLES S. BIRD



*WITH THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS*



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PART TWO

SOMEHOW everything seemed to happen on moving day with the Buffalo Jones Expedition in East Africa. Exactly why this should have been it is impossible to tell. Perhaps the reason may be found in the fact that a considerable part of our time was occupied in moving. No doubt the circumstance could be traced to some such perfectly reasonable cause. But we chose to look upon it otherwise.

When an outfit like ours has been working for a while in the open country — especially when the undertaking has no precedent and the outcome is decidedly uncertain — the little happenings of each day gradually grow to have a peculiar significance of their own, and finally a

Lassoing Wild Animals

brand-new set of superstitions is formed and half-jokingly believed in by every one concerned. In this way an expedition comes to be regarded as lucky or unlucky, or lucky on certain days, or at certain hours of the day, or at certain periods of the moon. The wide reaches of the African veldt have something to do with it, perhaps.

These superstitions are temporary, local, and often purely personal affairs. Means, being a cowboy, believed that when he rode his big-boned bay the drive would be successful. The native dogboy insisted that when the long-eared bloodhound and the little white terrier were coupled together on the march, the rest of the pack would come through without mishap. Loveless swore by a particular piece of rope, and Mac — which is short for Mohammed — discovered propitious omens on every conceivable occasion.

In Africa

It was on the first day's march into the Kedong Valley that we had roped the wart-hog. On the journey from Sewell's Farm to Rugged Rocks we had rounded up and photographed the eland. Again, it was on the trek of March 8 to the Wangai River that we had caught our only glimpses of rhinoceros and lion — faint chances of making a capture, but still chances, and better than no signs at all.

And thus, merely because it had turned out so in the past, every member of the expedition had come to entertain a semi-serious belief that something momentous was bound to happen on moving day.

A general feeling of expectancy pervaded the entire *safari* when we broke camp at the Wangai River at dawn of a hazy morning. The sky was clear of clouds, but behind the hills of the Mau

Lassoing Wild Animals

escarpment a veldt fire had been burning for several days, so that a veil of smoke was seen hanging in the air as the dawn broadened into day. The smell of the burning veldt and the nearness of the fire lent an oppressive warmth to the still morning.

"You two boys had better carry your heavy ropes," the Colonel said at starting. "We might meet something."

We had finished with the Kedong and Rift valleys. We had hunted every corner of the district within striking distance of the water. And we had had success of a kind. Cheetah, eland, hartebeest, and serval-cat we had roped and tied and photographed. But the really big game had so far escaped us. For this reason we had decided to take the road over the Mau, where the smoke haze hung heavy, and so on into the Sotik country, where both lion and rhino were said to abound.

In Africa

For the first ten miles of the march our way led across untraveled country, toward the two deep ruts in the veldt that were known as the wagon road. We had an extra ox-wagon with us now, in charge of Mr. Curry, an Africander, who lived with his partner on a farm on the border of the Sotik, and who on his return journey home with his wagon had agreed to help us carry supplies. Curry was slight and round-shouldered, with light yellow hair. His face was burned a bright red, excepting his nose, which was white where the skin was peeling. He had a peculiar, slow, drawling way of talking—when he talked at all, which was seldom. Being an inhabitant of the district into which we were going, he was naturally subjected at first to a number of questions in regard to the big game there.

“Plenty of rhino in your part of the world, I suppose?”

Lassoing Wild Animals

"Y—as," drawled Curry.

"And lion, too, I imagine?"

"Y—as."

"Ought to get some giraffe on the way, hadn't we?"

"Y—as."

"Rhino pretty scarce just now, though, aren't they?"

"Y—as," Curry answered placidly.

Thus it soon became apparent that Curry's chief ambition was to agree pleasantly with whatever anybody said, which tended to discredit any information he had to impart. So, as a matter of course, the questions ceased, and when no more were asked him Curry's conversation ceased also.

It was rough going for the ox-wagons those first ten miles, and they made slow time of it along the base of the hills. According to our custom on the march the Colonel and the two cowboys, the

In Africa

picture department (composed of Kear-ton and Gobbet), and Ulyate (the white hunter) and myself rode in a widely extended line in front of the *safari*, sweeping the country for game. It was hot at the base of the hills — so hot that when your bridle hand dropped inadvertently to the pommel of the saddle, the brass mounting there seemed to burn you. Not a breath of air was stirring, and the sun shone down blazing through the wisps of smoke haze, and the heat waves rose from the dead, parched veldt so that the distant southern volcano looked all quivering.

Then from out the blurred vista in front little by little a clump of comparatively large trees began to take definite shape. Another half mile farther, and we saw that something was moving among the trees as high up as the top-most branches.

Lassoing Wild Animals

“Giraffe,” said Ulyate, and no sooner had he spoken the word than the great towering animals wheeled and fled from their shelter with that long-legged gallop of theirs which looks so easy and slow, but which carries them over the ground as fast as a speedy horse can run.

The Colonel and the two cowboys set off at a hand gallop in a vain attempt to round them up and drive them back to the cameras. The race was a hopeless one for the horsemen from the start. But, according to the general method of operations adopted by the Colonel from the very beginning, no chance of a capture, however slim it might appear, was to remain untried so long as men and horses could endure.

The two ruts of the wagon road led close by the grove of trees, and when the rest of us reached this spot and dismounted to await results, the three

In Africa

leading horsemen had disappeared long ago into the scrub-grown country to the south.

As noon approached, the heat became more and more oppressive. The cameras had been screwed to the tripods and covered with our coats to protect them from the sun. The horses grazed near by. Mac was sent up one of the trees to warn us of the approach of anything like a giraffe, and the rest of us sat on the ground round the bole in the small circle of thin shade and lazily watched the black ants always crawling and climbing and zigzagging back and forth over the network of fallen twigs and leaves. It was too hot to talk — it was too hot to sleep or think. And by and by the ox-wagons came up, and the oxen brought the flies. For a time then the only sounds were the slow crunching of the feeding horses and an occasional

Lassoing Wild Animals

inarticulate snarl from some one or other who foolishly tried to brush the flies away from his face.

Eventually, after a long time had passed, Means rode into the grove of trees, unheralded by Mac and alone. The bay horse had fallen badly, wrenching his rider's back where once he had been hurt before. Means took his saddle off, threw it on the ground, and sat on it.

"He dropped into a pig hole," he explained, "an' hopped out again as neat as could be. But in hoppin' out he hopped into another, an' that just naturally discouraged him an' he come down with me."

No comments were made, nor did Means expect any. But evidently he had considered it only justice to the bay that the mishap should receive from him the proper explanation.

In Africa

Then Loveless returned, also alone. He made a few grumbling remarks about its being all nonsense to run the horses to death when there was no chance at all. But as his listeners showed not the slightest interest in the matter, he, too, relapsed into silence.

The Colonel was the last to come in. He rode straight to the tree where the company were gathered, dismounted, and sat down. Then he spoke to the world at large.

"They must be about here somewhere," he said. "And being about here somewhere, we'll get 'em yet."

When the shadow beneath the tree began to lengthen toward the east, the *safari* shook itself together and prepared to move on once more. But this time, instead of occupying his customary position at the head of the column, the Colonel lagged behind.

Lassoing Wild Animals

Immediately after leaving the grove of trees, the road commenced to climb the first rises of the Mau escarpment. As we mounted higher up the hillside, the view behind us opened out into a grand panorama of the two valleys and their sentinel volcanoes, with the smoke haze hanging over all. For a time, those of us who were in front rode half sideways in the saddle, looking back over the way we had come and over the district we had grown to know so well. Then we crossed a small, level park that formed the crest of the first hill, and as we moved down the western slope the view behind us disappeared and the new country spread before us.

Kearton was riding with his head sunk on his chest like a sick man. Gobbet asked if anything was wrong with him.

"Nothing bad; too much heat this morning, likely."

I n A f r i c a

"Want to hunt up a bit of shade and lie up awhile?"

"No, I'll go on."

Gobbet shrugged his shoulders. "You're the judge," he said.

Hill after hill stretched away in front to the one upstanding kopje that marked the top of the Mau. The district was wooded with small, twisted trees, and the fire had crossed here, so that the ground was black and the air smelled stronger of burning.

Presently Means stopped. "I'd better wait till the Colonel comes along," he explained. "The Colonel don't carry any weapons."

Loveless stopped with him, and, as Ulyate was somewhere behind with the ox-wagons and porters, this left Kear-ton, Gobbet, and myself to ride on by ourselves. For a mile or more the road lifted and dipped with monotonous reg-

Lassoing Wild Animals

ularity, and the burnt land was still on either hand, without a sign of life anywhere to be seen. So when the sun really began to decline toward the west, Gobbet, who had once been assistant manager of the Alhambra Music Hall in Brighton, told the story of Harry Lauder and the liquid-air biscuits, and it seemed to do Kearton good. Kearton had just told Gobbet to quit his lying, when all three of us realized that for the last half minute we had been unconsciously listening to the beat of a galloping horse on the road behind.

The next instant Ulyate pulled up in a cloud of dust.

"Colonel wants you," he said. "They've rounded up a giraffe."

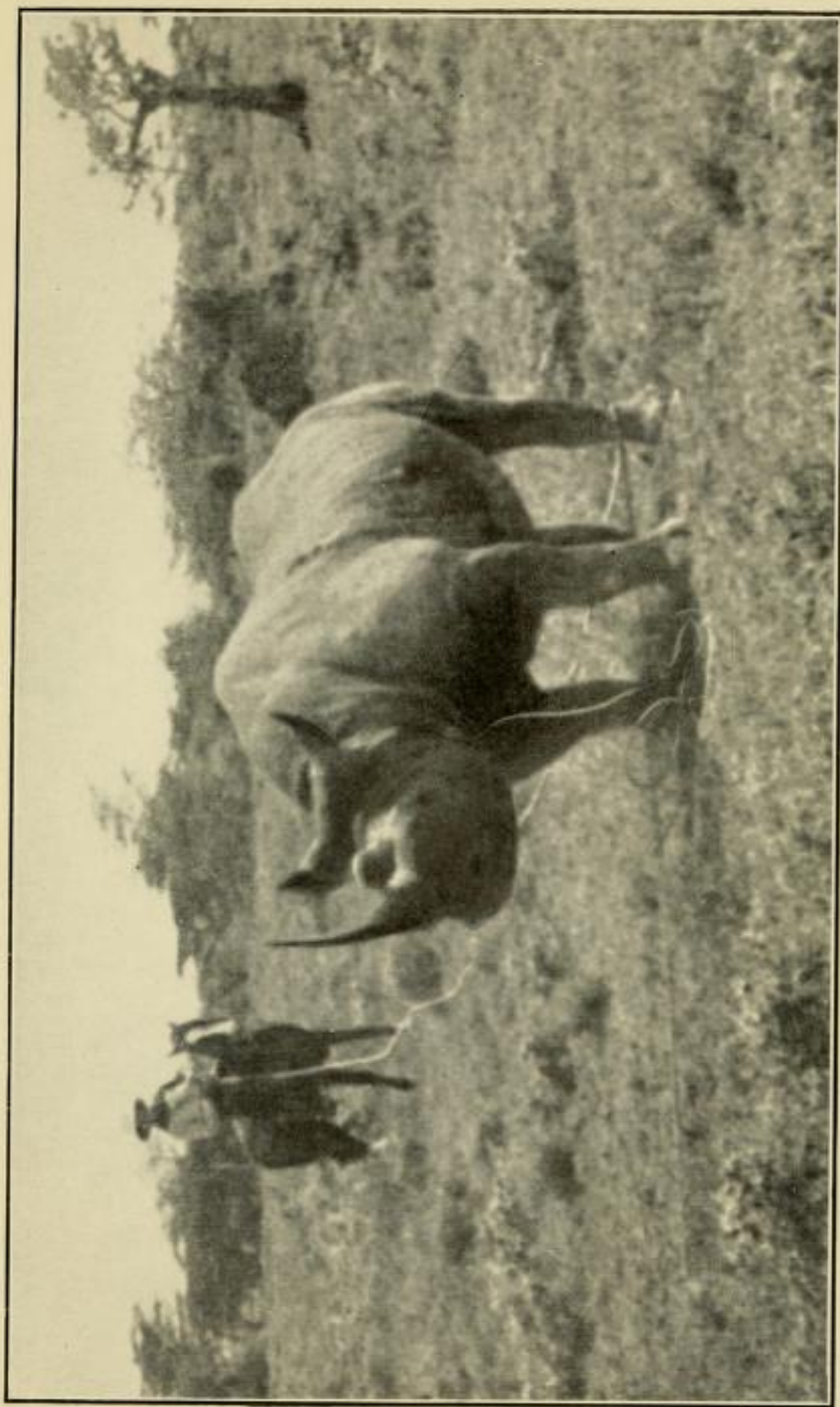
We wheeled the horses and started back on the run.

"About—three—miles! Left—of the—road!" Ulyate shouted after us.

Lassoing Wild Animals

Then sometimes, when we outspanned for an hour at noon, the four special camera porters would give imitations of Kearton and Gobbet taking pictures, of Loveless shoeing horses, or of Means in the act of roping. And in the evenings, when the day's march was done and the outpost fires had been lighted, the talk of the company would turn to our chances of finding luck in the Sotik country that lay ahead.

In the afternoon of March 16 we reached Webb's Farm, in the Guas Nyiro Valley, which lies at the edge of the big plains. In this neighborhood there were three farms — Webb's, Curry's, and Agate's — and on the evening of our arrival some of their men paid a visit to the camp. They had heard of the expedition, and each in turn examined the horses, the dogs, the ropes, and the saddles, and then, like the



"WITH THE ROPED LEG HE DRAGGED THE HORSE AFTER HIM"

In Africa

hunters at Nairobi, asked the inevitable question:

“But how are you going to do it?”

“Oh, we’ll do it somehow,” the Colonel replied good-naturedly. And the visitors shook their heads a little and smiled and changed the subject.

But to attempt to rope a rhinoceros or a lion required fresh horses, and ever since we had left Nairobi, nearly a fortnight ago, we had worked our horses hard every day. Now that we had reached the land of the big game, the Colonel for the first time called a day of rest. So we loafed about camp from sunrise to sunset and by evening were heartily sick of it all.

Perhaps we had expected too much of this Sotik country; perhaps the expedition was running, temporarily, in a streak of bad luck; but the fact remains that when we resumed hunting on March 18, disappointment only followed disappointment.

Lassoing Wild Animals

As we had done in the Rift Valley, so here we adopted the method of sweeping the country with a widely extended line. The first day we rode far to the southward, to the Hot Springs and back, and found nothing, and an unreasoning depression settled upon the expedition. The next day we rode still farther, to the westward this time, and again found nothing, and so the depression deepened. Also on the afternoon of this day it rained heavily, and Curry agreed with Ulyate that this probably meant the beginning of the rainy season, which was already overdue.

That night at the supper table the Colonel spoke his mind. The rain was dripping through the canvas fly overhead, and the Colonel wore his broad-brimmed hat to help keep the water off his plate.

“There’s no use hanging round here

In Africa

any longer," he said; "not a bit of use. We haven't seen anything, nor a sign of anything. When the rains begin in earnest, this ground will soften fast an' the horses will get bogged an' we'll have to quit. So from now on we've got to work fast. Now Ulyate says there's water about twelve miles from here to the north — called the Soda Swamp. We'll start for the Soda Swamp in the morning."

Again it was moving day. The morning dawned fine after the rain, and the air was clear, and the country looked greener and fresher than it had ever looked before. By the time the sun rose, the first wagon was packed, so the *safari* set out on the journey, leaving the second wagon to load and follow our tracks, for there was no road to the Soda Swamp.

At the last moment the Colonel de-

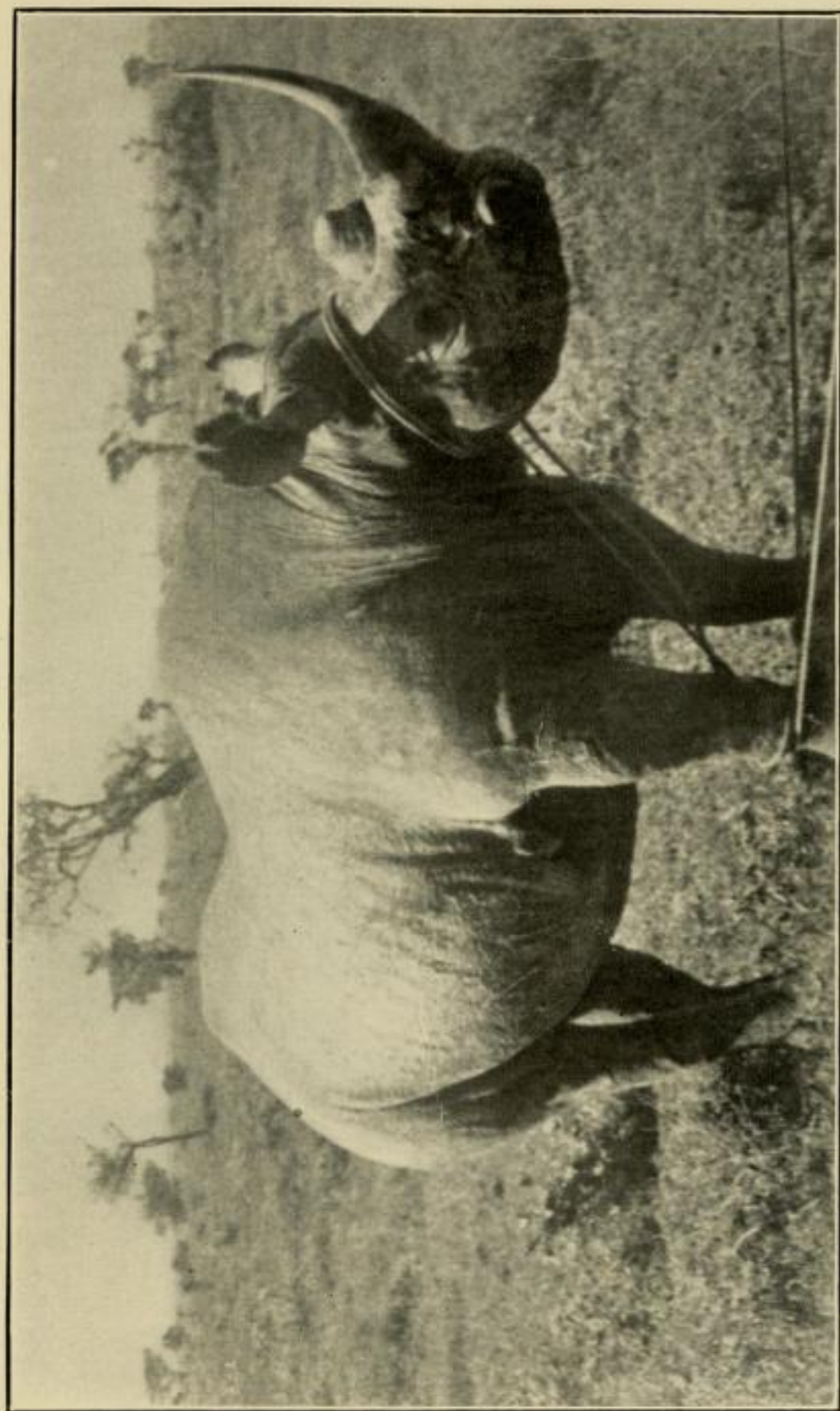
Lassoing Wild Animals

cided that he and the cowboys might just as well make a circuit to the westward of the line of march on the off chance of finding game.

“We covered that district pretty thoroughly yesterday,” he said. “But still, you never can tell.”

Yet nobody thought it worth while for the camera department to go with them, and so Kearton and Gobbet and the four special porters trailed along with the slow, plodding wagon. In the first place, the wagons would follow the shortest route and the horses would be none the worse for an easy day; in the second, if by the remotest chance the Colonel flushed anything worth while, he could more easily find the cameras.

Curry had remained behind to bring on the second load, and soon Ulyate left us to make a *détour* past Agate's Farm to procure another sack of rice that was



THE RHINO ABOUT TO CHARGE GOBBET'S CAMERA

I n A f r i c a

badly needed. Ours was a large *safari*, and the details of transportation required close attention.

The morning wore on. The sky remained clear and the heat became intense. The direction in which we were traveling led us along the border of the plains, through small green parks, scattered groves of trees, and scrub.

So far as the mounted men were concerned, the march was a succession of rides and halts. The heavily laden ox-wagon traveled slowly, and it soon became our custom to dismount in a bit of shade and let the wagon pass ahead about a mile, when we would mount again and catch up with it and then repeat the process.

At one of these places there was a grass-grown mound against which we sat, leaning comfortably, and speculated on the distance we had come

Lassoing Wild Animals

and the distance we had to go. When, after a while, it became evident that we should never agree in the matter, the conversation altered to a sort of spasmodic affair.

"I thought this district was so full of big game that you couldn't sleep at night for the lions roaring around you," Gobbet remarked lazily.

"Wait till you get among them," said Kearton. "*Sais*, keep that horse farther away; he'll be walking on us next."

"Well, I haven't been kept awake any yet," Gobbet replied.

"I wonder where that wagon's got to," and Kearton raised himself on one elbow and peered ahead from beneath the down-tilted brim of his helmet. Then he lay back again and shut his eyes.

"Means is coming," he said.

The announcement occasioned no sur-

In Africa

prise. Undoubtedly Means had some reason for returning over the trail, and when he reached the mound we should probably learn what he wanted.

Means dismounted and sat down beside us. "We've found a rhino over in the next valley yonder," he remarked, and nodded his head toward the west.

"A rhino is no matter to joke about," said Gobbet. "Please remember that in the future."

"I'm not jokin'," said Means. "Colonel's watchin' him. Loveless stopped half-way here, about three miles off. Colonel sent me to bring the rest of you and get the heavy rope."

"Is that right, Means?" Kearton asked sharply.

"Sure."

"Come on, then."

In five minutes we had overtaken the wagon and stopped it, and while Means

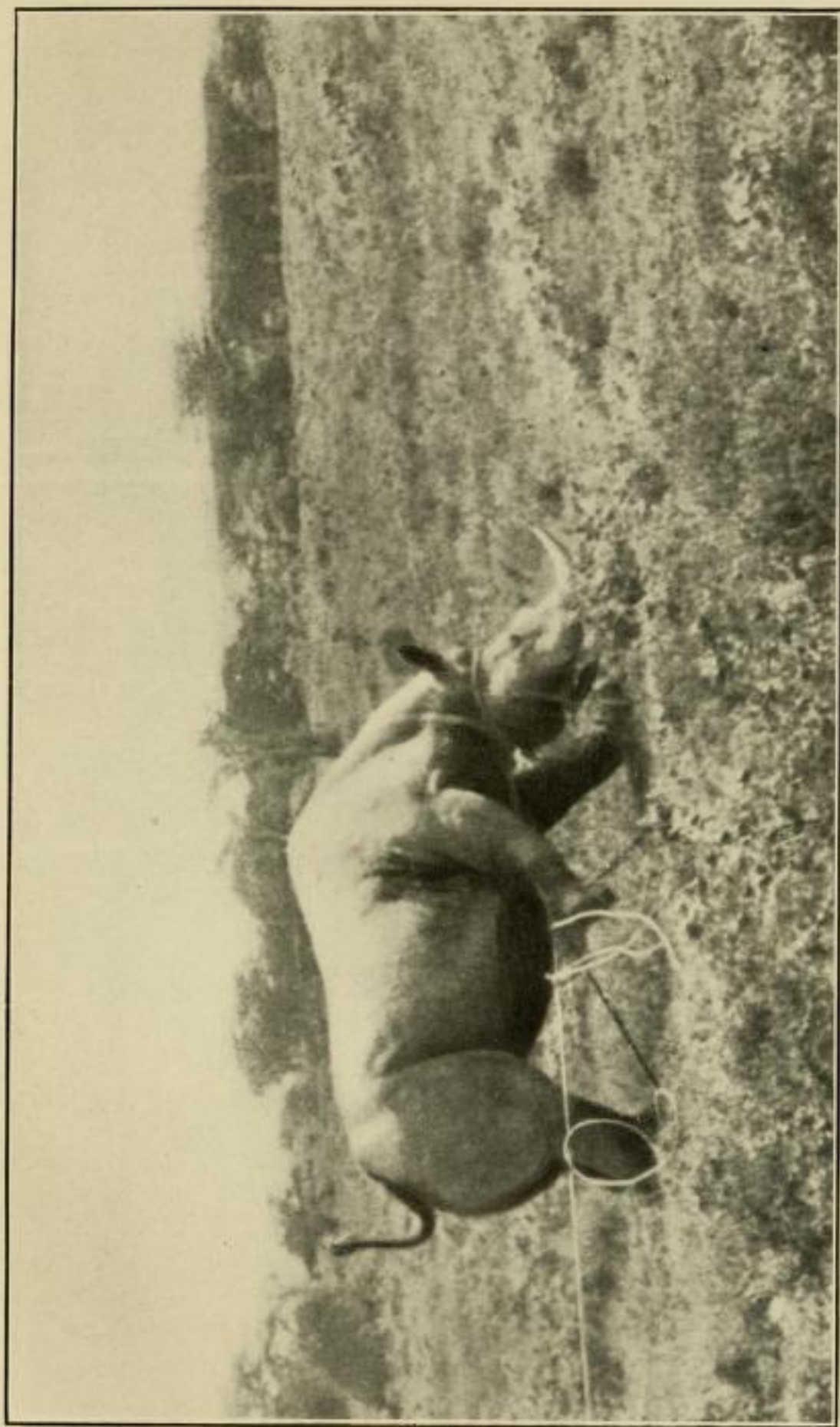
Lassoing Wild Animals

clambered up on to the load to hunt for the heavy rope, Kearton collected the camera porters and started ahead with them in the direction Means pointed out.

But Means could not find the rope he wanted. He threw off half the load without success.

"It's on the other wagon. There's where it is," he finally concluded. "No time to wait now. Other wagon likely hasn't started yet. We'll have to do with what we've got."

We rode on at an easy jog to keep the horses fresh, and at the end of half an hour we came upon Loveless waiting for us just beneath the crest of a rise. He had off-saddled his horse and had turned him loose to graze a bit before the coming work, and a few minutes were occupied while Loveless saddled up again and Kearton and Gobbet adjusted their cameras and took them on their horses.



"ONE LENGTH OF LINE LEFT—THE REST OF THE ROPES DANGLING, BROKEN, FROM THE RHINO"

In Africa

Finally every one was ready, and we set forth once more on a wide détour to the north to approach the beast from down the wind.

Loveless gave us the latest news: "The Colonel came over the rise a half hour ago and said the rhino was laying down resting quiet. The Colonel went back again at once to keep watch."

As we proceeded farther on the circuit and began to ride down the gentle slope into the adjacent valley, we slowed down the pace to a cautious walk. No one spoke, and on the grass of the veldt the tread of the horses made scarcely any sound.

Suddenly the Colonel appeared, walking toward us, bent low. He had backed out of his hiding-place behind a clump of scrub.

"He's laying down over there about a hundred yards away," he whispered.

Lassoing Wild Animals

"Now we want to catch the start of the show. You boys ready?"

Means tightened his cinch, and shook his rope loose and coiled it up again. Loveless said he was ready. One of the *saises* produced the Colonel's horse from behind another clump of scrub, and Kearton dismounted and began creeping forward with his camera.

"Don't start him up till I get my position," he cautioned. "I'll wave my hand."

On account of the growth of low bushes we could not see the rhino, but in silence we watched Kearton tiptoeing farther and farther ahead toward the spot where the Colonel had said the beast was lying down. The time was approximately a little after noon. The wind that was blowing was light, and came to us hot over the sunny reaches of veldt. The sky was cloudless.

In Africa

Then the three ropers commenced maneuvering forward, swinging out a little to the right. Kearton stopped. He set up his camera and sighted it, and took out his handkerchief and carefully wiped the lens.

When Kearton waved his hand, the Colonel's yell shattered the stillness and the great beast heaved up out of the grass and tossed his head and sniffed the air, and snorted. The horsemen rode full tilt at him, and with surprising quickness the rhino wheeled and broke away south down the valley.

For a good three miles the rhino ran straight and fast. Finally he came into more open country, which was dotted here and there with small thorn trees. Here, also, in one place there was a fair-sized pool of water, left over from the rains of the night before. The rhino selected this pool as a good position

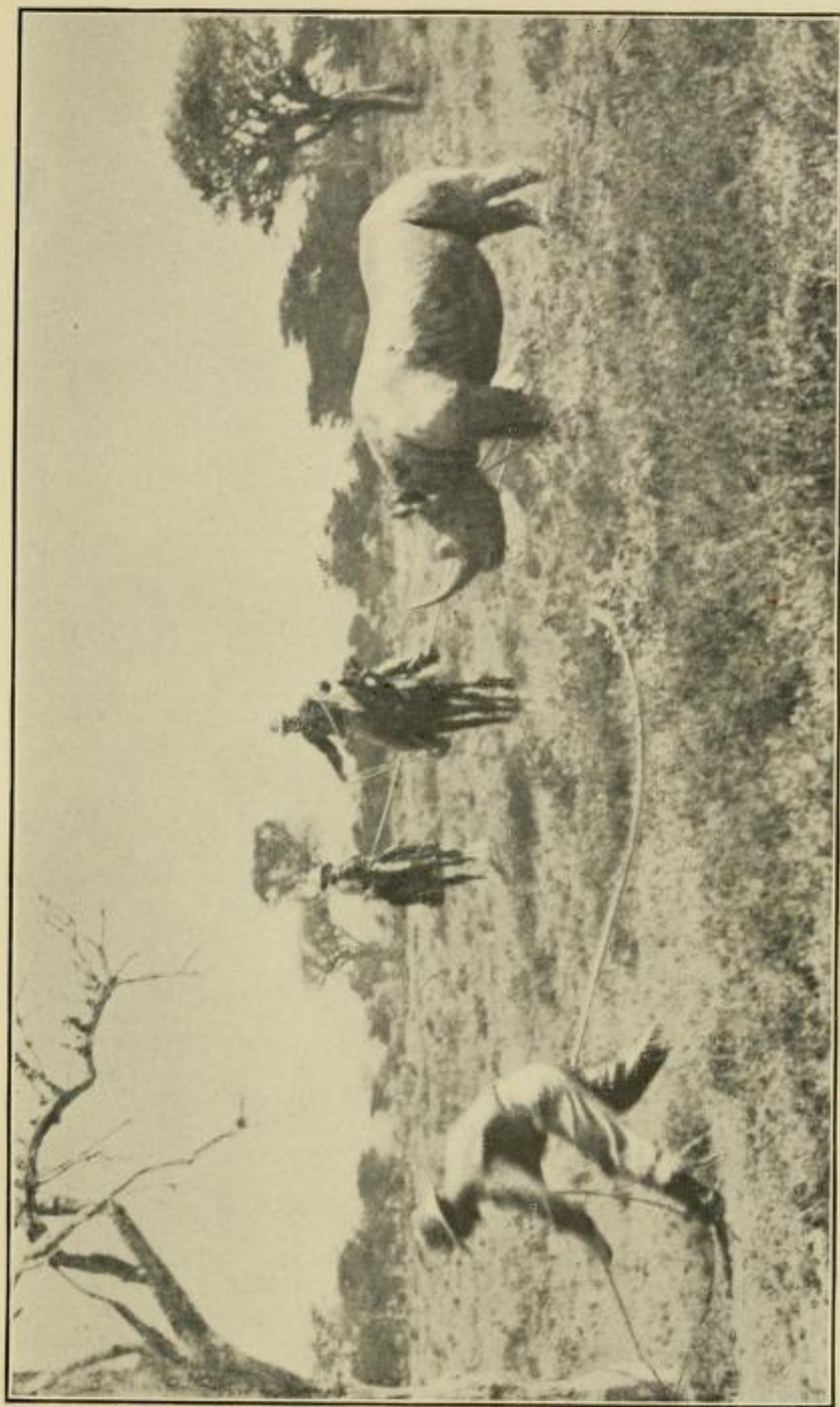
Lassoing Wild Animals

from which to act on the defensive. He splashed into the water, stopped, and faced the horsemen.

Then followed a few minutes' respite for all concerned. The horses were panting heavily after the sharp run, and the rhino's position in the pool rendered it difficult to approach him for a chance to throw a rope. Evidently considering himself safe for the moment, the beast rolled once or twice in the water and then stood on guard as before, but with his black sides dripping.

"We've got to get him out of that," said the Colonel. "A horse wouldn't stand a show there. Now when I get him to charge me, you boys stand by."

Before the Colonel finished speaking, he was already edging toward the pool. For fifteen yards the rhino watched him coming. Then with a great snort he charged out of the water, sending the



"STEP BY STEP THE HORSES DRAGGED HIM TO A TREE, WHERE LOVELESS MADE THE ROPE FAST"

In Africa

white spray flying in every direction, and the Colonel had to ride hard to keep ahead of the tossing horn. But Means was after the rhino like a flash, and with a quick throw caught him round the neck. The big bay fell back on his haunches and the rope snapped like twine.

“We’ll miss that heavy rope to-day,” Means said.

“We’ll tie him up with what we’ve got,” the Colonel replied. “Only we’ve got to tire him out some first. What we’ll do is to make him charge us one after the other, so he’ll run three times to the horses’ running once.”

It was a full half-hour before the next attempt was made to throw a rope. Time after time the rhino came plunging out of the water to charge the nearest horseman. Our Western horses proved to be only just a trifle faster than the

Lassoing Wild Animals

rhino, so that each time the beast nearly caught them. Besides, here and there the ground was bad with ant-bear holes, which had to be avoided, for a fall would mean disaster. But little by little it became apparent that the rhino's continual charging was beginning to produce an effect.

In the meanwhile the rest of the chase was coming up. In the distance we could see them hurrying down the valley — horsemen and porters considerably scattered, as if each one followed a route of his own choosing. Kearton led on his big chestnut. He was carrying the heavy camera under his arm, the tripod over his shoulder. The reins were hanging loose over his saddle horn, his heels were thumping the horse's sides, and the perspiration was streaming down his face.

"We lost you," he panted. "How's it going? What a picture!"

In Africa

Mac, the Mohammedan, and Aro, the Masai warrior, took the apparatus from him, and he dismounted and went to work.

At the second attempt to rope the beast, Loveless caught him by one hind leg, and the rhino decided to shift his base of operations to an ant-hill in the neighboring clearing. His mode of progression was to walk on three legs and to drag the black horse after him with the other. He reached the ant-hill and demolished it and paused for a breathing spell.

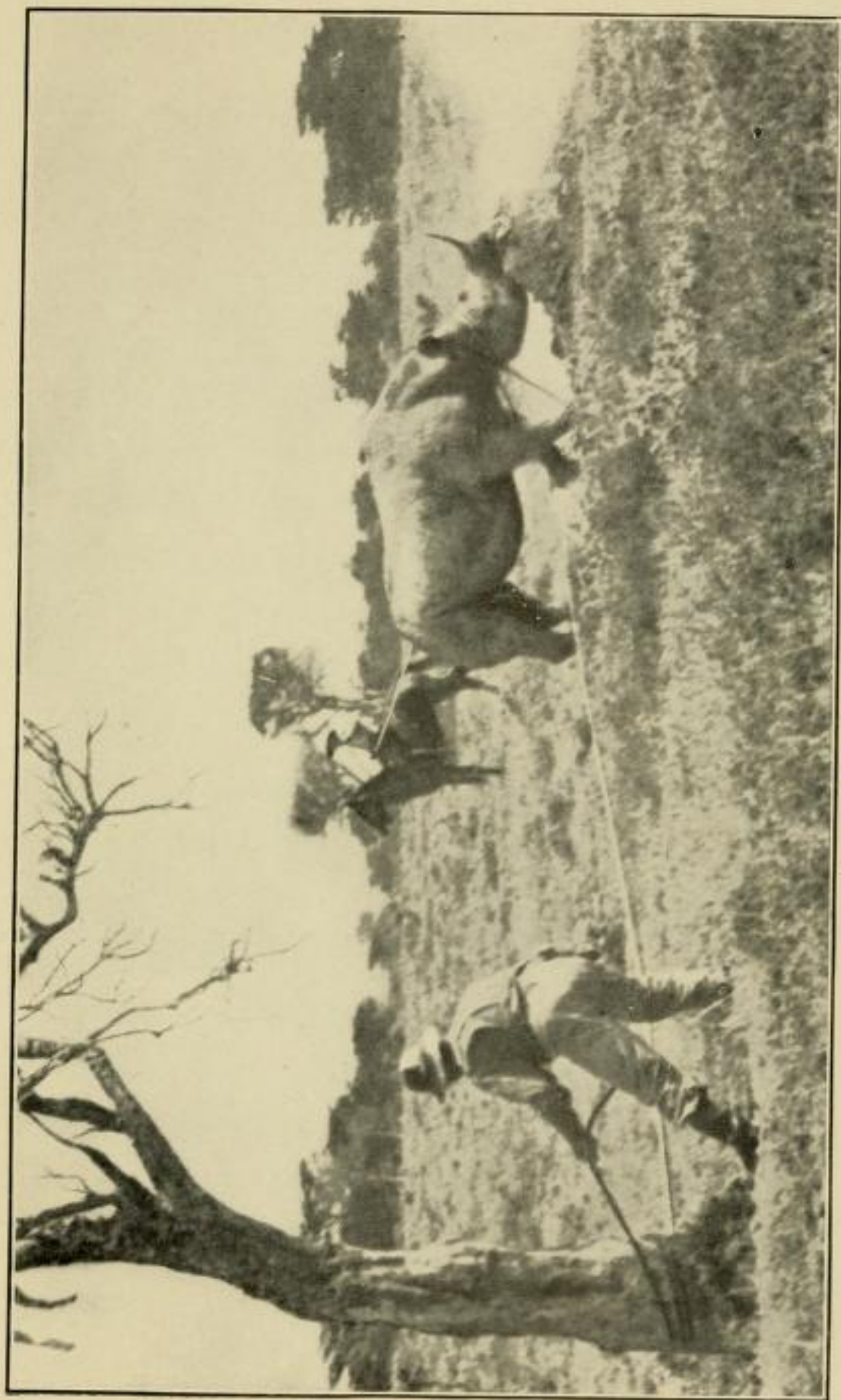
The chase followed after, and Kearton went into action on the north, and Gobbet on the south, near a small thorn tree, with a negro porter beside him. The rhino caught sight of Gobbet's camera and charged. The porter went up the tree like a flash. Gobbet was bent over, looking through his view-finder,

Lassoing Wild Animals

which, of course, gave him no idea of how fast the beast was bearing down on him nor how close he had already come.

“Look out!” yelled the Colonel.

Gobbet glanced up over the top of the camera and made a jump for the tree. But the porter was already in the branches, and the tree was so small there was not room for two, and Gobbet had to run for it. The next second, with a powerful upward stroke of his horn, the rhino sent the apparatus flying. Then Means succeeded in attracting his attention and he charged the horseman instead. Gobbet picked up the débris, found that the tripod-head was split clean in two as with an axe, found the camera itself undamaged, found there was enough head left to support the camera, quickly mounted his machine again, and was just in time to catch the end of the rhino's chase after Means.



"FROM ANT-HILL TO THORN-TREE AND BACK AGAIN THE FIGHT WENT ON"

In Africa

And all the while Kearton had his camera trained upon the scene in which his assistant was playing the conspicuous part.

"I hope I got that good," he said; "it'll make fine action — fine."

From one position to another, from ant-hill to thorn tree and back to ant-hill once more, the fight went on through the long, hot afternoon. Ropes were thrown and caught and broken, mended and thrown again. The horses were pulled, all standing, one way and another. Rolls of film were exposed and replaced by fresh ones. The rhino sulked and stormed and charged in turn.

At the end of the fourth hour, Loveless had one short length of light line left. The rest of the ropes were dangling, broken, from the rhino's legs and neck as he stood at bay over the ruins of the ant-hill.

Lassoing Wild Animals

The sun was rapidly canting toward the west. The continual work in the intense heat, without food or water, was beginning to tell on both horses and men. The rhino was weakening faster. But only one hour of daylight remained, and if the beast could hold out till dark we should lose him.

There was the dead stump of a tree with the roots protruding lying in the grass near by. The Colonel told Means to fasten the stump to the last piece of line, and Loveless rode toward Kear-ton's machine, past the rhino, dragging the stump behind him. As the Colonel had foreseen, the beast charged at the stump, and the loose ropes hanging from him became entangled in the roots.

So on they went at a run, first Loveless, then the stump, bounding over the ground, then the charging rhino, headed straight for Kearton's camera. The

In Africa

Masai warrior stood by the tripod with his long spear poised high, and Kearton turned the handle and shouted at Loveless:

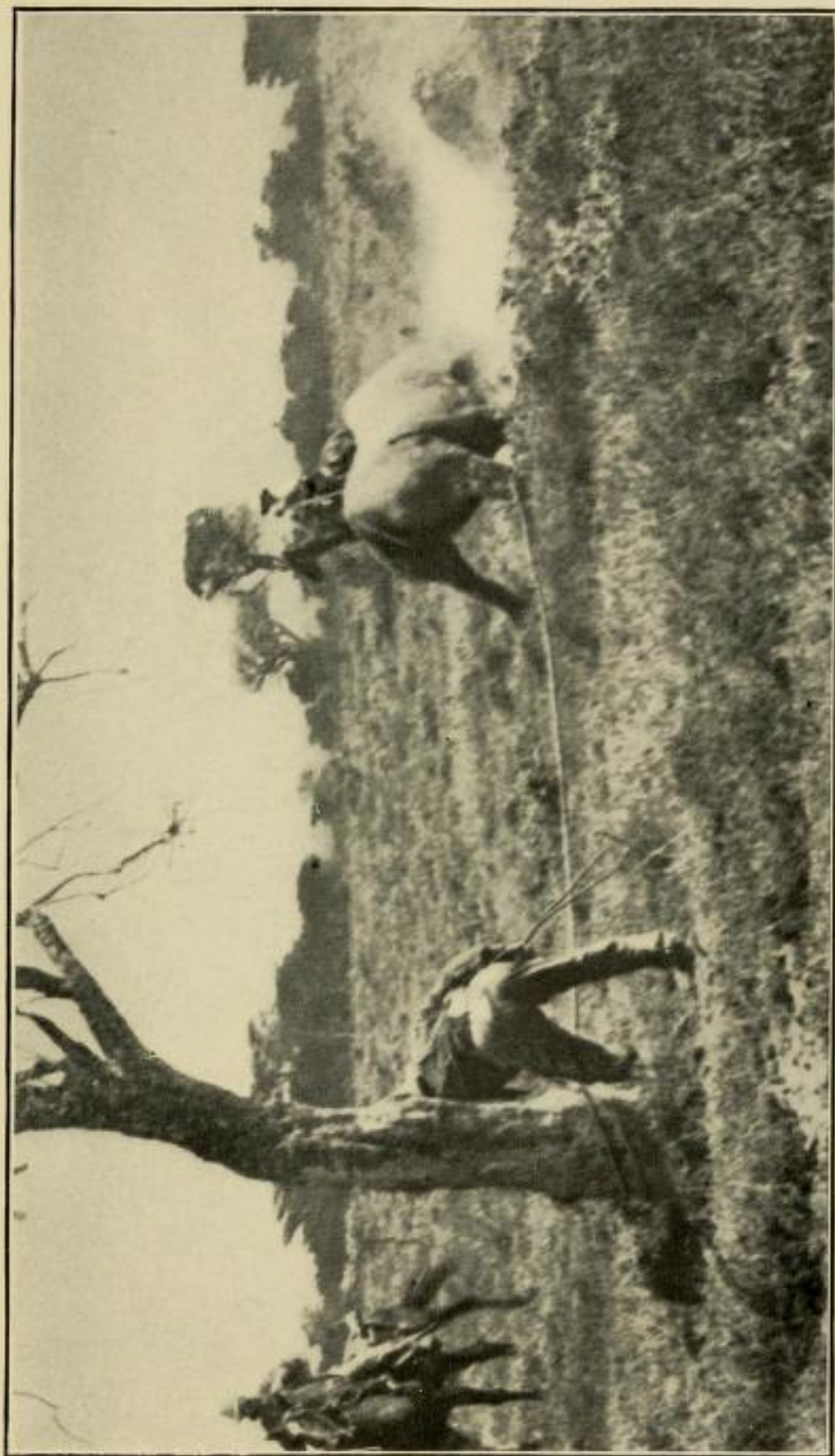
“How many times have I got to tell you not to come straight into the lens? Bring him on at an angle! . . . I don’t want to be unreasonable,” he added, when the rhino stopped, “but you ought to have learned better by this time.”

Then, by hauling in gently, Loveless succeeded in recovering two of the ropes, and they were pieced together and thrown again, catching the rhino by one hind leg. Both the cowboys put their horses to work pulling forward on the rope, and they lifted that one hind leg ahead. The tired beast shifted his great body after it, and thus step by step the horses dragged him up to a tree, where Loveless passed the end of the rope two turns around the bole and made it fast.

Lassoing Wild Animals

The rhino charged once just before the knot was tied, and Loveless had to jump into the branches through the thorns to escape. He charged again, rather feebly this time, trying to get free, but the rope held well and tripped him up. After that he stood quietly at the end of his tether, watching the camera in a sullen way while Kearton took his picture with the last few feet of film.

By this time the light was almost gone, the films were finished, horses and men were nearly done, and, besides, it was moving day and high time we resumed the march.



"HE CHARGED AGAIN, FEEBLY, BUT THE ROPES HELD WELL AND TRIPPED HIM"