

THE LAST OF THE MASAI

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CHEVALIER DE L'ORDRE ROYAL DU LION

LATE CAPTAIN CONGO FREE STATE FORCES

AND

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS



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webbed); and its heavy blunt head and broad chest would be against the attainment of any speed, even if nature had supplied the limbs fitted for swimming. Being considerably heavier than the water it displaces, when it wishes to move it sinks to the bottom, and runs as long as its breath lasts, only coming to the surface to breathe. Its swimming capacities are just sufficient to keep it stationary in a gentle current; but when the current is even under three miles an hour a swimming hippopotamus is invariably carried down by it.

Where hippopotamus have been hunted they become exceedingly wary. The smallest alarm will prevent them showing themselves for hours. In these cases they will only raise their nostrils above the surface of the water when it is necessary to take a breath; and even so they generally manage to do so in a tuft of water plants, or under the shade of a bush.

RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*).

Swahili : K'faro. *Masai* : Emwoin.

The rhinoceros is to be met with over the whole of Masailand and East Africa: in the thickest forest, in thorny deserts or open fertile plains. From its appearance and size it may be distinguished in open country at enormous distances. A few rhinoceros in a district make a very big show, and it

is probable that the actual number in East Africa has been greatly exaggerated, since in districts reported—before the railway was answerable for the advent of white hunters—as “teeming with rhinoceros,” some ten or twelve specimens have been killed, and they are now practically unknown. In the days before the railway, the rhinoceros was a constant source of difficulty and trouble



RHINOCEROS WITH 25-INCH FRONT HORN

to caravan leaders. Caravans were frequently charged by a rhinoceros which had perhaps been startled, but not otherwise been provoked; and though the animal itself rarely did any individual harm in its wild rush, the loss of time and the damage to loads caused by the stampede

of the porters were the cause of much annoyance and expense. It is a noticeable fact that caravans seem always to have been charged in the daytime; and though they march as often at night there seems no record of an attack being made in the dark. Numberless instances are reported of a rhinoceros casually walking through a camp at night without doing any harm. This, and the record of extraordinary escapes men have had when charged by a rhinoceros in daylight,

lead to the supposition that at night it can see well, whereas in the daytime its sight is very imperfect. The Masai maintain that if a man stands still when charged by a rhinoceros he is in no danger, as the animal will pass him by, mistaking him for a stump or stone.

The rhinoceros in East Africa is one of the animals most likely to become extinct, since, provided sufficient allowance is made for the fact that its sense of smell is of the keenest, and the hunter does not walk with a



RHINOCEROS

heavy step, there is little difficulty in approaching it to within twenty yards across or up wind. There is no doubt that all animals, when they can neither see nor smell an approaching person, are warned of his proximity by the vibration caused by his footsteps, and conveyed to them through the ground.

It has become the fashion to shoot rhinoceros at comparatively long ranges, with solid bullets from a small-bore rifle. This means that a large number

are seriously or mortally wounded, and yet not brought to bag. A sportsman wishing to bag a particular rhinoceros should approach to within thirty yards, with a double heavy rifle, and if his first shot does not prove fatal, he is certain to be able to turn the



VIEW ON THE RIVER N'GONGO BAGAS

animal if its rush, after being hit, should be in his direction. It stands to reason that the hunter would not be able to approach within thirty yards if the rhinoceros were not unaware of his proximity. On wounding the animal there is a comparatively small chance of its charging directly at the hunter, as a rhinoceros at rest invariably stands with its back to the wind—knowing that it will be able to

scent the approach of danger from up wind—and when suddenly startled or hurt in the open, its first charge is sure to be down wind. When a rhinoceros apprehends danger in its vicinity, and yet knows by its scent that the wind is clean, it invariably runs up wind, unless there is forest or heavy cover in the immediate neighbourhood it is in the habit of frequenting.

Charging directly at a hunter, it is one of the most awkward animals to kill, as its horns cover its brain, and its head covers its chest; but even under these circumstances a charge of small shot has been known to turn it. For all practical purposes, in the case of rhinoceros hunting, the animal's sense of sight may be left out of account. Hunters should bear in mind, when seeking for a good trophy, that the peculiar way in which the horns grow on the head of the rhinoceros invariably gives the impression, while the animal is still alive, that they are at least three times as large as they are in reality.

Burchell's rhinoceros—the white or square mouth rhinoceros—does not exist in East Africa. No horns rightly attributable to this animal have been found in the country; and although one or two travellers—in contradistinction to sportsmen—have reported having seen this species there seems little doubt that they were mistaken.

THE COMMON RHINOCEROS BIRD (*Buphaga*
orythroschyncha).

One of the most remarkable instances of the change of habits in wild birds is shown in the case of the common Rhinoceros bird, which formerly fed on ticks and the other parasites infesting game and domestic animals. It was not infrequent for an animal suffering from a sore to be so badly probed by these birds that it died as a