

TWO RHINOS AND A LION.

By R. W. L.

MANY lion and rhino hunting stories have been written, and many more, it is to be hoped, will be chronicled in the future; for now that the Game Regulations drawn up as the outcome of the International Congress on the subject, recently held in London, have become law, and certainly if they be universally and vigorously enforced, as is the case in the British East Africa Protectorate, where a game-ranger has been appointed, there is little danger of the rhino becoming extinct and of his ceasing to give sport. As to Felis leo, he may be trusted to look after himself.

Having obtained a week's leave, W— and I left the Uganda Railway not too miles from Nairobi. W— was very keen to secure his second rhino, to which his all but expired licence entitled him, while I was extremely anxious to get a lion, never having even seen one, though during my two years in the country I had often been shooting over ground where they were numerous and had been frequently shot. We had good sport during our first three days, but it was not till the fourth day that either one of us saw a rhino. However, on that day I wounded one, which went off with a couple of 577 bullets in him. Having told W— of my bad luck, on returning to camp, we decided to have a look for him the next day. Accordingly we set off at daybreak on the following morning, and when within about three miles of our point, spotted another rhino with our glasses. We had to make a long detour on account of the wind, and decided on our plan of action, viz., that W— was to shoot, but that I should accompany him in case of accidents. We got up within twenty yards, and just as W— raised his rifle to shoot, my gun-bearer clutched me by the arm and hissed in my ear, "Lion, sir, lion!" And there, sure enough, not one hundred yards off, was a grand yellow-muzzled full-grown young lion sitting on his quarters, looking straight at us, switching his tail and barking the ground with it, showing his teeth and growling.

I whispered to W—, "What shall we do?" He said, "Rhino first; lion will wait, or at any rate won't go far." The rhino was by this time beginning to show signs of activity, and I have no doubt the advice was sound, although looking back at losing my first chance of a lion, I cannot help regretting I followed it. A single lion, while remaining in full view of his pursuers and unmolested, will not display any great signs of hurry in his retreat, and will often allow one when mounted, to approach comparatively close; so W— told me afterwards, and as he has shot a dozen he is entitled to speak with authority. The rhino, which proved to have a remarkably fine pair of horns, the back one being only a couple of inches shorter than the front one, took a good deal of killing, so that the lion was trotting away leisurely and had got about four hundred yards start of us when we went in pursuit, in which, however, we were speedily checked, for within ten yards of where the lion had been lying another rhino rose out of the grass, aware of our presence and sniffing around trying to locate us, we being then some fifty yards off, at which distance a rhino cannot,



BRINGING BACK A RHINO'S HEAD.
Near Nairobi, 100 miles up the Chwaka River.



OUR TROPHIES IN FIVE DAYS' SHOOTING.
Two rhinos, one grizzly, one wildebeest, four grants, four impalas, one Thomson, two hartebeests, two colts, and one water-buck.

as a rule, see. Had we gone straight on, the rhino would inevitably have charged; to go round meant time and probably loss of the lion, so there was nothing else to do but get rid of our obstacle as speedily as might be. It was not a sporting thing, perhaps, but it must be remembered that we were after the lion, and that had it been feasible we would have allowed the rhino to remain in peace; as it was, when within about thirty yards, we fired simultaneously, W— with his 450 and I with my 577. In our hurry we shot badly, for the rhino trotted away some three hundred yards, following the lion's line of retreat. We again got quite close—within twenty-five yards—and pumped in lead, but seemingly without any effect, till suddenly we found all our solid bullets exhausted, barring one that I had in my left barrel. During the momentary pause in hostilities when we had turned round to signal for more cartridges, the rhino got our wind, and came full-tilt towards us, snorting and shaking his head from side to side, till, spotting us, he put his head down and the pace on. We had all scattered when he began to charge, but there were no trees to climb up for safety, and the brute singled me out for his special attentions.

"Throw yourself flat on the ground," or "Jump aside as he charges home and shoot, when you cannot for choice climb a friendly tree," was the advice given to me in the event of being charged by a rhino by a friend some months before. I had twice climbed trees under similar circumstances, and had hoped the necessity of availing myself of the other two

alternatives might not arise; but here it was, and luckily I did something which perchance was the second alternative. I jumped aside as I instinctively felt the brute's horn within an inch of my back, and as he went by me shot him through the heart; he fell dead and rolled over like a rabbit. The shot was a desperate fluke, as I fired from the hip, but I was none the less thankful to see the result, as indeed were the rest of the party.

How this rhino had managed to live, much less charge, with eleven solid bullets in him I know not, and by a strange coincidence this proved to be the identical rhino I had wounded the previous day, as a bullet-hole through the shoulder-bone was ample witness to, there being a congealed mass of grass, earth, and blood around the hole, from which the blood had begun to run afresh, at the result of this second attack.

Whether the lion who had been lying down within ten yards of the rhino was aware that he had a wounded beast close to him, I cannot say; it certainly looked like it, but he would have had to spend many a supperless night had he reckoned on our friend succumbing to his wound for his meal, as he proved himself to be in far from a moribund condition.

What became of the lion? Well, we returned next morning hoping to find him at or near one of the two rhino carcasses; but it was not to be, and fate was against us; for though I followed up the gully out of which we had aroused him for three miles or so, I never saw him again, and this is the end of the history of the two rhinos, but not of the lion.