

STALKING BIG GAME WITH A CAMERA IN EQUATORIAL AFRICA

WITH A MONOGRAPH ON THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT

BY

MARIUS MAXWELL

11

PREFACE BY

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*ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS
BY THE AUTHOR*



THE CENTURY CO.
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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CHAPTER VII

CAMERA SPORT WITH BUFFALO AND RHINOCEROS

A SHORT SAFARI TO LAKE NATRON

WITH the intention of undertaking a long trip to the northern provinces of Kenya Colony, and of including in our projected safari the region of the Lorian Swamp and the borders of Somaliland, I landed at Mombasa on April 28th, 1922, after a pleasant nine days' sea voyage from Bombay.

The preparations had been entrusted to my friend, J. H. Barnes, who had, previous to my arrival, made the necessary arrangements for provisioning the safari, and procured donkeys and other means of transport. In view of the somewhat difficult journey we had before us through more or less desert country scantily inhabited by nomadic tribes, and being aware of the careful supervision necessary in all such transport matters, I decided to leave this question to a capable and experienced man. He was to start from Nairobi with the safari about the middle of May, and take it on to Archer's Post, our starting point, to which we would motor and join him by the first week in June. In the meantime we intended to em-

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ploy the few weeks at our disposal by travelling south, to the borders of Tanganyika Territory and Lake Natron, with the object of trying our luck in securing photographs of buffalo and rhinoceros in their respective native haunts. Both were said to be fairly common in these regions at certain times of the year, but, as it happened, owing to the unusually wet weather that had set in some weeks before in the locality round Lake Natron, the grass, which I had expected to be parched and short, had grown to a considerable length in most parts along the Southern Guaso Nyiro, reaching in certain places to well above our waists. In the marshy depressions the coarse grass had grown to a height above our shoulders, and this considerably diminished the chances of obtaining successful results.

Starting from Nairobi by train, on the afternoon of May 4th, we reached Magadi Lake at noon on the 6th, after breaking our journey for a day at a small station named Kajiado. Here we secured the necessary "posho" (mealie rations) for our porters. On the evening of the 6th we moved towards a suitable camping ground on one of the southern promontories of the lake some two and a half miles from the works of the Magadi Soda Company.

The next morning, at the first streak of dawn, saw the safari on the move, making its way along the headland towards the southern extremity of the lake, where the water was shallow and offered a fairly convenient crossing. We reached the western shore by fording the muddy water and passing over the three promontories that jut into the soda-impregnated lake bed. These promontories were littered with jagged pieces of lava-rock, which made the going pretty awkward for some



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of our shoeless porters. The country traversed immediately beyond the lake consisted of broken undulating ground of distinctly volcanic origin, and the scanty parched grass and stunted thorn-trees were the best that this tract of thirsty wasteland was able to produce, even after the rain showers it had recently received.

As we passed within a few miles to the north of the Lenderut Hills, which slope towards the south end of the lake and die out in the narrow promontories just mentioned, the outlines of the mountains ahead of us, Shombole and Sambu, grew bolder with every league we advanced. The afternoon saw the safari traversing a grass plain, interspersed with clumps of so-called pepper-bush and young acacia, until we reached a cluster of fishermen's hovels, in the form of an abandoned Masai *maniata* or *kraal*, situated a few hundred yards from the banks of the Guaso Nyiro. This river takes its source outside the great Rift Valley, and after entering and running through part of the valley it discharges its waters finally into Lake Natron. Striking across a marshy plain we reached Mount Shombole in the evening, and pitched our tents on its northern slope. The camp overlooked the extensive floor of the Rift Valley with the tortuous course of the river winding across the dead-level plains below us.

On our way across the coarse grass of the alluvial flats we had struck abundant spoor of buffalo herds, intersecting the boggy depressions. Here the rush stood up far above our heads, making the most ideal cover and feeding ground for these beasts, and forming veritable strongholds such as they delight in, with the river winding through between banks fringed in places with dense reeds and an occasional fig tree.

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The buffalo could spend weeks without once having to appear in the open. Every now and then a herd of the magnificent game could be located in the swamp by a flock of snow-white egrets or cow herons as they circled round the animals and settled on their broad and massive backs. The birds feed on the insects which their hosts disturb in their passage through the grass. On this marshy ground the buffalo are frequently seen with an egret or two perched on their dorsal ridge, as shown in one of the illustrations. The covert affords, at certain seasons, such effective concealment that, even from elevated points a couple of hundred feet on the slope of a hill, nothing may be espied for days, and the herds, when seen moving towards this cover, appear to vanish in the long grass as if engulfed in a chasm of verdure.

Part of the next day was spent in shifting our camp to a more favourable spot on the western slope of Mount Shombole, close to a fisherman's hovel some fifty feet or so above the level of a swamp, and overlooking the gap between Mount Shombole and the impressive Nguruman Range of hills; between these the river flows with many tortuous windings and forms the delta at the northern end of Lake Natron. In front of us, on the opposite side of the gap, there rises the dark and massive form of Mount Sambu with its base partly concealed by an island strewn with broken lava. This islet rises, as it were, from the swamp, and interrupts the view beyond of an extensive and salt-impregnated plain. Mount Sambu forms part of the imposing Nguruman Range, the western wall of the Rift Valley, with its lofty escarpments towards the north. On our left, beyond the marshy delta of the Southern Guaso Nyiro, extends the great soda lake Natron, in Tanganyika



LAKE MAGADI FROM ITS SOUTH-WESTERN EXTREMITY

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Territory, with the cone-shaped Mount Ngai* in the distance, covered with streaming, whitish lava ash, resembling sunlit snow. A legend is said to be current in connection with this volcanic mountain to which the Masai fantastically attribute the origin of their domestic cattle.

One of the accompanying photographs shows a headland at the base of Mount Shombole jutting out into the alluvial flat formed by the silt of the Guaso Nyiro in its flow into the lake. The accumulations of silt have caused the stream to subdivide, and the marshy plain is traversed by a number of twisting water channels, which stand out vividly from their surroundings, thanks to the darker green of the reeds and bordering bulrushes. As the channels are constantly silting up, new ones are, in course of time, cut through the soft earth, keeping the delta furnished with moisture, and thus it remains a permanent marsh; incidentally, it forms a most favourite haunt for the numerous buffaloes inhabiting this region. On the edge of the swamp, at the lake shore, innumerable water-birds, mostly flamingoes and pelicans, are seen feeding or roosting; here and there a family of marabout storks stand out, philosophical and conspicuous, among the lesser birds.

The accompanying illustration of flamingoes may convey some idea of the immense numbers in which these graceful, pink-feathered birds congregate when feeding. The photograph was taken near one of the silted channels of the Guaso Nyiro at its outlet into the soda lake, where the water is strongly brackish.

* This is an abbreviation for "Oldonjo-Lengal," which is the Masai name meaning "Mountain of the God."



LAKE SHORE AT NATRON WITH MOUNT SHOMBOLE IN THE BACKGROUND

SPORT WITH BUFFALO AND RHINOCEROS

Flamingoes are said to be birds intermediate between geese and storks or herons, and are invariably found in flocks. Their feet are webbed and they possess a slender neck and long, stilty legs. The bill is longer than the head, bending downwards from the middle, and provided on each side with sieve-like plates which act as strainers; the tongue is armed with strong, recurved spines. When feeding, as may be observed from the illustration, the long and slender neck is curved to such an extent that the head is upside down, for apparently in no other position could the straining plates be brought into operation. Their food, like that of ducks and geese, consists principally of worms, molluscs, crustaceans, and small fishes, and is taken by the simple means of filling the mouth with water, which then runs out through the comb-like plates of the bill, while the prey is retained. They do not appear to object to the salinity of the water and seem to feed in sweet, brackish, or soda-saturated water alike, often being found feeding along the moist soda-impregnated shores of the lakes in Kenya Colony and Tanganyika Territory. Flamingoes are good flyers, and excellent swimmers, too, though only in deep water, for their long limbs make it difficult for them to swim in shallows. The plumage of the birds seen in the accompanying illustration is white with a pinkish tinge. It is said that there are eight species of this bird, four of which are assigned to America and the remaining four range over the south of Europe during the summer months, and over Africa, India and Ceylon. Even where the birds are found in thousands on the African lakes, whether roosting or feeding, their noises are not in the least offensive, but have, on the contrary, a soothing effect on the interested spectator.

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Standing motionless for a time, he may often find the birds approaching to within a couple of dozen yards as they feed solemnly along the lake shore.

One morning I was thus watching the birds, standing ankle deep in the brackish water, with my camera pitched on a tripod, and ready to seize any chance for a suitable exposure, when I detected the patter of hoofs on the beach behind me. Turning quietly in the direction of the sounds I saw a herd of wildebeest cantering some little distance along the shore towards the outlet channels of the river. The animals had evidently descended from their distant feeding grounds on the plains forming the low saddle between Mount Shombole and the Elashu Hills, and appeared to be very thirsty. They promptly lowered their heads and drank from the splashes of brackish water, paying at first no heed to my presence and presenting an opportunity of cautiously turning my camera in their direction. I secured the photograph which is here reproduced.

On another occasion I was given an opportunity of taking photographs of roosting pelicans: these appeared for the greater part of the day to remain stationary, either in deep water or standing in the shallows closely gathered together and keeping stoically aloof from the industrious and intently feeding flamingoes.

From the manner in which the pelicans keep apart from the busy flamingoes, and stand listlessly or float lazily, in one gregarious flock, packed closely together so that their white plumage is frequently intermingled with that of their neighbours, it is evident that they do most of their feeding at night or in the small hours before dawn. They seem to remain idle



A HEADLAND AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT SHOMBOLE

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during the day, roosting and huddled together in the dense formation that is so typical of the birds.

The pelican is a common bird in East Africa and belongs to a family *Pelicanidæ*, which contains several species that are found in tropical and temperate regions. Pelicans are about the same size as swans, but appear larger owing to their loose plumage. They feed mainly on fish, frequenting coast, rivers and lakes, from which they rarely go very far. The long, broad, flattened bill, with its upper mandible hooked, carries beneath the lower jaw a capacious dilatable pouch; this serves as a receptacle for storing their food, which they either devour at leisure or use to feed their young. The colour of their plumage is nearly snow white with a slight flesh tint.

Photographing the African buffalo in its marshy haunts or in bush country is not an easy task. The most one can expect under such conditions is to snatch a glimpse of the raised head of one's quarry, the tips of the horns, or the beast's massive flank. When these animals have been in any way disturbed they usually remain in the shelter of the swamp and make their appearance in the open at night time. Buffaloes are not merely possessed of a keen scent but their eyesight is also excellent and their hearing acute. It is therefore only on rare occasions that a single individual can be surprised in its chosen covert and especially when it has become aware of pursuit.

When a herd of buffalo is met with in the open, it behooves the camera huntsman to make the best of such an opportunity by dealing with his chance in the way most suitable under the particular conditions. The best method of approach is often

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the most direct one—to move up to the herd in full view of the loitering or feeding animals. It should be remembered that a crouching figure in the deep grass is especially likely to attract the hostile notice of the herd, while the likelihood of an attack on the intruder is remote when the members are gathered in the open. By moving up quietly and abstaining from sudden movements, it is sometimes possible to approach to within photographing distance before the younger members become uneasy and bring about a mild stampede of the whole herd. The older individuals will frequently stand gazing at the unusual apparition with their heads erect and horns laid back, and their curiosity may often induce them to walk towards the object of their attention with their moistened noses in the air sniffing for the scent of the intruder.

A herd seldom contains aggressive individuals, and in case of an alarm the bulls will as a rule meekly follow the example of the anxious cows and their perturbed young. It is, however, well to remember that once the buffalo is roused, or finds himself injured, he is without doubt the most determined and vindictive of the greater game animals, and is likely to do his utmost to drive an attack home, pursuing his antagonist to the bitter end with admirable pugnacity. The sport of following up wounded individuals in the extensive swamps remains always a hazardous performance, as the advantages under such conditions are mostly strongly in favour of the hunted quarry; for, besides their keen powers of smell, hearing and sight, these beasts possess a cunning which can all too easily be underestimated.

Having spent some days in search of prospective "sitters," we finally succeeded in approaching a herd of the magnifi-



FLOCKS OF FEEDING FLAMINGOES (TELEPHOTOGRAPH)

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cent beasts well out on the plain, just beyond a belt of acacia trees. The wind blew in our favour, and concealed from them the exact nature of the intrusion, but the light of the sinking sun was troublesome; it shone from behind the loitering herd and obstructed the lens. The animals, which looked black and massive in the evening light, were accordingly reflected on the focussing glass in more or less silhouetted form. I carried the camera attached to a light tripod. Barnes, with a rifle, walked a pace in front, partly masking my apparatus, which I was ready to pitch into position the moment we came within reasonable range. Leaving the edge of the acacia grove, we traversed a stretch of bare ground between the herd and ourselves. Thus we moved quietly and obliquely across the open ground towards the game. Some of the animals were at first lying in front of the main body, peacefully chewing the cud and resembling a herd of domestic cattle; these stood up at our approach and many of the larger individuals stared sullenly at us from under their massive frontlets, with outstretched heads, but none of them showed any particular inquisitiveness. I had expected a few to walk up towards us in order to satisfy their curiosity, which in that case would have given me a more desirable composition. There was no such luck, however, and I was compelled to move within range, fearing all the while that they might stampede at any moment without giving me a chance for an exposure. The shutter was barely released when the herd cantered off a short distance away and again stood gazing at the unfamiliar apparition. Moving up in a seemingly unconcerned manner I succeeded in securing a further snapshot before they stampeded in earnest.

Observation of wild life will make one finally realise that

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there is very little natural aggressiveness in the wild creatures. Even the buffalo will rarely come to the attack without some cause to justify his action. A solitary animal may occasionally display ferocity, perhaps because experience has taught him to hate mankind or he considers that the intruder is likely to be dangerous and disturb his peace.

The natural truculence that is so often attributed to these formidable-looking beasts is rarely met with, and the fierce inherent savagery which they are supposed to possess as part and parcel of their general disposition is often exaggerated in the description.

Familiarity with man, when a few of these animals are preserved on some settler's farm, may, of course, cause them to become a nuisance after a time and molest the casual unsuspecting traveller; but this I should say is possibly due to the beast's resentment at the frequent intrusion on the limited privacy of some favourite haunt. The steady persecution of game animals in general must to a certain degree have left an instinctive impression of suspicion in wild animals towards mankind; this feeling may also perhaps have been transmitted from one generation to another.

Nevertheless, it is common to find in the game reserves of East Africa that animals inhabiting the open ground are apt to become unusually confiding, as far as wild animals can be expected to be so towards mankind. The wildebeest, zebra and hartebeest, the most common inhabitants of the veld, will often allow the observer to approach them within fifty yards and even much less, but their instinctive apprehension generally causes them to become very restive at this range, and they may of a sudden decide to move off, lest closer proximity



A HERD OF WILDEBEEST QUENCHING THEIR THIRST (TELEPHOTOGRAPH)

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should make it difficult for them to avoid harm in case of hostile intentions on the part of the intruder.

By patiently continuing to move about unobtrusively, remaining in full view of the creatures and keeping, at first, a reasonable distance, one finds that the game, after a time, becoming familiar with the sight of the strange object, may accept it as harmless, and so occasionally permit one to come within closer range.

* * * * *

The following interesting little adventure with the African buffalo is one that occurred to me in a place called Bolessa, in the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya Colony, and resulted in my securing a photograph of a singularly fine solitary bull in appropriate surroundings (see the first illustration of this chapter).

Early one morning a few of our boys reported some fresh spoor of a small herd of buffalo in the vicinity of the camp. With my camera we proceeded immediately to the spot where the tracks were abundant. The type of country in this locality may perhaps be best described as a plain covered with a parched and scraggy heather-like growth, some two feet in height, and studded with bright green and well-nigh impenetrable clumps of the common "suaki," or pepper bush as it is often called. The dung, with which here and there the intervening spaces between the bushes were littered, was sufficient indication that the herd had moved slowly, loitering and feeding among the heather-like plants.

On the off-chance of stumbling on to a laggard member of the herd, or a solitary bull, we moved cautiously among the clumps of bush, and on rounding one of these I obtained a

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glimpse of a black and massive stern. The animal, in spite of our close proximity, was evidently far too intent on feeding to have become aware of our careful approach. It had its head well down among the herbage, and, standing obliquely, only showed a part of its right horn, which, from the momentary glance I obtained, appeared to be a good one. It remained for a while unsuspecting of our presence and gave me the necessary time to retire behind effective cover and prepare camera and tripod. There was no likelihood of the wind changing and the strong breeze was in my favour.

My preparations completed in feverish haste, I crept stealthily forward into the open—and had hardly succeeded in planting my light tripod on the uneven ground when the bull suddenly raised its head above the growth and stood alert as if listening intently. A curious instinct, so commonly observed in game animals, had warned it of impending danger. While it was feeding, one would have thought that the noise made by the munching of the tough food would have been sufficient to render the animal's sense of hearing oblivious of our stealthy approach.

The massive body swung suddenly round, displaying a superb head with a pair of remarkably fine and shapely horns, and the animal faced the camera behind which I stood nervously fumbling with the focussing knob before pressing the release. Here the animal is portrayed as it appeared at that moment, a picture of massive proportions and pugnacious strength, with the sheen of its black coat well set off by the colours of its environment.

With head raised, nose pointed forward and horns laid back in a defiant and challenging attitude, the buffalo gazed



ROOSTING PELICANS ON LAKE SHORE (TELEPHOTOGRAPH)

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steadfastly at me, obviously mystified by the close proximity of such a strange apparition. The partly chewed heather in its mouth and the sprig on its frontlet are appropriate signs of an interrupted feed.

The action of the shutter made the wondering beast snort and move a few steps forward as if it could hardly trust its eyes. For a second time it halted, but now much nearer, and posed in a slightly altered attitude. The focussing became intensely exciting work, and they were speculative moments when I tore at a tab from the film-pack and pressed the release for this second exposure.

This time the rap of the shutter at such quarters proved too much for the buffalo: with a parting snort, it wheeled round and cantered out of sight, leaving me confident and satisfied that I had made a couple of successful exposures.

Both Barnes and myself felt not unnaturally relieved from the tension caused by this unique experience. Similar experiences have made me arrive at the conclusion that the African buffalo is seldom truculent in such circumstances. The formidable appearance of the beast at close quarters, with its impressive frontlet and sweeping horns, inspires an appreciation of the colossal strength which this animal undoubtedly possesses, and makes it appear the finest of all representatives of the bovine family.

RHINO ADVENTURES

Tramping across the valley of the Southern Guaso Nyiro from Mount Shombole towards the base of Mount Sambu, we espied a pair of rhinoceroses in the distance.

They were feeding some way from the swamp, on the edge

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of a bare plain which extends south to the lake shore and west to the foot of Mount Sambu. The coarse grass, interspersed with reeds and plants, among which the two animals were leisurely feeding some little distance apart, was mostly about four feet in height, and grew in clumps. The two huge bodies, stained with the earth in which they must have been wallowing quite recently, had assumed a light grey hue, and lurched every now and then slowly forward through the parting vegetation.

On our approach one of these old-world beasts, the individual nearest to us, lifted its snout, and gradually raised its head above the grass, remaining motionless except for the twitching of its ears. It had evidently heard our approach, and standing stock still we awaited the moment when it would lower its head and continue feeding; with great care we then proceeded towards the vast bulk until the desired distance was reached for a satisfactory exposure. Wishing to make the best of the conditions, I was on this occasion using a portrait lens and tripod, and kept edging cautiously towards my prospective "sitter." Although we were on the right side of the wind the beast kept looking up uneasily at short intervals and evidently felt that everything was not quite as it should be. Finally, raising its head and swaying it in our direction, it could no longer fail to discern the intruders, in spite of its exceedingly bad sight. Gazing at us for a while with its small eyes twinkling, and its ears nervously twitching, a dull curiosity at last overcame the animal's uneasiness, and it decided to investigate the object of its inquisitiveness. It lumbered deliberately forward in our direction, stopping and raising its head every two or three steps, puzzled, and apparently



BUFFALO FEEDING IN SWAMP WITH EGRETS PERCHED ON THEIR BACKS



HERD OF BUFFALO IN THE OPEN AT SUNSET

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straining its defective eyes to get us well in view. Its image grew on the focussing screen, and accurate adjustment of the camera became a difficult and trying matter. Prepared to sacrifice the apparatus, should the "sitter" become flurried at the last moment, I kept focussing until the body of the animal occupied a satisfactory proportion of the ground glass, and pressed the release at a moment when the beast was advancing towards us. The click of the shutter, curious to say, did not deter the old fellow from stepping forward on to the small piece of open ground at the end of which we were stationed with the camera poised on its light field tripod. The gun was held in readiness in case anything should go amiss.

A sudden yell from Barnes, however, accompanied with a few blasphemous terms of endearment, brought the beast out of the depths of its thoughts, and, throwing up its head, it stood amazed for a moment, wheeled round in what seemed at first rather a hesitating fashion, and trotted finally out on to the bare plain. It then halted for quite a minute, gazing in the direction of Barnes, which gave me ample time to train the lens to where the wondering animal stood; and so I got my second exposure. After trotting a few paces in a circle it again turned in his direction and stood as if not satisfied with its interrupted investigation. From the subsequent photograph it may be gathered that the good natured but inquisitive beast was on the verge of approaching for a second time, but, finally thinking better of it, it swung round and moved off briskly, closely followed by its mate. The latter at the outset had been a certain distance away, too far to permit me to include both of them in the picture.

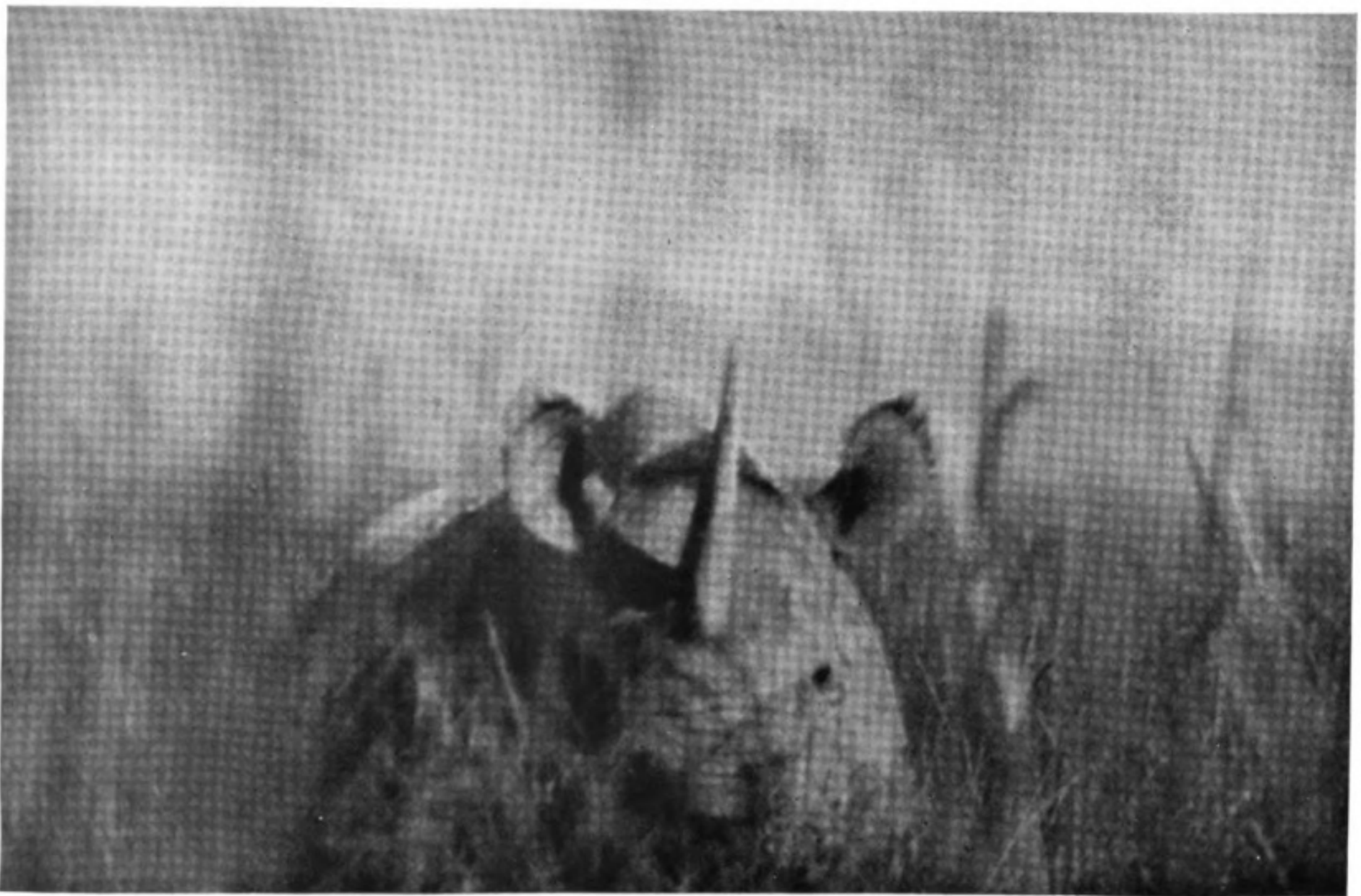
It was a comical sight to see the pair of them trotting off

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briskly, one behind the other, with their elevated heads, horns stuck in the air and tails stiff and erect, looking from a distance like a pair of large warthogs.

It is a well-known fact that these creatures are the most uncertain in their behaviour of all the larger game animals of the African continent. They are easily flurried, and their sudden confusion, probably resulting from the smallness of their intellects, causes them, when confronted with anything strange, to gather that they are in desperate straits and are called upon to make some demonstration in self-defence. It is perhaps largely due to this fact that they often become a nuisance to the traveller, and particularly so in bush country. The rhino is a formidable-looking beast, with a curious prehistoric air, and when it bears down on the intruder, to the accompaniment of snorts, the demonstration is at times decidedly disconcerting. It is as well that in such cases they are easily turned by a shot in the head or forepart of the body, as they are tough and will stand much punishment with the rifle before they succumb; one can never be quite sure of dropping the charging beast with anything but a well-placed shot.

Their awkward habit of standing motionless and alert, concealed in the scrub, listening intently to the approach of strange sounds, before they suddenly barge out from a most unexpected corner at a moment when the porters have almost stumbled on to them, is frequently conducive to mishaps by way of scattered loads and broken chopboxes. The boys naturally drop their burdens in their anxiety to keep clear of the clumsy and dull-witted animal, which is, in reality, only too anxious to make his frantic escape. Imagining himself surrounded by the line of porters he may at times repeat his rush



FACE TO FACE WITH RHINOCEROS BICORNIS

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through the caravan with fatal result to his ignorant self. An old bull, when suddenly confronted with a human being at close quarters, particularly in bush country, may occasionally stand restive for a short while, snorting defiance before taking himself off at a trot. On detecting a strange object he is likely to trot up to it. A shout is usually sufficient to bring the beast to his senses, but on occasions, feeling himself confronted by a dangerous intruder, he instantly decides to rush forward, and changes his trot into a slashing gallop. A side-step in the nick of time is possible, but requires agility, and remains at all times a risky performance. When unwounded he will seldom return for a second attack, and this supports the belief that the demonstration on the part of the stupid animal has been prompted by its sudden confusion and ignorance as to how to deal with an embarrassing situation at a moment's notice.

The first photograph lacks the artistic setting, but may bring back to those who have at some time or other made the close acquaintance of the black rhino of East Africa a vivid recollection of the grotesque appearance of these antique creatures.

It may, perhaps, be of interest to the reader to hear of the following little experience with the East African rhinoceros, for incidents of this nature are bound to occur once and again to camera men who wish to gain at first hand an insight into the disposition and habits of those game animals which are generally classed as dangerous. Here, for instance, is an account of a typical incident with a rhino startled from his midday siesta.

We were travelling light from our base camp, and the few porters had just begun to pitch our 40 pound tent on a ledge

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of the Lisudwa Hills, some eight miles from Lake Natron, when one of the boys informed us of the presence of a large bull rhinoceros. The peaceful animal had evidently picked out a suitable thorn tree on the broken hillside, some distance from the ledge, and had probably occupied the chosen spot between the hours of nine and ten, previous to our arrival. The hum of human voices had apparently been detected, and had caused the old beast to awaken from a heavy slumber. At all events, when I approached him from down hill over the broken ground, I obtained a glimpse of the massive head facing in the direction of the camp, and so giving me a side view, with the restive, twitching ears cocked and the two horns stuck in the air. From the outline of its back it appeared that he was seated on his hindquarters, his forelegs straight, in a manner often seen in the domestic pig as it squats on its haunches. I happened to be for the moment standing about a dozen yards below in a rock-strewn watercourse, where my movements were circumscribed on either side by patches of thorn-scrub, and I was about to prepare for an exposure when the beast suddenly stood up, wheeled round unexpectedly and, with alacrity, hurled down the hillside, choosing the watercourse as a line of escape. This gave me barely time to dispute my ground and turn the animal with a shot. With astonishing quickness he swerved at the impact of the bullet, and it was extraordinary to see with what agility and speed he went clattering down, over the broken ground, and galloped for more than a mile on the open plain below. We had an excellent view of the fleeing animal, and this incident gave us a singular opportunity of observing the gait of a rhinoceros at full gallop.



GAZING INTENTLY TOWARDS THE INTRUDERS



THE OLD-WORLD BEAST IS ABOUT TO INVESTIGATE

CHAPTER VIII

FURTHER EXPERIENCES WITH RHINOCEROS BICORNIS

IT is common knowledge among hunters and interested observers of animal life that it is practically impossible to foretell how the rhinoceros of East Africa will act if approached within close range.

Under such conditions he will prove to be undoubtedly the most erratic of all the larger game animals, whether he is met with on the turf-covered plains of the uplands, in bush or scrub country, or in the arid regions of the Northern Frontier District of the Colony.

In the previous chapter on "Camera Sport with Buffalo and Rhinoceros," some experiences with this old-world creature have already been described, from which it can be gathered that the East African rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros bicornis*) affords the camera sportsman a good deal of interest; at times, also, a considerable amount of excitement. It is a matter for regret to realize that this animal will in all likelihood be the first of the great African mammals to become extinct.

His erratic actions at the sight of mankind and his habitually fidgety demeanour in such circumstances are presumably due to excessively bad sight, which is, moreover, hampered, when the head is held in certain attitudes, by the presence of

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the pair of median horns. In addition, the animal is known to be awkwardly stupid. His sense of hearing, on the other hand, is acute, and this fact is particularly noticeable and more pronounced when an alert individual is met with in bush country.

It is, I believe, because of these defects that the animal is apt to behave in such an uncertain and nervous manner in the presence of strange objects. He detects, for instance, an unusual sound and instinctively suspects danger. At the same time, his inadequate sight is unable to make out the cause of the disturbance, and this annoys him considerably; he becomes suddenly startled by the close proximity of the strange or dreaded object the moment it appears within his range of view, is thereby apt to become flurried and, in consequence, takes the initiative by attacking the intruder, or he blunders out of the way in the most unreasonable direction he could have chosen.

Normally he is a timid enough creature and prefers solitude. Human sounds will scare him away and the scent of man is generally equally effective, as the average rhino is quite aware that the human being is to be avoided; he seems to know him by his scent and noises, though rarely actually from sight.

The rhino is easily provoked at times when disturbed during a siesta, or when he is thirsty, and is unexpectedly startled by the appearance of moving objects close at hand while intently engaged in quenching his thirst or indulging in a bath.

In the arid regions of the Northern Frontier District I noticed that these quaint pachyderms were in the habit of travelling long distances from their water supply to their feed-



A RHINOCEROS DRINKING: IT PAUSES AFTER EACH LONG DRAUGHT

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ing ground, which may sometimes be a matter of ten to fifteen miles away. They often come to drink in broad daylight, and the notion that they quench their thirst only in the evenings or at night is incorrect, unless they are apt to be disturbed in their chosen localities. The adjoining photograph, for instance, was taken shortly after noon, and my porters frequently came with reports of rhino coming to drink at the river side (Northern Guaso Nyiro) during hours between sunrise and sunset.

A little adventure, which incidentally gave me the opportunity of obtaining the next series of photographs depicting an attacking rhinoceros, will perhaps be of some interest to the reader.

While we were travelling in the Northern Frontier District our Boran guide informed us of a certain locality where rhino frequently came to drink at some salt water springs in the heat of the day.

The place in question possessed one of those typical sandy river beds bordered here and there with so-called dome palms. Hot springs welled up from below the outcrops of foliated rock, furnishing crystal-clear, but distinctly saline water, which formed a chain of small pools in the rocky parts of the otherwise dry watercourses.

Arrived at the spot after a hot and thirsty march through a parched scrub country, we took up a position some distance from the springs, and, after a few hours of impatience, spied a rhino making its way towards the water. It trotted for a while along the edge of the distant strip of thorn scrubs, and finally made its way directly across the open to the springs, changing its gait to a walk as it neared its destination. It ap-

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peared most unwary and showed not the slightest hesitation in its actions. It had evidently travelled some distance and seemed very thirsty, for the moment it reached the first pool it walked right into the shallow water and promptly lowered its head, drinking steadily for not less than a couple of minutes at a time. This gave me an opportunity to secure the accompanying photograph of the drinking animal. The beast was fortunately not accompanied by tick-birds, otherwise the approach would have been a tedious business and the picture, in all probability, even more imperfect than it here appears.*

Having made what exposures I desired I withdrew a certain distance without the creature having the slightest suspicion of my presence, so intent was it on quenching its thirst.

Exchanging the long focus lens for a five-inch (13.5 cm.) Zeiss-Tessar, which I intended to employ for close and rapid work without the need of camera adjustments, I returned to my "sitter," accompanied by Barnes, who carried his rifle in case of a mishap.

Creeping up carefully and making use of every available cover in the shape of a tuft of grass and a small boulder here and there, we reached the bare space round the pool and found our rhino lying comfortably in the shallow water. We had barely straightened our backs and moved unobtrusively out

*The blemishes on several of the illustrations of this chapter are due to the following reason. Excessive heat prevalent in the locality where these photographs were taken had affected the sensitive emulsion of the films in the pack, and the violent rubbing of one film over the softened emulsion of the next in the pack as they were being changed for the various exposures caused horizontal scratches on their surface. Neglect to develop the films in cooled water resulted in the emulsion breaking up into a multitude of small cracks. Rather than try to have these blemishes removed by retouching, I have chosen to have the reproductions made in accordance with the original negatives.



BEARING DOWN ON THE UNWELCOME INTRUDERS

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into the open, to within thirty yards or so from the beast, when, with ears twitching, it raised its head, stood up, and turned sharply in our direction where we stood exposed and in full view. As it seemed, in less than a second the animal galloped towards us and the shutter was released, thus giving the first of the series of three photographs. The rhinoceros is here seen bearing straight down on the intruders with its ears pricked forward—but the head is not as yet lowered for the thrust.

The removal of a tab of my film pack and the resetting of the shutter were matters of a second or two, and jumping aside with what agility I could muster and pointing the camera in the direction of the galloping beast, I pressed the release more or less at random. I heard my friend discharge his first barrel. The second exposure showed the irritated animal in its stride, in the attitude in which it was rushing blindly at the intended victim.

Resetting the shutter and wrenching another tab off the pack I pressed the release for a third time, and was apparently in time to snap the rhinoceros a short moment after it had received the bullet. From Barnes' account after the incident it would seem that at his shot the beast, after passing between us, had swerved in his direction and slackened its gallop to a canter. The animal is depicted in the illustration with its horns lowered, and must have been close upon my companion at the moment I made this exposure and he felt compelled to fire his second barrel. The effect of this second shot was curious, as the rhinoceros spun round and sank on its forelegs in the attitude which is caught in the illustration.

As a rule, if a shout has proved ineffective in stopping a

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rhinoceros, it may be easily turned by a head shot. Once it is in rapid movement shouting will naturally be of no avail. Even then, as long as the animal has not yet lowered its head it will often wheel round and take itself off at the last moment. But once the creature has dipped its head, in full stride, it apparently sees and hears nothing more and rushes blindly at its enemy. This particular individual showed itself an uncommonly determined beast, but at the same time there was doubtless ample provocation on our part, considering the circumstances of our intrusion.

I have little doubt that this same animal would have moved away from our proximity had it previously winded us and had time enough to retire without undue haste. This sudden appearance of two strange, moving objects at such close quarters might have flurried any other placid beast as well as the blundering rhinoceros. But even under such trying conditions most individuals will show their timidity by instinctive flight. Others, of a bolder or more inquisitive disposition, may perhaps stand for a time and gaze steadfastly at the object that excites their curiosity. In the incident just recounted the black rhinoceros attacked by sight and not by scent, and I have had occasion to observe this in the course of other experiences with this species.

Generally, the rhinoceros, like all animals, prefers to move off on winding a human being, and particularly so when it scents a white man, unless, of course, it is persistently thwarted from satisfying its natural wants. In the case of its access to a water pool being prevented by the constant presence of cattle and herdsmen in drought-stricken areas, an occasional individual may become decidedly savage.



THE BULLET MADE THE ANIMAL SWERVE TOWARDS MY COMPANION, WHO FIRED HIS SECOND BARREL

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I gathered from transport riders in the Northern Frontier District that cases had occurred when their oxen were driven away from water holes, and in two instances a Dutch transport rider, in the service of the King's African Rifles, had one of his team of oxen gored by a truculent rhinoceros when his animals were led to drink at some water hole near Lasamis, a locality situated on the track from Archer's Post to Marsabit. Reports of similar incidents from Boran and Somali cattle owners in the region of the Lorian were current regarding the savage behaviour of elephants during severe droughts, and when the water of the Guaso Nyiro has failed them.

A cow rhino in company of a calf is at all times likely to be vicious, frequently to such an extent that even the hapless male parent is not permitted to come too close to her offspring without incurring the displeasure of the female.

Stalking and photographing the rhinoceros as it is often met with on the turf-covered and shadeless plains of the uplands of Kenya Colony can hardly be called a difficult matter, as the animal under these conditions is so very easy to approach. It is, however, a different matter in bush or scrub country, when the creature is apt to show an alert and suspicious disposition.

Having struck the fresh spoor of a rhino, or perhaps that of a family of rhino, the camera sportsman follows it with infinite caution until, when his luck is in, he hears the distant sound of a tick-bird, which gives him timely notice of the presence of his intended subject. This would allow of the necessary preparations being made at ease, while his companion gets his gun ready in case of emergency.

Often, though, the sudden twitter of a few alarmed rhi-

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noceros-birds is heard close at hand and their snorting host may then be expected to emerge suddenly from the brushwood or scrub, with raised head, ears pricked, and horns stuck perkily in the air, to investigate what all the commotion is about.

A more embarrassing encounter, in the absence of birds, is perhaps heralded by an unexpected crashing in the bush followed instantly by the appearance at close quarters of a snorting rhino blundering past one in full gallop.

The accompanying illustration depicts an interesting moment where an individual is shown with lowered horn as it was snapped in the act of rushing forward at my companion.

It had apparently been standing motionless and alert for a while among the brushwood, listening intently, until it became discomfited and flurried by our close proximity, and decided to attack the intruders. The surroundings give one some idea of the arid locality in which these animals may occur, bare and desolate, with here and there a kopje. The brushwood and parched thorn-scrub is typical of the "Nyika" of the northern regions of Kenya Colony.

Considering that the foregoing series of photographs are the impressions of the incident faithfully recorded by the camera, one can hardly abstain from remarking the surprising difference between reality and imagination.

Most of us are familiar with the wonderful drawings and engravings that are found in the old books on sport and hunting: in these pictures the artists' imagination has added considerably to the effect of the composition, but necessarily at the expense of reality. This is, however, in many ways explicable as even the eye of the sportsman is apt, at such moments of intense excitement, to picture in his mind an



THE SECOND BALL MAKES IT SPIN ROUND AND COLLAPSE ON ITS FORELEGS

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exaggerated image of the rapidly advancing animal. Briefly, the excitement and discomfort in the circumstances are factors to be taken into consideration, as they are capable of affecting the spectator's judgment of the animal's proportions, and produce an idea of a most savage and gigantic creature bounding forward to affect his destruction.

The camera, however, looks upon it from a different and cooler point of view and gives a record devoid of sentiment and colouring.

Photographs depicting such exciting incidents can, therefore, hardly ever convey the same impression as the pictures of an artist representing the same subject. By a proper choice of lenses a slight distortion in the perspective of the subject can be almost entirely avoided.

The foregoing photographs of the charging rhinoceros give one an insight into the nature of the animal's movements while galloping towards an antagonist. Remembering the ponderous weight of the beast and the remarkable speed (roughly about a dozen yards a second) with which it bears down on the intruder, it may be imagined with what force the anterior horn can be driven home.

In Muybridge's admirable work on "Animals in Motion" will be found the following paragraph, page 258 (fourth edition, 1918):

"It is very desirable that some African traveller should succeed in obtaining photographs of the rhinoceros under full speed, as, like the hippopotamus, it will perhaps in a few more years be exterminated. A single lateral exposure will, under favourable conditions, be quite sufficient to determine the character of the movement."

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The illustrations which are here given of the rhinoceros in full stride show, by comparison with Muybridge's series of photos of the galloping horse, the nature of the actions of the old-world beast.

No. 12 of his Series 50 gives an identical phase in the stride.

I have on several occasions had the opportunity of observing the rhino's fastest movements and found its footfalls similar to those of the horse in the gait which Muybridge terms the transverse gallop.

The observations of the writer are concerned with the black or prehensile-lipped rhinoceros of East Africa (*Rhinoceros bicornis*) and have not extended to the so-called square-lipped, or white rhinoceros, of the Lado (*Rhinoceros simus*). The latter is, from all accounts, a larger and less active beast than the black species of East Africa. There is, however, judging by the animal's general build, no reason to suspect the least difference in their respective gaits, but I should imagine that the white rhino, by reason of its slow and sluggish disposition and seemingly excessive bulk, would be contented with a canter as its fastest gait, and show a great disinclination to gallop.

Considering the proportions of even the black rhinoceros it is astounding how active the beast may show itself in case of need: driven to its utmost speed it can possibly travel at a rate exceeding 20 miles an hour.* It takes but a little time

* In this connection it is interesting to note that Sir Samuel Baker mentioned, in his "Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia," that a fleet Arab horse is needed to catch up with a galloping rhinoceros in open country. The accounts of his chase on horseback after rhinoceroses are most instructive for forming an idea of the animal's fastest speed.

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for a rhino to get into full stride, and even in its gallop it is surprising to notice how quickly and suddenly the animal can swerve aside at the sound of a shot.

Normally it holds its head in the position depicted in the first illustration of this chapter. Curiosity will cause it to elevate its head in the manner which is so well shown in the last illustration of the previous chapter on "Camera Sport with Buffalo and Rhinoceros." In this photograph an individual is seen facing the object of its suspicions, with its head in the attitude it assumes while conducting investigations at close quarters, the horns sticking up in the air. I therefore conclude that in this position the beast can make the best use of its deficient sight. The commencement of the gallop towards the unwelcome intruder is apparently carried out with the head slightly raised above the normal position, and the ears pricked up and alert, as shown in the second illustration of this chapter; the moment the beast is at close quarters, within, say, a few paces from its antagonist, the head is evidently lowered and it rushes blindly forward with unrelaxed speed, with the anterior horn poised for the impact. This change in the attitude of the head is a useful indication for the sportsman and should be responded to with a timely side jump. Needless to say, it is always an unpleasant performance and is better suited to the trained agility of a *torero*.

From the foregoing photographs it is curious to note how slender the animal's legs appear when seen laterally and compared with the bulk of its body. The length of the thigh to the hock has probably much to do with its capacity for rapid motion, without giving the appearance of unwieldiness in the animal's movements.

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The African rhinoceros has in its untrammelled state three distinct gaits. The first is the walk, which, as in nearly all quadrupeds, has the following successive foot-impacts: the stride is begun with, let us say, the near (left) hind leg, the next foot to touch the ground is the near fore, then follow successively the off (right) hind and the off fore.

The second gait is the trot, in which each pair of diagonal feet, let us say, the near fore and off hind, or off fore and near hind, are alternately lifted more or less simultaneously.

The third gait is the gallop, which is the movement that most concerns us here.

Muybridge distinguishes two distinctly different types of gallop in quadrupeds, namely, the one which he terms the rotatory, and the other the so-called transverse gallop: the latter is the most common among four-footed animals, and evidently also includes that of the rhinoceros. Commencing with, for instance, the near hind, the foot-falls or foot-impacts succeed one another as follows:—

Near hind, off hind, near fore, off fore; or, off hind, near hind, off fore, near fore, depending on whether the animal is leading with the near or off fore.

Muybridge's rotatory gallop has the foot-impacts succeeding one another in rotary fashion in the following sequence: near hind, off hind, off fore, near fore, or, in the same sequence, commencing with the off hind in rotary fashion. Unlike the elephant, the rhinoceros can travel quite well on three legs in the event of one being severely injured.

The front horn of the rhinoceros, which consists of a mass of closely packed fibres growing from the skin and resting with its slightly hollow base on a shallow prominence of the



RUSHING FORWARD WITH LOWERED HEAD

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massive skull, is a formidable arm of offence. The head of the beast, supported by the powerful muscular neck on the vast bulk of the animal's body, can, when needed, be lowered for an attack to such an extent that the snout remains poised a few inches above the ground. Such a low poise of the head is on occasions observed when the animal is charging, in the comical way these bad-sighted and crusty customers sometimes do at a small object on the ground that, for some reason or other, has disturbed their mind.

On account of its proportionally shorter neck the black rhino does not normally hold its nose as low to the ground as its bulkier and more sluggish cousin, the white rhinoceros. The latter, it is said, is able to lower the head to such an extent that the front horn remains almost parallel with the ground, offering, incidentally, a better target for an effective shot in the head in case of a charge.

The forward rush of the black rhino, when at close quarters with a human adversary, is evidently carried out with the head poised in the attitude depicted in the second illustration of this chapter. It will be seen that, at close range, the charging animal has its ears somewhat drawn back, in the same way as a vicious horse in a savage mood.

The astonishing speed of the animal, with its considerable weight, adds immensely to the momentum with which the horn can be driven into the body of its antagonist, and the following little anecdote will give some idea of the power with which this formidable means of aggression can be wielded in the event of the rhinoceros being so minded.

In the country between the Amala and Mogor Rivers we were one day following the track of what appeared to be a

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large rhinoceros. The Ndorobo tracker after some spooring led us finally into a strip of dense bush, which extended over a few hundred acres along a tortuous course of a partly dried rivulet bed; this, now a mere chain of pools, served as a drinking place for the numerous herds of antelope inhabiting the adjacent plains. Cautious stalking brought us close to our quarry, which, from its general attitude and its nervously twitching ears, appeared to be very much on the alert. Obtaining a momentary glimpse of the substantial base of the front horn, I was satisfied that this was the owner of the big footprints we had followed, and secured it with a shot behind the shoulder. This I much regretted afterwards, seeing that it was an aged cow rhino. The mistake in sex was comprehensible in the circumstances, for the female African rhinoceros has almost invariably a notably thinner horn than the male, though occasionally it may be longer, while the base is generally proportionately smaller in circumference; such, however, was not the case in this particular instance. Moreover, she was unfortunately accompanied by a calf, which was presumably standing close by, effectively concealed among the creeper-like stems of the bush. Immediately after the shot was fired the young one showed itself beside the body of its parent. Moving a few steps towards my quarry, I was suddenly startled by a terrific crashing through the bush, and the male rhinoceros appeared on the scene at a fast gallop, giving me barely time to retreat a few paces and watch further developments: he must have been browsing some distance apart from his mate and remained for a while motionless and alert on hearing the report of the rifle. Standing still for a moment beside the carcase of his mate he lowered his head and prodded at her with a



AN ASSEMBLY OF RHINOCEROS BIRDS FLITTING ABOUT THE BULKY FLANK OF THEIR HOST

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resounding thud. This was repeated several times with increasing vigour until frenzy seemed to overcome the desperate beast and retreating a pace or two he charged the carcase wildly again and again in rapid succession and finally rolled the heavy body over, stepping over it through the surprising momentum of his rush. In the meanwhile the orphaned calf, alarmed by the fury of its male parent, had made itself scarce. This incident indicates the strength which a rhinoceros can display when thoroughly roused and goaded to frenzy. The weight of the carcase must have been well over a ton, and it is perhaps worth recording that the tough hide of the dead female was dented in places but not pierced, in spite of the terrific blows to which it had been subjected.

An indication of the difficulty which these animals have in gaining a clear sight of objects may be found in the action of the head, which they repeatedly raise and dip in a comical and puzzled fashion, when they are approached in the bush, as they stand peering in the direction from which the intruder is coming towards them. Their uneasy cogitation often expresses itself in the way they sway their head and the forepart of the body from side to side, while standing on one forefoot and then on the other alternately. At such a moment a sudden decision may be expected, the tail goes up, the animal either rushes forward at the intruder or—turns and trots off.

The rhinoceros usually seeks a place for his siesta between the hours of nine and ten in the morning, and resumes activities about three in the afternoon. In places where they are rarely startled or molested they will lie down on their side and sink into a deep slumber without further preliminaries; where they have been recently disturbed they are apt to remain rest-

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less and apprehensive for several days, and at such times they are found to become fastidious in the choice of a resting-place. I have had occasion to watch these creatures for hours from a ledge on the Lisudwa Hills, from which a splendid bird's-eye view was obtained of the bush country immediately below. One individual, for instance, stood about in a restive condition for over an hour before it finally squatted on its hindquarters. In this attitude it sat for quite a considerable time, in an uncertain and disturbed frame of mind, judging by the manner in which it incessantly kept moving its head, now in this direction now in another, listening intently all the while with its mobile ears twitching and alert. It had previously been startled by our appearance in the neighbourhood on two consecutive days. The moment the animal's perturbed senses detected the shouts of our boys whom we had sent down for water, it made no further bones about it, but promptly stood up and trotted briskly off. It was evident from the suddenness of its actions that the keenly alert animal had heard the sound of human voices at a distance of roughly three hundred yards, showing how acute their hearing can be once their suspicions have been aroused.

On the other hand, by moving slowly and cautiously in open country where the rhino is usually much less suspicious and wary, it may often be approached to within easy photographing distance without even causing alarm to the tick-birds that may happen to be on the animal's body at the time. In fact I have, by careful movements, taking a few steps at favourable intervals and standing stock-still alternately, secured snapshots of rhino, when the hearing of the particular individual had already conveyed to it a suspicion of my ap-



FACING THE CAMERA PREVIOUS TO A HURRIED DEPARTURE

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proach, and it had become fidgety before the unwary birds were in any way disturbed.

One of the photographs depicts an assembly of five of these rhinoceros birds pecking away energetically at the thick hide of their massive host, flitting about the animal's flank and back and industriously searching for vermin on all parts of its huge body.

The next illustration shows the same individual directly facing the camera after it had pivoted on the mound on which it stood, now this way and now that way, in an endeavour to locate the exact origin of the intermittent noises caused by the rap of the camera shutter at each exposure. The moment it detected my presence it wheeled round unceremoniously with its stiffened tail in the air and its head elevated in a comical and perky fashion, and thus it trotted off briskly from the unpleasant neighbourhood.