

# BIG GAME DISTRICTS

By  
FRANK WALLACE

EARLY SUMMER three years ago saw the beginning of the greatest slaughter among mankind which the world has ever known. To the lower order of creation in many lands it inaugurated a period of comparative peace. The feet of the young men turned, not to the lonely places, but to where the red gods of war called, to Flanders, to France, to the East, to Africa. Whatever the results of this world-wide conflagration may be, it is safe to assume that when it dies down many who are now warring against their fellow men will wander again among the untrdden ways in search of that restful peace to which they have so long been strangers. That the enforced close season has been beneficial to the game can scarcely be doubted, and there should be fine heads waiting for the future hunter in the various big game districts of the British Empire. Concerning these, first-hand details are hard to obtain at present. In parts of Africa where fighting has taken place game has suffered to some extent; that in India is most probably in its normal state, while the British territories in North America, save for the incursions of American hunting parties, is in the same condition. The red deer of Scotland, which perhaps may not be considered to come under the heading of big game, have been going through a very trying time, and their position has still to be defined. The game on the Russian and Austrian fronts has certainly suffered severely, and in all likelihood will never again stand in the position it occupied in August, 1914. This question, however, lies outside the scope of the present article.

There are very few places now in which it will be possible for the future big game hunter to go and shoot where, when, and what he likes. Game laws are the sole bulwark which stand between the hunter and his prey, where it is at all accessible, and such a bulwark in many instances has far too many holes. Many people seem to think that it is the big game hunter who is responsible for the destruction of game. This is really very far from being the case. It is the settler, the local inhabitant,

properly guarded reserves and an equitable system of game laws. It must be a matter of satisfaction to him to know that his efforts have been crowned with, at least, partial success. One wapiti (by the way, the name is

irritating variety of hide and seek, in which the hunter seeks and seldom finds the coveted head on which he has set his heart. Wapiti are also to be obtained on Vancouver Island, and judging from all accounts their numbers are not likely to be seriously depleted. The heads are not so good as those on the mainland. In addition to the localities already mentioned a very dark form with smaller horns is found in the dense forests of Manitoba and East Saskatchewan. Its numbers have been slightly on the increase since 1895. The mountain sheep is about the most highly prized trophy to be obtained in a hunting trip in North America, and though various species are classified they are really the same

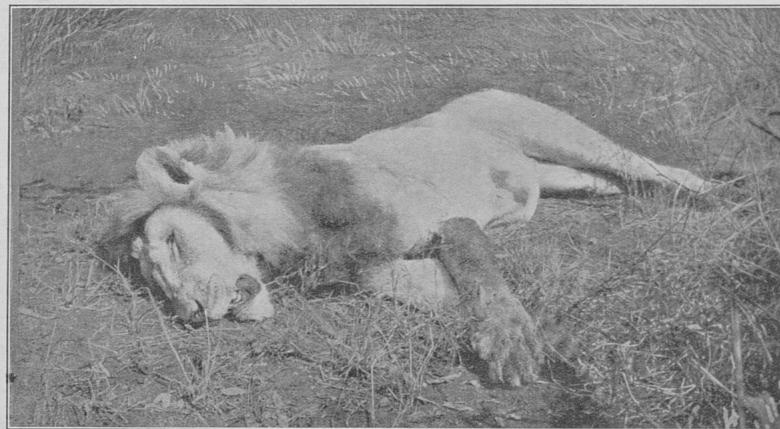


BLACK RHINOCEROS. BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

that given to these fine animals by the Shawnee Indians) stag is now allowed to be killed under a licence in East Kootenay, and some fine heads should be obtained. Though no trophy is more imposing, to tell the truth there are many forms of hunting superior to the pursuit

beast with distinctions varying according to their geographical distribution. It is by no means easy to get a good head nowadays, and the remembrance of the only really good head which I saw during a trip in the Lillooet district some years ago still rankles. Does he still, I wonder, roam over Yarlakan, or do his mighty horns grace the walls of some sportsman more fortunate than myself?

That quaint and interesting creature the Rocky Mountain goat will probably outlive the more splendidly horned survivals of the once widely distributed American fauna. Many have puzzled as to whether he is a fool or a somewhat thick-headed hero, and opinions are about equally divided. His white coat is glaringly conspicuous in the summer, and he is easily killed. Goats can be shot within quite a short distance from Vancouver, but it is no simple matter to hunt him in the Rockies in midwinter with snow on the ground and an icy wind howling round the crags on which he moves so leisurely. When I got my only really easy chance I could do nothing. I was pulling through my rifle after a shot when the cord broke half way and left me with a useless weapon. This particular moment the goat chose to clamber on a pinnacle of rock immediately above me, gaze patronisingly down at my impotent wrath, and then leisurely make off. It was not until later that circumstances enabled me to get even with some of his relations. It was on the same day that I was lucky enough to secure a very pretty mule deer. These beautiful animals are still fairly plentiful, and should be obtained in a hunting trip to British Columbia. The black-tailed deer is a closely allied species. The white-tailed deer is found in the typical form in Virginia, U.S.A., but he is also found in British Columbia and Canada. He is a hardy little beast, standing about the same size as a fallow buck, is prolific, and will live anywhere where there are woods and suitable cover. Dr Hornaday has urged the wide introduction of this animal into many parts of the United States, and it is difficult to find any objections to his proposal. The American bison has gone, alas! never to return, and no sportsman can now hope to add his massive and interesting head to a collection. The remnants of the once vast herds have shrunk to a small band which is found near the great Slave Lake in Northern Canada. An enterprising gentle-



TAWNY-MANED LION.

From *The Game of British East Africa*. By Capt. Stigand. (Field & Queen (Horace Cox) Ltd.)

and the native who destroy the game. The genuine hunter kills only adult males, and, if he be of the right kind, only a very limited number of these. It is the wanton destruction of game of whatever age or sex which wipes out a country's fauna in a space of time so fleeting as to be astounding. The importance of game reserves and game laws is now realised by the Legislatures of most of the districts under European control which hold big game, but there is still much to be done to insure that our descendants shall enjoy in some measure the sights which have delighted hunters of the present generation. Although the numbers of game have dwindled at an appalling rate all over the world during recent years, they have nowhere vanished so rapidly as on the continent of North America. Dr W. T. Hornaday, who, with Mr Madison Grant and a few others, has thrown the whole of his influence on the side of the game, wrote not very long ago: "Judging from the rate at which the wild creatures of North America are now being destroyed, fifty years hence there will be no large game left in the United States or Canada outside rigidly protected game preserves." This, coming from the Director of the New York Zoological Park, carries great weight.

The wapiti, that noblest of all stags, is still to be found on the eastern side of the main Rocky Mountain ridge in Alberta north and south of Banff, and in East Kootenay in British Columbia, where the species has been carefully nursed under the able and unwearying supervision of my friend Mr Bryan Williams. Future sportsmen owe him a great debt of gratitude. In the face of much misunderstanding and opposition he has worked with unflagging energy and zeal for the establishment of

of the wapiti. It is not often that the chance is obtained of a genuine stalk in the open, and still hunting is a kind of sport which requires endless practice and superhuman patience. It is apt to degenerate into a peculiarly

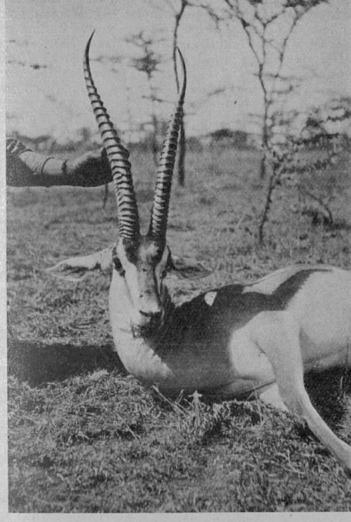


A FINE IMPALA. BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

man paid a large sum for permission to kill a bison bull in the Yellowstone Park not so very long ago, but after all this is hardly the same thing as bringing your quarry down on the open prairie.

Musk ox are rarely found in a collection, but they can be easily secured by a rich man in comparative comfort by hiring a whaler. They are not interesting animals to shoot, and the pursuit of their relative, the takin, provides considerably more sport—and fatigue—in Central China. The animal which really stands in need of *absolute* protection is the gallant little prong-horn antelope, which has the unique distinction of being the only animal of this genus who annually sheds his horns. He is extraordinarily difficult to keep in captivity, and his numbers in a wild state are steadily dwindling. He is still found in Alberta and British Columbia. I cannot say definitely whether he is now allowed to be killed in the former State. If he is he ought not to be. No one who has ever hunted him but looks back with pleasure and delight to his meeting with one of the most sporting little gentlemen ever created. The grizzly bear is still fairly plentiful in the wilder districts of British Columbia, and ought to be obtained by anyone who wishes to make a point of securing a specimen, and the smaller black bear is common in certain localities.

Caribou, of which many local types are distinguished, carry good heads in the north-west districts of North America, Cassiar, the Yukon, &c., while antlers of a complex type are found in Newfoundland. From the Yukon and Cassiar, too, come magnificent moose heads, though the finest of all are killed in Alaska. By far the best plan for anyone who may intend in the future to shoot in North-west America would be to write direct to Mr Bryan Williams, the Provincial Game Warden,



GRANT'S GAZELLE. BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

Vancouver, who is kindness itself in arranging for guides, &c. The cost, particularly in Cassiar and the Yukon, is very high.

In New Zealand red deer have been imported, and offer magnificent stalking amid very rough surroundings. The best heads equal in length good continental specimens.

I cannot pretend in the limited space at my disposal to do more than roughly indicate some of the better localities for game and the particular animals which may be found there. Any comprehensive details are quite out of the question.

#### Africa.

Africa will always be the hunter's paradise provided its legislators have the wisdom to look ahead. Even in the twentieth century some new beast may be dragged from its lurking place in the depths of swamp or forest, and as "something ending in 'i'" hand its discoverer down to posterity. It seems but the other day that the okapi was discovered! It is all so easy now—I am referring, of course, to pre-war conditions; all you want is time and money; then, so to speak, you take your choice. The fortunate person who has these two very necessary qualifications can place himself in the hands of some well-known outfitting firm—this matter can be arranged in London—and for a sum of money considerably less than he would have to pay for even a moderately good deer forest in Scotland enjoy the most wonderful experience of his life. He will probably elect to go to British East Africa. On the train going from Kilindini to Nairobi he will gain a very fair idea

of what South Africa looked like in its palmy days. He will see antelope and zebra, giraffe, rhinoceros, wild pig, gazelle, and very likely lion. Later on, during a three months' trip, he should get over thirty species of game animals ranging in size from the tiny dik dik, no bigger than a hare, to—if he likes to pay for it—the lordly elephant. It is possible to get over forty species, though the visitor would have to be very fortunate to secure so many in a three months' trip. Lion are very largely a matter of luck and time. I am not taking into account the licensed butchers who are allowed to harry the

animals, which in point of size rank next to the eland and kudu, have a tolerably wide range, through West Africa to Uganda, but they have seldom been killed by white hunters. He should get water buck of two varieties, Coke's and Jackson's hartebeest, the oryx (*beisa*), and perhaps *catilox* or fringe-eared variety, and white-bearded gnu. The true gnu, or black wildebeest, now only exists on private preserves in South Africa, and special introductions would have to be obtained to procure a specimen. Mountain reedbuck are fairly common in certain localities, and the Bohor reedbuck should be secured. The beautiful little impala carries better horns in East Africa than anywhere else on the great continent, and is one of the most graceful animals to be found anywhere. Of the smaller varieties, Grant's and Thomson's gazelles are common. The former for its size carries one of the most beautiful little heads imaginable, several varieties being distinguished. The gerenuk or Waller's gazelle, whose massive horns seem to overburden its long slender neck, should also be met with. Black rhinoceros are common in parts, but good horns are rare. First-class buffalo heads are still to be encountered, and are about the finest trophy the hunter can expect to obtain. There is not much sport in killing hippopotami, but they can easily be got.

The following information cannot be guaranteed as up to date. In the Transvaal a big game licence costs £25, but as a matter of fact the killing of all big game is prohibited. There are two large reserves and several smaller ones. In Natal hippopotamus and black rhinoceros each cost £20, a buffalo or kudu bull costs £10, and an eland bull £5. Two water buck and two



WAPITI, WITH 52IN. SPREAD. NORTH AMERICA.

unfortunate "king of beasts" as if he were a rat in districts where, rightly or wrongly, he is regarded as vermin, but of the fair chances which the ordinary man may expect to get. Personally I was unlucky. I saw two lions six hundred yards off in broken scrub, and though we tracked them all day never got a shot; I saw (gladly!) the heels of another ten yards off in thick bush, and on a third occasion a lion walked round my tent while I lay asleep inside. Fortunately the flap was down, and I knew nothing of my visitor till I found his tracks in the morning. Many white men have been in the country for years and never shot a lion. Others come for three months and kill two or three. Whatever the sportsman kills in East Africa he will carry home with him memories of a land whose charm never grows stale. He will see, probably to his surprise, what a wild animal really looks like amid its proper surroundings, as distinct from those in a zoological gardens, or the conventional inaccuracies so touchingly portrayed by the popular wild animal painter. It is a lamentable fact that we have no great British animal painter whose work can be compared with that of artists like Kuhner and Fries. East Africa is the most popular hunting ground for the sportsman, for it is easily accessible—he can be hunting within a month from leaving London—and he obtains great variety. He will not, it is true, get the best specimens of sable and roan, nor is it likely that he will get a good kudu; for these he will have to go further south. The giant eland, whose handsome headskin and magnificent horns provide so splendid a trophy, is not to be obtained here, and the keen hunter will have to go to the Bahr el Ghazal or Senegambia, where if he is lucky he may get a good specimen. Nor is it likely that he will kill a bongo, whose head is to be found in but a few collections. They do exist in the forests of Kema, but their shy secretive habits and acute hearing render them comparatively safe. These handsome



PALMATED WAPITI HORNS. NORTH AMERICA.

inyala may be killed. Elephant, white rhinoceros, and roan antelope are protected. There are several game reserves. In North-west Rhodesia a £25 licence enables the holder to kill roan, sable, buffalo, gemsbuck, sitatunga, and twelve other varieties of game, such as hartebeest, lechwe, bushbuck, &c., whilst an additional £25 includes elephant, rhinoceros, giraffe, eland, kudu, mountain zebra, white-backed duiker and ostrich, with definite restrictions. The game is protected in certain districts. An important point which might with very good effect be introduced elsewhere, particularly in

America, is this: "A licence holder may employ natives to assist him while he is actually engaged in hunting, but shall not furnish them with or permit them to use firearms." In British Nyasaland the licences are graded as A, B, C, costing £25, £4, and £2 respectively, the powers granted varying according to schedule. Giraffe, mountain zebra, wild ass, white-tailed gnu, eland, buffalo, &c., are not allowed to be killed at all except under special licence. Two elephants, two rhinoceroses, and six wildebeest may be killed under A, but of these latter not the white-tailed species. Six sable or roan and six kudu are allowed under A and B; and under A, B, and C eight of the commoner varieties of antelope to the number of thirty in all, plus six hippopotami, six warthog, and six bush pig. The animals are protected in certain areas. The elephant marsh reserve, covering an area of some forty square miles, has been opened under



ELAND BULL. BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

certain restrictions. The game laws of British East Africa are too long to be set down in a short article, and though excellent up to a point, the limit of game they permit to be killed is, in the humble opinion of the writer, too wide. There may be some good reason for limiting certain species to twenty individuals and others to ten, but taking into account the very large number of shooting

some distinguished guest, like the regally planned shoots of the late Maharajah of Cooch Behar, are satisfactory for the chief personage, but not so thrilling, save as a spectator, for the less exalted visitor. He may find himself like the commoner in Mr Punch's picture, very much in the background, while a couple of lords take up their position on his right, a couple more on his left,

borrowed double-barrelled '450 black powder Express rifle in something under five minutes, at a range of about 400 yards. The view from the rock behind which I had flattened myself resembled heather burning on an extensive scale. The horrified deer, with all the good stags who were in the wood, removed themselves from so unhealthy a neighbourhood with remarkable celerity, and passed within 20 yards of me, an opportunity of which I took full advantage. In the excitement of the moment I was nearly shot by an American millionaire, but little trifles like that do not worry an undergraduate.

If the sportsman bound for India knows a forest commissioner or some such official, he will probably have a very good time and some enjoyable shooting. The ordinary tourist can procure blackbuck shooting and chinkara, a pretty little beast something like the "Tommy" of East Africa, almost anywhere. Tigers are a different proposition. There is no fear of their extermination in the vast jungles which still exist, but it would be difficult for the ordinary traveller to obtain one casually. The dry season is the best time to shoot in many ways, as water is limited and the game is found in its vicinity. A tiger killed at this season, however, has not nearly so fine a skin as one shot in the cold weather. The usual methods of hunting them are from an elephant howdah, from a machan over a kill, or by driving. The first method is very costly, as, in addition to a highly trained shooting elephant, which is not easy to get, a large number of elephants for beating up have to be procured. In India and Africa what are regarded as luxuries elsewhere are essentials from the hunter's point of view, and it is unwise to stint them. The "block" system is customary in the Central Provinces, but even though a "block" is applied for early, it by no means follows that it will be allotted, as there will probably be several applicants. When off the beaten track it is sometimes possible to obtain permission to use bungalows which are occupied by officials going their rounds at certain times of the year. Clothes can be got cheaper in Calcutta or Bombay than here. Roped-boats will be found very useful at times. If you are on your own and employing a number of beaters, see them paid yourself and do not pay anyone who does not display some kind of badge or ticket, which should be provided beforehand. If this precaution is neglected many a man will come to be paid who has not been near you all day. A supply of two and four anna pieces is



MULE DEER. BRITISH COLUMBIA.

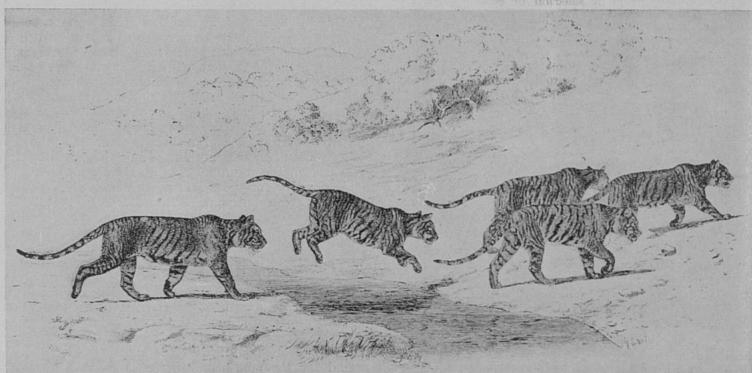
parties visiting the country before 1914, ten and six respectively would be ample, even taking the food question into consideration. The females of all antelopes and gazelles are quite rightly exempt except under special licence; also elephant, for which a licence of 150 rupees is necessary, and for two 450 rupees; one giraffe may be killed under a special licence of 150 rupees. There are two large reserves, which it is the hope of all sportsmen may be kept intact, and five small ones. Much the same laws are in force in Uganda as exist in British East Africa, but two elephants are allowed to be killed on a £50 sportsman's licence. The Budonga and Toro game reserves provide sanctuaries for game in these regions. In the Egyptian Sudan a sportsman's licence costs £50, but this does not allow him to shoot from a steamer or from any barge or boat attached thereto at any bird or animal except lion, leopard, or crocodile; £20 extra fee has to be paid for killing a giraffe under this licence. Officers serving in the Sudan, officials, and in some cases residents can procure a sportsman's licence for £6, so that the wealthy tyro, it is scarcely to be wondered at, is not always looked on with a friendly eye. Among other animals one specimen of the beautiful Mrs Gray's waterbuck is allowed, one rhinoceros (but not in certain localities), one eland, one kudu, one oryx (*beisa*), two elephants, one buffalo, waterbuck, roan, bushbuck, leucoryx (but they are hard to get), several varieties of cob, addax, addra, gazelle, reedbuck, and hartebeest. The Nubian ibex, which carries a very pretty little head, may be killed under this licence, and two wild sheep. The former is protected in certain areas of the Red Sea province.

British Gambia, Southern Nigeria, Sierra Leone also compel the observance of game laws, of which details are forbidden owing to lack of space.

#### India.

The third great game producing area of the British Empire is India. In many parts game is still exceedingly plentiful, and thanks largely to the forethought of European administrators it is holding its own. It is, of course, nothing like so numerous as it was in the palmy days of "John Company," save on the vast estates of some few rajahs; and the visitor who goes to India without the knowledge of where to go, and what is still more important, to whom to go, is likely to be disappointed. The big shoots held by the rajahs for

with a duke or two and a prince well in the foreground. The native shikaris, if they know their job, will turn a tiger to the rifle they are told thus to honour, with the same accuracy as a really good Highland stalker will move a stag to a certain pass. It is true something may go wrong, from their point of view, and right for the gentleman in the background, as once happened to



"WHAT I SAW ONE MORNING."

From *Records of Sport in Southern India*. By the late General Douglas Hamilton. (R. H. Porter. 1892.)

me at a deer drive. The favourite positions were filled by noble lords and scions of the nobility, whilst I, an excited and envious undergraduate, was posted on the extreme flank "in case something broke back." Fortunately for me, on the approach of a herd of young stags, a youth whose ignorance conducted to his bliss, fired in their direction twenty-eight shots from a

useful for these payments. Panthers are hard to get, as indeed they are anywhere. Lions only exist now in Kathiawar, and are strictly preserved. Buffalo, which are not so shy as the bison, are found in Assam, the Terai westward to Nepal, East Bengal, and the eastern districts of the Central Provinces as far south as the Godavari River. They are usually shot from elephants. The bison is found in Assam, Burma, the forest hill country of the Central Provinces, Mysore, and Travancore, where some very good heads have been killed. The old bulls are usually found alone. The Indian rhinoceros is rare and a difficult beast to get. He inhabits the high grass and reed jungles of Assam and west to Nepal. The only way to get a shot is by the use of elephants, and of the rhinoceros these animals are very frightened. When he attacks he prefers to use his tusks and not his horn in an endeavour to disembowel the elephant. Wild elephants are not shot in India unless "rogue," in districts where it is possible to tame and use them for domestic purposes. Sambhur have a wide range in the forest districts, as have the beautiful chital. They both furnish handsome trophies. The nilgai, or blue bull, is also widely distributed except in the extreme south, but is not a very interesting animal. Ceylon has not the same variety of game as India, nor are the heads so good, as may always be expected in the case of island animals. The swamp deer, which does not extend its range to the island, carries a handsome head. It should not be confounded with the barasingh or hangul of Kashmir. Other game animals found in India include such beasts as the little muntjac, the hogdeer, the four-horned antelope, the tahr, the goral, and the serow. It is unlikely that any sportsman will get a chance to secure the takin of the Mishmi hills or Bhutan.

Bordering our Indian Empire are to be found some of the most splendid game animals in the world, such as the markhor, the ibex, and varieties of the great Asiatic sheep. Asia is the real hunter's paradise. Anyone with



THE RETURN TO CAMP. NORTH AMERICA.

