

# The Horned Beast of Africa.

The Primitive Trail-breaker of Tanganyika, the Rhinoceros, is one of the Most Unpleasant of Beasts to Encounter. The Accompanying Article Tells of Rhino Adventures and Rhino Habits

By GEORGETTE HEYER

Karagwe, the northernmost corner of Tanganyika, lies west of Lake Victoria and east of Ruanda, the Mandated Belgian territory. I have lived for a year in a mining camp in this district, and I can truthfully assert that one of the most common beasts found there is the black rhinoceros. On account of them it was never safe to go more than a mile from the camp in any direction without a heavy rifle, and upon the march one has always to be on the look-out for a chance rhino. It is not nice to come suddenly upon one.

But they have their uses. They make paths that are flat and broad, with the tall grass trampled down, and in a country where there are no roads these are invaluable. I have walked for miles down rhino tracks, and I have been more fortunate than some in that I never once walked into the real owner of the path. My marching was done by day, of course, when the animal life is sleeping; I should not care to venture down one of these tracks at about four in the afternoon, when the rhinos are out for a constitutional.

The first time I saw one of these grotesque beasts I felt considerably scared, but as time went on I became a little *blasé* about them. Familiarity breeds contempt.

But it is not wise to despise the rhino. One never knows what he will do. Perhaps four times out of five he will make off, but there is always the fifth time, when he will charge like a swift tank, crashing through the undergrowth as though it were paper. Our car was several times chased by one, and we paced him by our speedometer and found that he was doing thirty-three to thirty-four miles an hour apparently without effort. Once under way—and it is surprising how quickly he can take off—there is nothing to stop him, for he weighs two tons.

Once, at six o'clock one morning, a rhino wandered right into our camp and was seen through the lifting mist not twenty yards from one of the houses. Panic seized the natives, who stampeded into the nearest compound; my husband came flying back to our house for his rifle, and awakened me with a shout of "Quick! there's a rhino in the camp!"

This was so thrilling a piece of news that I jumped out of bed, caught up a coat over my pyjamas, and hurried out after him.

We found that the rhino had moved off slowly through the camp, followed by Mr. J. V. Oates, the first man on the scene, who presently shot it. My Sealyham terrier hastened up to the spot, full of importance, sniffed at the huge corpse rather scornfully, and turned away with the air of saying, "Dead, I see. Nothing for me to do here." When told to get on the rhino's back he did so without the slightest hesitation.

The hide of this rhino was made into whips. The horn of a rhino is not real horn at all, but is actually congealed hair. When it is freshly sawn off stubby strands can be seen at the root, while round the base the hair is still growing, rather like a short wire brush. As the horn tapers it becomes smooth and polished, and one would scarcely believe that it could be made of hair.

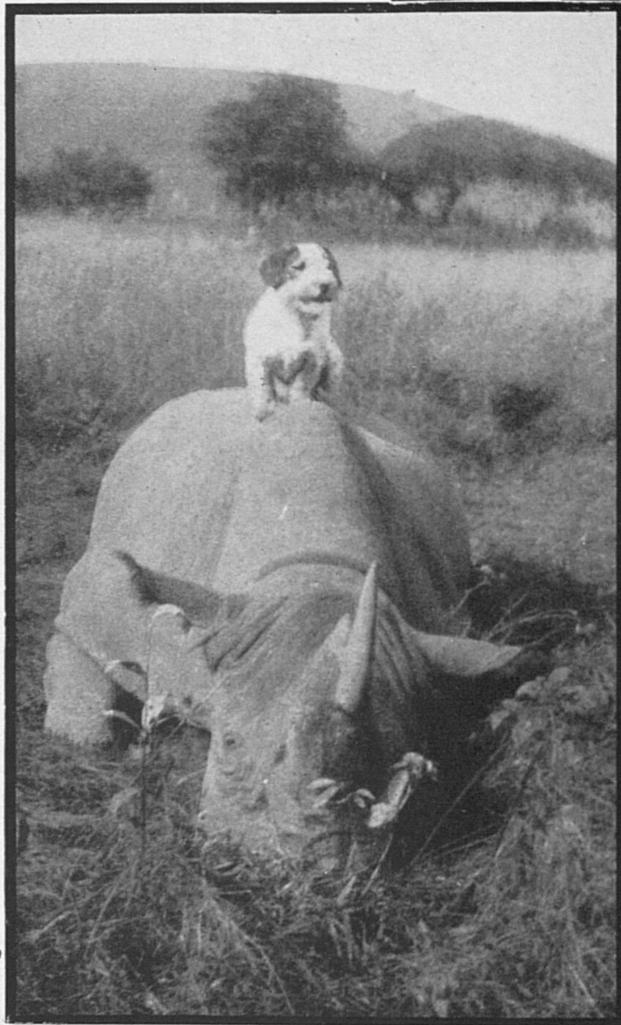
The rhino with the rear horn longer than the front,

seen in the third photograph, was an old cow shot on the Niergongo plain, miles from anywhere. The length of the rear horn is somewhat freakish, and only occurs in some of the old cows.

The young rhinos seem to stay with their mothers until they reach quite a mature age. Upon one occasion my husband was motoring down a rough road when he chanced to see some part-ridges ahead on the edge of a large clump of thorns. He stopped the car, got out with his shot-gun, and fired. Immediately there was a sudden tremendous commotion in the thorn-clump—a snorting and trampling and crashing. Three rhinos broke from the clump at full speed. They were a family of mother and



UNIQUE: A record rhino whose horn grows straight outward from his snout instead of upward, shot by the husband of the author of the accompanying article



THE CONQUEROR: The small Sealyham of the expedition posing as the slayer of the giant beast

father and well-grown son, and they came charging out, enraged by the sudden noise. Fortunately, they were too startled to make sure of their direction, and hurtled off, one through a bush, another across country, and the third over the road within a few feet of my husband.

The trio lived in that thorn-clump for several weeks, and waged a sort of guerilla warfare on our cars. After that first time they had no doubts as to the way they should charge, and when any car or lorry passed they would burst forth and charge after it full tilt. None of the trio had good horns, so we were loth to shoot them, but the situation was becoming really dangerous, and we were afraid we should have to blot them out. But as though they guessed our intention they suddenly elected to change their abode, and removed to some quieter spot much to our relief.

Tanganyika. The rear horn is insignificant, but thick and heavy. The front horn measures  $33\frac{1}{2}$  in. from base to tip, and grew in the extraordinary fashion seen in the photographs. Instead of curving upwards, more or less at right angles to the head, it grew outwards, almost on a line with the snout.

My husband was returning to headquarters after a *safari* of several days and stopped at a village on the slopes of a hill above a dense valley. At a point below the village the valley was crossed by a small flay overgrown with coarse grass, some ant-hills, and some scrubby bushes. My husband was out after buffalo, but had no luck, and was just returning to the village when his gun-boy suddenly whispered "Look, B'wana! Rhino!"

About 200 yards off my husband could just see in the grass a rhino evidently feeding, for his head was down. In this position, owing to its curious growth, the enormous front horn was not visible, since it lay almost along the ground. My husband got out his Zeiss glasses, but could distinguish only the rear horn, which he took to be the front one. He was unimpressed, and decided not to shoot but to take a photograph.

There was no wind, so he slung his gun over his shoulder and crept cautiously up to within forty or fifty yards. But no sooner had he levelled the camera than a little breeze sprang up straight from him to the unconscious rhino. Up came the great head, sniffing at the air; there was a gasp from the gun-boy, and a startled whisper of: "B'wana, look at the horn!"

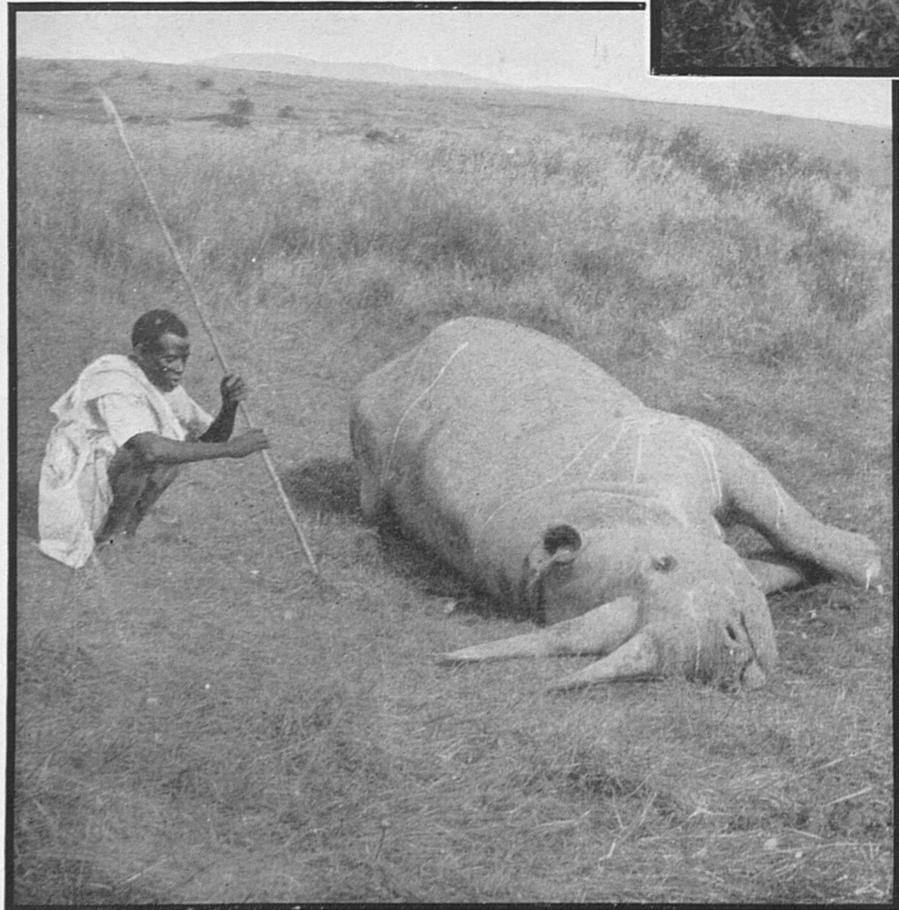
My husband took one look, saw this colossal horn above the grass, flung his camera to the boy, and grabbed his rifle. Just as the rhino, who happened to be in a bad temper, was about to start his charge my husband fired. The rhino checked, spun round in a half-circle—sure sign of a good shot—and dashed behind a bush.

The huntsman quickly ejected the cartridge, and the rifle jammed. This meant that the second cartridge had to be ejected also, leaving only three in the magazine. This wasted a few seconds, then my husband ran forward, expecting either to see the rhino down or making off. Instead of this it came charging out from the other side of the bush with that great front-horn pointing straight at my husband's solar plexus!

My husband fired again at a range of thirty yards and got in a good neck shot. But even as he ejected again he saw that the mad rush was not checked. On came the rhino, pouring blood at nose and mouth but seemingly undaunted. My husband fired a third time, and turned and ran!

He caught his foot in a tangle of undergrowth, fell, sprang up again, and turned to see the rhino standing still at the spot where he had last fired at it. He reloaded and gave the brute a fourth shot to finish him. Then at last the rhino went over, slowly at first, like a felled tree, and then with a crash.

Upon inspection every shot was found to be a killer. The rhino was a very old bull and correspondingly tough. He was the only one my husband had ever had trouble with in this way, since usually we have found that they go over at one good heart shot. As far as I know the horn is unique both in its size and its growth.



THE MARK OF THE FEMALE: A ♂ rhinoceros, with the enlarged rear horn which occurs only in old females

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