

I made a low bet, but my opponent was nervy, and coolly wagered the limit, hoping to bluff me out and take the "kitty," upon which I, nothing loath—glad to have thus, as I thought, lured him on—responded with full measure.

Raise after raise went into the now formidable pool, until there must have been more than the amount of my original fortune at stake on these few cards.

To make up my last bet I detached the golden nugget from my fob and threw it upon the bulky pile of notes.

Seeing that he had cleaned me out, the stockman called my hand.

Then, with an inward chuckle of delight, I confidently flung down my four monarchs face upwards on the table, and prepared to rake in the pile.

But with restraining hand my adversary quietly spread—four aces on the board!

Maddened beyond endurance at this unexpected turn of fortune, I petulantly threw out some charge of foul play and made a grab for the heap of money.

With a snarl of rage the stockman drew his revolver and bade me leave it alone.

I was beside myself with liquor and excitement, and, hastily pulling my own weapon, I promptly fired two shots in quick succession, both of which took effect upon the gambler, who, with a groan, crumpled up and fell across the table.

All was now confusion, and several persons near by seemed to spring upon me all at once.

My gun was torn from my grasp, as also the handful of bills which I had seized.

Then suddenly the lights went out, and a cry of "Police!" arose.

I struggled furiously, and at last got free. Heading for the door, I made good my escape, and, after a wild dash through the deserted streets, outdistanced all pursuit.

Then was it that I found still clutched in my left hand the precious little nugget.

That night and all next day I kept in hiding, as there was a hue-and-cry for my capture, although I was glad to read in the papers that my victim had not been mortally injured.

The following day I managed to ship as a steward on an Italian steamer bound for the Adriatic.

I was now a ruined, broken man—broken as much in spirit as in pocket. I was also a fugitive from justice. This was nearly five years ago, and during all this time I have voyaged to and fro, not really caring what became of me and ever sinking lower.

For, meanwhile, the curse of drink had been steadily growing upon me.

Each time I landed at a port it meant a wild carousal, and now, due to my last one here in this town, I have missed my ship and am stranded on the rocks.

Nothing of value remains to me but this fine nugget of virgin gold, which in such strange manner I have all this time retained.

"Thus," concluded the sailor, pleadingly, "I ask you to give me money for this trinket, and to hold it for a year or so. I intend to make a special effort to redeem my ruined past, and if I can I will send you the money to retrieve this pretty lump of gold."

There were real tears in the man's eyes as he handed me his treasured nugget and scribbled my address in Havana upon a scrap of paper with shaky, trembling hand.

Faithfully have I held this token for many years, but never has it been redeemed, nor do I now think it ever will be.

I know not where the miner-sailor is, but should he still live, and should he by chance read this narrative, he may know that I still hold his trinket in pawn, and, in spite of its beauty, I still would be glad to know that he may one day be able to retrieve it.

II.—THE ONE-HANDED HUNTER AND THE RHINOCEROS.

By F. A. M. WEBSTER.

ILLUSTRATED BY ARCH. WEBB.

The terrible experiences of a hunter while after big game in the African bush. "The incident," writes the Author, "is perfectly true. Shortly after it was told to me I met the hero of the story, who confirmed the details as related by my friend."



HIS yarn was told to me by an old hunter whom I met out in Africa, where one lives much alone in out-of-the-way places, and, therefore, makes the most of those guests whom a kind Providence sends one's way.

I saw this old chap far off as a tiny dot upon the native road, which runs across the plains, and, with the aid of my glasses, recognized him

as a white man, long before he came within hail of my little village of grass houses.

Ibrahim, my cook, had caught and killed a fowl, put the bacon into the pan, and opened a tin of salmon by the time our chance guest turned off the road and up the hill. Before he was inside my hut Assmani, my personal "boy," had laid the table and breakfast was ready.

McGuire, my guest told me his name was:

and as the meal progressed I gathered from conversational fragments he let drop that he had been a hunter until an untimely accident prevented him from following his calling any longer, and that he was at present employed in trading with the natives.

He made one of the strangest figures that have ever sat at my table. At least sixty years of age, with grizzled, sandy hair, and piercing blue eyes, he was short and broad almost to the point of deformity. His deep chest and great, sloping shoulders showed immense power, and his arms were well-nigh as long as those of a gorilla. His right hand was gnarled and twisted with age and work, his left hand was missing; the stump where the flesh had been sewn together over the end of the bone was not pretty to look upon.

His retinue consisted of one mule—old, and very much the worse for wear—and one most villainous-looking "boy," who answered to the name of "Jim"—also old, but, to judge from appearances and the load he carried, tough as rhinoceros hide.

For two days the strange pair stayed with me; "Jim" consorted amicably with my "boys," while McGuire and I mooned about the village and the surrounding bush. Several times as we sat in my *banda* at night, I saw him look reminiscently at the sewn-up end of his left arm, when the whisky had passed more than once across the table. I judged that there was a more than commonly interesting story related to that missing hand, but he did not refer to it, and, out of common courtesy, I did not either.

On the last evening of his stay at my village we did ourselves rather better than usual; but, as the Scotch say, McGuire was "na mair than jocose," and after awhile he grew reminiscent. I was glad of that, for I wanted badly to hear the story of that missing hand.

Seeing my eyes fixed on the scarred stump, McGuire volunteered the statement: "It's a rough and risky life, the professional big-game hunter leads, and likely to come to an abrupt conclusion at the shortest possible notice."

I acquiesced politely and waited. There was a silence, while McGuire emptied and refilled his glass.

"I was lucky to lose no more than my hand," he said, lifting up the horrible stump, and gazing at it affectionately. There was another long pause.

"Folks think a hunter is well-paid," he went on, at last, "and so they may be, the new breed, for a man gets seventy-five pounds a month and all found nowadays, I am told, and even so he's none too well paid for taking his life in his hands and watching over half-fledged fools every hour of the twenty-four."

"In my days it was a sight less pay that we got, but bigger risks to run and worse weapons to work with. And another thing, the country wasn't as settled as it is now; the natives were more wild, and, like as not, some green-horn fresh out from home, who knew neither the customs of the people nor their language, would take you up-country and, from sheer ignorance,

mix you up in a tribal row before you knew where you were. There was a young lord once—but that's another story. The yarn I am telling you is about a chap who came out in the early days before there was a Uganda Railway, and when the rails upon which they run the trolleys up and down the road from Mombasa to Kilindine now were being laid down by McKinnon's people to help explore the interior.

"I shall not tell you what his name was, for he is a big man at home now, and might not like to be reminded of the incident; but he was only a youngster in those days, and as good a plucked 'un as ever I wish to meet. He stood about six-feet-four in his stockings, and was the quickest man of his inches I've ever seen. I did hear that he had done great things as a runner at his college at home; but, however that may be, his quickness saved my life.

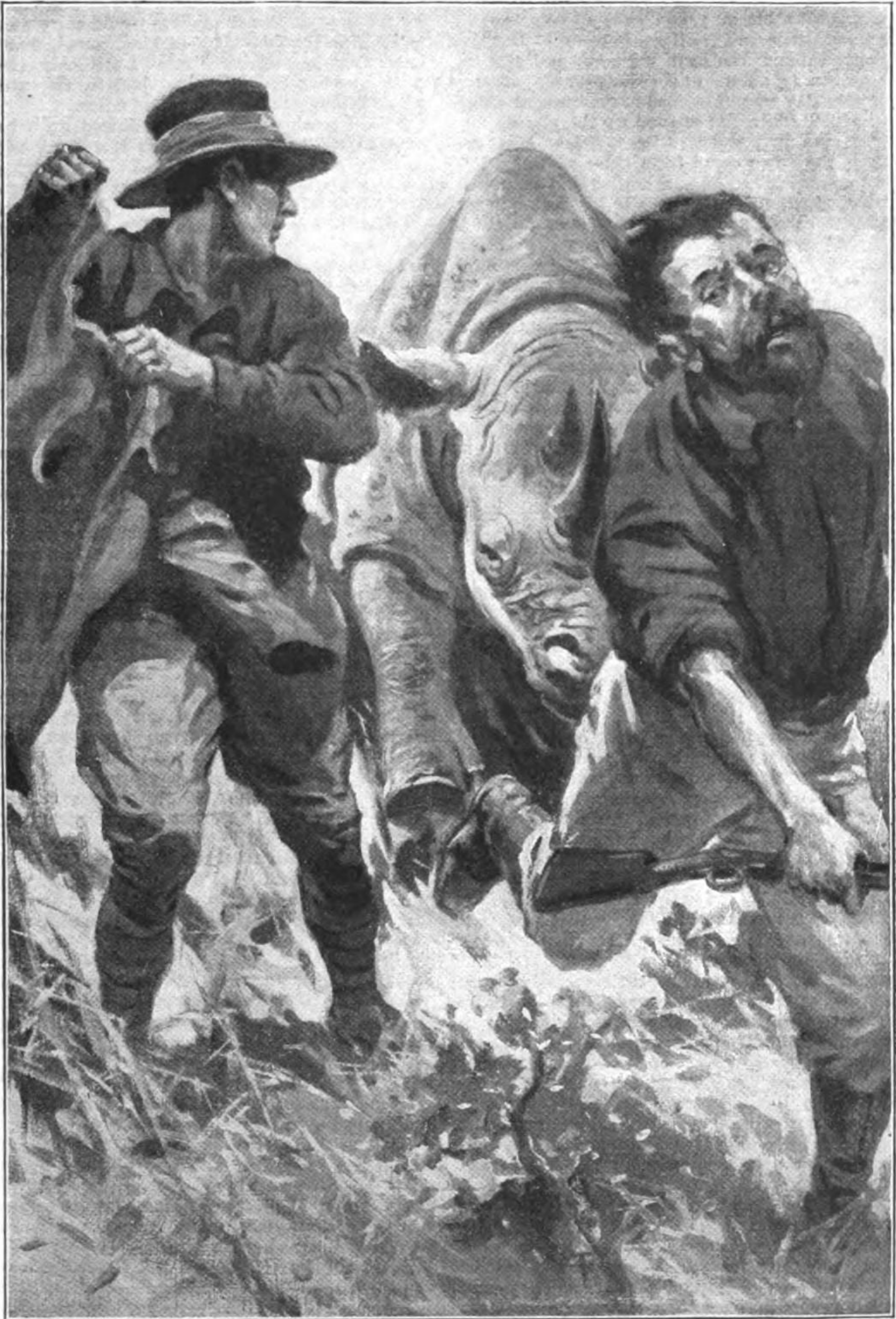
"The month he came out I was hanging about at Mombasa, trying to shake off the after-effects of a bad bout of malaria. When the boat came in I met it as usual to see if there were any old friends aboard, and there, sure enough, I spotted a man I had known down in Durban two years before, and with him was the man I am speaking of. Well, we foregathered and had a chat, and the end of it was that I fixed up to fit out a hunting *safari*, and to go with the young chap after big game in the interior. I was to act as guide, interpreter, hunter, and chief steward rolled into one. He made liberal terms with me, and didn't stint his money when it came to fitting out the *safari*. I remember he had a favourite saying that 'the best was quite good enough for him, and he supposed it would suit me too?'

"It took me about a week to get together the porters, native hunters, cooks, and personal 'boys'—it was then that I picked up 'Jim,' who has been with me ever since. Camp kit, rifles and ammunition we did not need, for my employer had brought more than enough out with him.

"In due course we moved out of Mombasa and began to climb—for, as you know, the land rises pretty well continuously from the coast-line until it reaches five thousand feet, after three hundred miles have been traversed; needless to say, we did not go so far as that.

"We pushed forward steadily for some time, and then, trek right or left, we couldn't find the really big game, try how we would. Buck we found in plenty, and I soon saw that my boss had brought all his courage with him, and was no mean shot. I was glad of that, for there is nothing I hate more than to see a wild animal get away with the bullet of a bad marksman inside him. At night we heard lions roaring and leopards 'sawing wood'; but by daylight they seemed to vanish into thin air.

"The boss was always pulling my leg about it, telling me tales he had heard of the dangers of the African bush, and the grand sport the game to be found in it afforded. Then he would laugh and say, 'Here am I, covered with ticks, and I've had a "jigger" flea in my foot; but otherwise I've been as safe as if I'd stayed in Piccadilly. Where *are* these savage wild beasts I've



"He whipped off his shooting-jacket and flung it fair on to the animal's horns as it thundered after me."

been told so much about?' And I'd say, 'You wait a bit, sir; you'll see all you want to of them before you see the ship again.' But, for all my talking, the days went on, and still we never saw an animal of the dangerous species.

"One day we were seated in the bush, smoking our pipes, while Jim washed up the plates.

"I was just saying that it fairly beat me where the game could have gone to, when Jim dropped the plate he was wiping and let a yell out of him that fetched me to my feet quicker than an electric shock would have done. I caught the word 'Kifaru,' and saw Jim's black legs vanishing into the branches of a tree. You can bet both of us followed him as quickly as we could, for a rhinoceros is no sort of beast to stop and argue with when your rifles are leaning up against a tree twenty yards away.

"Our stomachs were hardly across the lowest bough of the tree into which Jim had already disappeared, when I saw a dirty, grey-coloured rhinoceros dash across the place where we had been sitting at the speed of an express train.

"The beggar must have been prowling about the bush, and, catching our scent, had charged down-wind the moment he knew that there were men in the vicinity.

"Now, the 'rhino' is the silliest beast alive, and he is as blind as a bat; but that does not alter the fact that he is infernally dangerous. When his mood is that way, he'll charge anything, from a tree-trunk to an elephant, or a snake to a man; and, once he's got you treed, he will stop there and wait for you to come down until you drop out of the branches from sheer exhaustion.

"This fellow had got us fairly up a tree, and it wasn't such a very strong tree, either. At first he couldn't make out where we had vanished to. He kept looking this way and then that with his wicked little piggy eyes. Then he would turn his head from side to side, trying to catch our wind; afterwards he would take a walk round, stop, and repeat the performance. Still he couldn't find us, and I began to hope that he might go away, until Jim started jabbering and telling me that he did not think the tree would stand the shock if the rhino charged it; and that is just what the brute did do, as soon as he heard Jim's voice. I yelled to the boss to hold fast, and clung on to the trunk myself; but, even so, the force of the impact nearly shook us both to the ground, and we heard Jim yelling like mad above us. As for the rhino, the force of his own charge knocked him clean over and set him squealing; but he got up and charged again, and this time the tree seemed to give a bit from the roots upwards.

"I didn't like it at all, and my eyes kept turning longingly to the rifles. After the third charge I made up my mind something must be done, and told the boss I was going to try to reach the rifles. He told me not to be a fool, but it seemed to me to be one of those occasions when folly is the only road to safety.

"When the rhino had drawn off to reconsider things for a moment, I slipped down the tree-

trunk on the side farthest from him and made for the guns as fast as my legs would carry me.

"I didn't waste time looking round, but I knew that he was after me. I felt a horrible chill creeping up my spine, just in the place where I imagined his horn would enter.

"As I reached the tree I snatched up a gun in my right hand, grasped the tree-trunk with my left, and whirled around it. As I did so I saw that the beast was almost on top of me. There was a sickening thud, and my left arm dropped to my side useless. The animal's horn had come full on to it where the wrist was curled round the trunk, and had smashed it to pulp.

"Even so, I did not faint, although I was in the most horrible agony. I knew that if I fell the beast would finish me there and then, so I took to my heels again and bolted, panic-stricken and half-conscious, back to our own tree.

"Of course I could never have reached it, but the boss had left the branches when he saw me reach the guns; and now, as I ran back with the rhinoceros in hot pursuit, he whipped off his shooting-jacket and flung it fair on to the animal's horns as it thundered after me. It was an amazing risk to take, and only a man with the coolest of courage could have done it. However, it was just one of those hundredth chances which does come off sometimes. Thoroughly baffled by the loose, blinding folds about his eyes and nose, the animal tore past us, and then, coming to a stop, stood still until he could get his feet upon the coat and rip it off his head.

"That was just the one chance of settling him, and the boss took it, for I was useless. He snatched the rifle from my hand, raised it, dwelt on his aim a second, and fired. It was a beautiful, clean shot, straight between the eye and the ear, and right through the brain.

"So he got his specimen of 'savage' big game, after all, and a very fine front and back horn into the bargain; but they cost me my left hand, and, but for him, would have cost me my life as well.

"That finished our hunting trip, and I went down to the coast again on the flat of my back, carried in a litter made by the porters.

"My hand had to come off, of course, for wrist-bones and flesh were no more than a jelly smashed up together. The boss nursed me as tenderly as a woman until we could get medical aid, and, what is more, he saw to it that I did not lose by my mishap. Of course he couldn't give me back my hand, and, as I have already told you, he had agreed on liberal terms with me before we went on *safari*, so that there was no further obligation on his part—for a hunter takes his risks on his own shoulders, and pays the price of his calling, more often than not. But he pensioned me off, all the same, and offered to take me home and find me a job on his estate in England, if I would go. But I would not do that. Africa is like strong drink—the smell and the love of it get into a man's blood, and he can't leave it alone, and if he goes away from it for a time he is never happy until he is back amongst the old, familiar sights again."

THE WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE

ADVENTURE ~ TRAVEL ~ SPORT

Vol. XLIII.

OCTOBER, 1919.

No. 258

Hunting Wild Cattle

By C. J. DICKIE .

Illustrated by STANLEY L. WOOD

An Englishman's stirring adventures while catching bulls in Patagonia. The hunting of wild cattle in the forests and on the pampas of South America affords plenty of excitement and a spice of danger. "The accompanying narrative," says the Author, "is my own experience, and is a true description of the difficulties of the chase so far as the wild cattle of Patagonia are concerned."



O speak of the sport of wild cattle-hunting may appear to some perhaps as a little far-fetched. The fact is, those who are accustomed to the quiet, domesticated cow found on the conventional farm have no conception of the cunning, fierceness, and sagacity of these creatures in their wild state. I have often had encounters with them, and know from actual experience that to bag this quarry is almost, if not quite, as difficult and as risky as hunting the rare wild animals of the African forests. Here it should be borne in mind that the majority of the wild cattle that roam the pampas and forests of Patagonia, in South America, have through long generations developed the shaggy mane and high shoulders typical of the North American buffalo of times gone by. They are entirely different from their prototype of the farm.

I was once on a trip up the Andes, looking for land suitable for a ranch, when I had some of the experiences I here relate. Until our party arrived at the Rio Nires, we had for a considerable time been dependent on our shotgun for our supply of fresh meat. True, the regions traversed teemed with guanaco and ostrich. The former is a species of wild llama, but its flesh being exceedingly dry and tough is rarely

eaten, while the latter is too shy for one to approach close enough for a shot, and can only be secured by good dogs. As our dogs had already travelled four hundred miles, they were hardly in a condition to keep our larder supplied.

We had on several occasions on our trip passed through districts where wild cattle were known to be. Although we made excursions for the purpose of securing some, we were always unsuccessful, the first time we came in contact with them being after our arrival at the junction of the Mayer and Carbon rivers. We were by this time well into the backwoods, where man, excepting a few daring explorers and naturalists, had seldom been. The Indians in these regions never penetrate the forest, as they fear the evil spirits that dwell there. What they take to be evil spirits, or "gualickos," as they call them, are the avalanches of snow and ice which during the summer are constantly becoming detached from the glaciers and descend into the valleys, or lakes, with a rumbling noise resembling thunder. When one is near the great peaks, the sound sometimes persists for a considerable period, as the echoes are thrown from one mountain to another.

While we were encamped on the Rio Nires we heard the bellowing of bulls in the distant valleys, so decided to make an excursion to see