

JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN SOCIETY

VOL. XXII. NO. LXXXV

OCTOBER, 1922

NOTE.—There are many subjects in Africa, such as Racial Characteristics, Political and Industrial Conditions, Labour, Disease, Currency, Banking, Education, and so on, about which information is imperfect and opinion divided. On none of these complicated and difficult questions has Science said the last word. Under these circumstances it has been considered best to allow those competent to form an opinion to express freely in this Journal the conclusions at which they themselves have arrived. *It must be clearly understood that the object of the Journal is to gather information, and that each writer must be held responsible for his own views.*

BIG GAME SHOOTING IN AFRICA¹

IN reading a paper on Big Game Shooting in Africa I am aware that there are many who are better qualified than myself to write on such a subject. What I propose to do, however, is not to give you a dissertation on record heads of this, that, and the other kind of African beast, or to describe difficult game stalks, the memories of which may be interesting to oneself, but boring to an audience, but to endeavour to give some idea of what shooting in Africa was in the old days as compared with the present time, and to show you some cinematograph pictures of game which are really unique. They were taken by Mr. T. A. Barnes, a well-known African hunter and explorer, who has kindly allowed me to show them.

My early African experience was in the eighties. I landed at Quelimane in Portuguese East Africa in 1887, and for three years was hunting elephants,—any other game was meat to fill the pots only. I went from Quelimane to Nyasaland,

¹ This paper was read at a Meeting of the African Society held at the Royal Society of Arts on 29th June, 1922. For report of other proceedings on this occasion see p. 61.

going by open boat up the Kuakua River, one of the ancient mouths of the Zambezi, then up the latter and the Shire River by the first stern-wheel steamer built in that part of Africa.

During my three years' hunting I was in Zambezia, Nyasaland, as far north as Lake Tanganyika, and west to Lake Mweru, and the Luapula, and Katanga. They were happy days: plenty of hard work and excitement, and many "incidents." There were then no Governments, no regulations—every man did what seemed right in his own eyes. The rifles we used then for elephants were the biggest we could carry. I had two double 8-bores, a single 4-bore, and a .577 Express. The 4-bore used to generally knock me down when I fired it. I carried only a very small "shepherd's" tent, and had no camp-bed or equipment such as one uses now.

There were plenty of elephants in most parts of Eastern Africa in those days, and my system in hunting was, on getting up to a herd, to get in as many shots as possible at the commencement, and then to follow up running, sometimes for great distances. When young and strong one can do that sort of thing. Of course at that time I was shooting for *ivory*, and although trying always to get the biggest tuskers, we did not despise medium-sized ones.

I do not know any harder or more strenuous life than elephant-hunting carried on as it was when I first went to Africa.

Not many months after I commenced hunting I became involved in a war between the Arabs and Europeans at the north end of Lake Nyasa, which interfered a good deal with hunting, as most of the Europeans concerned in it were wounded. We were joined in the fighting after a time by Captain Lugard, as he then was, now General Sir Frederick D. Lugard.

After some three years of this kind of life I became a Foreign Office official, and thenceforward any prolonged shooting tours were impossible, though I used to generally manage to get a month's shooting every season, north, west, or east of Lake Nyasa. Perhaps one of the most interesting of these journeys from a shooting point of view was an expedition from the

north end of Lake Nyasa to Lake Tanganyika, and thence to Lake Mweru. On this trip I had with me a steel section boat, and after circumnavigating Lake Mweru I voyaged up the Luapula River as far as navigation was possible. I never saw game beasts in such enormous quantities as they were on the flats adjacent to Mweru and the Luapula in 1891-2. Sometimes the plains were black with buffalo as far as one could see, and these great herds were always followed by lions. Unfortunately rinderpest, which passed through that part of Africa in 1893, almost cleared out the buffalo.

Years ago, of course, the old big bore rifles using black powder, gave way to the new small bores, using chemical powders, and having enormous penetration. With the old 8-bores with 3 oz. bullets driven by 12 drachms of black powder, the head shot with big bull elephants was of little use, as there was not sufficient penetration to carry the bullet through the bone to the brain. In more recent times there is no more certain shot for elephants than the brain, and any modern rifle of good penetration will carry a bullet right through the head of an elephant.

In these days one travels very comfortably in Africa. There is no need for discomfort provided a traveller has the means to supply himself with all the outfit, stores and transport he requires. All through the eastern half of Africa, when travelling, one lives in tents, and there is no more delightful life during the dry season than a camping shooting trip.

In West Africa conditions with regard to shooting and game are totally different to those prevailing in East Africa. Whereas in Nyasaland, Uganda, Kenya, etc., one would never think of sleeping in native huts, in West Africa, especially in the Hinterland of Liberia, no one ever uses tents at all. You sleep in excellent native houses in the villages, which are clean, free from insects, well built and comfortable. In Eastern Africa one never has any trouble in getting villagers who know the haunts of game and are eager to accompany the sportsman on the chance of getting meat. In West Africa, on the contrary, especially Liberia, I always found it extremely difficult to get any villagers to go far in the forests; and as to sleeping out, there is nothing they abominate more.

Speaking generally, in the forest lands of Western Africa there is very little shooting compared with the eastern half of the continent.

It is a mistake to suppose that the whole of Africa has been explored and exploited for shooting purposes. There are many districts waiting for sportsmen who are keen on natural history collection and the procuring of unknown or little known specimens, especially of the quite small forest duikers. Even in Kenya Colony there is country which is as yet little known, and I will read you an extract from a letter which I recently received from Mr. J. A. Barnes. Speaking of a trip to the "Great Craters" he says :

"This is a district quite unknown to Englishmen, and about which nothing has been written.

"The great central crater of Ngorongoro 11 x 12 miles in diameter is absolutely a menagerie. I never saw such a sight in my life. It is computed that there are 50,000 Blue Gnu in it, besides Lions, Cheeta, Hyænas, Rhino, Hippo, Ostrich, Zebra, Kongoni, 'Tommies,' 'Grant's,' Chandler's Reedbuck and Impala. You can imagine the crush within one volcano, and the animals never leave it. The floor of the crater is practically one stretch of clover, or such an immense stock of game could not exist. The lions, by the way, are daylight ones, quite an uncommon occurrence in these days of shooting expeditions. Sir Charles Ross got seven in a day or two without the least difficulty, and we shot others driven by the Masai.

"Other things of interest were the Oledonuji-lengai volcano, which erupted during the war, and has not been visited since, and the discoveries by the Germans of gold, diamonds and prehistoric remains amongst the craters."

ALFRED SHARPE.