



*Photo by Gannon, Johannes, Mo.*

THE AUTHOR.

HUNTING AND HUNTED  
IN  
THE BELGIAN CONGO

BY  
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## A FREE FIGHT

by, whereupon the owner sprang to his feet and closed with his opponent. Such was the account given by Salem, and corroborated by all the other boys who had witnessed the affair from the start. Judging that the punishment that I had already meted out to them was not sufficient, I ordered the three of them to stand stationary for three solid hours in front of my house, each bearing on his head a seventy-five pound load. The old chief loudly harangued those of his people who were concerned in the fight, and judging by the way they slunk off to the village it was evident that his speech had made an effect on them. The old man was highly pleased and amused to see my three shame-faced delinquents standing like statues under their respective burdens.

It was most fortunate that this was a friendly village, and the affair had passed over as lightly as it did.

That day I shot a fine buck on the flats to the north, and the greatest punishment of all to Kasinbasi and Co., was that they were not allowed to join the other boys in the feast that night.

The next day we moved about eighteen miles to the west, at the foot of the mountains that divide the Belgian Congo from the Lado Enclave. I camped on a beautiful flat piece of country with fine short grass, outside the village known to the natives as "Farbra": there was the customary scrub, and forest-like glades through which beautiful streams ran down from the mountains. My grass house was sheltered by a grand old tree with enormous branches stretching out fifty feet from the trunk all round. The natives were delighted to have a "msungu" (white man) near the village, for they all anticipated a huge feed of elephant flesh during my stay. Large herds had been seen in the vicinity lately, so they said, but experience teaches that natives are gifted with extraordinary love for "throwing the hatchet," especially

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when a white man comes along with plenty of cloth and other desirable articles, and has no intention of staying over the night unless there are prospects of elephant shooting or trading to his advantage.

There was no difficulty in obtaining food for the boys, the people here cultivated their lands to the fullest extent, and appeared to be prosperous. All were in their true savage state, some of the women had from two to eight pounds of red clay in their coiffures. All around were large herds of goats and a goodly number of cattle.

We were now at a fair altitude, having climbed above the flat country and left the mosquitoes in the marshes and swamps by the Nile. Life was indeed worth living up here.

After a day's hunting I would sit watching the effects of the sunset, the great hills of the border covered with enormous boulders, some of them weighing hundreds of tons. Winding paths stole between the trees and bushes and the dull roar of a waterfall made itself heard even above the din of the drums and the weird song of the dancing natives in the village close by. A large bird, the size of a bustard, hopped like a frog in the grass, and, by way of song, made a strange sighing noise. Slowly the stars peeped out from the dark blue sky. What a paradise it is in those parts! It seemed impossible that I could be living in the same world with those countless thousands who were on the verge of starvation in the great cities away to the north. Here all material wants were supplied, the native is quite contented so long as his physical requirements are satisfied, and money has no purchasing powers in his eyes. If you were to offer him the choice between a sovereign and a spoonful of salt, I know which he would prefer.

One evening Salem had the audacity to use the large cooking pot in which the boys had prepared their food, as a bath, of which proceeding I did not approve, as in



Photo by C. K. P. De Laet, Zambesi

"AN OLD BULL RHINO."

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the event of anything happening to my own pots and pans I would require this same article to have my own food prepared in.

The third day of my stay at Farbra I brought down an old bull rhino. I was out in the hopes of seeing elephants, and on emerging from some dense scrub I saw a huge slate-grey creature just ahead, grazing in complete ignorance of our proximity, half of his body screened from sight by a huge ant-hill. One of the boys, like a fool, gave a low whistle to acquaint me of what he thought I had not seen, and at the sound the brute raised his head and snorted furiously. Fortunately I had the '450 on my shoulder, for the boys dropped whatever they were carrying and scattered in all directions. I speedily sought shelter behind a small tree and fired at the rhino's shoulder : for a few seconds he stood stamping, blowing, and making an unearthly row, then he dashed off to the right, and was soon lost to view in the long grass. It was just like witnessing a runaway steam roller, as the ground trembled under the stampede of the enormous brute. I dashed headlong after him, but the huge beast travelled at a great pace, leaving only a few drops of blood on the down-trodden grass in his wake. Several times he lay down to rest behind a bunch of bush, and I got within ten yards of him when with a most terrific commotion he crashed away once more ahead of us. By this time the boys had caught up to me, and had regained something of their former composure, and followed the trail with me. More than once I got near him, but not until close on sundown did I get an opportunity to open fire again. At last he stood, completely done up, by the bank of a small stream, and I gave him both the right and left barrels of the '450 in the shoulder. He attempted to rush at us and clear off ; all the boys stood at a respectful distance, and I did not venture too close myself. I finished him with another shot in the

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shoulder. There was no hope for the beast against the smashing power of the solid .450 bullet. Nevertheless I was proud of having brought to earth one of these cumbersome beasts, and stood gazing for some time at the enormous mass of flesh with its little crimson streams. I was always careful to have a blanket with me and food sufficient for all for four days, so we camped close by for the night. The boys and the two Shinzis who had accompanied me soon busied themselves in cutting off long strips of the flesh, which they greedily devoured raw with the warmth of life still in it.

The Black Rhinoceroses such as I encountered confine themselves to the thick bush country. The one I killed was a huge brute about 5 ft. 3½ ins. in height, and 11 ft. 10 ins. length over all. Its weight I would guess to be 3-3½ tons. I left its horns to the villagers: the body was a mass of sores, but this condition is peculiar, I believe, to the wet season.

The apparent colour of rhinos and elephants depends largely on the soil of the country, for their natural coats become caked with mud from the water holes in which they love to wallow. The rhino has a very restricted range of vision.

Next morning I returned to the camp at Farbra. The villagers went out to the scene of the kill *en masse*, and returned in the evening loaded with meat for a feast. I noticed that by way of preparation they covered their stomachs with fat, with the idea of imparting the necessary elasticity to the "little Mary," a custom which seems to be practised by most of the Central African people. My boys ate till their eyelids drooped.

Not many miles from here I found some exceptionally fine samples of alluvial gold. In almost every river and stream of the North-East Congo—I have seen it in the Nile—there is a kind of shale which the inexperienced is likely to mistake for the precious metal.

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Leaving Farbra I struck out in a southerly direction along the foot of the mountains towards the Mullah in the south-west corner of the Enclave. Crossing the river about half a mile below the waterfall I found that in the centre it reached just up to my armpits, and as it was running fairly strong several of the boys were afraid to go over, but a little persuasion soon remedied matters. When I made my first trip in the Congo I used to get my burliest follower to carry me across the rivers on his shoulders. One day his foot slipped, and I was pitched headlong into the swirling current, and when I came to the surface the water was rushing out of my nose, ears, and mouth. That afternoon Monica, my personal "boy," came to the hut at the customary hour for my bath, and said, "Bwana, do you like hot water or cold?"

The river had not long been left behind when we came upon the remnants of a once peaceful hamlet, and while foraging around I came upon a human skeleton, whose very posture sent a chill through me. I now guessed the reason why the people at Farbra refused to guide me in this direction in spite of a liberal amount of cloth that I had offered for the services of two of their people. But for the pile of blackened stones against which the remains rested in a sitting position I should perhaps have paid less attention to it. Several bones lay on the ground amidst a mass of broken gourds and earthenware. It was a ghastly sight. The boys made a detailed inspection of the wrecked dwelling, and discovered a lot of native stringed instruments, armlets, pieces of earthenware vessels, grass matting, and a few arrow heads, two of which were covered with a dark thick substance, probably poisoned. They were beautifully made and were of a fantastic pattern. On making a further inspection myself I discovered a number of bones thrown down in one of the huts, the roof of which



