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# AFTER BIG GAME

IN

## CENTRAL AFRICA

RECORDS OF A SPORTSMAN FROM  
AUGUST 1894 TO NOVEMBER 1897, WHEN  
CROSSING THE DARK CONTINENT FROM THE  
MOUTH OF THE ZAMBESI TO THE FRENCH CONGO

BY

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'DU CAP AU LAC NYASSA,' 'LE DAHOMEY,' ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

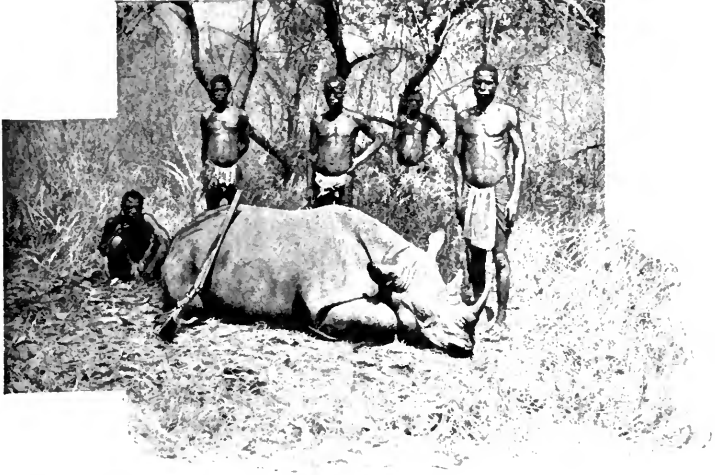
FREDERIC LEES

*With 71 Illustrations and a Sketch Map showing Route*

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MALE RHINOCEROS (see p. 71).

## CHAPTER V

### IN THE MIDST OF THE JUNGLE—PURSUIT OF BIG ANIMALS

The Kapoche district—An excellent country for sport—The expedition in winter quarters—Niarugwe Camp—Temporary fortification—Favourable season for large pachydermata—The ant-eater—Superstitions about this animal—Rhinoceros-hunting—Inconveniences of dense vegetation—A faithful spouse—A panther in the middle of the camp—After elephants—Three elephants killed—Pursuit of buffaloes—Meeting with lions—Seeking for a wounded buffalo in the tall grass, and the danger of this undertaking—Night-watch for the panther and its death—A morning with lions—Missed!—In the dense jungle with a dying lion—The last hunt—Meeting with Mafsitis.

At the present day all these regions have changed very much, owing to European advance; but at the time to which my narrative relates—that is, the year 1895—there were few parts of Africa which offered the hunter such resources as the Upper Kapoche, the north

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of Undi, and the neighbouring country. Between the Upper Tchiritse and the Kapoche, both of which are extreme tributaries of the Luyia, are still found the Luyia itself and the Loangwe. These four deltas were as deserted as the earth was before the creation of man, and one could march for a week there in any direction without meeting a village; formerly there had been a few villages, but the Mafsitis had destroyed them.

The land was well watered by the four rivers which I have named, and by their many tributaries; there were to be found shady places and swamps,—dear to elephants,—as well as gigantic thickets, pieces of forest-land, and grassy plains suitable for these animals. Flat in certain parts, mountainous in others, alternately wooded and open, level and undulated, the ground was fitted for all species, and was inhabited by them. Large pachydermata, hardly ever being disturbed, became less nomadic; in brief, it was an excellent country for sport, provided that one knew how to make the best of it. There were, on the other hand, many difficulties for us,—density of vegetation, height of grass, and difficulty in moving through those almost impenetrable thickets, or those swamps which, though easy enough for an elephant or a rhinoceros, were difficult and fatiguing for man. Besides, the position in which the hunter placed himself became extremely perilous in case of danger. I must add that rain continued to fall heavily, and that the first day of our arrival at Niarugwe Camp we were unable to leave our tents.

The main body of the expedition under the command of De Borely wintered during this time to the north of Makanga. The bearers had been sent away for the time being, our comrade remaining with a few men and servants. Though you may persuade four or five hunters to tramp in the rain eight or ten hours a day, it is quite another matter with 400 bearers with loads on their heads—the column stops constantly and the packages are spoiled by the wet. The best thing, then, is to await the end of the rainy season, which falls generally at the beginning of May. I utilise the time by hunting. Will the reader now inspect our quarters, similar to all our camps ?

Our entrenchment is completely hidden from the outside, and any one passing near the forest would never suspect that forty men were living there, as comfortably as circumstances permitted. In the middle is an open, uncovered space of twenty yards; at one end is my tent, Bertrand's tent and that for the baggage, specimens, and biltong; all around, and inside the stockade of abatis and thorns, are the thatched huts of the men, their fires, firewood, the buccans, etc. Outside the camp is a spot in a clearing which is levelled and swept, where animals may be cut up, so as not to dirty the inside. There the skins are stretched and dried in the sun. When the sun does shine, many biltong-racks, upon which strips of meat are placed to dry, are also put outside; these are carried inside the stockade at night, to be replaced in the morning. This is done with the

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object of not encumbering during the day the place which we occupy, and to keep the flies, which are attracted by the meat, at a distance. There is not the least danger in leaving the meat outside during the day, vultures rarely daring to touch it when men are in camp and carnivora being hidden in their lairs.

More than once it has happened that upon noiselessly returning to camp during the excessive heat of the day I have found the sentries, of whom there were always two or three, fast asleep, with twenty racks loaded with meat at their side. But at Niarugwe Camp we had not only the animals to fear: we had to beware also of Mafsitis: so we always left on guard at least six men armed with Martini rifles. In case of alarm, they had only to close the stockade "door." As bullets could leave the enclosure, but clubs and assagais could not enter, nothing was to be feared inside. The "door," of which I have just spoken, is very simple and a perfect protection. The camp enclosure is broken by an opening, at each side of which two posts are driven into the ground. A thick branch of a tree, provided with thorns, as long and as thick as the little finger, is then cut. It is dragged to the entrance, and the trunk is pulled violently from the inside between the two posts and fastened in such a way that the thorns are piled up at the entry, making it the most impregnable part of the fortification.

Two hundred yards from the edge of our part of the forest flows the Kapoche, where we obtain drinking water. The river is much swollen at this time

of the year. Reeds and aquatic plants which line its banks attract innumerable mosquitoes : the reason why we keep some distance away.

Though this time of the year is fitted for the pursuit of the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the buffalo, other animals are never seen, hidden as they are by the density of the vegetation and warned of your approach by the noise of your progress through the grass. Thus, I have the greatest difficulty in finding an antelope or a wild-boar. On the other hand, during the dry season, when everything is burnt up, you can find as many as you like, provided, of course, you take the trouble to look for them. The first bit of sport we had in the Kapoche district is worthy of mention.

One dull, rainy morning, we see on an open space an animal which most of us have never seen before. We cannot distinguish it very clearly, and as it turns its back we make all kinds of conjectures. I see two large rabbit-like and flexible ears, a round back, and a fleshy tail. Can it be a kangaroo? Not wishing to move, and run the risk of frightening it away, I aim at its back in the direction of the heart. It falls dead on its side. Tambarika, while his comrades and I are examining in astonishment this curious animal, recognises it immediately to be an ant-eater. A white skin with long, scanty, blackish-brown fur, a tapering snout similar to that of a pig with a hole at the end but no mouth, a tongue a yard long like a whip-thong, ears like those of a rabbit, enormous nails on its paws, a powerful

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short thick tail almost hairless, and the corpululence of an adult pig—such is the not very flattering portrait of the ant-eater. It was received at the camp with all kinds of exclamations, the oldest declaring that this animal brought misfortune, and that it was customary upon meeting it to return home and not continue a journey. I feel quite certain upon hearing this that whatever happens will be put down to this unfortunate ant-eater. In fact, all our fruitless attempts to overtake elephants, ailments, everything, even the bad weather, will be attributed to it during our stay in this place.

That does not prevent my men from eating and declaring it excellent, in which I share their opinion. It is, indeed, difficult to find more delicate flesh. The ant-eater is an animal essentially nocturnal: consequently, it is rarely seen, and its habits being very little known accounts for the superstitions. Few natives among those who frequent the woods have ever seen it. Do not think that all blacks are accustomed to the bush. The majority in these countries are farmers; they know merely the names of the rare animals which they have met in following the paths leading from their village to neighbouring villages; hunters among the population are the exception. A large number of my bearers did not know even the native names for all the antelopes which I sent to the camp. Every peasant in France is acquainted with the habits of hares and partridges. In Africa, where the large fauna keep in the thickets far from human beings, it



is necessary not only to have weapons, but also to track and to possess special knowledge, to capture and to know animals. There is hardly one hunter in each village; thus, out of the thirty bearers I have in camp, only four are capable of following a track. However, hunters or not, all love the life which we live here.

The end of March comes without noteworthy incident, but April is fairly eventful. We spend the morning of the 6th in following two rhinoceros which have made many peregrinations in the tall grass during the night. Pursuit of them is very tiring, as we cannot see four yards before us; and we never know at what moment we are to meet these savage animals.

We arrive very near our goal without having been charged, in spite of the almost continual shifting of the wind; but it does not follow that we shall finish our day thus, for, in the very middle of a dense thicket, we hear, a few yards off, a snorting and then a sniffling which we know well. In the midst of broken branches, overturned shrubs, and trampled grass, appears a huge mass which charges in our direction with the speed of a locomotive. We have only time to jump on one side. The animal passes, but so quickly that I cannot take aim, being hindered from doing so by a tree. It disappears in the grass. But in a few seconds we hear it returning on its steps, again seeking for that vitiated air, that smell of the enemy which has provoked its anger. It snorts and searches, turns and turns again like a gigantic pointer, with this

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difference that the rôles are reversed—we are the game which it is looking for. . . . This cursed vegetation is so thick that there is nothing to do but to wait; it is impossible to fire. I see the top of the grass wave and the shrubs lean over; I can guess, therefore, the position of the animal, but it remains invisible. However, its anger increases, and it continues to snort, making a noise somewhat similar to the grunting of a pig, only louder and deeper. It draws near. . . . From which way is the wind blowing? It is impossible to say, for the earth is wet and there is no dust.<sup>1</sup> . . . Time is pressing . . . Ah! it charges us a second time! . . . This time I see my animal a moment before it is upon us; although going at a gallop, it is not travelling over the ground so quickly as it was. We have jumped aside and everyone is hidden. . . . Stationed behind a tree I see it advance splendidly, and I decide to stop its passage. Doubtless smelling our fresh tracks, it slackens its pace when in front of us, and I take advantage of this to fire two shots, which make it swing round in a direction opposite to ours. Before disappearing through the smoke it receives still another express bullet in its cruppers.

But the battle is not over. At the same moment warning of another charge is given quite near to us; it is rhinoceros No. 2, which we have forgotten. Doubtless this is the female. He or she passes at a gallop five or six yards away, but not in our direction,

<sup>1</sup> When there is dust, a handful is taken up and thrown in the air; by which means one can tell the direction in which the wind is blowing.

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blowing furiously. Look out for a fresh attack! It is terrible to be in the midst of vegetation so thick that it prevents you being warned of danger except through hearing. I send Rodzani up a tree to inspect the surroundings. He sees the last-named rhinoceros already at a great distance, and states that it is the male which is making off, and that it must be the female we have shot. But we are not long in finding he is wrong, because blood—that precious indication for the hunter—makes the pursuit of the first rhinoceros, which I believe I have wounded seriously, easy for us. After going one hundred yards he must have lain down, but got on his feet again after a final effort, to fall once more a little farther away. He has fallen on his stomach, his four legs giving way under him. Rhinoceros often fall in this way, probably because they do not die on the spot, but continue to walk until their legs refuse to carry them.

It is really the male which we have killed. Here are his measurements: withers, 5 feet 2 inches; length from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail, 11 feet 1 inch; diameter of the forefoot, 8 inches; horns: front, 2 feet 3 inches; back, 1 foot  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The measurements of the female, which was not long in dying, are as follows: withers, 5 feet 4 inches; total length, 11 feet 2 inches; diameter of foot,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches; horns: front, 1 foot  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches; back, 1 foot 3 inches. It will be noticed that the female is larger than the male, a peculiarity which often happens.

Let us return to the male rhinoceros. After measuring and photographing the body I leave two

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men with it, and make ready to return to camp so as to send others. As I am going that way I cross the plain on to which the female rhinoceros charged after the firing of my two first shots. Fresh marks on the ground show us that it is the female which passed that way, and suddenly a snorting tells us that she has been waiting for an hour for the return of her companion. As at one side of us there is an open space seven or eight yards in extent, where the rocky ground has not allowed grass to grow, I run to take up a position there, so as to have, if possible, more room in front of me than during the preceding encounter. I take my 8-bore to please my men, who have just been reproaching me for not having used it, and place myself in the midst of the grass, motionless, on the side opposite to that on which I have heard the characteristic snorting of the unfortunate female. Here there are no trees in which one can shelter.

The animal is disquieted, but she has not smelt us. I hear her walking, and then, immediately afterwards, I see her coming towards us, but like an animal which goes about its own business. She is coming out to the right, will cross the open space, and in all probability will enter the grass again on our left. On she comes at a walk, and when seven or eight yards in front of me I fire. My men were persuaded that she would fall down dead on the spot. Msiambiri had even bet Rodzani a pot of moa (the beer of the country) that with the big rifle the rhinoceros would so fall. He loses, for upon receiving my bullet the animal throws herself upon us at full speed, making us

scatter at once in the grass; but she quickly falls down and dies almost at our feet. There is a warm discussion on the conditions of the bet, Msiambiri, who is always having his little joke, now pretending that he bet merely that the animal would not go so far as the other. Don't let us waste time in discussing: let us again take measurements and return to camp! The meat is not got in before half-past ten o'clock in the evening.

It is here that the panther<sup>1</sup> enters on the scene again. About half-past eleven o'clock, when everybody is asleep, she jumps on to the stockade and misses her footing; falling on to a thatched shelter, upon which she slips and to which she tries to cling, she topples over with the roof into the midst of the camp. This noise awakens everybody with a start, and seeing the animal in the light of the camp-fires my men think they are attacked, and utter various cries. But the apparition was only like that of a lightning flash; the panther springs on to the thatch and retraces her steps before we know what the matter is. I go to bed again. The reception she received probably frightened her sufficiently to prevent her returning at least this evening.

Towards morning she is heard roaring. Judging from her footprints on the moist earth, which make one almost think that twenty-five panthers have been there, she must have prowled the whole night in the neighbourhood. She is going to be our companion

<sup>1</sup> Panther, according to Cuvier; leopard, according to Linnæus. It is the same animal. See *Mes Grandes Chasses*, pp. 94, 95, and 96.

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for a great part of our stay here, until the day, in fact, I have prepared to play upon her a trick of my own.

The 7th passes without incident; on the 8th we follow the track of two male elephants, but they are too far ahead of us, and our trouble is for nothing. On the 9th we meet with the tracks of eight elephants, including two large males, and we overtake them after only two hours' march. I kill a big male. As to the other male and a female, I wound but lose them both after a day's pursuit. However, as the male seemed to me to be doomed, I send four men in search of it. They return without result, after passing the night out of doors.<sup>1</sup> The camp is transported near the dead elephant, passes two nights there, and then returns with the smoked meat. On the 13th I kill an old female which has twice charged Rodzani. I fire five bullets into the region of the heart, and she does not appear to be any the worse, but goes off quietly, hardly bleeding. We follow her at a distance, expecting every moment to see her fall. As she is going right towards the camp, it is so much labour saved. At last, at the end of more than half an hour, she decides to fall and die. She bled internally, and, her abdomen full of blood, travelled more than four miles!

On the 17th we meet with a herd of buffaloes, behind which I see three magnificent lions, which disappear before I am able to fire at them. We follow the lions for a time, but soon give them up to

<sup>1</sup> I found this elephant dead on the 26th, and extracted three of my bullets from it. I took its tusks, weighing about 35 lbs.

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as related in the preceding chapter, and at the end of the same month a lion wounded one of our men and destroyed much baggage, clothing, and utensils. It was at the opening of May that we had the fine "battue" I have just related, which almost assumed the proportions of a massacre. Finally, during May I experienced, on a certain night, a series of vicissitudes which I shall relate farther on. On the other hand, sometimes you may remain four or five months in regions where lions abound without even meeting one although you beat the bush the whole day and hear them at night. It is a matter of chance.

The expedition continues its studies and exploration to the west of the Kapoche, a region which is almost destitute of water during the dry season, and, consequently, little frequented by fauna. Our stay there is of short duration. We then go to the southwest, across a very mountainous region where game is rare, and we move to the west of Undi (of sad memory), about five days' march from Mbazi Mountain.<sup>1</sup> I meet there with the tracks of many rhinoceros, and pitch my camp for a few days to try my luck. The only other animals are a few roan antelopes. This country is very uneven, consequently very fatiguing; there are ravines, river-beds, with perpendicular banks, hillocks, hills, and mountains to wind round or to climb, making you think that you are hunting chamois or bears rather than rhinoceros. The rhinoceros, however, are fond of

<sup>1</sup> See *Mes Grandes Chasses*, pp. 134, 135, etc.

these wild and tranquil places, and, if they do not venture on to the mountainous parts, at least they frequent the hillocks whose stony soil, whether it be sparsely or thickly covered with vegetation, suits them equally well.

For several days we follow, without any result whatever, rhinoceros' tracks made during the night; these animals continue their march in the morning because of the cloudy, rainy weather, describing interminable circumvolutions and incessant detours. On account of its wandering habits, its continual passing to and fro, the rhinoceros has been styled by the natives by the name of *pembere*, a word which comes from the verb *kupembera*—that is, “to turn.” Having noticed that several tracks finish almost regularly in the direction of a range of very wooded hills situated two hours' distant to the north of our camp, we pass a night there so as to be on the spot at daybreak. Setting off in the morning we soon find fresh footprints, which we follow for half an hour and then abandon to follow others which we see on the way, belonging to an animal a little larger than ours. Happy inspiration! In a minute we discover the fresh, unbroken dung of a rhinoceros:<sup>1</sup> when the dung is found unbroken the animal cannot be far off, his habit being never to leave the places where he has deposited excrement without returning there a short time afterwards to scatter it in every direction with his horn. Why does he

<sup>1</sup> This dung resembles that of a horse, but it is much larger, like that of the hippopotamus and elephant.



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do this? Through instinct of self-preservation and because he knows that these traces left behind him make known his presence? I am totally ignorant. The fact remains that he never neglects to perform this little act. Sometimes he does not do it at the very time, he walks about in the neighbourhood; but he returns invariably to the place where he has left these traces and never leaves it until he has crushed them.<sup>1</sup>

As the rhinoceros cannot be far away, I consider it prudent to be on my guard. I believe, in fact, that the rhinoceros is the only animal which rushes at man without provocation. According to certain hunters, it only "seems to rush at you": it does not rush at you, they say: "it tries simply to run away in any direction in its fright caused by your smell." That is playing with words. Nobody has ever been able to analyse the sensations of a rhinoceros at the psychological moment when he charges; but I have noticed several times that when a rhinoceros has scented you, he beats the bush around you like a pointer, and makes for you as soon as he has got wind of you. During our stay at Niarugwe Camp a rhinoceros charged us twice consecutively. Sometimes also, it is true, the animal has gone off without charging; but that is the exception.<sup>2</sup>

We shall have to return to the habits of this strange animal, and those of other denizens of the forest; but

<sup>1</sup> The natives say that the animal is so vicious that it even gets into a rage with its own dung.

<sup>2</sup> That was the opinion of Sir Samuel Baker. See *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia*, small edition, p. 246.

I have said enough to make it clear why, seeing the unbroken rhinoceros' dung on the ground, we thought that a meeting with the animal was imminent. It is well we are on guard, for five minutes have not elapsed before a well-known snorting is heard; but it is impossible to know whence it comes. Kam-bombe, who climbs up a tree, has no sooner looked around and fixed his eyes upon something, than there comes over his face that nervous expression which I know, and he slides down in haste with the words, "Quick, this way!"

The rhinoceros is behind us! Through extraordinary luck he has not yet scented us, though we believe the wind to be in our faces. We hasten to change our position to a place seven or eight yards on one side. The spot is not much sheltered: there are few trees, but many thick bushes, similar in appearance to oleanders, clustered one against the other. Some of these bushes reach to our waist; but others are taller, and here and there block out the view. Within a radius of ten yards these bushes form a curtain, and (this is one of the peculiarities of the African bush) one can see nothing beyond. This kind of vegetation is very favourable for tracking an antelope, but it is not very suitable with a rhinoceros. Its height is great, it is true; but it holds its head low down, and its vital parts are a yard from the ground.

The dung is on our left on a small empty space, and, consequently, between us and its owner. My intention is not to fire immediately the animal appears. I want to watch attentively how it proceeds, for I

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believe that the purpose for which it has returned is to occupy its attention, and that it will give us a little example of its habits. The wind is now in our favour. I must add that the ground is stony, and slightly slopes towards the side whence the animal is coming. I load the 303 with two solid bullets, lest I shall have to shoot at the head ; Express No. 1 with solid bullets will do for the body. When this is done we wait hidden behind a bush.

The rhinoceros has not scented us : otherwise, in all probability, it would have charged. The snorting we heard is not repeated. It was very fortunate it snorted at all, because it warned us, and although the sight of dung already announced its return, it was a good thing to know the exact moment. The animal is a long time in appearing: it eats quietly, and draws near little by little. At one moment its back appears ten yards away. . . . One cannot imagine the agreeable emotion which a hunter feels in thus seeing a dangerous animal approach without suspicion.

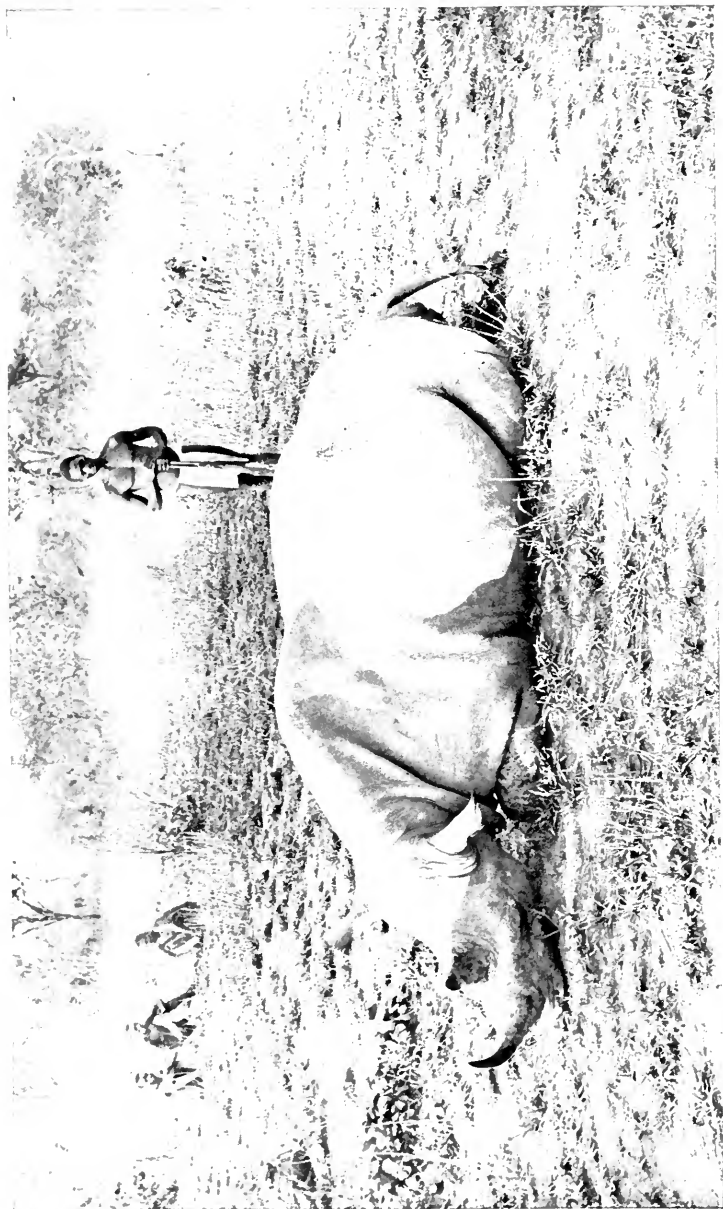
The head is invisible; however, at a certain moment, it is raised with a distrustful air, and remains motionless. The animal then snorts, continues on its way, and again snorts, showing that it has smelt that we have been there, but has not yet got wind of us. If only it will not take to flight, if only it will not move about too much, and thus enable me to shoot with certainty! The idea occurs to me to get in front of it in order to hasten the end ; but my men restrain me, as the rhinoceros continues on its way and draws near. Never have I seen the terrible animal so well as on

this day. It scratches the earth with its right foot, and with two or three blows with its horn, which are given automatically and with the regularity of a pick-axe, unearths roots, which its prehensile lips tear up and its teeth crush; its ears move with its jaw, and its small tail swings to the right and left, with the object, on the face of it useless, of driving away the flies. On its back, neck, and flanks, are insectivorous birds which call out, fly, run, and cling like magpies, in search of the many insects which are on the thick skin of the pachyderm. The presence of these birds is the most annoying thing which can happen to me: if one of them flies away or another arrives, we shall be discovered; a cry of danger from one will cause all the others to take to flight, and perhaps also the rhinoceros. So, without further delay, and renouncing the hope of seeing the manner in which it scatters its dung, I raise my Express slowly and aim at the heart. . . . The birds fly away at the report, and with a long neigh, almost a whistle of pain, the rhinoceros mounts the slope of the hill right of the wind at full gallop, without leaving me time to place my second bullet. For some seconds we hear it breaking down the bushes which it encounters, while the stony ground resounds under its feet. As usual, we follow its track immediately. I see soon that, in spite of all my care, I have missed the heart, the blood which we find being fairly abundant, but frothy, which shows that it comes from the lungs. Night comes before we have overtaken our wounded animal. We camp on the very spot where

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the pursuit is stopped, near a pool of rain-water, and we decide to continue our search at dawn next day. The night is passed with the small comfort which can be obtained from a saucepan, a blanket, and a handful of rice, things which are inseparable from long elephant hunts. And, as there are no lions to be feared, and it is late when we abandon the pursuit, we simply lie down under a tree in the midst of the bush, after lighting fires, which we keep up all night. That is the usual way of resting in these regions when on a journey: encampments with stockades are only established in dangerous countries where an attack is feared, if wild animals are to be dreaded, or if one is going to make a stay sufficiently long to merit the trouble of pitching it—that is, four or five days at the least.

Dawn next day found us on the track of the rhinoceros, and it was not until about nine o'clock in the morning that we discovered its body on the edge of a pool. It must have died on the previous evening almost at the time we were obliged to stop. Its horns were worn out, and its size was ordinary: so, considering the labour it had cost me, I was only half satisfied with my conquest. Rhinoceros in the full force of their strength have horns in perfect state because they grow quicker than they wear away; but when old age begins, the growth of the horns appears to stop, and they grow shorter and shorter with time. I have killed a very big old female rhinoceros whose horns were completely worn out and only a few inches



SPORT IN THE RHINOCEROS COUNTRY.

The moon rises. Some antelopes which come to drink take to flight, doubtless having scented the redoubtable personage who is near to them. The night passes without further incident. Every now and then the lion feebly moans, thrilling us with emotions until morning; about dawn we cease to hear it.

At daybreak my men try in vain to discover the whereabouts of the lion from the top of the ant-hill, and, as soon as it is full daylight, we leave our post, and, winding round the elevation, advance with precaution to a small tree into which Kambombe immediately climbs, to report to us that the lion is lying against a bush twenty yards away. He can only see its tail and hind paws; nothing moves. I make a detour, and, stifling the noise of my feet, get within thirty yards of the animal. Its head is hidden, but I see the remainder of its body lying on its right side. So, hiding myself behind a thicket, I use my field-glass to see if its flank rises and falls, but two minutes pass without my observing any movement. I throw a clod of earth near the animal, my weapon ready to bring to my shoulder if it rises. But it will never rise again: the lion is stone dead.

We draw near, and I have the pleasure of looking at a magnificent maneless lion stretched in a pool of blood. The bullet has broken the spinal column, or at least must have injured it sufficiently to make it snap when the animal took a few steps; the top of the lungs is shattered, as well as part of the liver. There is no trace of the second shot.

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When finishing our examination we see a group of men in the distance, and find they are from the camp. In spite of the distance, the night has been so silent that they were able to hear the gun-shots, and Bertrand has sent to see what news there is. This reinforcement arrives timeously, and the lion is soon brought to the camp. Two hours afterwards its skin, carefully treated, is stretched on steel pegs in the sun.<sup>1</sup> Its skull is buried so as to get rid of the flesh; the carcase, after the examination of the stomach, which contained zebra, is taken a long distance from the camp and left to the vultures.

Two or three fruitless nights follow that which I have just related. One evening the rhinoceros approaches us at the north pool, round which it promenades, and, after having excited us to hope, makes off without drinking. Its suspicions were stronger than its thirst. As it is moonlight, I have a good mind to go in pursuit; but the prospect of being charged, even in the soft and poetic light of the moon, makes me renounce the idea, and I let it go. The rhinoceros makes off quietly, now and then sniffing with distrust, as much as to say, "Emphatically this place does not please me!" We have all our night's trouble for nothing.

Doubtless, it was the morning tracks of our men which this animal had scented. One has to avoid

<sup>1</sup> At the end of this book I give, for the benefit of hunter-naturalists, some indications on the manner of preparing animals' skins and other trophies.



walking round a pool where a rhinoceros is awaited : its sense of smell is keen. So it was that my "information brigade" had orders to arrive in single file and to enter the water, making a circuit of the pool, and examining the edge with their feet in mud the whole time. They came out at the same point they had entered and followed the same path by which they had come, so as to leave only one trace of their passage.

One evening we took up our position at the small south lake, which is very long and narrow. To be within equal distance of all parts of it, we had to place ourselves in the middle of one of the long sides, profiting by an ant-hill which was there. This position presented the serious disadvantage of allowing us to be scented by everything which would come to our left. To possess a means of retreat in case of a charge, we made steps at the foot of the ant-hill so as to get down easily to the water, because the edge of this side of the pool, which it overhangs by nearly two yards, was perpendicular. Facing us, on the other side, a gentle sloping bank led to a plain devoid of obstacles, with the exception of a few clumps of bushes scattered here and there. In case of danger we had to let ourselves down into the water, cross it, and make off over the plain, in front of which, at a distance of 150 yards, was a large tree in the low branches of which we could take refuge. The rhinoceros, being unable to jump over two yards of water, would be obliged to walk round the pool; which would give us a start. This little

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plan had been made by Rodzani at our installation. We were there five or six nights without anything happening. The few animals which had broken the monotony of our waiting — buffaloes and antelopes for the most part — had gone down to the water on the side which was not steep. These animals do not like to descend a steep slope to drink, because it prevents them, when at the bottom, from seeing the surroundings, and they fear surprises. But you must always beware of the rhinoceros, and we had done well, as will be seen, not to trust to chance.

The evening, then, as I have just said, we take up our position. The first hour passes very quietly. Though there is no moon, the night is very clear, and the sky is sown with stars. Two hundred yards behind us is the dry bed of a river strewn with dry leaves, which have constituted a precious means of warning to us. For the last four days our pachyderm has not paid the shortest visit to these regions. This silence, this monotony of waiting, and my immobility produce a certain torpidness in me; I have the greatest difficulty in the world to keep awake; I rub my head and drink water, so as not to fall asleep. My men, silent as statues as usual, listen, and vigilantly keep their eyes open. From time to time they nudge me with their elbows to point out something which attracts their attention. I take my glass, and by the animal's gait, its method of proceeding, rather than by direct vision, I recognise it. Sometimes it is a hyena, which is recognisable by its

sloping cruppers, and also by its lapping; sometimes an antelope, advancing without the least noise, like a shadow, remaining motionless for several minutes before resuming its walk. Then everything disappears, and calm reigns once more. One of my greatest privations on these night-watches is not to be able to smoke. Ah! the hours would be less long if one could pass part of the time that way; but we smell quite enough already to animals, and also, it appears, to Chinese, without the still stronger emanations of tobacco smoke.

Suddenly, about eleven o'clock, we have plain proof that we give off an aroma very disagreeable to the delicate nose of certain wild beasts. We hear at first a sound of sweeping in the dry leaves of the river-bed behind us. . . . Fully awake, with all my presence of mind about me, I listen with keen emotion, for there indeed is the step of a large animal. . . . It crosses, then comes out on our left, and immediately a snort as powerful as a jet of steam from a locomotive resounds in the silence of the night. . . . We recognise the angry bicornis for which we have come to look; but, to tell the truth, we expected it from another quarter. . . . We ask ourselves, with a feeling of anxiety, which may well be imagined, whether or not we have been scented. . . . In a few seconds we shall be quite certain about that. . . .

In fact, the approach of a furious gallop, an intermittent noise as of a small trumpet, and of heavy breathing, a fracas of broken bushes, tell us that not a moment is to be lost, and we decamp by our back

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door,—that is, we hastily climb down the embankment, plunge into the water up to the stomach, reach the other bank by large strides, and scamper over the plain at the moment our assailant reaches the ant-hill mad with rage, blowing and snorting like a steam-engine. We stop a few steps from the protecting tree to listen and to look round with wide-open eyes. We must make a very funny picture with our small packages; one of my men carries my cape, water-bottle, and electric battery; the other, like myself, has a rifle in each hand. Needless to say, we are ready to throw down everything which impedes us; but danger is not imminent for the moment, for upon reaching our ant-hill the rhinoceros must have lost our scent. Where is the animal? That is what we must know without delay, and only our ears can tell us.

Another snort and the noise of branches inform us that it is skirting the pool to the right of our watching-place. . . . We must come to a decision without a moment's delay. We decide to return immediately to our ant-hill, because the animal cannot scent us now: only, it has stopped perhaps, and is on its guard: so we must not make a noise. Consequently, we judge it wise not to cross the water, but to make a circuit of the pool in the direction opposite to that taken by the rhinoceros, in order to reach the ant-hill on the left. We put this idea into execution without accident. Hardly have we returned to the place where we sat than we hear the pachyderm, which has also passed round the pool, but the opposite way,

snorting on the plain which we have just left. . . . A few minutes longer and we should have met it again! My field-glass shows me only a gray, very indistinct shadow which advances over the plain, but too far away, owing to the darkness, to be fired at. . . . The only thing to do is to wait. . . . During the space of half an hour the animal makes us experience many emotions: irritated beyond measure, it comes and goes, returns on its steps, always invisible and perpetually snorting. At one time it must have arrived near the tree at the place we stopped to listen, because it breathes with still more anger and precipitation. My men say, "It isn't a rhinoceros, it is a steamer," pronouncing the last word *stima*. In fact, it is a whistling, blowing, and snorting machine, which beats the neighbourhood, and looks for us in all places where its little brain suspects us. We fear above all that it will return on the left, and will again charge us. This little game may be allowable in open daylight, but in the very middle of the night, when you can hardly see to direct your steps, playing at hide-and-seek with an angry rhinoceros is a pastime which I do not recommend to people with delicate nerves. Your incapacity to see exasperates you beyond measure; you start at the slightest crack or sound, and at last your ear even deceives you as to the real position of the animal which you hear.

The noise ceases at last, and we believe that the rhinoceros has gone.<sup>1</sup> More than half an hour passes.

<sup>1</sup> The next day I saw that the rhinoceros had not left the plain for

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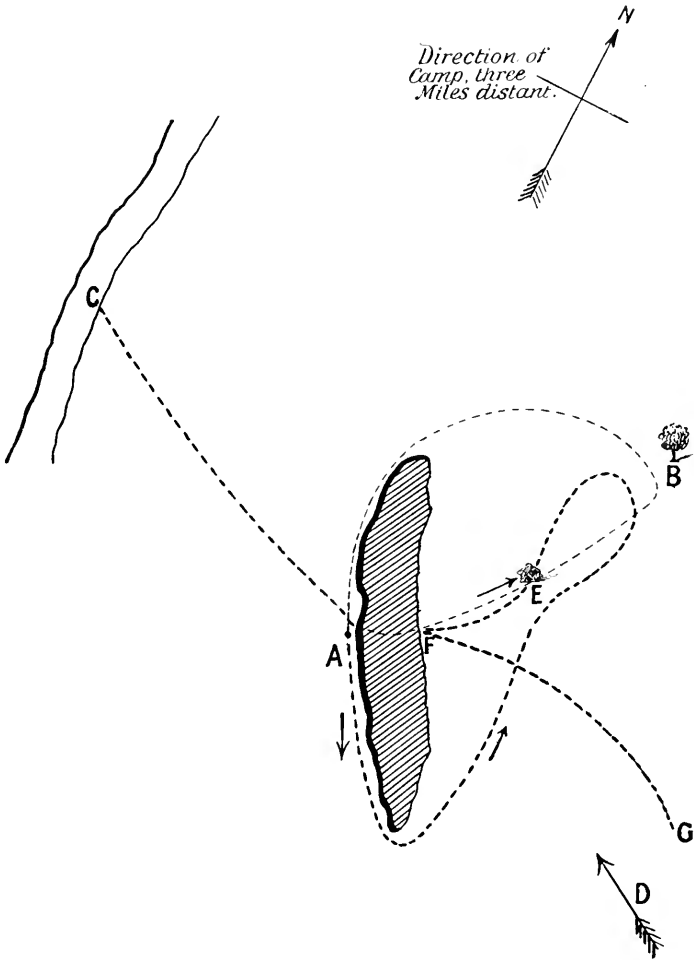
I am considering the night as wasted, and our encounter as bound to have no other result, when my men and I suddenly see a shadow coming straight towards us from the other side of the water, and I recognise it to be the rhinoceros, slowly and noiselessly walking along. If I were not acquainted with the animal's habits I should think it saw us and was going to cross the water; but its quiet air and raised head show absence of suspicion; its mistrust is set at rest, and it is coming simply to drink. There it is at the edge of the water, where it stops facing us, listening and appearing so plainly to look at us that I cannot prevent muttering to my men, "It sees us!" "No, no, it doesn't see us; it is going down to drink. Wait until it is at the water's edge," they whisper in my ear. But a final suspicion comes over it; it stops at the edge and turns to look behind it, presenting its entire profile as a mark for my rifle. Distinguishing it clearly, I wish to profit by its position, and without using the reflector take good aim at its shoulder, firing two shots with the Express, one after the other. . . . We hear the violent impact of the bullets.

Hardly has the report rang out than the noise of a gallop dies away in the plain, and the usual questions are exchanged between us, "Have I missed or slightly wounded it?" "Oh no; your bullets went home, and it did not utter a cry. We shall find

an instant; it had stood motionless in the middle against a thicket, doubtless waiting until some noise or breath of wind informed it of our movements.



A NIGHT-WATCH: RHINOCEROS AT THE EDGE OF THE SOUTH POOL.



RHINOCEROS-HUNTING AT NIGHT—THE SMALL SOUTH POOL.

A, Our night-watch ; B, Isolated tree ; C, Dry bed of river ; D, Direction of wind ; E, Bushes ; ..... Path followed by hunters ; - - - - - Path followed by rhinoceros ; F, Spot where it was shot ; G, Spot where it was found dead in the morning.



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it perhaps a long distance away to-morrow. We shall know the truth when it is daylight."

When daylight comes! . . . That is the only answer to the uncertainty of the result of these nocturnal hunts when your weapon is hesitating, your eye indecisive, and you lack confidence. Those hours separating you from sunrise appear interminable.

At daylight we start on the trail, on which there are here and there spots of blood, followed by spirts and large clots. When we see that "the heart laughs," as the natives express joy, and victory is almost certain. Two hundred yards from the pool, in fact, the rhinoceros is found to have fallen flat on its stomach with its four legs bent under it. It is the large rhinoceros reported by the research brigade — a female animal with a very fine pair of horns. One of the bullets pierced the heart, the other passed a little above the lungs; and both went right through the animal, stopping at the other side under the skin, where they formed protuberances.<sup>1</sup>

The death of a rhinoceros always brings joy to the camp. Its feet and heart, like those of the elephant, are almost the only parts which a European can eat; the rest is hard and at the most only good for making *pot-au-feu* or biltong for the natives.

<sup>1</sup> These bullets, and those with which I have killed my principal victims, I extracted from the body and preserved in a small collection which I look upon with a certain pride. Flattened, crushed, twisted, and deformed, my "celebrated bullets," as I call them, bear labels recalling their histories.

But as things are at present nothing can be done. It is as useless to try to capture elephants with rifle-shots as it is to catch flies with vinegar.

### RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*)

RHINOCEROS.—Its gradual disappearance—Its last places of refuge—Supposed age—Signs by which one can recognise it—Size of adults—Measurement of horns—Horns of the young—Use of the horns—Torn ears—Degree of acuteness of senses—Favourite places and plants—Habits—Method of sleeping—Accidents caused by rhinoceros.

I said just now that the African elephant is bound to disappear in a century or so if we continue to shoot it. The rhinoceros is much nearer extinction; it has one foot in the grave! Its congener, the *Simus*, has already disappeared; the bicorn will do the same by virtue of that law of nature which reduces the size of men and animals as time proceeds, causing insensibly to disappear from our planet giants which existed in large numbers during the tertiary, glacial, and quaternary periods.

Apart from its destruction by man, the causes of the gradual disappearance of the rhinoceros seem to me to be its slowness in breeding and its fierce habits, which do not accord with the encroachment of human populations, for no sooner is a country inhabited than it leaves it. Certainly a large number of rhinoceros were very uselessly sacrificed formerly. Hundreds were killed in a few months, at various intervals, between 1824 and 1879 by expeditions in South Africa, and from 1880 to 1890 in Eastern Africa. Everywhere the natives wage war upon it with the simple object of procuring food, and there is nothing that some will not do to get this kind of flesh. Many thousands of elephants and rhinoceros must have been killed all over the continent. Thus the places where it is still found can be counted almost on the fingers of one hand. These are the eastern boundary

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of the province of Angola, on the Zambesi; the south as far as Victoria Falls, and the north as far as Barotse; German East Africa and British East Africa, the north of Victoria Nyanza, and the Upper Nile; in short, the heart of Africa has become their last resort.

I cannot say that the rhinoceros personifies beauty, grace, or elegance; but such as it is, and although I do not believe it is capable of serving any purpose whatever from the point of view of colonisation, it is an interesting animal. Moreover, it is not particularly harmful. It charges the hunter when it scents him, but that is because he has followed it into its distant retreats. Never does it lay waste cultivated lands in the same way as do the elephant, hippopotamus, and wart-hog; on the contrary, it flees places inhabited by natives.

Its disappearance would do no harm to anybody; but it is always sad to see powerful animals annihilated by man.

In the preceding chapters I have mentioned some of the habits of the rhinoceros. Here I am going to make a few supplementary remarks about this strange animal, which lives with difficulty in temperate countries, and the habits of which are so little known.

The age it can reach will probably never be determined; but, judging from the teeth, as in the case of the horse, I think it must live a very long time.

The molars are intact, or worn, as the case may be, though the size and appearance of the animals' bodies do not change. The horns also stop growing at a certain time, and, as the animal continues to use them when feeding, they end by becoming shortened and injured. And with age comes thinness; its sides become hollow; its viciousness increases. Age can be determined, therefore, by these three indications: condition of the molars, exterior dilapidation, bad condition and smallness of horns owing to usage. To fix an approximate age, I should think that the animal hardly ever exceeds one hundred years.

The average size of an adult male is 5 feet 6 inches ; an adult female is generally a little larger. Its total length, from the tip of its nose to the root of its tail, is, on an average, 11 feet 3 inches. As to the horns, they reach very different dimensions in animals in the full force of their maturity ; but those of the male are always much longer and thicker than those of the female. The first horn (that which is above the nose) may measure, on an average, 1 foot 6 inches ; the second one is sometimes as long, although more often it is only from 6 to 10 inches.

I have rarely seen female rhinoceros with their young, and I cannot express an opinion on the question of breeding. The only thing I know is that the young inherit the ugliness of their parents, and that they do not begin to have horns on their noses until they have finished sucking. The young run very well, following their parents in their rapid gallop without difficulty.

The horn on the nose is used both as a weapon of defence and as a pickaxe. When charging, the rhinoceros always has its head very low, consequently its horn is almost horizontal ; at the moment of striking it raises its head violently and generally strikes upwards. The animal uses its horn for unearthing roots, which compose a great part of its food, seizing and dragging them up afterwards with its slightly prehensile upper lip. The second horn serves it little or not at all, being situated too far back to touch the ground or to strike with ease.

I do not know whether rhinoceros often fight among themselves, or how they act if they do ; but I have often killed animals which had torn ears, as though they had bitten each other. This hypothesis is hardly admissible, since the animals have neither canine nor front teeth. But one must not think, either, that these marks are made by other animals ; because, though the rhinoceros when young may run some danger, no animal attacks it when it is an adult. I confine myself, therefore, to

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mentioning what I have noticed without attempting an explanation.

The rhinoceros' sense of smell is extremely keen, almost as much so as that of the elephant. As with the latter, also, its eye and ear are imperfect. The animal trots and gallops with extraordinary swiftness, but its usual gait is a slow walk, always with lowered head.

It is fond of dark impenetrable thickets, and, during the dry season, when the grass is burnt, it passes the whole day there. When the grass is very long, it is common to meet it on the plains in the shadow of large trees. At nightfall it sets off in search of food, and generally reaches water, as I have stated in Chapter X., either about ten o'clock in the evening or before daybreak in the morning, save exceptions. Strictly speaking, it does not travel; but it is, nevertheless, a great walker. When it has chosen a district it does not generally leave it; there it has two or three favourite spots, often a long distance apart, where it goes in the morning to rest, after having covered sometimes thirteen miles during the night in marches and counter-marches. It often remains outside the whole day in cloudy and rainy weather, and, as it is very suspicious, the presence of men in its vicinity is sufficient to make it totally change its habits.

Rhinoceros are generally alone or in pairs. They are fond of roots, cacti of all sorts, and certain other plants; they do not eat much straw. They take great pleasure after drinking in wallowing in mud, with which they cover themselves from head to foot.

Insectivorous birds rid them of many of their parasites while they are walking about in the daytime. During the hot hours of the day the pachyderm lies down on its side like a horse, and goes to sleep with its nose to the wind. When its sleep is heavy, you often see a white froth around its mouth. At that moment you can, by exercising infinite precautions, and on condition that the

wind is in your favour, draw near and kill it point-blank. But it is a dangerous experiment.

The rhinoceros ranks after the elephant as the largest animal, and its approach at night or in the daytime is always very impressive. The number of people who have been forced to climb into trees, in positions sometimes comical, by a charging rhinoceros is considerable. Although accidents are less frequent than with the elephant, they do often occur with an animal so irascible.

### LION (*Felis leo*)

The LION.—Only one species—Difference between the wild animal and the menagerie specimen—Measurements and weight of an adult—Colour of the skin—Legends about the lion—Their mistrustfulness—Various ways of dealing with a lion—Signs of anger—The charge—Attempts to intimidate—Hours at which they roar—Nocturnal fights—The lion's enemies—Its lairs—Lioness's period of gestation—Skin of the cubs—Troops of lions.

I will here complete in a few words what the preceding chapters have said on the habits of the lion. Once more let me repeat that there is in my opinion, and in that of all hunters of any experience, *only one species of lion*. The lion's coat changes colour or thickness according to its environment. That of the plateaus of Atlas and Kilimandjaro, at an altitude of 13,000 feet, must naturally have a thicker coat than that which inhabits the sandy plains of the equatorial regions; the mane which catches in thorny thickets is not so thick as that of the animal which lives on grassy plains; but, yellow or brown, with or without mane, it is the same animal. At the Cape, at Tanganyika, and in the country of the Somalis, you will find adult lions of absolutely the same species, magnificent animals, of which you can obtain but a poor idea from the specimens in menageries.