

PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA

THE HISTORY,
SCENERY, & GREAT GAME OF
MANICA AND SOFALA
BY R. C. F. MAUGHAM

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FOR THE DISTRICTS OF MOZAMBIQUE AND
ZAMBEZIA, AND FOR THE TERRITORY OF
MANICA AND SOFALA

WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER VIII

ELEPHANT (*continued*)—RHINOCEROS

I AM of opinion that the shooting season of this part of Africa, by which term is usually understood the period between the winter month of June and the end of November, is quite the most unfavourable for elephant hunting of any portion of the year. My own observations, added to the statements made to me by natives, convince me that the elephants, which in the winter months I have mentioned withdraw into the dense, waterless fastnesses of the mountain ranges, only re-descend into the more accessible plains after the first rains of early December. They do, it is true, make descents from time to time when various fruits ripen, and wander through the lower forest country as far north as Chupanga ; but these visits are only flying ones. The time of year when the herds really wander far and wide is undoubtedly the height of the rainy season, and, it may be, they select these months by reason of the comparative immunity from interference which the climatic conditions assure them. To hunt elephants, or, indeed, anything else at that time of year, when such of the ground as is not quagmire is for the most part inundated ; when the moist, heated atmosphere, heavy with dangerous miasmatic exhalations,

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simply reeks with malaria, would be to court almost certain and serious illness if nothing worse; but, putting aside the consideration of the season, for any person endowed with average health and activity, and really keen on this description of sport, sufficient excitement may be obtained in the healthy winter weather if he be not discouraged by the first few failures which, to the inexperienced, are almost inevitable.

The main difficulty consists in the fact that during the winter the ground is so hard as to make tracking a task of difficulty, while the brittle, crackling leaves are a cause of much embarrassment and disappointment to the hunter. Want of water is also occasionally felt at this time of year, as is the scarcity of cereal food for the native carriers, which the villagers in some localities usually exhaust long before it is time to get one's expedition together.

In September last I had the good fortune, whilst travelling through the northern portion of this territory, to bag two large elephants, and to fall in, from first to last, with a considerable number of herds of these interesting animals.

Marching one morning about 7 a.m., between Mana-muri and Tambula's, through fairly open country containing the isolated jungle belts to which I have referred elsewhere, fairly high grass, and scattered groups of *Hyphæne* palms, the footprints of an apparently large elephant bull were crossed soon after sunrise. As in the case of my tuskless cow, of which I was not unmindful, I halted the carriers, and, accompanied by my two hunters,

Lenço and Patrinka, carrying the '303 and the double 8-bore, we laid ourselves out on the spoor. Rain had fallen lightly during the night, a circumstance which greatly facilitated tracking, and, more important still if possible, had softened the fallen leaves so that they no longer crackled beneath one's feet. Plunging into the saturated undergrowth we were soon wetted through, but, regardless of this, we speedily began to overhaul our beast, which Lenço (than whom there exists no steadier or more enthusiastic tracker) assured me in a hoarse whisper was only actually a few minutes ahead of us. We proceeded thus, however, for over an hour, crossing one stream in no less than three different places backwards and forwards, when, half-way through a grass patch of fairly considerable height, and advancing with the utmost caution, I suddenly espied the huge dorsal ridge of a large elephant 15 or 20 yards to our left. He had evidently heard but not winded us, for he was standing with extended ears and raised trunk looking backward suspiciously in our direction. A few yards to our right stood a high ant-heap, topped with bamboos and willow-like "kala-chulu," and for this we noiselessly made. On reaching it I ascended a few feet, which gave me a clear view of the bull's right flank and head, from the position of which I surmised that he had turned slightly away while we retreated to the ant-heap. I could see one moderate-sized, nicely curved tusk, but the other appeared to be hidden by the grass in which he was standing. It was really an awkward shot, as, from his angle, I saw that a bullet aimed at the temple

would probably rake too far forward to touch the brain; however, I resolved to try it, and, aiming for the hindmost edge of the depression behind his eye, fired with the .303. With a loud, shrill trumpet, and shaking his massive head, he went off through the grass at a great rate, and, snatching the 8-bore, I was just in time to give him the right barrel in the flank as he disappeared round the corner of the bamboos behind which we were standing. He roared loudly as the heavy 1,164-grain bullet propelled by 10 drachms of black powder struck him, but it appeared to have only the effect of increasing his speed. We hastily descended, and forcing our way through the intervening grass, took up the spoor of the fleeing monster. It was soon evident that the second shot he had received from the heavy rifle had inflicted a severe wound, as quantities of blood, evidently thrown from his trunk, lay thickly along the track. After about half a mile he slowed down to a walk, and zig-zagging groggily along for some distance, at length, to my relief, turned up wind, and made his way through an open belt of isolated palm thickets. Suddenly we came upon him standing on the edge of the palms, looking back very suspiciously, the great ears out-thrust and the waving trunk unceasingly searching for some taint in the air. I noiselessly crawled up to within a distance of about 20 yards and again tried the .303, but as I pulled the trigger he must have moved slightly forward, for the only effect of the shot was to make him stumble and draw another shrill trumpet from him. I therefore discarded the Lee-Metford, and seizing



ELEPHANT SHOT BY THE AUTHOR IN CHERINGOMA.

the double 8-bore, ran in and fired at the extreme edge of the great ear as it lay over the point of the shoulder. He now shook his head violently until his ears rattled, making at the same time a querulous noise in his trunk, whereupon I gave him the second barrel in the same place, which brought him down with a crash.

On examination I found to my great disappointment that the left tusk had been diseased, was malformed, and had broken in the animal's fall into three pieces. The right one, however, was short and thick, almost a perfect semi-circle, and a little under 30 lb. in weight. His measurements were as follows: Height to summit of shoulder, 10 ft. 9 in.; tip of trunk to tip of tail, 23 ft. 1 in.; length of ear, 4 ft. 9 in.; circumference of right fore-foot, 4 ft. 1 in. It was impossible to measure his girth with entire accuracy, but I believe it to have been about 18 ft., or possibly a little over. This was a very large animal, and must have had a height of fully 12 ft., measured to the top of his head, but, large as he was, I feel sure that I have seen still larger.

The following day, leaving the camp at dawn and accompanied by several men in addition to my regular hunters, I went in search of a small herd of elephants which one of my people, who had been out to look for villages for the purpose of exchanging a portion of the meat of the fallen bull for flour, stated he had seen in the distance the preceding evening.

It was several hours before I found anything sufficiently fresh to be promising, but at length we

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cut the spoor of a moderate-sized herd which had passed two or three hours before, moving in a south-westerly direction towards the Cheringoma Range.

I never remember seeing more beautiful country than that through which, for some distance, we followed them. It reminded one of a vast park. The soil, poor and sandy, produced for the most part a low, turf-like grass which, added to the positively symmetrical patches of isolated jungle, gave one the impression of an effect produced by artificial means. Towards noon, however, we re-entered continuous forest, and here it was evident we were closing up with our game. Lenço led, carrying the Lee-Metford, I followed, Patrinka bringing up the rear with the double 8-bore, followed at a long distance by the remainder of the men.

As we advanced in this order, I suddenly saw Lenço swerve to the left and crouch, an example which we immediately followed.

Not seeing anything, I whispered, "Wa-ona ninji" (What do you see?). "Nkalamu" (Lion), he replied, and, raising ourselves slightly, he pointed out to me a large male lion crouching or lying, it was impossible to distinguish which, behind a thin screen of leafless bushes through which the outline of the splendid form was plainly visible.

I reached for the '308, at the same time drawing from my belt two cartridges with hollow-pointed bullets to replace the nickel-covered solids which the weapon contained. To my surprise and wrath Lenço absolutely refused to hand it over.

"Ndi-pase mfuti" (Give me the gun), I reiterated

threateningly in a hoarse whisper, shaking him by the arm.

“Sina-funa, mu-nadzatamangisa nzo” (I will not, you will drive away the elephants), was the resolute reply.

I was so astounded by this unlooked for attitude on the part of my trusted henchman that, for the moment, I could not make up my mind whether to snatch the weapon from him, kill the lion and chance the report reaching the herd, or tamely submit to my hunter's impertinence, when the lion considerably solved the question for me by slinking into the brushwood and disappearing from view.

Savagely angry as I felt with Lenço for his obstinacy and disobedience, which had assuredly cost me a handsome skin, I could not but feel that he was in the right, for whosoever, following elephants, fires upon other game shall assuredly return to camp empty-handed.

So the path was resumed, not without a wistful glance in the direction of the lion's line of retreat.

Suddenly the faint crash of a distant down-torn branch was heard far away to the right, and, upon testing the wind, we found that as it was blowing almost across our front from the left, an immediate détour to the right was imperative—as it was we were in imminent danger of discovery, so, to make assurance doubly sure, I insisted in making a backward curve of considerable distance. At last, after several checks and much uncertainty, coming suddenly out of a high grass patch through which our progress was greatly facilitated by its having been trodden down in all directions by a bewildered-

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ing maze of gigantic footsteps, I saw three elephants advancing leisurely towards us several hundred yards away, and approaching in such a way that it was evident they intended to enter a dense jungle consisting of an outer fringe of high marula trees and thick brushwood which skirted our grass patch a little to the right. It was thus evident that we had passed completely behind the herd, so, in order to still further improve our position, I instantly drew back, and, under cover of the grass, made for the shelter of the trees with all speed. Arrived at the belt of forest, I selected a delightful natural bulwark of bush, densely covered by a pretty vine-like creeper, and noiselessly ensconcing myself behind it, awaited, with feelings of excitement which may be better imagined than described, the passing of the approaching elephants, which were advancing towards the trees in such a way as would bring them past at a distance of only a few yards. On they came, slowly and majestically, their intestinal rumblings being plainly audible and producing the most curious effect. Oh, for my camera! but it was with the carriers far in the rear, and, in any case, it would have been doubtful if I could have used it without betraying myself. First two cows passed me, making for the timber into which they entered, then three more cows, followed by a small group all of the same sex and containing several tuskless animals with two or three calves about two-thirds grown. Not an elephant among them had more than moderate-sized tusks—certainly there was none with ivory which

would have tempted me to sacrifice my reputation as a determined non-slayer of cows. I waited and waited for the herd bulls which I felt confident would appear, but they came not. The hunters crouching at my feet were almost beside themselves with suppressed excitement. Never had their feelings been so outraged, for they clearly saw that the cows were safe, and their silent entreaties as they saw the coveted mountains of toothsome flesh passing one by one, as it were, from their very grasp, became almost tearful, whilst the herd sauntered grandly by. To make a long story short, there was not a single bull among them, and once more, accompanied by an extremely disappointed and sulky train of men, who regarded two fat hartebeeste which I shot mainly for them with unconcealed disdain, I returned to camp, which was not reached until long after sunset.

I shall never regret not having shot one of that herd since I was enabled by not doing so to quietly observe them at as close quarters as it would have been safe to have occupied, and, strange to say, with the exception of one of the calves which I think felt suspicious, for he advanced a few yards towards us with uplifted ears and trunk through which he blew long and loud, all those mighty beasts passed me by within 20 or 25 yards, as unconscious of the danger which lurked behind the small vine-clad thicket as though it had been non-existent. They appeared to take several minutes to pass, and the interest of the spectacle they afforded was unbounded. The leading files on reaching the timber raised their trunks and,

apparently as a matter rather of habit than hunger, tore down each a small bunch of leaves, a few of which were carried to the mouth and the rest cast aside; others sauntered beneath the marula trees picking up the fallen plums, which they delicately ate one by one. Except for the swish of the down-torn leaves, the crash of a breaking bough, or the whimper of the younger animals, they seemed to pass noiselessly, like huge, grey spectres, an uncanny illusion to which their smooth gait admirably lent itself. Only once did the older animals display any emotion. It was on the arrival in the trees of the main body of the herd when, apparently, some of the elephants composing it crowded on those forming the advance party, now busily searching for plums. One or two of the latter uttered an indignant roar ending in a high note such as might have been that of some giant stallion in a state of excitement. They then disappeared, and the occasional crashes in the forest grew fainter as they passed tranquilly on their way.

About this time I had a very exciting few minutes with an elephant which I will now endeavour to describe. We had come upon fresh tracks early in the morning, always a fortunate occurrence, since, at times, one wastes many precious hours in hunting up recent traces. The early part of the spooring was a most unpleasant business, the animals, three in number, passing at once into a wide papyrus swamp where I feared they might lurk for some time. After wading through what appeared to be the greater portion of this awful, malodorous place, in which the great mop-headed rushes, impassable

as a wall, save where the elephants had made great gaps through them, towered 6 or 8 ft. over the top of one's head, and the men kept stopping to rid their legs of the clinging leeches which swarmed in the weed-covered water, we emerged on to somewhat higher grass-land. Lenço hereupon shinned up a date palm, and, after an instant's survey, had the good luck to at once make out several elephants 400 or 500 yards ahead, inclining slowly across our left front, apparently for the purpose of entering the forest close by. We doubled over to cut them off, the strong wind which was blowing being wholly in our favour, and, after a few unpleasant moments spent in stumbling in and out of their deep footprints, we reached the shelter of the trees.

Cautiously advancing through the jungle, we could plainly hear them in front of us, and, after several hundred yards passed in this way, I became aware of a movement in a dense screen of foliage 40 or 50 yards ahead; a moment afterwards a huge head was thrust out. This was a young bull with insignificant tusks, which, I fancy, must have been listening intently, for, after a moment or two, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny which did not discover us, he turned and sauntered off, quartering across our front but going away.

A moment later a much finer beast, with long symmetrical tusks, emerged from the same cover, and followed upon the heels of the first one. I waited a moment, but as number three did not show I concluded he must be ahead, so, without further delay, reaching for the 8-bore, I tip-toed

along noiselessly in the wake of the unconscious animals. Rapidly diminishing the distance between us, and with Lenço slinking cat-like at my heels, I found myself in a moment or two dodging practically beneath the shadow of the great, grey stern, which towered above me only a few yards ahead. The excitement was intense : any moment he might turn and discover us, but I could do nothing until such time as he should turn either to right or left and expose a vital spot. For some seconds this odd procession of three wended its way through the forest as I have described ; at length he turned slightly to the left, and we crouched. On he went again, however, we following. My only fear was lest I should laugh outright, or sneeze, or do something of the sort, for so great was the excitement and novelty of the situation that I felt as one sometimes does in a church, or at a funeral, desperately inclined to burst with laughter. At last he stopped and turned his left flank towards us in the act of pulling down a bunch of leaves. Raising the 8-bore I instantly fired for the heart, whereupon he fell with a crash, roaring loudly.

With a tremendous commotion the other elephants dashed off through the trees, trumpeting shrilly, and the next moment my bull, picking himself up, wheeled round like a teetotum, and seeing me standing there, charged straight down upon me, trumpeting and screaming like a demon. Escape was out of the question ; I could not have run in such cover for 5 yards without stumbling and being caught. I instantly raised the 8-bore, therefore, and at a distance of ten or twelve paces,

with his gigantic form and upraised trunk extended, as it seemed, literally above my head, fired the second barrel at the centre of his chest. The effect of this shot was to throw him right back upon his haunches, upon which he sat for a moment like an immense dog, producing a curious rattling sound in his trunk. I darted behind a large tree which grew close at hand, having no time to reload, and, as I reached it, he pulled himself together again, and, spying Lenço, charged him with a fury which the two shots he had received seemed in no way able to abate. For just one moment, which chilled the blood in my veins, I did not know whether he was *still* intent on following me, but to my intense relief, tail on end, the great shrieking form rushed close past my sheltering tree. At that moment the report of the .500 express announced that Patrinka, the second hunter, had come into action, and although I believe the shot he fired was a clean miss, it had the desirable effect of distracting the elephant's attention from the object of his pursuit, and confusing his ideas as to the direction from which the danger had come. At this moment Lenço, who had found no difficulty in keeping out of the way, crawled round to me, his eyes alight with exultation and excitement, and, pointing to a group of bamboos whose tops were visible over a large ant-heap, indicated by an eloquent gesture that the bull was there. I required no such information, for the loud rumbling which he made, and the appalling ferocity with which he smashed the bamboos, were audible for a great distance. Seizing the Lee-Metford, therefore, and approach-

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ing under cover of the ant-heap which was most luckily placed, I succeeded in reaching unperceived a point about 12 or 15 yards from the furious monster. As I did so he listened intently, having, I fancy, caught something of the sound of my approach, and, turning slightly, exposed his temple. Taking a quick aim at that point, I fired, whereupon, dropping his trunk and tail, he swayed gently for a moment from side to side, and fell with a shock that fairly seemed to shake the earth.

Lenço here went quite mad. Snatching the Lee-Metford which I was holding, he rushed up to the prostrate elephant and fired the remaining barrel through the back of the massive head, at the same time shrieking execrations of a kind wholly unprintable, and it was some moments before, by dint of several severe cuffs, I succeeded in reducing him to his usual condition of imperturbable serenity.

This elephant was a very fine beast of the following dimensions : Height at the shoulder, 10 ft. 7 in. ; length from the tip of the trunk to the tip of the tail, 24 ft. 9 in. ; circumference of the right forefoot, 4 ft. exactly. The tusks, a perfectly matched and even pair, when freshly removed from the skull weighed a little more than 60 lb.

On examining the elephant I found that my first bullet had travelled high for the heart, whilst my second, which checked his charge, was also directed too high, but the heavy 8-bore bullet had passed through three parts of his entire length, and, lodging under the massive spine, not an ounce of the heavy rifle's terrific striking energy had thus

been wasted. My third shot from the .303 had entered the brain at a point almost in the centre of the hollow that marks the temple. I extract the following remarks from my diary :

“I must really go more for the Lee-Metford in future, despite my discouraging experiences with the broken tusker. Had I selected this weapon in the first instance this morning, I feel sure I should have dropped him with my first shot, even though the angle was not all one might have desired ; as it is, there is no doubt in my mind that I owe my safety to the smashing blow of the 8-bore's second barrel, which reined the elephant back, and successfully checked his first tremendous onset.

“The appearance of these animals at short distances in forest is most imposing ; they seem simply colossal, and move through all sorts of apparently impenetrable obstacles with a smooth, irresistible disregard of them which is a clear indication of the futility of hoping to get out of their way should the first impetuous rush be unchecked by an overpowering blow from a heavy rifle.”

I shall say no more about elephants. They will always have my admiration and respect, and, to a feeling of thankfulness for any influence which my feeble representations may have exercised in turning the scale which secured them the protection they have recently received in these districts, is added a hope that some day one among us may arise to demonstrate practically the immense utility of the vast wasted power and energy pent up in those tremendous bodies. I am

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convinced that these might be usefully employed in some direction towards the task of lightening the dark corners of that continent wherein they have assuredly not been placed without a purpose.

What the Leopard is considered in relation to the head of the great cat family, the Rhinoceros is, in many respects, when compared with the great pachyderm we have just been considering.

Large herds of elephants have often been seen, and also large troops of lions, but I do not know of anybody who ever found himself at close quarters with more than two leopards at one time, or with an equal number of rhinoceroses. The common African variety (*R. bicornis*) was formerly found in considerable numbers in this territory, their favourite lurking-places being rough, rocky ground under the mountain ranges, or dry rock-strewn wastes some distance from water, and although a certain number still assuredly exist, they are very rarely killed, and their spoor but seldom seen.

I have never observed south of the Zambezi any horns of the rhinoceros which equalled those I have seen and shot in East and East Central Africa. Like the elephant, and, it may be, other species, they appear to grow smaller and smaller the nearer one approaches the continent's southern extremity.

The late Sir Samuel Baker, in one of his books, mentions having seen or purchased, I forget which, a rhinoceros horn brought from the Lake Chad district, which was of great thickness and 3 ft., or over, in length. He hazards the suggestion that the beast it belonged to may have been one of

some unclassified species, but I do not think that this supposition need be based solely upon the mere circumstance of the size of the horn.

In the Mozambique Province, north of the Zambezi, I have killed a rhinoceros whose anterior and posterior horns measured respectively $25\frac{1}{4}$ in. and $12\frac{5}{8}$ in. ; whilst Mr. Kirby speaks of one which he shot in the country lying between the Shiré and Zambezi Rivers whose anterior horn measured no less than $29\frac{1}{2}$ in. Of course, these in no way compare with the tremendous weapon Sir Samuel Baker mentions ; but, in spite of this, I cannot refrain from regarding them as examples of the curious decrease in size, either of body or parts, which various animals appear to suffer the farther south they penetrate from their family's original point of general distribution. In this part of Africa, for example, although I am not in a position to state authoritatively that they do not exist in isolated cases, I have never seen rhinoceros horns which even approached the dimensions of those of the animal killed by myself, whose measurements I have quoted above, to say nothing of Mr. Kirby's really fine specimen.

I have never encountered the Rhinoceros in this territory, although I have endeavoured to spoor them on several occasions ; as I have already said, they are not numerous, and assuredly those shot during my acquaintance with this part of Africa have been disappointing, in so far as I have had opportunities of examining them, both as regards the sizes of the animal and the horns.

The large so-called White Rhinoceros (*R. simus*)

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does not occur here, although I believe I am right in saying that they are still found occasionally to the westward in the neighbourhood of the Luenya River and other southern affluents of the Zambezi. They are very rare, and generally believed to be on the point of becoming extinct. No trace has, I understand, been found of these animals to the north of the Zambezi, and this is, therefore, another of the very large number of varieties to whose distribution that river constitutes a mysterious, impassable barrier.

The black species is a very curious and interesting type. This beast is the embodiment of sullen stupidity, and if his eyesight were as acute as his senses of smell and hearing, he would without doubt prove, of all the great game animals, the hunter's most dangerous adversary. Of extremely regular habits, he takes daily a long rest after his early morning feed, sleeping usually through the heat of the day in some dense thorn jungle, drinking at dawn and after sunset, and nearly always frequenting the same watering-place. When disturbed he bounds away at a tremendous pace, which is maintained for considerable distances.

The natives are terribly afraid of the "pwété," as they call the Rhinoceros, and display much more nervousness in following on his tracks than in the case of any animal I know. The Black Rhinoceros is an irascible brute, and his mad, unreasoning rage is easily aroused. Many cases have been known of his charging fiercely down upon a passer-by who has been merely scented whilst innocently approaching the animal's resting-place from the windward side,

and wholly unconscious of the beast's proximity. His first notice of danger is usually the appearance of the animal itself at probably a distance of only a few yards, with lowered horn and tail on end, thundering down upon him at such a pace that escape is not always possible. Fortunately for many a man the rhinoceros is extremely short-sighted; once outside the range of his scent, the object of pursuit is, as a rule, lost to him, and, unlike the buffalo, he seldom turns and hunts it. He just blunders on at full gallop, discharging a succession of those singular whiffs from his great lungs which resemble nothing so closely as jets of vapour discharged from the exhaust of a powerful steam-engine.

With all his moroseness he is still possessed of a considerable amount of cunning, and when hunted or pursued will almost invariably bolt down wind, and continue to follow that direction until he is satisfied that all pursuit has been abandoned. Speaking personally, I have always found the rhinoceros exceedingly difficult to track, especially in the dry season; in spite of his great bulk and weight, and notwithstanding that he bounds along like a horse at full gallop, his large feet, which are divided into three semi-circular horny divisions, make scarcely any impression when he slows down to his quick walk again, especially where there is a thin over-lying layer of leaves upon the hard, sun-dried soil of the winter months.

Numerous have been the escapes from these animals of which one has heard, and not a few the casualties; but, taking him for all in all, he

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is, as I have said, a silly, blundering, thick-skulled oaf, who attacks anything he cannot understand, and whose almost feminine inquisitiveness is often the cause of his own undoing.

One of the most singular of the Rhinoceros's many quaint peculiarities is the composition and mode of attachment of his formidable weapons. Contrary to general supposition the horns do not, properly speaking, either in themselves or their foundations, form any part of the animal's skull, as in the case of most game beasts possessing them; nor is the material of which they are composed horn, or anything like it. They are attached to the skin covering the frontal and nasal bones, and not, as I have said, to the bones themselves; they are simply a conglomeration of coarse hair glued together with some hard, horn-like substance. A section of the horn carefully cut and many times magnified clearly displays the hairs composing it, together with the wonderful conglutinating substance which binds them together.

Both the species of Rhinoceros which I have mentioned possess two of these formidable weapons, that of the white variety being much larger as regards the anterior and shorter in the posterior horns than those of the common "pwété." The latter vary greatly in size and thickness, neither age nor bulk being any indication of the probable dimensions of the trophies the beast will possess. They are easily removed, and if the head be left a few days in the sun will fall off of their own accord.

Hunting in 1898 in the district of Zambezia,

several days' north-west of Quelimane, a part of the country where rhinoceroses are not, as a rule, to be met with, I came one day upon the spoor of a large bull. As we were not far from water, my first impression was that some wandering hippopotamus had passed that way in the night or early morning, but a glance from my hunter soon dispelled the illusion.

As soon as I heard that the spoor was unmistakably that of a rhinoceros, I commenced to follow up with an eagerness which my native companion assuredly did not share ; however, after a few miles of easy and rapid tracking, the footsteps led us to the edge of a thorny grass patch of so forbidding an aspect that I felt certain we should find our beast within. As this appeared to me a singularly undesirable place in which to encounter so formidable an antagonist, I decided to reconnoitre the position before advancing farther. What little wind there was blew in our favour, so, having ascertained from a neighbouring tree that the entire patch did not cover much more than an acre, I sent men round to set it alight in several places.

Presently a thin smoke arose over the tree-tops, followed by the crackling explosions of the burning grass stems, but I had hardly time to observe this when I heard a tremendous commotion followed by a shout. With a succession of whiffs and crashes the great beast broke cover. I was standing in the shelter of a friendly tree awaiting events rifle in hand, and at first thought he was coming right over me ; he sheered off, however,

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and at a distance of about 20 yards I gave him a .577 solid bullet high up on the shoulder as he bounded past. He stumbled, squealing like a great pig, but instantly recovering himself dashed off at a prodigious pace, paying no attention to my second barrel, which was probably a clean miss. We lost no time in taking up the spoor, which, true to the invariable custom of the rhinoceros, led off down wind, but as I did not consider he would go very far, hard hit as he assuredly was, we followed him undismayed. The blood spoor showed that he had received a lung shot, and after about half an hour or more we came up with him, going very groggily through open mimosas. Again taking the .577, I sprinted hard after him, and got within about 40 yards or less, when he stumbled again, and, soon after, coming into the shade of a large mjole tree, lay down without having given me the smallest chance at either of his flanks. As he did so, the fierce little eyes fell upon me standing with cocked rifle a little way behind; game to the last, he struggled to rise again, but, before he could do so, I gave him a bullet in the centre of his broad neck, which killed him on the spot. He was in the very pink of condition, and his horns, to which I have already made some allusion, are quite the finest I possess, or have seen, among those which have been obtained in this part of Africa during the time I have served on these coasts.

I do not believe that as a rule a rhinoceros charges on being wounded unless the assailant happens to be in his way. The stories one hears

of his attacks are almost always cases in which he has winded the passing hunter, and charged him probably more from a feeling of irresistible irritability, perhaps not unmingled with curiosity, than the fixed intention to attack the intruder.

These animals are not hard to kill, but they should certainly not be hunted with the small-bore high-velocity rifles, which I have heard from time to time recommended for this kind of work.

A .577 express, or a 12-bore Paradox, or some other weapon of great striking energy gives more satisfactory results than the cordite rifle when used against this class of game; the head shot can but seldom be taken, owing to the peculiar shape of the skull, which is entirely guarded in front by the horns, and is, moreover, not to be recommended as a mark by reason of the smallness of the brain cavity. Either the neck or the shoulder shot should if possible be taken in preference; the former, as I have twice had occasion to observe, being instantly fatal if, as I have pointed out, the rifle be sufficiently powerful. The point of aim should be the centre of the neck, midway between head and shoulders. Of course small-bore cordite rifles are, without doubt, capable of killing a rhinoceros, or anything else, as an officer of the King's African Rifles proved quite recently by bagging a fine specimen with a single shot from a Lee-Metford or Mannlicher, I forget which, close to Zomba in British Central Africa, but so many cases must occur of the escape of animals wounded by these weapons that I have no hesita-

tion, even at the risk of being considered somewhat old-fashioned, in unhesitatingly recommending the heavier types of weapon for this form of sport.

Many years ago in those halcyon days when game was so plentiful in South Africa that a short way out of the existing small settlements one was rarely out of sight of the great herds; when those hardy and, in the light of subsequent discoveries, most inadequately armed hunters both of British and Dutch extraction wended their slow and painful way into the great unknown beyond the Drakensberg, and returned to recount those thrilling adventures so hard to credit in these days of railways and motor transport, the great White Rhinoceros, now believed to be to all intents and purposes extinct, was found in large numbers, especially in the country surrounding Lake Ngami.

Concerning these animals Baker relates an incident which is unique in its way, and is also sufficient to dispel for all time the commonly accepted supposition that they were by nature harmless and pacific. Speaking of that well-known hunter, Mr. Oswell, the contemporary of Livingstone, and of the famous Roualeyn Gordon-Cumming, he says:

“There was a particular locality that was so infested with rhinoceroses that Oswell had grown tired of killing them, and he passed them unnoticed unless he met some specimen with an exceptional horn. He was riding a particular horse (on the occasion in question), which had been his constant companion in countless shooting incidents, when

he happened to remark a large white rhinoceros standing in open ground. This animal possessed a horn of unusual length, which made the owner a worthy object of attention. Oswell immediately rode towards it. The animal took no notice of his approach until he arrived within about 100 yards. The *Rhinoceros simus* is not considered dangerous, therefore he had approached without the least caution or hesitation. I forget whether he fired, but I well remember that the beast calmly confronted the horse, and slowly, but determinedly, with measured pace, advanced directly towards the rider. Like an object in a disturbed dream, this huge creature came on step by step, leisurely but surely, never hesitating or halting, but with eyes fixed upon the attacking party. Firing at the forehead being useless, Oswell endeavoured to move either to the right or the left to obtain a shoulder shot, but the horse that was accustomed to a hundred contests with wild beasts was suddenly mesmerised and petrified with horror. The quiet and spectre-like advance of the rhinoceros had paralysed and rooted it to the ground; trembling all over, its limbs refused to move; the spur and whip were unavailing; the horse felt that it was doomed. This horrible position endured until the rhinoceros was within only a few paces distant, it then made a dash forward. . . .”

When Mr. Oswell recovered consciousness he found that the horn of the rhinoceros had penetrated his thigh, the flap of the saddle, and the horse's body, being only stopped by the flap on the other side; both horse and rider were hurled

violently into the air, the former being killed on the spot, whilst the latter fortunately recovered.

It is sad to think of the wholesale slaughter of wild beasts that has transformed those swarming plains which, even twenty or thirty years ago, contained so much game that according to some writers their numbers were beyond the bounds of imagination, into the present lifeless, arid wastes which one may often follow for hundreds of miles without the eye falling upon a single living animal. That criminal, unreasoning passion for killing has had a terrible and far-reaching effect, and deprived the country for ever of the wonderful spectacles which it used to afford. Fortunately we now live in days where more heed is paid to our responsibilities, and, as one result of this, we are doing more to preserve, in so far as may be expedient, the beautiful and interesting wild things of the earth. In East Africa, for instance, almost every curve of the Uganda Railway exhibits some new and unexpected phase of the widely represented fauna ; and so accustomed has the game become to the appearance of the trains that the zebras and Grantii gazelles scarcely turn their heads at the whistle of the engines. I very much doubt whether in the whole course of the journey from Cape Town to the Zambezi, a distance of nearly 1,700 miles, the passing traveller would find a single head of game to arouse his interest and awaken his sporting instincts !