

HUNTING TRIPS
IN
NORTHERN RHODESIA.

WITH

ACCOUNTS OF SPORT AND TRAVEL IN NYASALAND
AND PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA, AND ALSO NOTES
ON THE GAME ANIMALS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

BY

D. Lyell
D. LYELL, F.Z.S.

(JOINT AUTHOR OF "CENTRAL AFRICAN GAME AND ITS SPOOR.")

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS.

London:

HORACE COX,

"FIELD" OFFICE, WINDSOR HOUSE, BREAM'S BUILDINGS, E.C.

—
1910.

CHAPTER IX.

A TOUGH RHINO.

THE black rhinoceros is very plentiful on both sides of the Luangwa river, and in every other part of Northern Rhodesia, where the country suits it. They prefer wild country away from villages and the habitations of men. Although they usually drink every twenty-four hours, they are often seen some distance from water. Usually they prefer rough, hilly country with plenty of thorn bushes about, for this species feed mostly on these trees, and seldom eat grass. On October 14th, 1905, I was following elephant spoor, which led up a long valley towards the Muchinga Mountains. As I went along I passed successively waterbuck, puku, wart-hog, and a big herd of kudu, composed solely of females. The waterbuck and puku I saw near the Nyamazi stream, which I had walked along for some distance on the elephant spoor. After going along for perhaps three hours, I was just thinking of resting for a few minutes, as the sun was terribly hot, when we saw two grey-coloured animals walking in the timber, across our front. As they came past I saw they were rhinos, so as the elephants still seemed to be some way ahead I determined to try and shoot one.

I ran to the right to intercept them, and stood near a solid tree, on which I rested the rifle, taking care, of course, that the barrel did not touch the tree, as the jar would have sent the bullet wide.

When they passed, about sixty yards off, I saw one was a female and the other a three-quarter grown calf. The female showed a good horn, so I confined my attentions to her, and fired for her shoulder as she stopped to break a branch from a thorn tree. The bullet struck her with the familiar "phut," and she ran towards me, but on receiving another bullet somewhere near the base of her neck she turned off, followed closely by the younger animal. After getting the cartridge out of my '303 and reloading, I ran after her. She took me along at a good pace, and I was very pleased when she stopped and looked round. She got another bullet, and did not seem to mind it in the least, for she started off as hard as ever.

On getting up to her again, I took the 10-bore Purdey rifle I had with me and climbed the sloping sides of an ant-hill, about forty yards from her. I fired at her shoulder and promptly fell backwards, for I was sitting on a slope.

After my men and I had finished laughing, I saw the stern of the rhino disappearing in the bush, the young one still keeping with her. Grabbing the '303 again, I followed hard, as I knew she could not go very far with the wounds she had received, for they seemed to have gone about the right place. To make a long story short, this game went on for some time, but at last she dropped, and I was able to rest after one of the hardest runs I have ever had. What had happened was this, I think. The first bullet had paralysed her nervous system, the shock preventing her feeling the subsequent wounds, for most of them had gone into her shoulder and the base of her neck. I have seen the same thing happen on several occasions to antelopes, for at times it is marvellous the wounds that animals can carry off.

The rhino seems to be feared by the natives of this country more than any other animal. He certainly looks a bad-tempered beast, and his appearance is against him, for he generally has a fierce look about him when disturbed, and behaves in a fussy manner when he is startled. He has a habit, too, of breaking up his dung with his horns and feet, and the natives say that this is a sign that he is fierce and ill-tempered.

I think they are more harmless beasts to tackle than an elephant, buffalo, lion, or leopard; and as a rule they are very easily killed with modern weapons, for one or two small-bore bullets generally prove quite sufficient. That they sometimes charge when unwounded is a fact, for my friend Capt. C. H. Stigand was badly hurt by one of these animals which he came on in some long grass. On this occasion there were two of them, and the male attacked my friend and knocked him down, giving him a very dangerous wound in the chest. The rhino left him, and returned two or three times, before it disappeared for good. There is no saying what an animal will do under given circumstances, as animals differ in their temperaments almost as much as human beings. But to get back to my own rhino. When I wanted to photograph it, I found the man whose work it was to carry the camera had left it in camp, so he had the pleasure of a ten-miles' run for it. As I knew it would be quite four hours before he could cover the twenty miles, I got the men to make me a shelter of branches and leaves, and lay down to have a sleep. I suppose I had rested about five hours when the men woke me up and said they heard shouting in the distance. Soon after this we saw an animal running in our direction, and when it got closer we made out a good roan bull coming towards us. I missed it the first shot with the '303, but another attempt was more successful, for I hit it near the spine and it came down. Before I could get close it recovered itself and struggled on for about two hundred yards, when it lay down in a small hollow.

As the men with the camera had come up, for they had driven the roan towards



CUTTING OFF ELAND'S HEAD.



RHINO ♀.
(Shot in Northern Rhodesia).

me, I took it, and got two snapshots of the animal before I finished it with a bullet in the neck. The men had brought a kettle and some tea and scones, and while coming along had found some delicious honey which they had brought along, too, in a bent piece of bark.

Being rather hungry, I made a good meal and, after cutting off the roan's head and letting the men take the meat, I started back to camp, killing a warthog and a waterbuck on the way. The former was a long shot, the bullet striking it in the chest and killing it at once.

I only wounded the waterbuck, but he stood again, when I hit him in the lungs, and he only managed to run about a hundred yards, falling dead in some long grass. The lung shot is very deadly for all game, although they generally run some way before falling dead.

When animals are hit through the heart they usually dash off at a quick pace, and fall after going a short distance.

A bullet in the brain, neck, or spine always drops game where they stand. I prefer the shoulder shot for all antelopes, for the bone will be broken and splinters sent into the cavity of the body. For elephants the brain shot is the neatest, for when properly struck the beast collapses. Unless very close it presents a difficult target, and should not be tried unless the beast is broadside on. A facing head-shot at an elephant is most difficult on account of the sloping forehead. Some men make a point of only shooting for the heart, and certainly fewer elephants will be lost with this shot than the one at the brain. If an elephant escapes after being hit in the head he will seldom die, but this is not so with beasts hit in the body.

It seldom pays to follow a wounded elephant or rhino far, for they keep going until they drop, and do not lie down like most other animals after going for a short way. Mr. Selous mentions this, and I have found it to be so in nearly every case.

The following day I sent most of my men out to bring in the meat of the rhino, and also his head and feet.

While I am writing about rhinos, I may mention another which I shot recently which had grown a third horn, or the signs of one, for behind the usual posterior horn there was a knob about the size of a small fowl's egg. In time this might have developed into a third horn, for it was composed of the same substance as the other horns and was quite as hard. I have heard of three other cases of the same thing, but Mr. Selous, who devotes a whole chapter to the two species of rhinos found in Africa, in his "A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa," does not mention a similar case, so I

think it cannot be common. If it were common such a keen observer would have noticed it.*

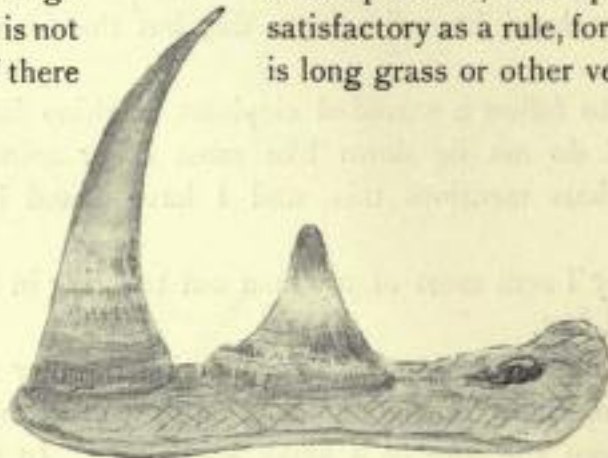
I have kept the horns and part of the head-skin showing the two horns and knob, as I think it is interesting.

Rhinos are easier beasts to get up to than elephants or buffalo, and although their sight is poor, their senses of hearing and smell are acute. There is not much fear of their becoming extinct for many years, for, being very well distributed in this country and inhabiting very out-of-the-way places, they are not molested.

The flesh of the rhino is pretty tough eating, and it is often found to be full of maggots, which do not tend to make it appetising. Their skin is very thick, but not so thick as a hippo's, but is closer in the grain and makes better whips. Their horns vary considerably, and sometimes the posterior horn will be found longer than the anterior.

This variation made old hunters give the beasts different names, but it has almost been conclusively proved that there are only two species of rhino in the whole of Africa.

The horns of rhinos do not seem to attain a large size in this country, and I never heard of one being shot that measured over 25in., whereas in East Africa and Uganda they grow much larger. An old beast soon wears its horns down, but they generally keep them fairly sharp. Rhino spoor is very easy to follow, for their hoofs are not very large considering the size of their bodies, and as long as they keep to soft ground they can be easily spoor'd; but, of course, on rocky ground tracking them is more difficult. They always lie down to sleep, and if one is found in this position it is a simple matter to go close up to him; but it pays to put him up, as a shot at an animal lying is not satisfactory as a rule, for one cannot locate the vital organs properly if there is long grass or other vegetation round him.



RHINO HORNS
(Showing growth behind posterior horn).

* Mr. Rowland Ward, in "Records of Big Game," mentions one that was killed having five distinct horns. This, of course, is quite exceptional.