



MEMORIES *of an* AFRICAN
HUNTER  *With a Chapter on*
Eastern India. By DENIS D. LYELL
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Life in Central Africa," etc.  WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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NO man is capable of writing the complete life-history of any animal, as the habits of a particular species vary in the different localities where it is found, and it would entail an extensive experience to get such opportunities.

For instance, the behaviour of rhinos and buffaloes differs considerably in different parts of Africa. In British East Africa (now Kenya Province) both these species are said to charge on very little provocation, whereas in the territory farther south they are not often inclined to take the offensive unless after being wounded.

All generalities, however, are a mistake, for I have heard of exceptions to this rule. It is quite impossible to say how any animal will behave under given circumstances, as one may run off and another do the opposite. Therefore it is advisable to keep a rifle handy when in the bush.

When I first went to Nyasaland the buffalo and eland were strictly preserved, but later a certain number were allowed on the licence, six of each per annum. Rhinos were not very numerous in Nyasaland, and I only occasionally came on their tracks; but in North-Eastern Rhodesia they were quite plentiful, so I saw a number at different times. I did not bother much about them, as I was usually looking for elephant when I found their tracks in the bush. A rhino treks a fairly long distance from his nightly drinking-place.

After I had got a few horns as trophies, I had no

wish to shoot more for the little one could get for the horns and skins, as I never believed in making money out of anything except ivory. The tuskers were bound to be shot by somebody, and I thought that, if others went for them, I might also, and the more I hunted elephant the greater became the fascination of the game.

In my previous chapter I have given an account of some of my experiences with elephants, and could give many others if I did not wish to say something about the other game of the country. My first rhino took several shots to kill her. One of the shots fired from a heavy, kicking 10-bore double Purdey rifle upset me, as I was sitting on the side of a large ant-hill. The rhino bolted and (after my men and I had finished laughing) was almost out of sight in the bush, so I ran after her with a single .303 and killed her.

On another occasion I found a bull rhino asleep, and hit him as he was snoring, with a single .400 H.V. rifle. He woke up and was on his feet in three seconds, and came puffing past us into some long, sun-dried grass which threw a strong glare into my eyes as I chased him. I was so dazzled with the reflection off the bright yellow grass that I almost collided with the rhino, which had stopped to look back. Being dressed lightly in shorts with bare legs, I was fairly agile, so did an excellent swerve, passing the angry beast within a few paces, until it seemed safe to pull up and look back.

The rhino wheeled round to keep his eyes on me, and offered an excellent raking shot on the point of his shoulder, so I gave him a solid .303, as I had grabbed that rifle after firing the single .400. He collapsed at once and soon died, for I found afterwards the bullet had cut the large arteries above the heart. The first bullet raked his left lung, and he

might have got away if I had not run after him quickly.

It is a mistake to fire at game sitting, as it is difficult to locate the vital spots when an animal is in that position, so the best thing to do is to whistle or clap one's hands sufficiently loud to excite the beast's suspicions, but not so loud as to make him bolt quickly.

Rhino are much easier to kill than bull elephants, and I put them on a par in this respect with cow elephants, which die quicker than the bulls.

The black rhinoceros feeds mainly on thorn twigs and seldom eats grass, like the white rhinoceros, which feeds solely on grass. There are no white rhinos in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, and they are a South African species which through a short-sighted persecution are rapidly becoming extinct, owing mainly to the love of slaughter displayed by some of the South African colonists who are not nature-lovers or thinkers.

There is a variety of white rhino in the southern Sudan and adjoining territory, but I have never been there, so all I know about it is what I have read on the subject.

I think the black rhino occasionally eats grass, as I have seen grass in their droppings on several occasions. Thorn-tree twigs seem a most indigestible kind of food for any animal, as they are hard and stringy, but so does some of the stuff that elephants eat, and there is no accounting for taste.

Why the names black and white were given to the two species of rhino I do not know, for when examining one of each in the Cape Town Museum it was difficult to say which was the whiter of the two. Both names are wrong, as their colour is a darkish grey, just about the colour of an elephant's hide.

One of the rhinos I shot had a third rudimentary



RHINOCEROS BULL.
Shot and photographed by George Gården,

horn about the size of a prune, and my friend George Garden, of Mlanje, Nyasaland, shot one exactly similar in Portuguese East Africa. There is a record of one which had five horns—three rudimentary, and the ordinary two which are usual.

A rhino is a very strong animal and capable of doing much damage, so when spooring one in thick cover, it is best to have a rifle ready for action, for although all the large game seem bulky and slow, they can come at a great pace when they want to. The pace of an animal running away, even when frightened, is no criterion of his speed when coming for one in an infuriated condition.

Many people scoff at shooting now, so they take telephotos of game, sometimes pretending that a beast is charging when it is not, as an expert can see at once. They get up quite a reputation for courage amongst people who do not know the ropes, and who admire their fine pictures (some of them are certainly good). As a matter of fact, there is seldom much danger in approaching game with a camera, because the first instinct of any beast is to bolt.

On the other hand, it is much more dangerous to follow a wounded animal into thick cover with a rifle, for one is much more likely to be charged when doing so, than by taking a photograph of the same beast when unwounded.

In mentioning this, I have no wish to decry the pluck of the telephotographers, as they are brave men, but I do wish to dispel an erroneous idea which is prevalent amongst people who know nothing about hunting. Some of these "charging" photographs give themselves away at the first glance, as the beast is seen at an angle, whereas a real charge is straight on, if photographed from the front. Of course a charge at someone else could be taken from the side, but one does not often see that kind in books or maga-

zines. Few animals charge unless wounded, except, possibly, a female with young. When game has been much molested, instead of wanting to charge at sight, they want to run away as quickly as possible.

In British East Africa, for many years after the buffaloes and other game were decimated by the rinderpest (about 1895), the buffaloes were preserved. Therefore they got accustomed to the sight of human beings and would hardly move away; in fact at times they would advance to make out an object which interested them. Then, when shooting at them was allowed, they retained this trait of curiosity.

On the other hand, animals which have been wounded slightly are inclined to resent their injury on the first human creature they meet, unfortunately not always the person who deserved the attention; but it is often the way in life that the innocents suffer and the culprits escape—for example, the politicians in the war.

Nobody can give sound advice as to the best thing to do when knocked down, for the victim is probably stunned or dazed; and an elephant, buffalo, lion, or leopard does not waste much time in these circumstances, but gets busy very quick.

When buffalo-shooting was allowed in Nyasaland, I went to the Chiromo Marsh and spent some time shooting round Machinjiri and other villages under the Cholo range. It was hot work, as the grass was long and unburnt, and when it had been burnt, some of it, being green, had not gone, so it was all tangled, and the place was black with ashes, which made one filthy in a short time. The ash dust got in one's throat, as it rose in the air when disturbed.

One of my most exciting days with a buffalo was when I found a fine bull with two others one morning at dawn. He had just left a maize-field, where he