

# THROUGH ANGOLA

A COMING COLONY

BY

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## CHAPTER VI

### A NIGHT WATCH: PHOTOGRAPHY AND BAD LUCK

IT was September, the end of the dry season, and the streams were running very low. There was just a line of muddy pools along the bush-fringed bed of the little river. To these pools the beasts and birds of the surrounding country came by day or night to drink. There were tracks of roan and reed buck, duiker and oribi, an old spoor of a sable and of a big bush pig. Just as we were leaving the line of pools, I came across the recent tracks of a lioness. She had come to drink, and perhaps to wait for her dinner. Had she found it; had the little river witnessed one of those jungle tragedies, so terribly common in Africa; had the night seen the stealthy stalk—the rush—the killing—of some animal come down to drink, perhaps from miles away, but finding death instead?

This was the first lion spoor I had seen in Angola, and, the moon being full and the skies clear, it was decided to watch for the lioness that night.

There is something fascinating in the stillness and loneliness of a watch by a jungle pool. It

stirs one to see wild life so close, and so unconscious of man's presence.

There is the careful approach of the animal that fears that death lies at the pool, the pitiful pretences made to run away from the shadows, just to make sure that those shadows do not hold a waiting lion or leopard, who may be tempted to make a premature attack. Sometimes one may even see the destroyers themselves come down to drink: lion or panther, serval or hunting-dog. These come down stealthily but fearlessly. There may come to the pool, with heavy movement and unperturbed, buffalo or rhinoceros, or even elephant.

Then there is a happier side of the picture to be seen, more often before dusk has fallen, when some lesser beast or bird comes down to drink and rest. The birds will chatter incessantly. It may be a thanksgiving song for the precious water; perhaps it is just scandal they talk, but anyhow it sounds happy enough. The lesser animals sometimes linger at the waterside, long enough to let one see something of their ways; and when there is a young family with them, and father, mother, and little ones have time to play, the watcher will have the best reward of all.

It is ever a pity to bring death and wounds to scenes like these, and I had never hitherto killed any animal, except lion or leopard, at a night watch.

And now my diary will speak for itself.

"Last night I sat up for five hours for the lioness, sat up alone, 2 miles from my camp, and

bush cow, eland, roan, water buck, kudu, reed buck, impallah, sitatunga, hippopotamus, and even an occasional elephant may be found. Along the Central Railway, a similar fauna is met in the lower plateaux near the Cubal and Catumbella Rivers, except that buffalo takes the place of the bush cow, and a few wildebeeste may be seen. In the hinterland, between these two railways, lies the country of the giant sable, the Luando-Coanza watershed, and in this country and along the great rivers to the south-east the "songwe" or Angolan lechwe is found.

Along the southern railway line, a day's march south of Mossamedes, there are oryx. The country between this line and the River Cunene, which forms the boundary to the south, between its terminus in the Chella Mountains and the eastern and south-eastern borders of the province, is the best hunting-ground in Angola.

In this great tract of country, where areas of scrub and desert near the coast and to the south are succeeded by the high plateaux of the Chella Mountains sloping south-eastward to the great river valleys of the Cunene, Cubango, and Cuando, most varieties of big game can still be found. Oryx, in the desert near the coast, would be most easily obtained by a motor trip from Mossamedes. A hunting trip in the south-east of Angola should obtain rhinoceros, giraffe, and kudu in the scrub; elephant, buffalo, water buck, cob, and sitatunga near the great rivers, and wildebeeste, hartebeeste, eland, roan, reed buck, and zebra in the plains which border them. It could be made by moto

from Lubango as far as Capilongo on the Cunene, and possibly to Cassinga, and from here by carrier or by wagon the whole way. Arrived at either of the three rail-heads, the hunter must decide whether he will travel by motor-car, ox wagon, pack transport, porters, or by any combination of them. The motor-car is an increasingly alluring possibility, with the opening up of roads in the colony, and has many advantages over wagon and pack transport.

Motor hunting trips could be carried out from several points on the Central Angolan Railway, which is better served by connecting motor roads than either of the others, and from rail-head or Lubango on the southern railway, but with difficulty from the northern line. A box Ford car with trailer attachment would be an effective means of transport. A box Ford can carry half a ton, and the trailer a similar amount, and between them could accommodate the hunter, mechanic, and cook, spare tyres, petrol for 2000 miles, a light tent, and equipment for a month's shoot. The lightening of the load by consumption of petrol and provisions, would make possible the transport of a reasonable amount of hunting trophies when returning. The scheme has its difficulties, but could be carried out if enough spare tyres and petrol were brought from England.

When good hunting country is reached, a small camp could be formed near a village, a local guide and a few carriers engaged, and the surrounding country hunted for a few days, before motoring on to other ground. Between the hunt-

this moment depends the hunter's life. Though they hunt their enemy with persistence, a buffalo can be dodged by an active man, and I once kept an ant-hill between myself and a determined buffalo till I won. Old and solitary bulls are amazingly cunning, and hard to track, but afford, for this very reason, the best of sport.

The BUSH COW (*Bos caffer nanus*) (Pacassa in Umbundu) is found in the Cabinda, Congo, and North Coanza provinces, and in places to the south of the Coanza River, especially in the west, where it is said to be found as far south as Novo Redondo. The equatorial type of bush cow, which is a miniature rufous buffalo with a smaller upward pointing horn, develops a darker colour and more splayed horns towards central Angola; but I saw none of the intermediate type of head between bush cow and buffalo, which I have met in Senegambia. Bush cow spoor is similar to, but smaller than, that of the buffalo; and the habits and temperament of both animals very alike.

The RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*) (Oci-manda in Umbundu, Kevukevu or Kaloko in Cokue) is found in the south of the colony in open scrub or savannah forest. It is reported in the country towards the source of the Bero River, in the upper reaches of the Ocingau, and between this river and the Cacoluvar, in the upper course of the Cubango, Colui, and its branches near Dongo, in the Cuchi in the neighbourhood of the post of that name, and in the extreme south-east portion of the colony in the thorny bush along the Cuando and its tributaries.

Keeping by choice to a restricted area, the rhinoceros is a browser, though when eating small ground shrubs he has the appearance of grazing. He feeds at night, drinks at pools rather than rivers, and lies up in light (often thorny) scrub during the day. The spoor is about the size of the hippo's, but has a three-toed impress. The dung, often dropped in the same spot, may be kicked and scattered by the rhino. Poor of sight and hearing, he has a keen sense of smell, and this fact, with his stupidity and uncertain temper, makes him appear to attack people somewhat frequently, though most of his charges are attempts to get away. On one occasion in South-East Africa when a rhinoceros ran over me, I am convinced, from the circumstances, that it was attempting to escape and not to charge. When wounded they will undoubtedly charge, and sometimes in a most determined manner; I have been charged both in the open and in thick bush by these animals.

The brain of the charging rhino is covered by his horn, and even a neck or body shot is only possible if the hunter can get to one side. Fatal shots are those striking him near the ear-hole (for the brain) and low down behind the shoulder (for the heart).

The GIRAFFE (*Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis*) (Onduli of the Umbundu, and Njamba nduli of the Cokue) is found only in the desert scrub or savannah forest of the south of Angola. It has a more reticulated coat than the *G. c. capensis*, with larger chocolate patches on a