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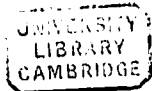
HUNTING IN AFRICA EAST AND WEST

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AND
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With Illustrations



AT NAROK, UNDER THE GREAT MIMOSA TREE NEAR OUR CAMP
From the left: Anita, Richard, myself, the Skipper, and my father



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suddenly I was startled by a sudden yelp, seemingly at my ear, and Oseni at the same time gripped my leg hard, whispering low, 'Chui!' That means leopard. I could make nothing out, but my father fired, and said he had seen it. Oseni said the chui had slapped a hyena, too eager for the feast to wait till a leopard had finished.

We went back to camp about four-thirty, with a lantern, by which we discerned two dead hyenas, but to our great disappointment, no leopard. A shave and a breakfast set us up for the morning's hunting.

CHAPTER XV

OUR FIRST RHINOCEROS

The wind blew open the tents of dawn . . .

Halting Sonnets

THE morning after the hyena Walpurgis-night, the Skipper and I went off farther to the south in order to prospect the grass. If it were as long as the recent rains gave every reason to expect, there was nothing to gain in that direction, and we should turn east into the hilly country where the buffalo lived. We were now some twenty miles north from the Tanganyika border and about a hundred miles to the west of the Rift Valley. Tanganyika had plenty of game and the lion followed the game. On the other hand, our side of the Rift Valley was covered by thick tropical forest; and along the near edges of this forest, where it merged with the plains in great islands of forest and great lakes of plain, were the buffalo. Whether to go farther south or to turn eastward into this buffalo country was the question. Long grass to the south would dispose of that alternative, because it would be manifestly impossible to hunt anything, except elephant, over your head in grass, and the hope of elephant had been dropped on the reports of our Wanderobo scouts, who had returned during the night.

I was a little thick with lack of sleep and my ears

rang and my knees were shaky with quinine, on account of the last six grains I had economically eaten from the bit of paper into which we had twisted the tablets. Nevertheless, an hour's walking in the fresh morning light dispelled all that. Our way passed across great spaces of tall grass and through patches of bush. Signs of rhino were noticeable, and one heap of spoor was not over a day old. The grass was long, and a few weeks would bring it higher. Although we postponed any decision until the evening, the Skipper, from his remarks, had clearly reached his own opinion.

So we turned back to where we expected to meet the others. This was a donga where my father and Sasita had reported fresh lion tracks going both in and out, and our plans for the day were to take enough porters over and have a beat. While the Skipper and I were prospecting the grass, the others, with the beaters, had proceeded leisurely to this donga. If, as we thought probable, this donga should be one of the covers where lions lay up during the day, there was no need of starting our drive early. We met there about eleven o'clock.

The beat was not a success. Only a pair of large yellow-winged bats and a troop of gray monkeys came out of the donga, and we started back toward lunch a little after noon. But we were but just come together from our several stations when some one, I forget who, noticed the circling halo of vultures which was now familiar to us as the sure sign of

recent slaughter beneath. So far as we could see, for the plain rolled gently up from where we were and pitched gently down beyond, the vultures hung over a point beyond the dip, and we could not tell what lay there. There was running and eagerness and high expectations, whetted by our recent bad luck, until we reached the top of the slow rise and saw only the torn remnant of a tommy. No lion, no leopard, nothing but the crumbs of the feast. It must have been a cheetah, we thought; one of those dog-like cats, hardly distinguishable from the leopard, except for its long legs, its round spots, unlike the rosettes of the leopard, and its canine, non-retractile claws. There was no danger with cheetahs, no fight from them at bay; the Skipper said, 'Ride them down over the plain and kill 'em with your stirrup iron; but look out if it's a leopard!' R. had ridden round after a couple one morning, seeing one here, and another there, several times, but never long enough for a shot. Now we had just missed another.

Two disappointments in succession usually lead in Africa to a sudden and unexpected fall of luck. This may be deduced from the only generalization about that 'tricky' (the word is the Skipper's) country which I learned to have faith in; that is this, the less happening now the more there will be soon. A constant and confident belief in this rule will keep your weary feet on the move or spur your bored spirits into activity. After a hard day, a wakeful

night, and a good deal of a morning, I tried to keep this in my mind as we continued our way to camp. My legs swung idly out of the stirrups, and in time with the motion of the mule my heels beat his flanks to urge him up to his place in our procession. I dropped my reins and rolled a cigarette from a blue package of the Rising Hope abomination. The sun lay hot on the plain, and my little motto slipped out of my head.

'Kifaru! Kifaru!' came suddenly down the line, and then the meaning reached my idle brain, rhino, a rhino, the rhino whose spoor we'd seen that morning. Selimani had my big gun in my hands almost before I had slipped off the mule, and I hurried forward. The Skipper was pointing to the side of a slope, about a quarter of a mile away, where a rhinoceros was trotting off, near two giraffe who were getting into a gallop. They all had got our wind. As R. remarked, it was a sight such as might have been seen on that hillside almost any time during the last half a million years.

We had only two horses with us, and whoever was going after the rhino had to go quickly. The Skipper was touching up his pony with his heels and at the same time holding her in. R. insisted I should go, and without arguing I got on my father's horse. The long-legged Wanderobo held my big gun for me and he kept it, following us on foot. The Wanderobo tucked up his blanket, and together we topped the rise, right behind the Skipper. But the rhino was

still going, and we bent to the right in order to get our wind out of his nose. Once we stopped and got off, running after him; he was too fast for us, however, and we took to our ponies again. He did not slow up until he entered a piece of ground thinly spread with little acacia trees. As soon as we saw him come to a walk, we got off and ran toward him, the Skipper first, I at his heels. There stood the rhino, a stone-colored, moving mass. At about a hundred yards away, the Skipper stopped and I stepped clear of a tree between me and this huge boulder of flesh. I fired and heard the thud of the bullet. The rhino started to trot away. I fired again, going well over, this time, which was not a commendable shot at that short range, and the Skipper fired his light rifle. By now I had lost sight of the rhino among the trees. So I just followed the Skipper and, although I did my best, I did not see him again until the Skipper pointed him out to me under a little tree. Even then I could not be sure which end was which — which the head and which the tail — but once satisfied of that I fired four times into his neck. He was already dead, I am sure, for none of these unnecessary shots had any visible effect. We went up and the Skipper jumped astride of the broad back. For the rhino had not rolled over on his side. He was too broad in the beam to allow that. His legs had merely collapsed under him and his head had fallen between his fore feet; had his appearance even remotely resembled any other

beast, he would have suggested a great mastiff asleep.

That is how my rhino was shot, hardly a story of danger and skill. I hit him once alive and four times dead; and at that, my first shot was a trifle high, I think, to reach the heart, which is very low in these pachyderms. They are strange beasts. They may come straight for you, like an excited steam roller, or they may trot off, as this one did, to die in a heap from a fatal wound or to go on through life as if they had never even heard the gun. In thick country they are dangerous companions, for they rush through close growth which a man cannot dodge about in and only a well-placed bullet can swerve their charge. In the open, men do not fear them, for they cannot see much over fifty yards, and if you see them first you need only make a *détour*. We had but little experience with rhinos — only this one and another big one which R. shot a month later — and I speak with insufficient knowledge, but the manners and customs of a beast with such a thick hide, such a short sight, and no wits at all cannot be abstruse.

That afternoon I went to sleep over Miss Austen and woke only in time to find that a rhino was being taken as sufficient reason for an extra whiskey at supper.

CHAPTER XVI

RICHARD'S LION

The shooting of a lion, fair and square, and face to face, was the Blue Riband of the Bush, and no detail would have seemed superfluous.

SIR PERCY FITZPATRICK, *Jock of the Bushveld*

WE decided that night to give up any thoughts of Tanganyika and, instead, to turn eastward to the buffalo country. Although we shall never know what lay in store — or in wait — for us to the south, we did not in the event regret our decision. The best route lay back by Badámit and the Leganga Hills.

The next morning, while Enos moved camp, we all started early to where we shot the rhino with the purpose of stalking his remains. We had a flurry of excitement hardly out of camp when one of the gun-bearers said he saw a lion, but I saw nothing and the incident lay in my mind more as a presage than as a real occurrence.

Near where the rhino lay we all got off our mules and horses, and advanced silently on foot. Selimani turned once and frowned at a couple of twigs I stepped on; as if they and not I had made the noise. Round each bush, we peered ahead, not perfectly certain, among so many similar trees, which of them sheltered the rhino. All in vain, so far as lions were concerned. What we saw will, however, remain almost as vivid in my memory as even the sight of

CHAPTER XXIII

OUR SECOND RHINO

I think he thinks upon the savage bull.
Much Ado, Act V, Scene 4

FROM the hot springs we travelled east along the foothills on our right for some three days, stopping one night at a place called Camp Dudu on account of its scorpions ('dudu' is Swahili for bug), and the next night at a similar place, until we came to the Narossora River. We splashed across about halfway to our knees and camped on the other side.

As I have said, our excursion to the south of Badámit had taken us away from the Rift Valley. We were now once more nearing its western slopes, but between them and us stretched an expanse of forest, the deep tropical forest of the African highlands. In the glades and meadows along its western margin, where islands of forest stood in a sea of grass and where lakes of grass lay in a mainland of forest, lived the buffalo. There they slept in the forest by day and fed on the grass by night. At twilight, dawn and evening, we were to hunt them. Here, too, in the marshes between the hills were rhino, and we hoped to meet them. Lions we now had dismissed from our thoughts, for they are plains dwellers and live amid the great herds of antelope, not in the forest where hunting is hard.

Just as Badámit was the last point to the south-

west connected in even a tenuous and intermittent way with Narok through its Indian store, so Narossora was to the southwest. For here also was just such another store. The road we had followed from Kijabe through the Kedong Valley by Ndulele to Narok and thence to the Guaso Nyero continued less and less distinguishable, to die out at Narossora. A. had invited Mrs. Percival and her daughter to meet us here, for they could get through on this vanishing road by automobile. But at Narossora a runner came through with the word that they had been delayed, and, in order to avoid waiting for them in a comparatively gameless land, we planned to go on and leave the Skipper to meet them and overtake us at Laitokitok, in the midst of the buffalo. By that time we hoped to have something to show the Percival family.

So we started the next morning, leaving the Skipper with one tent, three mules, and a dozen porters. Our first day's march wound along the bottom of a shallow ravine and then by a pass through the forest, our first real African forest, where the sun is withheld by the foliage and the air is cool and damp. Almost as much seemed to hang down from the boughs and trunks as grew up to meet them. It was the jungle of the story books, where the birds were parrots and the beasts were monkeys and leopards. We passed through and our path declined into a valley, not so spacious as we had been hunting in, and without the great herds of zebra and wildebeeste

we had seen, but large enough to show us that the main forest was beyond.

Yet here were great trees. Tall cedars, hardly to be girdled by the arms of two men, stood singly or in pairs like wireless stations on the tops of hills or in groves like the cedars of Lebanon.

We shot a tommy or two to eat and saw a few eland, but a long morning up and down the slopes of the hills disclosed no buffalo spoor, and so we moved on to Laitokitok the next day. We marched up one of the sides of the valley, passed through another and thinner strip of forest, finding on the way some flowers we had not seen before, and came out into another valley, smaller and surrounded by steeper and more wooded hills. Here we stayed until the Percivals overtook us.

As soon as we had pitched camp, an old Masai appeared, attended by two younger ones. We took him for the chief of the manyatta we could see near by and his appearance as a ceremonial visit. So we drew our folding steamer chairs up into line in front of where the porters were pitching our tents and prepared to receive him. Sasita acted as interpreter. But he disclosed no royalty or even vice-royalty. He had pains up and down his side and wanted to be cured. From all we could gather, and chiefly from his solemnly pained expression, his trouble was rheumatism. So we called Stephen to bring us the lime-juice bottle and a syphon. This was great dawa or medicine, we informed him, and perhaps, if God

were good, his pains would be less. He drank it with the wry face appropriate to medicine, and gave us thanks. Then we explained to him that we wanted some guides to help us to the buffalo. He responded with no assurances or promises, and his two younger companions looked utterly unmoved, even when we offered a reward of a pound in case of success. Sasita, however, was not discouraged; indeed, he opined that if they had promised to come we should never have seen them again, and that a blank expression really gave us some reason to expect a couple of guides in the morning; but when they arrived would depend on when they woke up and how they were feeling.

The next morning, when we were all ready to start, we found two Masai waiting for us, near our tents. They stood leaning on their long spears, as if our camp had happened to be pitched near where they were standing rather than the reverse. One was the usual Masai—long, thin-bladed spear, brown cotton knotted over one shoulder, copper earrings pendent from widely stretched lobes, bracelets, and blue bead necklace. The other was remarkable for his broad-bladed spear, a full hand's breadth across. It turned out that he was a son of Sendeyo, one of the two great chieftains of the Masai, who had fought with his own brother, the other, and caused the great schism in the tribe.¹ I think our man's

¹ As to Sendeyo, who lost his rightful inheritance of the chieftainship of the Masai by his younger brother's playing the part of Jacob to his Esau, see Hollis, *The Masai*, pages 327-29.

broad-bladed spear was the mark of his inheritance, for I never saw its like.

They eyed us, said, 'Jambo!' and shook hands limply and gravely. Then they took the lead and started off, without a word of inquiry as to what we wanted or of consultation as to where best to go.

The sun was not yet over the hills and we tramped through a thick white mist which showed where a swamp stretched between the site of our camp and the eastern group of hills. Beyond this the ground rose sharply and we walked in single file through deep wet grass. In the plains the dewy grass had brushed and slapped my bare knees; here the ears, laden with enormous drops, splashed on my spectacles and I had to pass my gun to Selimani while I kept drying them. The hills were steep, yet not abrupt. In the high altitude we all got a little out of breath as we climbed, and caught our breath again as we descended. For we went up and down, skirting a dark patch of forest here and then passing through a stretch of it there. As the sun came up, we saw how the country alternated between grass and forest, so distinctly divided that a step could take us from the bright sunlight through a close-grown wall of underbrush into the almost unbroken darkness of the woods.

We spent a long morning walking over these hills, until I was quite lost. Finally we skirted another long marsh, which lay, I think, on the other side of the range of hills to the south of camp. A hundred

yards into the swamp lay a whitish mound of something, and our Masai turned toward it. We followed, stepping from hummock to hummock, and found it was a rhino skull. Into it the Masai tossed a few blades of grass. This was a propitiation of such devil as might have taken possession, and so we, too, pulled some grass, and threw it in. Then we regained firmer land and stopped for a moment to look at our watches and consult about going back. The Percivals might arrive that afternoon and we had as yet nothing to show them. Nevertheless, it was past lunch-time. We decided to go back, and said as much to the broad-bladed Masai. He started up the hill in the centre of a wide meadow of open grass which ran to the top between the woods that covered the rest of the steep slope. Below us lay the swamp, and beyond it, over against us, rose another hillside, three or four hundred yards away, covered by patches and brakes of heavy cover.

About halfway up we crossed at right angles a fresh rhino trail, so recent that the bent grass had hardly had time to rise. It led into the woods to our left, and we followed it. The woods were about as thick as you please, with undergrowth and creepers, but the rhino had pushed and torn a path through like a tractor and we stepped hurriedly and yet cautiously on. It turned downhill and then out again into the open, crossing almost where we had stood for a moment to decide whether to go home. The spoor was so unmistakable that I do not think we

could have missed it, and I believe we had just missed the big beast by going to propitiate the devil in his ancestor's skull and again missed him when he returned to the open by following his trail into the woods. So we were not far behind, and we followed the bent grass across the open and into the woods on the right of the open meadow.

I was last of us three in our single file, because R. had given me the shot at the rhino on the plains, and it was now his turn. So the others were already within the wood when I and the secondi were still outside. I heard an exclamation from Mooma and said, 'Psst!' Then I saw that the boys behind me were gazing over the marsh at the hillside opposite. I called back my father and R., and we all looked across and saw a rhino followed by a calf steaming across an open patch on the side of the hill and disappear into some cover. Then we had another consultation, just about on the same place as before. Through our glasses we watched the pair emerge into the open again.

The Masai said the swamp was deep, by pointing and holding his hand at his waist. He added that the cover beyond was almost impenetrable, by holding the fingers of one hand criss-cross over his others. And, moreover, the game laws forbade killing a cow rhino with a calf. We decided to go back to camp. But we had hardly started once more up the meadow toward camp, when one of the Masai stopped us with the word, 'Mbogo,' or buffalo. Our gun-bear-

ers, however, refused to believe him, saying he had just seen the rhino cow again. So we kept on up. Near the top we halted, to get our breath. Again the Masai said, 'Mbogo.' Sasita shook his head, and sarcastically said, 'A bush moving.' But R. was gazing over the swamp, and now he stretched his hand out and called for his glasses. Through them he saw no buffalo, he said, but another rhino, alone, with no calf, and farther up the swamp, where it was narrower. That was what we wanted; without further consultation we went for him. It was R.'s rhino, for he had spotted him.

We got down the hill pretty quick and turned to our right along the edge of the swamp. By this time the rhino also had moved along the opposite side and was down in the mud and the rushes of the marsh. We did not see him until we walked out on a sort of peninsula that gave us a firm footing. Sasita, my father's gun-bearer, saw him first, stopped, bent over, and waved us down. We three advanced for a long way, it seemed, until we felt we must be very close to him. But he was a good seventy-five yards off when we saw him, splashing about belly deep in the mud, and half concealed by the tall reeds. R. fired and he turned with a lurch. I could hear the bullets go plunk, with a sound like stamping on wet earth. The rhino, facing us, made an effort to rise from the mud, and then sank back and over on his side. As we walked up, we heard a high, plaintive squeal, utterly out of sorts with a monster like that,

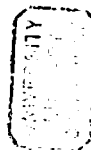
and more like a baby than anything else. He was dying, and when we reached him he was dead.

We sat round as the boys cut him up. We had to hack off his head, or rather the upper jaw as far back as the neck, to get the horns, which were fine and long, over twenty-four inches. The boys cut a quantity of long strips of the hide to make whips and walking-sticks out of.

As we sat there R. and I amused ourselves with the hide. It is a fair inch thick and tougher than leather. We got one of the Masai, he with the broad-bladed spear, to show us how he would have speared a rhino. He stood by the body and with a graceful and powerful flick of his wrist and arm drove the spear deep in, a foot or more. When we said, 'Again!' he flung it in again, deeper, and, to my admiration, precisely in the same hole. This showed he could spear a rhino all right, but if he hit one of the broad ribs, he would just bend his blade. I am told that native spearmen choose where the skin is tender under the tail and the spear can reach the heart without meeting a bone. After this, R. and I tried a soft-nosed Springfield bullet. We started to haul a big junk of flesh and hide over toward the wall of flags and bush that circled the marsh at this end, but Selimani would not let us move away without a big gun. 'Who knows who hides in that big grass?' he said. He was a prudent fellow when there was no reason to be otherwise. R. and I found that a soft-nosed bullet went through the hide easily, but left



RICHARD'S RHINOCEROS IN THE MARSH



so large a hole coming out that we wondered whether there would be much of the bullet left together to do a live rhino fatal harm.

We did not get back to camp until after four o'clock, tired and hungry. There we found the Percival family.

Mrs. Percival is one of those ladies, the best type of the settler's wife, to whom a wise Colonial Office will be polite and considerate, for without her and such as her the British Empire would be neither British nor Imperial. She was pretty and pleasant and competent. The camp and the supper table was the happier for her presence, and the richer for her activity. We had cakes cooked in cigarette tins, newspapers she had brought with her, new flowers we had missed, and such like. A small Masai baby had been brought in with deep sores on its legs and we had clumsily and ineffectually washed it with corrosive; I asked Stephen the day Mrs. Percival came how it was: 'Oh, it's all well; Madame Percival treated it.'

Peggy, her daughter, I can only say, is a great friend of mine. We had long talks. When I see her next she will be grown up and I hope she will be as kind to me as she was.