

The Land of the Pigmies

BY
CAPTAIN GUY BURROWS

(Captain Commandant, Cargo Free State)

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
H. M. STANLEY, M.P.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS, SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR,
AND MAPS*



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of the Congo territory. Moreover, as I have said, these elephants are very strictly preserved. A royal decree of the 25th of July, 1889, forbids elephant-shooting in any part of the State without a license or special permission; and in addition to this there are close districts and close seasons, fixed by the Governor-General and enforced by the district commissioners. Although this cannot affect the hunters among natives of more distant regions, the primitive nature of their weapons precludes the possibility of anything like wholesale slaughter, while the actual number of elephants killed by white sportsmen does not amount to more than one hundred head in a year. On the other hand, there is always a danger that the timid beasts may be pursued until they are frightened into seeking a more remote refuge in less accessible lands.

The African rhinoceros, clumsy and uncouth, has two horns, differing in this particular from the Asiatic, which carries but a single horn, and his front weapon of offence is sometimes as much as twenty-eight inches long. This huge beast frequents marshy jungles, and is met with in pairs or small companies on the Katanga, Manyema, and M'Bomu. Like the elephant, and second only to it in size among land animals, the rhinoceros marks the distinction between the fauna of the forest region and of the grass plains surrounding it on the north, east, and south, in which countries

are found the lion, giraffe, zebra, and other creatures unknown in the woods and forests of Western Africa.

The birds of prey include the eagle, vulture, and hawk; and the falcon and owl, which are the worst enemies of smaller beasts and birds; besides these the parrot, heron, crane, ibis, sparrow, pelican, duck, and many gorgeously feathered birds whose names I do not know are to be found in all parts of the country.

Among the reptiles the most remarkable are the boas and pythons, whose bite is not poisonous; the long green river-snakes; the spitting snake, whose saliva, if it reaches the eye endangers the sight; and a most repulsive serpent known as the two-headed snake, which resembles a gigantic earthworm, in that it is difficult to distinguish between its head and tail. Crocodiles are met with in great numbers in nearly every river. Natives are very fond of their flesh, though they can seldom taste it, as a crocodile will sink if mortally wounded; and they have no effective way of killing him on land, unless they happen to catch him napping on the bank and succeed in spearing him. In place of a tongue his mouth is furnished with a small valve, which just shuts up with the gullet. Frogs and toads, the latter of great size, are among the useful insect-eaters of the Congo basin.