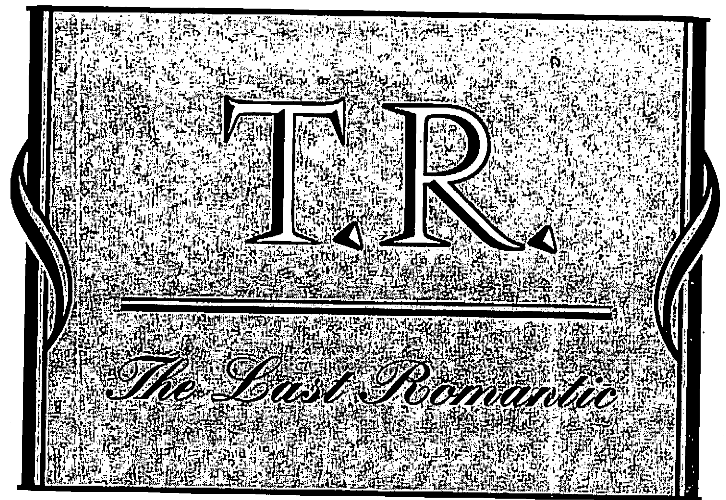
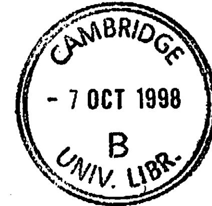


H. W. BRANDS



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the late South African war. Roosevelt was as thoroughly taken by the Boers he met as they, fully aware of his Dutch roots, were by him. He congratulated them on their large families and joined them in singing a Dutch lullaby he remembered from childhood.

Between the British and the Boers, Roosevelt judged, the white race was well represented in Africa. "There could be no better and manlier people than those, both English and Dutch, who are at this moment engaged in the great and difficult task of adding East Africa to the domain of civilization."

Roosevelt had no doubt that white settlements in Africa would have a beneficial effect on the black races there; for proof one had only to look at the condition of the black race in America. "To an American, who must necessarily think much of the race problem at home," he wrote, "it is pleasant to be made to realize in vivid fashion the progress the American negro has made, by comparing him with the negro who dwells in Africa untouched, or but lightly touched, by white influence." The relative advancement of American blacks was underlined by the presence in Kenya of a black man from the States who was working as a doctor; Roosevelt and his party quickly came to respect and admire this man for his courtesy and intelligence. They felt much the same way regarding a Jamaican black who managed one of the colonial government's farms and whose skills and temperament likewise bespoke the ameliorative influence of white culture. "No one could fail to be impressed with the immense advance these men represented as compared with the native negro."

V

But Roosevelt hadn't come all the way to Africa to discover the civilizing genius of the white race, of which he was completely convinced already. He had come for the hunting. Even so, just as he felt obliged to defend the institutions that made a great white hunt politically possible, so he felt compelled to defend the values that made it scientifically—as he saw it—necessary. During the course of his debates with the "nature fakers," one of the targets of Roosevelt's scorn had of wild things by declaring, "Every time Mr. Roosevelt gets near the heart of a wild thing he invariably puts a bullet through it." Perhaps this jibe still stung, or perhaps he simply recognized that the *Scribner's* audience wasn't quite that of *Field and Stream*. In any event, he mounted a sturdy defense of hunting. He recited "certain facts that ought to be self-evident to every one above the intellectual level of those well-meaning persons who apparently think that all shooting is wrong and that man could continue to exist if all wild animals were allowed to increase unchecked." Notable among these facts was that the argument-from-Eden for the sanctity of animal life was illogical and untenable. Roosevelt pointed out that humans and wildlife were engaged in a constant struggle for the resources of the planet; if humans didn't kill animals, the animals would end up killing humans, by eating them out of crops and home. He didn't advocate indiscriminate slaughter, to be sure. "Game-butchery is as objectionable as any other form of wanton cruelty or barbarity," he said. "But to protest against all hunting of game is a sign of softness of head, not of soundness of heart."

Roosevelt killed hundreds of animals on this trip; yet he insisted in each installment of his story that he did so only in the interests of science and sustenance (what wasn't stuffed to make dioramas for the museum was stewed to make dinner for the baggage-bearers). Despite his disclaimers, however, his thrill at the chase and the kill gleamed through his prose. For each of dozens of encounters, he described in exquisite detail the tracking, stalking, shooting, and expiring of the victim. After a while all the giant and common elands, harnessed and unharnessed bushbucks, Jackson's and Nilotic hartebeests, Vaughn's and white-eared kobs, common and Singsing waterbucks, and Grant's, Roberts's, Notata, and Thomson's gazelles started to run together. But a few of the encounters were undeniably gripping, and as recounted by the great man himself, they demonstrated that he hadn't lost the physical courage in which he took such pride and which made him so irresistible to so many of his compatriots.

Roosevelt bagged his first lion on the Kapiti plains between Nairobi and Mount Kilimanjaro. The expedition's beaters had been creating a commotion in the tall grass, driving suspected lions in the direction of Roosevelt and the other rifles. But they raised only two cubs, which

guishing the species "teddy lion").

Disappointed, Roosevelt and the other hunters mounted their horses and proceeded back toward camp. On the way they spotted fresh signs of lions and detoured toward a thicket to flush out any big cats hiding there.

> We rode up to it and shouted loudly. The response was immediate, in the shape of loud gruntings, and crashings through the thick brush. We were off our horses in an instant, I throwing the reins over the head of mine; and without delay the good old fellow began placidly grazing, quite unmoved by the ominous sounds immediately in front. I sprang to one side; and for a second or two we waited, uncertain whether we should see the lions charging out ten yards distant, or running away. Fortunately, they adopted the latter course. Right in front of me, thirty yards off, there appeared, from behind the bushes which had first screened him from my eyes, the tawny, galloping form of a big, maneless lion. Crack! the Winchester spoke; and as the soft-nosed bullet ploughed forward through his flank the lion swerved so that I missed him with the second shot; but my third bullet went through the spine and forward into his chest. Down he came, sixty yards off, his hind quarters dragging, his head up, his ears back, his jaws open and lips drawn up in a prodigious snarl, as he endeavored to turn to face us. His back was broken; but of this we could not at the moment be sure, and if it had been merely grazed, he might have recovered, and then, even though dying, his charge might have done mischief. So Kermit, Sir Alfred, and I fired, almost together, into his chest. His head sank, and he died.

Roosevelt killed eight other lions, eight elephants, thirteen rhinoceroses, seven hippopotamuses, twenty zebra, seven giraffes, six buffalo (the real thing, not the bison of North America), and scores of lesser mammals, as well as dozens of birds, from ostriches (two) and great bustards (four) down to the odd duck and songbird, and three pythons.

Like other hunters, he developed opinions regarding the character of his various foes. He judged the lion the most formidable, combining great strength with courage—although Roosevelt conceded wide variance among lions, as among certain other dangerous animals. One lion would charge when another would retreat. By contrast, rhinocer-

... stupid, and on precisely that account could be quite terrifying—not least because the only sure way to bring down a rampaging rhino was to put a bullet in its brain, a small target indeed.

The quirks of animal behavior caused Roosevelt to reflect on animal emotions, which in turn caused him to reflect on human emotions. Roosevelt knew that it was unscientific to impute emotions to animals, since there was no way of knowing what any given animal was thinking or if it was thinking anything at all. Yet the subject of animal emotions served as his literary gateway to the topic of human emotions; and in any event he was just as sure that animals thought and felt as he was of nearly everything else in his life. He mused,

> Watching the game, one was struck by the intensity and the evanescence of their emotions. Civilized man now usually passes his life under conditions which eliminate the intensity of terror felt by his ancestors when death by violence was their normal end, and threatened them every hour of the day and night. It is only in nightmares that the average dweller in civilized countries now undergoes the hideous horror which was the regular and frequent portion of his ages-vanished forefathers, and which is still an every-day incident in the lives of most wild creatures. But the dread is short-lived, and its horror vanishes with instantaneous rapidity.

This was all the more reason why the tenderhearted should not weep for those animals killed by hunters—or for those uncivilized people brought under the rule of law.

> Life is hard and cruel for all the lower creatures, and for man also in what the sentimentalists call a "state of nature." The savage of to-day shows us what the fancied age of gold of our ancestors was really like; it was an age when hunger, cold, violence, and iron cruelty were the ordinary accompaniments of life. If Matthew Arnold, when he expressed the wish to know the thoughts of Earth's "vigorous, primitive" tribes of the past, had really desired an answer to his question, he would have done well to visit the homes of the existing representatives of his "vigorous, primitive" ancestors, and to watch them feasting on blood and guts.

Roosevelt did just this, and, through his writing, so did his readers.

> Around the dead rhino the scene was lit up both by the moon and by the flicker of trees. The porters made their camp under a small tree a

branches on which they hung their bright-colored blankets, two or three big fires blazing to keep off possible lions. Half as far on the other side of the rhino a party of naked savages had established their camp, if camp it could be called, for really all they did was to squat down round a couple of fires with a few small bushes disposed round about. The rhino had been opened, and they had already taken out of the carcass what they regarded as the tidbits and what we certainly did not grudge them. Between the two camps lay the huge dead beast, his hide glistening in the moonlight. In each camp the men squatted around the fires chatting and laughing as they roasted strips of meat on long sticks, the fitful blaze playing over them, now leaving them in darkness, now bringing them out into a red relief.

Roosevelt entered far enough into the spirit of the country to eat the heart of the first elephant he killed, a great bull with monumental tusks, bagged on the slopes of Mount Kenya. But for the rest he remained distinctly an outlander, a keeper of civilization in the wildest region of the earth. Roosevelt may or may not have intended the stark—to the point of humorous—juxtaposition of one scene in which he had just put his knife through the brain of a deadly puff adder. "I slipped it into my saddle pocket," he wrote, "where its blood stained the pigskin cover of the little pocket 'Nibelungenlied' which that day I happened to carry." Roosevelt wrote of reading Poe on the upper Nile, of feeling a flush of patriotic pride on receiving a cable telling of Peary's winning the race to the North Pole, of listening with delight to the pupils of an American missionary sing the first two lines of "The Star-Spangled Banner"—phonetically: They had no idea what the words meant.

Seeing all the sights he described and killing all those animals took a long time: The grand safari lasted nearly a year. It ended at Khartoum in March 1910. "Kermit and I parted from our comrades of the trip with real regret; during the year we spent together there had not been a jar, and my respect and liking for them had grown steadily." Roosevelt also regretted taking leave of his "faithful black followers." He noted that he had been sick, with fever, only five days out of the whole; he ventured the opinion that this malady had nothing to do with Africa but rather was a recurrence of an illness contracted in Cuba. After this modest bow to the physical toll of the journey, he closed his account with a reminder that he was also a war hero.

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VI

Roosevelt's published version was how he wanted his public to perceive his expedition. He didn't dwell on certain other aspects of the journey—for example, the relatively soft life of the hunter who could afford to travel first class, as he did. "My tent is so comfortable (a warm bath and a cup of tea always ready for me when I come in after the day's hunt) and the food so good, that I feel rather as if I was having more luxury than was good for me," he wrote Bamie. And this comfortable tent was the rudest of his accommodations. During several stretches of the safari he stayed in the houses of the British settler aristocracy, including the Lord and Lady Delamere, master and mistress of a one-hundred-thousand-acre spread in Kenya, where they had established themselves as the foremost members of a modern, if comparatively enlightened, feudal nobility. Only slightly less elegant was the ranch of Sir Alfred Pease, an inveterate hunter who, having sampled the game of most of the African continent, had settled in the East African highlands for the moment. He also stayed with the William McMillans, a pair of American expatriates who felt honored to play host to their native country's former chief executive. "After returning from hunting today," he reported to Bamie from the McMillans', "I am sitting on the cool verandah of a very nice house with a beautiful garden around it."

Roosevelt and Kermit were treated to the best hospitality the white settlers of the region could provide, which, reflecting the pains they took to re-create the life of England in the bush, was quite good. From the evidence of the meals the two Roosevelts were served, they might as well have been in London. July 1909 found them in Nairobi for a transplanted version of race week at Ascot. Roosevelt was too old to take a mount in the running, but Kermit did, to his own amusement and his father's pride.

Indeed, Kermit's growing competence was one of the highlights of