

HAVASH!

Frontier Adventures in Kenya

BY

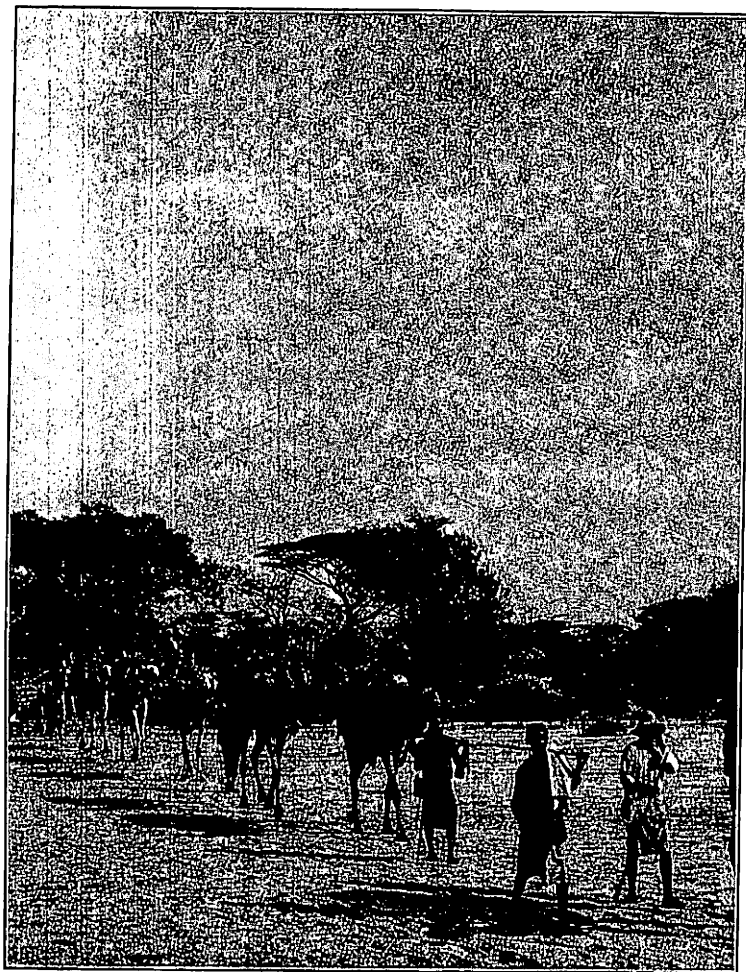
William

Brevet-Major W. LLOYD-JONES, D.S.O.

*Chevalier Legion d'Honneur, Chevalier Crown of Italy,
Chevalier Crown of Roumania, White Eagle of Serbia*

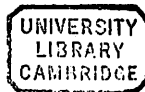
b. 1906

WITH 28 PHOTOGRAPHS AND A MAP.



A camel safari

Frontispiece]



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HAVASH !

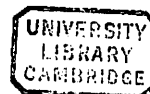
the head and shoulders of a rhino standing fast asleep. Taking careful aim I fired, at the same time stepping back ready with the other barrel should the beast charge. There was a tremendous snorting and plunging, and in a cloud of dust the rhino dashed off into the bush like a runaway engine. We followed quietly, and came upon him again in about three hundred yards. He was pretty badly hit and was breathing heavily. Advancing cautiously, I gave him a right and left from about forty yards, aiming for the eye. He tumbled to his knees, and I was about to approach to give the *coup de grâce*, when Tekla Silas touched my elbow and said :

“Shoot again quickly, he may charge yet.”

It was well he did so, for as I raised my rifle to fire the stricken beast struggled to his knees and made a gallant effort to charge home. This time he went down for good, but he had stopped four well-placed heavy bullets, any of which should have been fatal. The Maraquet hunters now appeared and wished to begin on the meat, but first my orderlies cut off the horn and some strips of hide to be used for the making of whips. There followed a horrible orgy. The Maraquet gathered around and, cutting into the body, ate the flesh raw. My last view of the scene was of a small boy dripping with blood right inside the carcass hacking away with a sword to



Skinning a rhino



HAVASH !

The second day's march out was waterless, so we started in the afternoon to avoid the heat of the day, and bivouacking, marched again at dawn so as to make the water early. I was carefully observing my men, as I was just a little apprehensive of the effect this fierce desert country would have upon the recruits, who had never before left their own country.

This region had a very sinister reputation, and was certainly awe-inspiring to any but a really hardened "bush-whacker." We were now marching through very thick, trackless bush, and absolutely dependent on the Sumburu guides. This did not make matters any easier for me, for though they probably did know the country, they were extraordinarily vague, and sometimes gave most misleading answers as to distances and the probable position and quality of the water to be found *en route*.

The reputation of "A" Company was apparently somewhat sinister, as the following incident will illustrate. The night before leaving Archer's Post an old Swahili trader had asked for and obtained permission to attach himself and his small party to my safari. Now he came to tell me that owing to some matter of business which required his

A PEACEFUL TRADER

immediate presence he must return to the river. It was entirely his own affair and I soon forgot the incident. Some days later, however, Dasalin related the real story of his sudden change of mind. It appeared that the old man had a wife who, contrary to the usual idea prevalent among Europeans, had great influence over him, and it was she who had persuaded him to return. According to Dasalin her line of argument had been somewhat as follows :

"Truly this caravan is indeed strong and well-organised. None, not even the Havash themselves, would dare to attack it. Nevertheless, I fear for our safety, for I have heard of these Havash askaris before. They are soldiers, and not like those of the police that we know. Also I have heard of their commandant. He hurries eagerly to battle. Assuredly should news of raiders come by the way he will at once turn aside and seek to destroy them. Let us therefore now return to the river, for we be peaceful traders. Soon, after this caravan has passed through the country, their presence will be known to all and the way will be safe. Then we can proceed quietly and safely where we will and in our own good time."

Game now began to be occasionally espied, but of a variety quite different from that found on

the Kenyan slopes. Grévy zebra and oryx, neither of which require much water, seemed common. Rhino tracks were everywhere, and, according to the Sumburu, lions were not only numerous but so bold that it was necessary to take precautions every night to protect the donkeys and even the men sleeping by the fire. I was prepared for this, as from the reports I had seen of travellers in this country it was no uncommon occurrence for porters to be carried off by lions even from the fireside.

The next water was at a place called Mahlalyok and consisted of a pool in the rock. Here there was a Sumburu manyatta (kraal), where I managed to obtain a bullock for the men, for which I gave a type-written receipt to the headman. My portable typewriter was most useful. The natives seemed to attach great importance to a printed document, and used to gather round while I was typing my diary sheets.

On the march I took the opportunity to train Red Wull. He was very bold and would tackle almost anything, but it took a little time to teach him to stand perfectly still until I gave him the signal to dash in. Once he had learnt the game it was rare that a wounded animal escaped, as he rounded them up in a very short time.

By now I had great confidence in my new Westley-Richards magazine rifle, but tried never to shoot at much over fifty yards, and thus make certain of bringing down my quarry.

The fourth day's march was only ten miles and led to good water, but as I did not expect to find much ahead I used six donkeys exclusively for carrying water so as to be independent of the inaccurate information of the guides. I was trying to train the men to use their water-bottles sparingly, and did not permit their use until arrival in camp at sundown. This training had its effect, and enabled the recruits to undertake long waterless marches in the desert without undue exhaustion. The fifth march took us to a place called Angoroni, where we were lucky enough to find a pool of rain water and took the opportunity to wash our clothes.

Rhino were quite a nuisance now and frequently delayed the march. No less than five came across our path on this particular day. As I did not want to shoot them I used to try and shoo them off, though not always successfully. One in particular, instead of lumbering off, came towards the column, and I simply *had* to kill him. Many people think that these animals are easily disposed of, but personally I never took chances with them, and used

HAVASH !

to pour in lead (if possible from behind a rock) till I was sure that the beast was dead. This fellow ran up and down the whole length of the safari scattering the donkeys and porters in all directions. My cook, as usual, created a diversion by trying to climb a thorn tree. It took hours to reorganise the safari and resume the march.

Our next halt was by the side of a stream at a place called by the curious Chinese-sounding name of Nyeng. It was refreshing to see running water again, so I decided to give the men and animals a day's rest. The Sumburu here were very friendly, and as evidently my reputation as a healer had preceded me, the elders asked me to remain so that they might bring in their sick. One old man even brought in his son so that he might see a white man. It was obvious that the white men who had previously traversed this country had treated the natives with consideration, and I was much impressed by the confidence and friendliness of the people. Captain Stigand, I know, had passed that way and I put down a good deal to his influence. He had a wonderful knowledge of the African and had a great future. Unfortunately, he was killed during the War in the Sudan.

The African native is a shrewd judge of character



"We were lucky enough to find a pool of rain water"



"A patch of well-watered country"

It was intensely hot, so I arranged to have the whole detachment out at dawn for physical drill. After the sun was up, except for necessary fatigues and signalling practice, the training of the recruits was carried out in the shade of the few palm trees in the vicinity of the post.

Almost as soon as L. had departed the local people brought in more news of the presence of Havash, and expressed lively fears of further raids. To give them confidence I established a system of regular partols, and allowed a few askaris to accompany their herds when it was thought necessary to take them beyond the immediate protection of the post. This somewhat allayed the apprehensions of the tribesmen, especially as I promised that if they could bring me reliable news of the position of the base of the Havash I would "burn them out." I also ordered the detachment on the mountain to make daily patrols and to keep a continuous look-out, and at the same time arranged for means of immediate communication between the mountain post and Loiyangalani: a helio flash by day and the lighting of an enormous bonfire, kept ready for the purpose, by night.

Sometimes I used to take out a patrol myself for a couple of days, and on one occasion

had an experience which none of us will ever forget.

A few miles to the north of Loiyangalani there was a deep gully with a water-hole near by. As from above the ravine a fine view was obtained of the country northwards, from the base of the mountain to the lake shore, I determined to establish at this spot an advanced post, and made a temporary camp for the purpose of investigating the site and superintending the necessary work. My tent was pitched on the soft lava field. The ground would not hold tent-pegs, so the guy-ropes had to be secured by piling up heaps of stones. After a long day's reconnaissance in the blazing sun, I was sitting by my tent door, when across the ravine I saw what at first I took to be a lioness. It was a likely spot, indeed we had seen the spoor of lion leading into the ravine.

It was getting dusk, so without hesitation I fired. As I did so my orderly turned, and with evident disapproval remarked, "Feci" (hyena). It dropped dead, and I believe that some of the men attributed the subsequent discomforts of the night to the fact that I had shot so ill-omened a beast.

Usually the evenings had been still, but soon

after dark the wind began to howl ominously, and I had to call for men to hold up my tent. Then followed a regular tornado, accompanied by heavy rain, a very rare occurrence in this region. Stranger still, Red Wull, usually so bold, whined miserably and came cringing to me for protection as though terrified by some actual presence which I was unable to see. I felt rather uneasy myself, especially when Abdul Gadir pointed out to me a regular procession of animals passing the camp and hurrying down the mountain-side to the open plain.

The whole country was volcanic, and I was thoroughly convinced that a seismic disturbance was about to take place. Every moment I was expecting to hear the ominous thunder of a landslide or of the rush of the waters of the lake as they surged forward to engulf the low-lying plain.

No one slept much that night, and we were glad to move off at dawn. As we trudged away we left deep tracks in the soft alluvial soil. An eerie night.

All this time I was collecting and sifting the various rumours and reports brought in by the Sumburu concerning the movements of the Havash raiders, but could make no definite plans at present.

Without transport I was to all intents and purposes marooned, or at any rate tied to the lake shore.

I made another visit up the mountain-side, and had perhaps the nearest shave that I ever had with a rhino.

Accompanied only by Dasalin and my Abyssinian syce, Gabre Gorges, I was searching the hill-side for signs of game with my field-glasses when suddenly Gabre Gorges touched my elbow and whispered, "Faro" (rhino).

Turning round, I found myself within a few feet of a cow rhino with a calf at her side. Jumping quickly aside, I emitted a fearful yell, in the hope of scaring the beasts away, as they were really too close to tackle. With a great snort the old lady whipped round and, followed by her calf, plunged into the thorn bush. Rather relieved, I continued the march, for I intended to get through to the mountain post in the day, but a quarter of an hour later we saw the same pair, who must have circled round, trotting towards us. This time the cow somehow looked very nasty, so getting down behind a convenient rock, I started literally to pump lead into her from about a hundred yards. I was hitting her about the face and

horn and could see the splinters flying. At about forty yards she stumbled to her knees, but she gallantly to come again, and only rolled over and she had stopped about twenty well-placed bullets. She was, I think, the most determined of the species that I ever had to kill. The calf ran off.

This rather delayed us, as the orderly begged to be allowed to cut off the horn, even if I did not want it myself. I only got in to the post just before sunset, and found everything in a muddle. Something was wrong, but what it was I could not at first discover.

Gizau Walde Mariam, the sergeant in charge was ill at ease and did not seem his usual bright self. I could get nothing out of anyone. All the rations had been eaten, the porters left behind seemed sulky, but dared not say anything. I slept over it, and in the morning decided to relieve the whole detachment and take the original party back to Loiyangalani with me.

Gizau reported sick, but I do not think there was anything the matter with him. I was really in a difficult position, and was relieved at this temporary solution. I did not want to doubt my best men, and had no means of dealing with them

of communicating with another post, even if I had wished to do so. Eventually, mindful of the dictum of Sir Harry Lumsden (of the Guides), "You cannot punish a bad man too much or a good man too little," I decided to let things alone for the time being, hoping that perhaps the matter would settle itself.

Two or three evenings later, just as I was about to turn in, my orderly came to tell me that Sergt. Gizau Walde Mariam wished to see me alone. This, of course, was irregular, but calling him into my hut, I motioned him to speak.

He began at once:

"Commandant, may I return to my duty tomorrow, and in future let me always be with you. If I could, and you would have me, I would rather be your orderly than a colour-sergeant."

I told him that he should return to duty next morning, and never knew what really had happened to upset the whole detachment. In the circumstances perhaps it was as well. Had it not been for this incident Gizau would not have accompanied me on the search for the Havash lair, and to his initiative and gallant action there the success of the attack was largely due.

During the hot afternoons I used to try to

HAVASH!

and began to circle slowly round, approaching gradually nearer.

They were hyenas, and no doubt had scented the wound. Always considered cowardly, they are often bold at night, and will snatch a helpless or dying man from a hut. I tried desperately, but in vain, to awaken the sleeping figures at my side, and had just made up my mind to fire my revolver, when fortunately Mr. Parvati got up to give me an injection of morphia.

At dawn next day we started to cross the shoulder of Mount Kulal, and climbed steadily up from the plain. When we halted for breakfast I found that my jaw was beginning to stiffen.

For some days I had noticed a slight difficulty in my efforts to eat, but hoped that it would pass off. Though I hardly dared own it to myself, I now realised that lock-jaw was overtaking me. I tried hard to make myself believe that the symptoms were due to shock caused by the effect of a heavy bullet. Once I had read in an old book on surgery that such symptoms might be expected. However, as I did not propose to die slowly by starvation, I tackled K. on the subject, and made him swear to me "by all that he held holy" that if by the next morning the stiffening of the jaw became more pronounced he would leave me alone

LOCK-JAW

for a quarter of an hour with my revolver and ask no questions. The occasion did not arise, though later my jaw became so fixed that I had to place a gag in my mouth to prevent it closing altogether, and could only be fed by means of a spoon with liquid while lying flat on my back. There was no doubt about the tetanus then.

I forget whether we took a week or ten days to get to Marsabit, as the rest of the journey seemed to me like a hideous nightmare. One dreadful afternoon I do remember, however. Mr. Parvati declared that it was essential to clean the wound again and to change the bandages, which were by now soaked through. By this time the supply of chloroform had given out, and I am not likely to forget the intense anguish of the moment when the bandages and splints were removed. I hung on to my revolver like grim death, though both K. and Mr. Parvati wanted to get possession of it. However, as I pointed out, it was still always possible that we might be attacked by Havash or molested by dangerous game. I therefore insisted on remaining armed. Mr. Parvati, unfortunately, here dropped the hypodermic syringe. It broke on the rock, so from now onwards I used to swallow the morphia tablets.

One night I experienced a most extraordinary

and did not wish to have to touch a dead body. The Kikuyu leave their dying alone in a hut to be taken by hyenas.

Captain D. now took charge of the party, as K. had many arrears of work to make up and had to remain at the station.

We did not get far that day, just off the slopes of the mountain, and camped at the edge of the thorn bush.

As we were pitching camp Dasalin espied a couple of rhino nosing about in the bush to our front. As I was giving him orders to go and scare them off D. came running up and said that as he had never shot a rhino he would like to go after them. I implored him to leave it to the experienced Dasalin, as I was afraid that it was more than likely that he would only drive them through the camp. Off he went, however, but returned later without having got a shot.

That night was, to say the least of it, very uncomfortable. Unable to rest, I got Mr. Parvati to sit up and tell me stories of his own country. Many and wonderful they were. He was extremely interesting, and amongst other things, during the long night watches, put before me very clearly the point of view of an educated Indian.

Anxious to be on the move again, accompanied

by my orderlies and Mr. Parvati, I insisted on starting before the camp was struck. We had hardly moved a hundred yards when there was a snort in the bush, and the two rhino of the evening before emerged, apparently about to charge.

I ordered the stretcher to halt and pulled out my revolver. Abdul Gadir and Dasalin stepped quickly forward to cover the stretcher, but I ordered them to hold their fire. From about sixty yards the two rhino made up their minds and came straight for us.

The two orderlies were armed only with single loading rifles firing solid .303 bullets. On my word "Piga" (fire) they very coolly commenced to plaster the beasts with well-aimed shots. Dasalin was laughing and thoroughly enjoying himself. Keeping one eye on the porters, he ordered Abdul Gadir to take the hindmost beast, as if one of the rhino had "got home" it would have been quite as bad as the two. Feebly waving my revolver, but reserving my fire, I imagined how the old rhino would enjoy hurling the stretcher into the air. But at about twenty yards the beasts veered away and thundered past us like a couple of traction engines running down hill out of control.

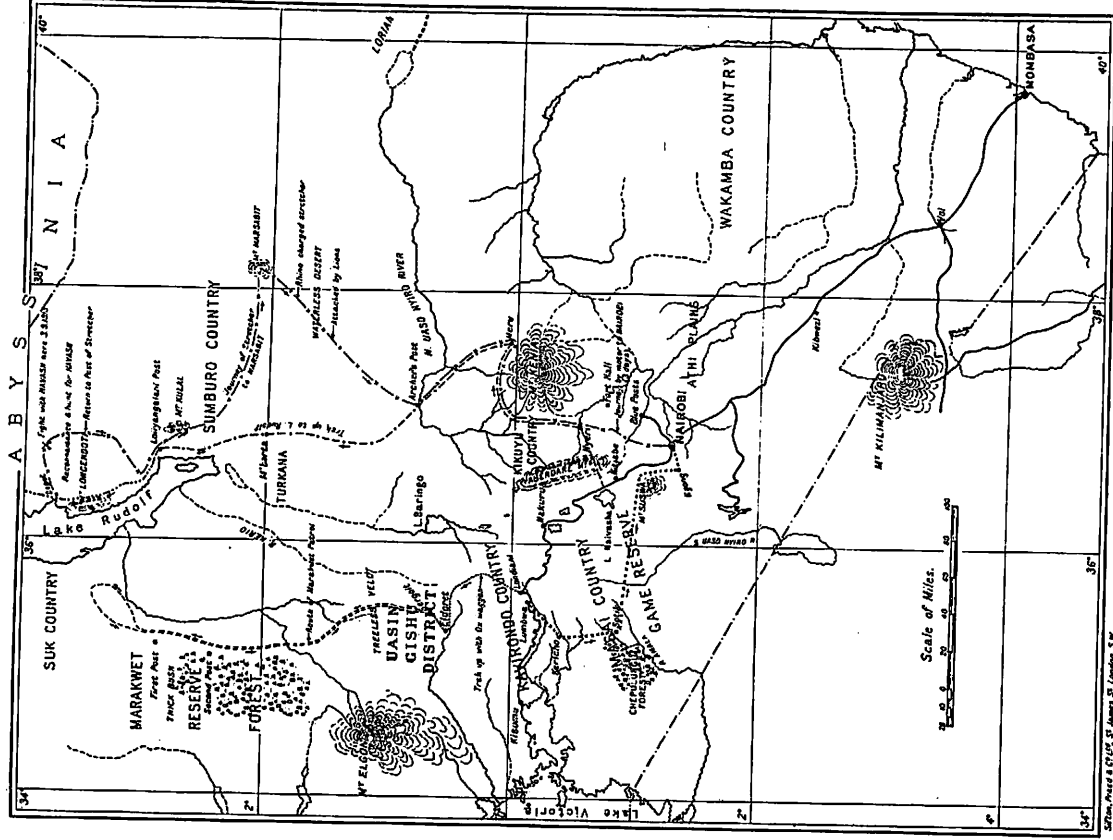
After that incident I was careful not to start again in rhino country before the advanced guard.

I!

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K. dated from Marsabit,
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was a sound of woe.
dead! It cannot be
not forgotten here."



- 1st trek : to Uasin Gishu Plateau
----- 2nd trek : Maraquet Patrol
***** 3rd trek : to Sotik
- . - . - 4th trek : to Lake Rudolf
- - - - - 5th trek : the return to Nairobi after the encounter

