



VITAL SHOTS ON THE ELEPHANT

Plate 1

THE DANGER SIGNAL, EARS PRICKED, TRUNK ALERT.  
THE TWO FRONTAL SHOTS HAVE BEEN ROUGHLY SHOWN BY RINGS DRAWN ON THE PHOTOGRAPH.

THE LONSDALE LIBRARY

VOLUME XIV

## BIG GAME SHOOTING IN AFRICA

By Major H. C. MAYDON (Editor), H.R.H. THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, R. AKROYD, Capt. G. BLAINE, Lt.-Col. R. E. DRAKE-BROCKMAN, Major E. D. BROWNE, Major G. BURRARD, A. L. BUTLER, Major A. L. COOPER, Major P. H. G. POWELL-COTTON, SIR A. P. GORDON-CUMMING, BT., Dr. H. L. DUKE, Col. STEVENSON HAMILTON, A. C. KNOLLYS, DENIS LYELL, Capt. A. T. A. RITCHIE, Capt. M. W. HILTON SIMPSON, N. B. SMITH, Col. H. G. C. SWAYNE, Col. J. L. F. TWEEDIE, H. F. VARIAN, R. C. WOOD.    ∩    ∩    ∩

With one hundred & fifty  
ILLUSTRATIONS



pp. 1-445

LONDON  
Seeley, Service & Co. Ltd.  
196 Shaftesbury Avenue

1932

3687

It is the unexpectedness of the attack, invariably made at close quarters, which makes it so deadly. As, however, its range of eyesight, like that of an Elephant, is limited to from thirty to forty yards it is generally fairly easy to avoid these attacks, provided the sportsman keeps his head, and is agile.

The moment a Rhino gets your wind its head and tail go up to the accompaniment of a loud grunting snort. For its bulk it is extraordinarily quick on its feet and covers the ground at a great speed.

A cow with a calf is an exceptionally dangerous animal, and in approaching a Rhino the utmost care should be taken to spot it before it discovers you, a difficult matter in the dense country in which it is usually found.

It is quite a habit for a Rhino when seeking its daytime resting place to turn back parallel and to leeward of its trail before it lies down, and the hunter must always be on the alert for such a contingency when following its spoor.

Black Rhino are as fond as the White species of wallowing in mud or rolling in dust, which gives their hides a variety of shades, from grey to red. Like the White race they resort to one spot to drop their dung and then kick it about, so that the bushes near are sprinkled with it.

When on the move, the precedence of a family party reverses the order accepted by the White Rhino. With the Black variety the bull leads, the cow follows, and the calf brings up the rear.

#### BLACK RHINOCEROS HUNTING

By MAJOR P. H. G. POWELL-COTTON

In the Baringo district Rhino were both numerous and aggressive, and the tale is told that before the days of the railway one of them charged a line of prisoners laden with the baggage of an official. The unfortunate men, who were chained by the neck, were unable to take flight, and several of them met their death.

When I was in that part of the country many years ago it was no unusual thing for the safari to cast down their loads and scatter in all directions as a beast, resentful of the scent of man, bore down on them unawares, snorting its disgust.

This was provoking enough when one still had the right to shoot, but after securing the two Rhino permitted on his licence, a sportsman had no other course but ignominiously to take to his heels with the men who, quite unmoved by any explanation of government prohibition, smiled and marked him down as a faint-hearted hunter.

With my second Rhino we had a lively encounter. In the first glow of dawn we had set out from camp, east of the lake, in pursuit of Giraffe, and soon picked up some fresh tracks that led us over a low hill. From its brow a fine view opened out below us, across a wide plain teeming with herds of game—Zebra, Eland, Oryx, Granti, Ostrich, Rhino and Giraffe, feeding or roaming at will over its fertile stretches of grassland.

On our homeward trail, after a day of disappointment, the men and I, hot and weary, were enjoying visions of the pleasant camp to which we

were returning, when abruptly our dream was dissipated by the sight of two Rhino standing in thin thorn some two hundred yards from our line of march. If we advanced they could not fail to get our wind, and to circle them meant a long detour, so when the glasses revealed that one had a good horn, I decided to try and secure it as the second Rhino of my permit, if possible.

Leaving men and mule behind me, I managed to move forward to within one hundred yards, although it was plain that the beasts were apprehensive, from their uneasy turnings this way and that. Aim was awkward through the thorn trees, and as my shot for the shoulder rang out, both Rhino simultaneously dashed in my direction, one rather wide, the other straight for me, blood and foam oozing from its lips, and spraying from its distended nostrils. The bullet had evidently struck the lungs. Another failed to stop it, and while I was beating a hurried retreat, reloading as I ran, a quiver of the ground and an infuriated snort close to my ear made me leap to one side. Swinging round I poured both barrels at the beast's shoulder at a distance of two or three yards, and swerving past me it transferred its interest to Bedoni, my gun-bearer, who had followed me and was now dodging behind some thorn trees. Deliberately the beast gave chase: the man flew for his life, doubling from side to side, while I sprang forward to try and divert its attention from his speeding figure.

To my consternation I then saw the second gun-bearer, a most erratic shot, raising his rifle, from which I knew Bedoni was quite as likely to get the bullet as the Rhino. My shout of protest was too late; the report rang out, but mercifully the shot went aground, while at the same moment Bedoni lost his footing and fell just in front of the beast which blundered onwards straight over his outstretched form. His teeth were chattering and his wrist was badly bruised by the animal's foot, but otherwise there was no sign of damage, and in a few moments we were steadied enough to look for our quarry lying motionless close by.

Nothing seemed to stir the quiet spirit of my old mule, a lover of the contemplative life, who was obviously far on the road to invulnerability. She was quietly standing close to the scene of the disturbance, just as I had left her, with a tolerant expression for all this human pother and agitation.

#### W H I T E   R H I N O C E R O S

The term "White" first applied to Rhino by the Boers of South Africa, is misleading, for while the texture of the skin of *Rhinoceros simus* differs from that of the Black species, the colour of the hide is only a slightly lighter shade of slaty grey. The animal, however, is fond of bathing in mud or rolling in dust, from which it takes on any shade from a deep red to a light grey, that would appear whitish in a strong light.

When at rest the ponderous bulk of the beast may easily be mistaken for an ant-hill of the prevailing colour.

In South Africa, less than one hundred years ago, a traveller in Magaliesberg (North-west Transvaal), counted over eighty White Rhino in one day's march. Now, unfortunately, the sole survivors are said to be some half dozen specimens, which the Natal Government are endeavouring to protect.

The White Rhino is a grass feeder with a wide square mouth as its most distinctive feature, while the narrow-jawed Black type subsists on thorn twigs gathered with its pointed prehensile upper lip.

The White Rhino is only exceeded in bulk by the Elephant, and a fully adult bull standing 5 feet to 5 feet 6 inches would weigh well over a ton.

#### N O R T H E R N   R H I N O C E R O S

(*Rhinoceros simus cottoni*)

For many years European Museums have possessed isolated examples of a square-based Rhinoceros horn said to have come from the north of the Zambezi, but the first definite proof of the beast's existence was a single skull from Lado, which found its way to America in 1900.

Nothing further was heard of the race until my own expedition of 1904-7, when I had the good fortune to bring home a series of skins and skeletons, from which the Northern White Rhino (*Rhinoceros simus cottoni*), was described as a type apart from the Southern, chiefly on the strength of distinctive differences in skull measurements.

The range of this Northern race extends from near Wadelai, on the left bank of the White Nile, northwards into the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and westwards into the Belgian Congo, and the French Colony of the Ubanghi-Chari.

The beasts are now strictly protected throughout, but, under exceptional circumstances, permission may be granted to shoot a single specimen.

At the time of my expedition in the Enclave, the Rhino were very local, and preferred to frequent the outskirts of marshy swamps, five of which existed between Kero and Wadelai on the White Nile. Here they were in the habit of feeding and drinking during the night, but before dawn broke they set out on a four or five hours' trek to thorn scrub, in which to lie up for the day. This habit was most regular in the vicinity of the Belgian posts, where parties of native hunters were often sent out to secure meat for the garrison.

As with Elephants, the older males often seek solitude or the company of one other male, for the greater part of the year, although at times a family party may be encountered with the calf leading the way, guided by the tip of its mother's horn, and the bull bringing up the rear. A Black Rhino family reverses the order of its going, for the bull takes the lead with the cow behind him, while the calf has to follow mother as best it can.

So low do they carry their heads that the front horn is frequently worn flat by friction on the ground, and this habit makes it extremely difficult to judge of the length of the horn.

The brain is so small and so well protected by the horns that a front shot is almost impossible. It is well to aim low behind the shoulder or in the middle of the neck, but when the beast is facing, and a shot cannot be placed inside the shoulder, an aim to break the upper part of the leg is advisable.

A peculiarity of both the White and Black varieties is the custom of resorting to the same spot day by day to deposit their dung, and these middens are a useful record to the hunter in search of fresh tracks.

The White Rhino of my experience does not charge on scent like the

Black, but it is nevertheless well to be wary, for now and then the beast will turn on the hunter with as much ferocity as its Black relation.

Many years ago I secured a good White Rhino bull at Lemasi, in the Lado Enclave, a country of thorn scrub interspersed with wide stretches of open grass, upon which the beasts cropped during the dark.

One April night the stillness was broken by the hungry grunting of a Lion close to camp, and in the early morning we set out in search of tracks. Suddenly we caught sight of a Rhino, stretched at ease, head from us, with a number of Rhinoceros birds moving about its back. To fire at a prostrate animal is unsatisfactory, but the question was how to bring the beast to its feet without disturbing the birds, which we knew would flit up and down the Rhino head at first sign of us, and screech loudly. Fearing that this alarm from its faithful little followers might put the Rhino to instant flight, I calculated the position of its heart as well as possible, and fired as he lay. Two more bullets failed to stop him, and he blundered away, leaving no trace of a blood trail. The men, however, were so certain the first bullet had gone home, that we kept up a three hours' steady pursuit, all through the burning heat of midday, till at last our quarry came in view, standing on guard under a thorn tree.

Two more shots sent him round the bush at a gallop; then he halted, caught a glimpse of us and made a deliberate charge down wind at me. An empty .400 is a bad card for an introduction, so I took to flight in my turn, slipping in a cartridge as I ran. Then a quick turn to place a solid nickel-clad bullet between nostril and horn made the beast swerve a little to thunder heavily past us out of sight. He had scattered us right and left as he charged in between us, hot and dishevelled as we were already by the chase, and now it took a moment or two to regain breath and self-possession.

An ant-hill rose some two hundred yards away, beside which I fancied the beast had halted for a moment. A very cautious approach revealed his unwieldy body lying inert at the far side, and we found that all the shots had met their mark. The square-based horn was unusually massive, and measured  $28\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length.

It was 5.15 before skin and scalp were removed, and porters had arrived from camp, and as night would soon be falling, there was nothing for it but to leave a band of men to bivouac on the spot, while the rest of us tried with uncertainty to retrace the dim outline of the homeward path among the thorn scrub. It was raining slightly and the skies showed signs of impending storm. Suddenly Abdullah, my boy, who was leading, halted, pointed wildly in the gloom, and with a hurried word of warning, vanished from sight, or as it seemed to my startled senses, was transformed into a Rhino whose great bulk had lumbered out of the long grass close across my vision, and stood snorting indignation less than one hundred yards away.

The .400 was pressed into my hand from behind, but peer as I would it was impossible to clearly detach the animal from the surrounding blackness. Nor was I anxious to deal with a wounded Rhino at night, after the morning's agitations.

Motionless we stood, I finger on trigger, the men behind me, while the Rhino faced us, snorting at intervals. Then I slipped into the bush in the hope of making a detour to evade the beast, but it was too dark to pick

one's way through the long grass and scrub, and I had to turn and regain the track.

The next moment a dim shape once more loomed across it, but this time the beast pursued its way and was blotted out in the darkness.

At 9 p.m., wet through and weary, we were glad to reach the friendly shelter of camp, for the thunderstorm had gathered in intensity and the rain was sluicing along the trenches round the tent. Next day it took forty-four willing porters, each with a load of between fifty and sixty pounds of meat, bones, hide and horns on his head, and high hopes of supper in his heart, to transport the carcass of the shot Rhino to camp. The skin had been removed in three pieces, and circles of men squatting round each had to be constantly kept at the task of thinning, while others built a rough platform over charcoal fires. These were to be kept going day and night to hasten the drying, for it was the height of the rainy season, a trying period for such work. Rain frequently started in the night, and at the first patter of it on the tent one had to rush out in pyjamas and supervise the covering of the hides with waterproof sheets.

Daily the skins were removed from the platform and carefully folded then opened out again and replaced, in order to keep the hinges soft enough for subsequent packing.

This specimen has been set up whole by Messrs. Rowland Ward, and can now be seen at the Powell-Cotton Museum, Birchington.