



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.

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BIG GAME SHOOTING IN AFRICA

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With one hundred & fifty  
ILLUSTRATIONS



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Often, too, especially if one is watching a water hole, there is the interest of seeing creatures seldom met with by day. Perhaps a Porcupine will come close to your ambush, stamping its feet and rattling its quills if it becomes suspicious; once a party of five animals, which I at first took for striped Hyenas, proved to be the quaint little Aard Wolf (*Proteles*); another time a little Genet Cat entered my hiding place, climbed on to my shoulder, and touched my ear with its little cold nose before making a hasty exit.

LEOPARD (*Felis pardus*), Local Name "NIMR."—Throughout the game districts of the Eastern Sudan, Leopards are common, but no animal is stealthier or more secretive in its ways than this beautiful great cat. Rocky hills and thickets of "kitr" thorn near the rivers are favourite strongholds, but wherever game is to be found, or wherever goats and sheep are to be picked up, Leopards will be near at hand. So wary are they, however, that unless one waits for them by a kill or a tethered goat, one may spend months in country where they abound without ever seeing one. I have had the luck to come across four on four consecutive mornings, all of which I killed, and then not had a shot at another for three years. Whether you see any Leopards on a trip or not, you may be certain that many have seen you, and slipped back silently as a shadow into cover while you were still at a distance. They are far from being exclusively nocturnal in their habits, though their peculiar grunting, sawing roar is seldom heard before dusk, and will return to a kill, or creep up to a bleating goat, in full daylight, morning or afternoon.

Their sight and hearing are very keen, but I think their sense of smell is comparatively dull. I have seen them follow a kill which had been dragged out of a thicket on to more open ground, snuffing slowly along the trail with nose to the ground, but I have had them extraordinarily close to me when I was concealed without their detecting me by scent. On one occasion I made a screen of grass tied against sticks, with a loop-hole in it, facing a goat which had been killed, and lay waiting in this during the afternoon. Suddenly a Leopard came right across the opening, and halted there. I could see every hair on his side, and could have stroked him with my hand, but I could not put the Mauser to my shoulder, as he was *within the length of the barrel*. Very slowly I pushed the stock of the rifle behind me, and was trying to align the muzzle for his heart, when he detected the movement, and sprang out of sight with a growl. He never reappeared.

There is a great fascination in watching a Leopard stalk a bait, or return to a kill. Though you may not have taken your eyes off the ground across which the approach must be made, it frequently happens that the animal will be close to you, before your eye picks up the lithe spotted form gliding slowly forward. Always, when you are waiting for a Leopard, and especially when you are on the ground on a level with it, avoid making even the slightest sudden movement. This will almost certainly be detected. If there is a rustle or the snap of a twig behind you, either remain perfectly motionless with your eyes on the bait, or, if you turn your head, let the motion be almost as slow as the hands of a clock. And, when the time comes, the rifle should creep to the shoulder as slowly and gradually as you can raise it.

Through keeping still enough, I have, two or three times in daylight, killed Leopards only 10 or 15 feet from me, though I was not over well

concealed. The "close up" view of them at these distances, before one ends it with a brain shot, is ample reward for a patient and motionless wait.

CHEETAH (*Acinonyx jubatus*), Local Name "FAHD."—Everywhere a much scarcer beast than the Leopard, and rarer in the Eastern Sudan than it is in Kordofan. Indeed, on this side of the country I only met with it twice, both times on the Setit. On the first occasion the late Colonel Collinson, then Governor of the Kassala Province, shot one when we were travelling together; the second I turned out of a thorn bush, over which a climbing vine with a fleshy, hexagonal, jointed stem had formed a dense canopy. Thinking it looked a likely place for a bird's nest, I gave it a kick as I passed, and a Cheetah bolted out of it. He went across the open at a great pace, his long tail waving in the air, and I missed him twice.

ELEPHANT (*Elephas africanus*), Local Name "FIT."—Elephants are still tolerably plentiful on the Blue Nile and its tributaries, while on the Setit there is generally a big herd in the country near the Atbara junction. Their ivory, however, never approaches the weight of big tusks from the Southern Sudan, though the animals themselves are as large as any in Africa.

Requiring, as it does, cool and correct calculation of the position of the vital organs in the animal's huge bulk, as well as steady shooting, often at the closest quarters, and with the giant beasts all about one, some visible and some concealed, Elephant hunting is an exacting test of nerve and presence of mind. Even an old hand feels, as one of the most experienced Elephant hunters of the present day has put it, a thrill "not unmixed with relief when that awesome brooding mass kneels suddenly to the shot."

The most vital shots, and the respective advantages of large and small bore rifles, are dealt with elsewhere.

BLACK RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*), Local Name "KHERFIT."—The Rhinoceros is now, I am afraid, practically extinct in this part of the Sudan. It is, fortunately, the only animal which has gone off the local list in recent years. The very few which remained at the time of the reconquest of the country were a remnant too small and scattered to save.

BUFFALO (*Syncerus caffer aquinoctialis*), Local Name "GAMUS."—The forms of Buffalo found in different parts of Africa show an extraordinary amount of variation in size, colour, and shape of horns. The great black Buffalo of the Limpopo region, with the bases of the horns forming massive rounded bosses on the forehead, is obviously not identical with the Buffalo of the Dinder, while neither could possibly be confused with the little red Buffalo of the Congo. If all African Buffaloes were as easily distinguishable their division into different races, or "sub-species," would be a simple matter. The trouble is that between, and connecting, such distinct types as these, there are many others, differing from them and from each other much less markedly, and often tending to intergrade. So far the attempts of zoologists to define the differences between these local races can only be regarded as confused and unsatisfactory. More than twenty "sub-species" have been described and named, for no fewer than fifteen of which two naturalists, Matschie (with ten) and Lydekker (with five) are responsible. In separating these far too much importance has been attached to the exact shape of the horns, and the direction of their tips, in the comparatively few specimens examined. Matschie, for instance, gave the